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June 15, 2020

Governor Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

As your State Board of Food of Agriculture, we commend you for your leadership and vision that focuses on a California for All. As we continue to mitigate and recover from COVID-19 and address our budgetary constraints, we understand that priorities for our state are vast and innumerable. However, we know that no Californian will be left behind, and we will emerge from this period stronger and more resilient than ever.

We would also like to applaud the work and dedication of your state agencies – Natural Resources, Food and Agriculture and Environmental Protection for providing non-stop engagement and dedication to collaboratively addressing our state's ongoing and long-term water challenges. As outlined in the draft Water Resilience Portfolio, "Water is central to nearly everything we value in California. Healthy communities, economies, farms, ecosystems and cultural traditions depend on steady supplies of safe and affordable water." The hard work of individuals and the leadership of these agencies are critical to our ongoing success.

At our most recent Board meeting we had the opportunity to hear from Secretary Wade Crowfoot, California Natural Resources Agency, on the Administration's continued focus on voluntary agreements, endangered species protections and shared science. The commitment and ongoing work of the Administration to integrate and collaborate with variety of stakeholders on these issues is greatly appreciated and we strongly support the approach and focus of these efforts as outlined by Secretary Crowfoot. We need to advance statewide water resilience to achieve an overall water program that balances the needs of all stakeholders—the protection and recovery of fish and wildlife while providing reliable water



for our vibrant farms and ranches and safe drinking water for our rural communities and cities. Only through collaboration will our “Regions Rise Together.”

However, there remain deep concerns within our state farming community on these issues and we believe further visibility of the state’s ongoing engagement is needed. We need your personal leadership to help the diversity of stakeholders engaged on water issues to “lean in” for collaborative solutions – breaking down the binaries and encouraging collaboration. Issues from Biological Opinions, Incidental Take Permits, Voluntary Agreements, and Delta Conveyance all impact the economic recovery of the state as well as natural habitat and ecosystems. Greater visibility of the Administration’s work will improve the perception within the farming community that water resilience remains a priority.

One of your first actions, as Governor-Elect was to support the process of voluntary agreements related to the Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan. This was followed by an Executive Order in April 2019, directing state agencies to develop a plan to ensure the state’s long-term water resilience and ecosystem health - providing a renewed foundation for California to address climate resilience. Work is also continuing on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), securing a water future for agriculture, businesses, disadvantaged communities and the environment through locally led decisions and actions. This is the pathway we need to follow – it’s proactive, inclusive and is beneficial for all stakeholders.

Ongoing and longstanding issues within the Bay Delta should no longer be a deterrent for enacting the vision of the Water Resilience Portfolio which calls for 1) maintain and diversifying water supplies, 2) protect and enhance natural ecosystems, 3) build connections and 4) be prepared. This Board is supportive of your engagement to help us further the progress that is needed in finding water solutions and in bringing necessary stakeholders together. We also stand ready to work with your agency secretaries in identifying federal infrastructure investments in water projects that provide good jobs and help benefit collective agricultural and environmental needs to build new and long-term partnerships.

In closing, agriculture is a vital part of our state and the current pandemic has raised public awareness about the critical role California farmers and ranchers play in meeting the health and nutrition needs of our state and nation. During the COVID-19 lockdown we were fortunate to have a local food supply for the entire nation since very few other regions in the U.S. were producing during that period. Food productivity is an integral part of water resilience and we appreciate your ongoing support and acknowledgement of the role of farmers and ranchers in providing food to our supermarket shelves as well as being a critical infrastructure sector for the nation. Agriculture needs a more reliable water supply and improved infrastructure to be a consistent source of food for the state, especially in times of crisis.

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Thank you for your ongoing leadership and engagement on water policy issues.

Sincerely,


Don Cameron

cc: Secretary Karen Ross, Department of Food and Agriculture
 Secretary Wade Crowfoot, Natural Resources Agency
 Secretary Jared Blumenfeld, Environmental Protection Agency