

**California Women for Agriculture
responds to CDFA's 2030 California Agricultural Vision – July 2008**

**Sharing their Vision of Agricultural Prominence, CWA Believes that California Agriculture
is the Fundamental Cornerstone for the Country's Health and National Security -
Agriculture Needs to be California's #1 Priority**

On behalf of California Women for Agriculture (CWA) and our over 2500 member-volunteers, we want to thank you for the opportunity to share with you, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), our vision for agriculture's prominence today and beyond the year 2030.

By way of background, CWA is the largest and most active all-volunteer grassroots agricultural support organization in California. Established 33 years ago in 1975 our membership is comprised of women and men who come from a variety of agriculture and non-agriculture-based backgrounds and professions such as farmers, ranchers, bankers, homemakers, teachers, attorneys, community and civil services employees and other agriculture related support businesses.

CWA is committed to maintaining a healthy and vibrant agricultural industry for California and our nation. CWA is dedicated to ensuring that a local, reliable food supply continues to be the foundation of our state's economy for future generations. We must not rely on foreign nations for our food or be held hostage by outsourcing our food production. Planning for agriculture's success should be our number one priority at every level of our government.

Today, you have asked the public and the industry for their 2030 vision for California agriculture, the "must haves" and the challenges which are intimately intertwined.

CWA shares a vision that California agriculture should be respected and protected for our future generations...not because we want to cling to an unrealistic, obsolete folklore, but because we know our national security demands a safe, abundant and domestic food supply.

At the risk of sounding a little like Pollyanna, we will envision 2030 agriculture as vibrant and healthy. Where our farm, fields and ranches are actively producing food, fiber, floral and fuel for our country and the world. Where we have access to water, labor, technology, biotechnology, markets, capital, realistic and science-based regulations. Where elements of public policy, environmental protection, social equity, and animal rights no longer threaten our agriculturalists, but rather work hand in hand with our farmers and ranchers and amenably with the community and environmentalists.

However, before we can make that dream a reality we need to make sure the agricultural industry will still be here in year 2010 and 2020 because our vision also embodies the biggest challenges that we consider to be the "must haves" for a sustainable industry. It is an industry that we currently consider to be environmentally sound and socially equitable. However, it must also be economically feasible today in order to continue to be the vibrant and healthy industry we want for 2030.

The California Food & Agricultural Code §821 read as follows: *As part of promoting and protecting the agricultural industry of the state and for the protection of public health, safety, and welfare, the Legislature shall provide for a continuing sound and healthy agriculture in California and shall encourage a productive and profitable agriculture.*

Unfortunately, a majority of the ag related legislation that has passed in the past few years has done little or nothing to provide for "a continuing sound and healthy agriculture in California" much less "encourage a productive and profitable agriculture."

Further, according to California Food & Agricultural Code §822, the Legislature is to review ag-related actions for impact on the following factors: productive land, water supplies, energy resources, pest control, labor, production tools, marketing, research, transportation, financing, commissioners, state-supported fairs, recycling and new technologies.

Our question to you is has that been done? What gets done with that analysis? Does it actually get considered and discussed by the Legislature? Or is it merely an exercise? As an agricultural organization whose members are on the front lines of implementing legislation, we often go at it alone and are frustrated by the urban disconnect and lack of sound policy support from our government.

Starting today there needs to be state implementation of practical and sound solutions (for all Californians) to address public health and welfare issues such as: domestic food production, food safety, water, air quality, energy consumption, and labor and immigration reform.

Social and environmental equity must be based upon sound science that takes into account our human needs and conditions as a part of the ecosystem. Scare tactics, irresponsible rhetoric and the threat of litigation cannot lead public policy decisions.

All facets of our diverse industry – from conventional to organic and our over 350 commodities - should be regarded and respected as productive agriculture, a part of our roots and heritage, and too valuable to lose in our state and country.

California agriculture provides access to wholesome nutrition. California agriculture is instrumental in nature's eco-system and protects the environment. California agriculture fortifies our homeland security by providing a domestic food supply, jobs and contributing to the GNP.

Unfortunately, if the current pendulum continues to swing, climate change and global warming will pale in comparison to what will happen because agriculture in our state and country will be all but non-existent.

With the loss of national agricultural land of over a million acres a year to urban development, it is not far-reaching to anticipate that any remaining food or fiber produced in our country will be scarce and coveted by those fortunate enough to have access.

The only trace of remaining agriculture will be in history books...or as the Counting Crows sing..."they paved paradise to put up a parking lot; they took all the trees and put them in a tree museum and charged people a dollar and half to see them; don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you got until it's gone."

Loss of a domestic food supply will mean that healthy, safe foods will not be accessible to most...food safety issues will become more commonplace and difficult to overcome because of the lack of control over foreign imports...routine vaccinations will become necessary to avoid food borne diseases from food produced in foreign nations without high standards for food safety and quality assurance. Our economy will regress as we become a nation without a domestic food supply. Does that sound hauntingly familiar to our lack of a domestic energy supply?

California agriculture is important. Government and public apathy about agriculture is reckless and lacks foresight. There needs to be universal recognition of ag's importance coupled with respect (in the form of action) from our state and national government. Unrealistic, infeasible regulations need to become science-based, realistic and implementable regulations. Wrangling over immigration needs to cease and Ag Jobs needs to be passed and implemented. Crop research, biotechnology acceptance and increased efficiency needs to occur. Voluntary preservation of prime agricultural land and support for land use policies that guide smart growth and protect ag land need to become routine. And as the last month as made painfully clear, a comprehensive water solution addressing agricultural, residential and commercial water needs is long overdue as we are now in a crisis situation.

Today, California agriculture is feeding the world with the safest, most abundant, diverse and least expensive food supply. We can no longer take this for granted. We must plan for the future. We must plan for agriculture to remain the economic powerhouse it is to our region, state and nation.

We believe California agriculture needs to be protected for our future generations and their food supply. Our productive lands should all be considered national treasures like Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks.

California must balance its desire for growth and development with its need for a safe and a domestically-produced food supply. Public policy needs to ensure the availability of water, land, technology, markets and labor sufficient to allow our farmers and ranchers to continue to produce profitably safeguarding our ability to feed ourselves.

Without these things, 2030 agriculture may end up being nothing more than something you see in a museum. Agriculture is comprised of resilient, innovative stewards of the land and the industry, but we are not supernatural human beings. We cannot stand alone. We are all in this together. CWA is here to lead the effort with CDFA in taking our comments and translating them into a priority plan of action for California agriculture. Although we are frustrated, we will not give up and we are prepared to plan with you our next meal, as well as those meals in the year 2030 ensuring that they are profitably and domestically produced by Californians and accessible to all.

In closing, CWA knows that California agriculture is and must remain the fundamental cornerstone for our state and nation's health and national security. Our vision for agriculture is not unique or impossible to accomplish. However, if we continue on the path we have been taking, our vision, like our current water supplies will be nothing more than a vanishing mirage. We deserve better. Our children and their children deserve better. We know we can do better!

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