

Vision for California Agriculture

Three themes I see make clear a new vision for California Agriculture

First:

Baby boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964—may constitute the last generation of Americans to share an intimate, familial attachment to the land and water. Many of us now in our forties and older know farmland or forests at the suburban rim and had farm-family relatives. For today's young people, that familial and cultural linkage to farming has all but disappeared. Increasingly one can see a severance of the public and private mind from our food's origins. Usually health issues, such as in the recent lettuce contamination, does California agriculture get national attention!

Second:

Coupled with the current rise in oil prices and the increase in transportation costs a world food deficit crisis is beginning to emerge. Recently the United Nations Secretary General called for food producing countries to increase their output of food by 1/3 the current amounts. Coupled with the need for more food, we need to address global warming in a much more serious way. Energy and natural resources must be more efficiently utilized.

And Third:

The Center for Disease Control reports that the number of overweight adult Americans increased over 60% between 1991 and 2000. The U.S. population of overweight children between ages two and five increased by almost 36% from 1989 to 1999. Along with these trends comes increasing levels of diabetes, high blood pressure and other public health concerns. Our sedentary lifestyle is killing us, especially our youth.

My vision for California Agriculture is:

1. More and better **Educational programs**
 - a. Programs that exemplify the new and innovative approaches ranchers and farmers are using to curb CO₂ emissions, and increase energy and resource efficiency. Also programs that progressive agriculturists are engaged in that address long-term sustainability issues. People, especially our youth (elementary and high school) need to know and participate in this type of activity.
 - b. Programs that connect people with the land—farm land and open space. Be it a trip to a local farm, children enjoying nature, or local farmers and ranchers reciprocating, we need to get the public more connected to where their food originates, and experience nature. Land Trusts and many other organizations including farmers and ranchers can help with this!
2. More emphasis on **eating locally grown healthy foods**.
 - a. Mainstream agriculture can't seem to survive without taxpayer subsidies. Although there was some improvement in the last Farm Bill, the playing field needs more leveling so smaller producers have a better opportunity to compete.
3. Valuable **farmland and other resource rich properties need to be conserved** for future generations.

- a. Although progress has been made, California Agriculture needs to promote the ethical issue of conserving valuable open spaces. Getting adults and especially our youth outdoors is more crucial than ever.