



Immediate Action Items Recommended to the State Board of Food and Agriculture By the California Agricultural Vision Advisory Committee

The California Agricultural Vision (CAV) Advisory Committee convened by American Farmland Trust (AFT) has considered the Options for Short-Term Action that emerged from the CAV stakeholder process and recommends that the State Board of Food and Agriculture undertake the following high-priority actions, which represent initial steps toward the adoption and implementation of a strategic plan for California agriculture. The Committee further recommends that the State Board ask AFT to appoint two volunteers, identified below, to lead and be responsible for implementing each action item.

1. Smarter Regulation of Agriculture to Improve Environmental Quality

The State Board should ask the California Roundtable on Agriculture and the Environment (CRAE) to evaluate the pros and cons of a variety of institutional arrangements (e.g., an ombudsman) or suggest alternatives for improving the administration of environmental and other regulations affecting agriculture. The primary purpose is to help farmers and regulatory agencies avoid duplication of effort, reconcile conflicting mandates and requirements, reduce paperwork and cut compliance costs where feasible, all without compromising environmental quality standards and compliance. The State Board should also ask CRAE to consult with agricultural representatives and regulatory agencies for the purpose of identifying specific regulations and policies that appear to be obstacles to the wider adoption of agricultural practices that could maintain or improve environment quality. CRAE could also identify and recommend practical fixes permissible under current law. The State Board should ask CRAE to complete its work and submit a report within 9 months.

Ashley Boren, Sustainable Conservation, State Board
Dave Puglia, Western Growers Association
Tim Johnson, California Rice Commission (Alternate)

2. Better Food Access for California Families in Need

To encourage wider use of available federal food stamp funds, the State Board should ask the Governor to order that effective methods other than finger imaging be used to deter fraudulent claims in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). All states except four, including California, use other methods to good effect. The State Board should make this request as soon as practicable and submit helpful information to support the request. The State Board should also ask the Governor to convene a panel of state agency heads and private sector stakeholders to conduct an inquiry into additional reasons why California is failing to use \$4 billion a year in available federal SNAP funding. The panel should be charged with proposing solutions that will encourage greater use of SNAP funding and submitting a report within 6 months.

The State Board should convene a volunteer working group of private sector agricultural leaders and representatives of food banks for the purpose of formulating a plan to significantly increase the amount of food being contributed by producers to food banks in California. The plan should build on existing efforts that resulted in 90 million pounds of food contributions to state food banks last year. It should include an educational and public relations component to facilitate producer contributions and to increase public awareness of how agriculture is contributing to the food security of California families in need. The working group should submit its plan to the State Board within 9 months.

Sue Siglar, California Association of Food Banks
Kerry Tucker, Nuffer, Smith & Tucker, Inc., State Board

3. Resource Stewardship and Conservation for Long-Term Sustainability

The State Board should ask CDFG to partner with private agricultural institutions and nonprofit organizations to document the on-going stewardship efforts of California agricultural producers and associations to improve environmental quality.¹ This should include an analysis of what prompted these efforts and what has made them successful. CDFG should be charged with formulating a plan to use this information to promote similar initiatives and practices in all sectors of agriculture, and to educate the public about the contribution that agriculture is making to environmental quality. CDFG should be asked to submit to the State Board a report that highlights the most successful and promising stewardship programs and individual producer initiatives, that to the extent possible documents their environmental benefits, and that includes a plan for disseminating this information, within 12 months.

Eric Holst, Environmental Defense Fund
Matt Byrne, California Cattlemen's Association

The State Board should ask the Agriculture & Natural Resources Division of the University of California (UC-ANR) to conduct a study of California's long-term agricultural land, water and other resource needs, based on future demand for food, fiber, renewable energy and ecosystem services, and on the influence of urbanization, water availability, climate change, energy costs, technology and other factors on future agricultural productivity and production capacity. In doing so, UC-ANR should consult with CDFG and other agencies, agricultural interests and other private sector stakeholders. It should be charged with recommending long-term goals and strategies for retaining, conserving and otherwise assuring that there will be adequate land, water and other resources to sustain long-term California agricultural production while maintaining environmental quality. The State Board should request that UC-ANR submit a report and recommendations within 24 months.

Dan Dooley, University of California, State Board
Ralph Grossi, American Farmland Trust

4. Fairness to Agricultural Workers and Employers

A stable workforce environment is critical to the continued success of California agriculture and necessary for fairness to California farm workers and their families. The State Board should immediately ask the Governor to encourage, and issue a statement calling for, federal

¹ Examples include the Sustainable Winegrowing Initiative, Dairy Quality Assurance Program, Stewardship Index for Specialty Crops, rice industry waterfowl habitat creation, etc.

immigration reform, including passage of the AgJOBS bill designed to meet the fundamental needs of California farm workers and employers. The Governor's statement should emphasize that Congress must take these credible steps to improve our immigration laws and end the current chaos suffered by our family farms, our farm workers and our rural economies.

Meanwhile, in keeping with the long-standing position of California agriculture, the State Board should ask the Governor to direct various departments of state government, including the California Highway Patrol, to focus their efforts on enforcing state laws and use caution to avoid unnecessary intrusion into uniquely federal areas of law enforcement. This should include providing direction to these state departments to refrain from needless federal jurisdiction referrals of those who have merely committed traffic violations or other minor infractions.

Luawanna Hallstrom, Collaborative Communications, State Board
Barry Bedwell, California Grape & Tree Fruit League

5. Regional Food Marketing Opportunities

The State Board should encourage a partnership between agricultural and nonprofit organizations to study the potential of regional food markets² to create economic opportunity for all California agricultural producers, ranging from those who now produce only for the global market to those who are trying to expand existing regional markets for their products. Regional markets appear to offer producers options for diversifying their revenue streams as a hedge against fluctuations in specific markets. They also appear to offer the opportunity for producers to connect more directly with urban consumers and thereby promote better public understanding of, and support for, agriculture. There may also be significant synergies between global and regional markets that would benefit all producers, e.g., regional branding leading to global marketing opportunities as in the California wine industry. A key issue for study should be infrastructure shortcomings (processing and distribution) and regulatory barriers that now inhibit regional marketing options for producers. The study should recommend strategies for meeting infrastructure needs, overcoming regulatory obstacles and otherwise promoting regional markets in California's metropolitan areas to better serve all producers who wish to access these markets. The State Board should ask for a report within 12 months.

Michael Dimock, Roots of Change
Rich Matteis, California Farm Bureau Federation

APPROVED BY THE STATE BOARD OF FOOD & AGRICULTURE, June 30, 2010

² Regional food markets now operate on the premise that food products grown within the region offer advantages to consumers by virtue of their local origin that often translate into higher farm gate value and/or strong customer loyalty.