



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
FOOD & AGRICULTURE

A. G. Kawamura, Secretary

April 11, 2008

Mr. Al Montna, President
Members of the Board
California State Board of Food and Agriculture
1220 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear President Montna and Board Members:

As the 21st century unfolds there is an agrarian revolution taking place. The culture of agriculture is expanding in all directions. Dynamic advances in conventional and sustainable technologies have created exciting opportunities throughout the ‘food chain’. There are ‘blooming’ synergistic relationships with multiple stakeholders that seemed unrealistic just a decade ago. And yet while this new era continues to bring profound changes, there remains a clear deficiency that threatens to overturn thousands of years of progress. There are certain basic fundamentals required for the successful completion of the agricultural endeavor. When we forget the stable foundation upon which agriculture must stand, we do so, not at our own peril, but the peril of civilization itself.

In the 1913 book “Farm Management” by G.F. Warren, there is a simple but powerful inscription that states:

The requirements of a good farmer are at least four:

- The ability to make a full and comfortable living from the land;
- to rear a family carefully and well;
- to be of good service to the community;
- to leave the farm more productive than it was when he took it.

The act of farming, of raising crops or animals for food, fiber and fuel has not changed much for thousands of years. Only in this past century do we see the remarkable acceleration of the sciences and the dynamics of globalization that have created widespread benefits and...challenges for agriculture. One of the predictable and truly troubling changes has been the significant decrease in the number of people who are actively engaged in that age-old practice which delivers our ‘daily bread’. In California, the fifth largest agricultural economy in the world, “*agriculture*” is becoming a poorly understood strategic function that lacks the universal support of the populations that depend on it. And while the dependency on agriculture increases proportionately to the growing global population, the lack of understanding threatens all aspects of its sustainability into the future.



In fact, the active dialogue that continues today about the concept of “sustainability” has made one thing quite clear...and that is that the future of California agriculture is anything but sustainable unless there is a comprehensive effort to understand the fundamentals upon which 21st century agriculture might stand, and then, to create a strategic plan that can help guide the state into that unpredictable future.

In your role as the State Board of Food and Agriculture, I ask that you begin this process to create a strategic plan for California agriculture, one that engages the public and our states’ farmers and ranchers. This “Ag Vision” should identify goals that we as a community of stakeholders are committed to achieve, ensuring that the agricultural fabric of our state remains dynamic and sustainable.

California has always been the land of innovation and opportunity – let us ensure that this vision of agriculture allows our state to realize its true potential. Ultimately, the future of California and our nation rests squarely upon a platform of abundance, in the areas of food, fiber and fuel that can be created out of this marvelous culture of agriculture.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A.G. Kawamura', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

A.G. Kawamura
Secretary

cc: Joshua Eddy, Executive Director
Nancy Lungren, Deputy Secretary
Robert Tse, Director of Trade
Jonnalee Henderson, Policy Analyst