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What is your vision for CA agriculture by 2030?

My vision is the way CA is currently going, there will be no more large scale ag. The media spread a “fear-factor” about how our food was produced, and that it was poisoned with pesticides. The food-buyers of the households bought into the fear. Since they didn’t grow plants or raise animals for consumption themselves, plus had gardeners to deal with their yards, they became disconnected with the education and back breaking work it took to raise our food and fiber. They didn’t want to be bothered with the science that proved our conventionally grown products were as healthy as organic, or that other nations don’t have to comply with the strict food-safety and worker safety codes the CA industry was faced with. From the sacrifices of the generations before them, the CA citizens were lulled into complacency. They only knew there was a great abundance of food and fiber for very reasonable prices. Then things changed. As the costs for fuel, labor, and material prices rose, the food industries started selling their technology – the only remaining competing edge they had against third-world nations who were land rich, abundant with cheap labor, and had little regulation to deal with. As consumers were lured by China’s cheap prices, farmers were struggling to keep up with compliance rules and regulations re: labor, air quality, water quality, etc. Also, the US government decided to open its borders to commerce, so invasive pests were being brought into CA at a rapid pace, with no manpower or government agencies able to block their invasion. The cost to do business rose exponentially. CA and American industries died – they either moved to China or shut down. China and many nations outside of the US didn’t have to adhere to the same rules and regulations, so were able to continue to produce inexpensive food in great quantities using the technology it bought or was donated from CA and the US industries, and thus outcompeted CA and the US industries in food production.

By 2030, Californians will realize they’ve lost the advantage and knowledge on how to grow crops that would sustain the nation, build things, and develop technologies for making and repairing machines, because everyone will have forgotten how to do it. The food prices will have skyrocketed because everything has to be imported. Where an average Californian spent 10%-30% of their income on food, it will have shot up to 80%. Families will be working long hours just to put rice and beans on the counter. A select few will remember how to grow fresh vegetables and will do so along roadsides and yards. Most people will be dependent on the supermarkets, supplied by costly imports. The mega stores will be supplied solely by China, who no longer has to compete with other nations because it was able to gain a monopoly on the market. CA will hope to someday be independent from China, and able to sustain its great populations. We will be the third world nation we used to supply food for.

Must haves:

1. A local, state, and federal government that supports one of the few remaining primary industries left in our state and country.
2. Better city planning - keep the farming where the soils are naturally rich in the river valleys (they’ll need way less inputs, plus will lessen run-off issues) and the cities on the hillsides like in Europe.
3. Form more Ag Alliance groups or a UN of Agriculture groups willing to develop ways so even with urban interface issues, farmers can continue to produce food and fiber in CA with the support of their neighbors, counties, state, and country. The low cost of food and the ability to produce enough to feed our population (plus millions more) is one of the last remaining factors that separates us from a third world nation. It should be an open-minded volunteer working group with equal representation: conventional grower, nutritionist, organic grower, large scale

grower, small grower, environmentalist, strategist on how to get it done, reps from each of the CA Ag colleges (including UC (theory) and State Colleges (people who see bugs in the field vs museums, and get hands on training) for entomology, agronomy, plant path, hort, farm workers, geologist, hydrologist, pca, pco, USDA-different disciplines, CDFA different disciplines, EPA (air quality \drift issues), DPR-different disciplines, family shoppers – large family plus foodie-type, marketer, shipper, packer, border control, Mexican USDA equivalent, so you're all represented...a UN of Agriculture. They must work cohesively. No fighting allowed. Strict code of respect for others opinions enforced at the meetings. Like you – listen and share ideas. It should be a fear-free room. What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. All must come with the idea to "What can we do to make it better?" Compromise. Set it up like court. Discovery. – idea gets introduced. Who are the players. The idea gets debated. The idea gets resolved.

4. CA Ag needs the best communication and support system to combat invasive pests. Currently it's not working.
5. The best plant breeding system so we can develop resistant varieties to diseases and cut down the need for fungicides to fight disease.
6. Mandate better water efficiency. We shouldn't see rain birds, flood irrigation (except for rice), or furrow irrigation anymore. Those who have already complied by switching to mini-sprinklers or drip tape should not be penalized. Set up low-cost loans if they can't afford conversion.
7. More holistic outlook on what crops are grown where: Should we be growing blueberries in soils with pH of 8 as advised by our UCCE Extension Farm Adviser? What are we doing to our soils and groundwater by pumping it with sulfur? Avos in the desert? What long-term environmental price are we paying? Water quality? Water quantity?
8. A serious look at Argentine ants and the Red Imported Fire Ant. The pesticides that knock them out are getting banned, and boric acid doesn't work well. "Soft" pesticides have their place, but sometimes you need a hammer. Growers know if you control them, you control lots of pests. Isn't the ultimate goal less pesticide use? Do you like sleeping with ants?
9. Find the "new RoundUp"