

## CDFA Listening Session

San Luis Obispo, July 1, 2008

My name is George Work. I represent the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation making a living on a cow calf/ dry land grain ranch in Southern Monterey Co. Presently we're in transition to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generations.

I want to thank the members of this board for taking the time and making the effort to make these listening sessions happen.

I served as a planning fellow with Roots of Change last year and was very encouraged with our outcomes which have been presented to you at other sessions, I believe.

A question: Are our grazing lands part of agriculture? Worldwide only 10% of our land is arable. Grazing land makes up a large part of what is left and often it gets ignored.

Let's go back and look at some history of lands. I have copies of USDA's bulletin #99, "Conquest of the Land through 7,000 years." I hope you will review this publication. More recently these concepts have been added to by Jared Diamond in his book "Collapse."

The fact remains that great civilizations have collapsed because of lack of stewardship of the land coupled with economic and social issues. I point out that each of these civilizations were purely organic.

We must learn from history or we are doomed to repeat it.

I have begun to look at things in a different way. As I see it we don't have problems, what we perceive as problems are really symptoms. For example, in the environment erosion is a symptom and the lands way of communicating with us that something has been done to it or not done for it. In most cases this involves us. How many of us speak land fluently?

Now to your questions, my vision for the year 2030 is for a sustainable food system. It is sustainable by being economically viable, ecologically sound, socially just and produces a food calorie of energy from sunlight with less than a calorie of energy from other sources inputted. Our biggest challenge will be to have people stop using linear thinking to solve our biological problems.

Margaret Wheatley in her book, "Leadership and the New Science," stated that the world is not made up of things, it is made up of relationships. Not just people relationships, but people in their environment, plants and animals with each other, microbes and the soil, subatomic particles with each other to name just a few. These relationships are not linear but are dynamic and ever changing. Linear thinking does not work when you are trying to manage these complex communities.

There is not anything much more linear than a regulation. You cannot regulate integrity or health in the soil. These kinds of regulations only compound our problems. We can put a man on the moon using

linear thinking but we can't even keep half our marriage relationships healthy and happy using linear thinking. Good communication is a key factor. Maybe we need to learn the language of relationships.

Are our soils becoming healthier and more productive using linear thinking or are they requiring more and more outside inputs?

How has the public perception of agriculture changed in the year 2030?

Because of its leadership and accomplishments in managing the multitude of complex communities, the public now realize that agriculture through its stewardship provides much more than healthy nutritious foods. Making good decisions we also produce clean water, clean air, and healthy habitat for millions of complex communities, from the microbes in the soil to the healthy grasslands that have now sequestered all the excess CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and it has also provided a place where people's spirits can connect with the land, its beauty and all its life forms.

A must have is a better way to make decisions when dealing with the complexities of all these biological communities so the mistakes made over the past 7,000 years won't be continued.

It appears the decision making process has changed very little over hundreds of years. There has to be a better way to make decisions. I am involved in a project which will research and compare the conventional process to one that is designed to deal with the complexities of the communities that agriculture must work with.

There has been some progress in this area. For example, the running of a meeting. Parliamentary procedure tends to be linear. Compare it with a well facilitated meeting. Which one allows creativity to flourish, has excitement, builds relationships in the process, and has a win-win goal? Which one produces a winner and a loser.

Thank you again for the opportunity to build relationships.