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April 28, 2014

The Honorable Karen Ross
California Department of Food and Agriculture
1220 N Street, Suite 400
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretary Ross:

At our most recent meeting of the California State Board of Food and Agriculture, we had the opportunity to focus on a variety of pollinator issues. We learned about the decline of native pollinators, the on-farm practices being implemented to improve pollinator habitat, and the strong commitment and partnership farmers and the academic community have in protecting this important natural resource.

Over the course of this meeting, several issues were brought to our attention, that we believe the Department and other state agencies could take action on to improve overall pollinator health as well as increase public awareness. These actions include:

- As environmentally appropriate allow the use of pollinator foraging and habitat on state lands. CDFA should continue to work with other state agencies and stakeholder groups to resolve barriers that prevent the use of state lands by commercial beekeepers and also encourage the development of pollinator habitat on these lands.
- Continue support of state/federal funding for pollinator research and integrated pest management. Research is critical in developing on-farm solutions and best management practices (BMPs) to help mitigate pollinator decline.
- Increase on-farm services and technical support for pollinator activities available through U.C. Cooperative Extension, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and other state/federal entities.
- Continue CDFA's work with the Pollinator Working Group, the State Apiary Board and other stakeholder groups such as the Pollinator Partnership, Western Plant Health Association and the California State Beekeepers Association to develop coordinated, shared and focused goals among all stakeholders in regards to policy recommendations, research priorities and BMPs.




- Maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of apiary shipments through CDFA's Border Protection Stations. From November to January more than 1.1 million colonies enter California from other states on approximately 3,300 individual shipments.
- Promote increased awareness among farmers and ranchers on use of pesticides/fungicides as it relates to overall pollinator health. Encourage training in pesticide application practices as well as the adoption of BMPs that work to minimize pollinator exposure.
- Include, if applicable, conservation practices that benefit pollinator habitat and forage in CDFA's Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program recognizing the impact the current drought has upon pollinator services and agricultural production.
- Encourage California Marketing Orders, Agreements, Council and Commissions to support Pollinator Week – June 16-22, 2014 through events, media and other activities to help promote pollinator conservation practices among farmers and ranchers.

Native and managed pollinator health is critical to California's overall agricultural diversity. An estimated \$11 billion in the state's crop production is pollinator dependent, representing approximately 25 percent of overall production within the state. Pollinator population decline is occurring and overall national colony mortality rates (overwinter) average more than 30 percent over the last seven years. Proactive action at the state and federal level to promote research, forage and habitat, as well as BMPs is critically needed.

CDFA is a leader in promoting collaboration among state agencies and diverse stakeholders in regards to this issue and we encourage your consideration on the above recommended actions. Thank you for the opportunity to brief you on this issue.

Sincerely,



Craig McNamara
President