

## 2008 CDFA Listening Session Comments

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I am Bill Martin, Executive Director of the Central Valley Farmland Trust. Our office is at 8788 Elk Grove Blvd, Elk Gove, CA. The Central Valley Farmland Trust is a non-profit public benefit land trust engaged in the protection of farmland in the Central San Joaquin Valley, mainly through voluntary acquisition of agricultural conservation easements from willing landowners. We currently hold nearly 12,000 acres of ag conservation easements in Merced, Stanislaus, San Joaquin, Sacramento Counties and are trying deal with a backlog of applications for which we have no funding.

I am here today because of an acute concern over the increasing rate at which productive farmland is being lost to development in the Central San Joaquin Valley and the need to increase available funding for its protection. I am not here because it is a "feel good" thing to do. I am here because the \$15 billion agricultural industry in the ten Counties from Kern in the South to Sutter in the north is seriously threatened. It is also important to note that this industry has far reaching economic implications and is not just a California issue. Certain commodities are grown exclusively in this region serving food consumption needs across the country and around the world.

If left to chart its own course history will repeat itself! We are all aware of what happened in the LA basin and Santa Clara Valley? No where else in California, or the world for that matter, is there an agricultural region with ability to produce the myriad of high quality crops, at unprecedented production levels, and efficiently deliver them to markets around the world.

Let me quantify the implications. In those ten counties previously mentioned, between 1990 and 2000 approximately 223,000 acres of high quality farmland was lost. And that is just high quality farmland. Total agricultural land lost to development was quite a bit higher. I don't have the exact numbers in front of me, but it is fair to say that between 2000 and 2005 that rate substantially increased. This phenomenon is driven by exploding population increases caused from immigration into California as well as migration from high priced coastal areas to the less expensive inland Valley. The loss of productive farmland is exacerbated when coupled with the difficulties municipalities have had in effectively and efficiently managing growth in their respective spheres of influence. For more objective and quantifiable evidence of this I encourage you go to American Farmland Trust's website ([www.farmland.org](http://www.farmland.org)) and read its comprehensive study (Central Valley Farmland at the Tipping Point?). Thank you for your time.