



# TULARE COUNTY FARM BUREAU

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*Mission: to promote and enhance the viability of Tulare County agriculture.*

**A Vision for Tulare County Agriculture  
Presented to the CDFA Ag Listening Session Participants  
By: Patricia L. Stever, Executive Director  
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Tulare, CA**

## **CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE IN 2030**

Tulare County Farm Bureau has been representing the interests of farmers and ranchers, and their families, for 92 years in Tulare County. Our mission has always been to protect and enhance the viability of agriculture in our county. Farm Bureau would like to thank the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Secretary AG Kawamura, and members of the CDFA Board for taking time to conduct these important and strategic listening sessions. We all have an important role in shaping the future of agriculture now and in the years to come.

In 2030, the vision of California Agriculture I anticipate will continue much like it is today, fighting many of the same battles, trying to overcome some of the same issues, ignorance, biases, and misinformation campaigns that plague our industry today. When you look back in time and review the archives of different Farm Bureau offices throughout the state, you can see that water resources, land use & planning, co-existence between the urban and rural communities, & rising input costs plagued our industry even 100 years ago. Unfortunately not much has changed.

What has changed in the last 100 years, is our country's desire to place greater emphasis on policing our nation's borders, protecting our country from terrorist threats, protecting our environment, and assuring the consumer that the food and fiber products sold in the United States are the safest, most reliable, and affordable products sold anywhere in the world. Unfortunately, what the average consumer does not realize is that many of the regulatory laws and rules that have been adopted at all levels throughout county, state, and federal government have contributed significantly to the demise of the American farm, but has done little to actually assure a higher level of accountability since rising imports from foreign countries has flooded the American market place with cheaply produced foreign goods that are not produced using the same stringent protocols that are enforced upon American producers. The dilemma has created a very unfair advantage for foreign countries to do business in the United States, at the expense of the American farmer. California farmers are the most regulated producers anywhere in the world, and this places our farmers at a distinct disadvantage in competing with their competitors from across the nation and globally.

Our ideal vision for agriculture in 2030 is to operate in a progressive and environmentally responsible manner, with the public's perception of agriculture as the **true stewards of the land**. Consumers will see farmers and ranchers as being innovative, environmentally responsible stewards, who are scrubbing the air of toxins and volatile compounds through the production of crops, and will see agriculture as our most vital environmental stewardship process, and our most vital resource to protect as a matter of state and national security.

I am reminded of the nation's victory gardens and the United States School Garden Army program, extremely successful during the first and second World Wars, that mobilized school aged children and entire communities

to grow their own gardens, conserve and ration important food and fiber resources, and be more environmentally responsible by eating what you grow and wasting less – these principles were extremely important during the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and should be refocused on in our 2030 vision plan. Rose Hayden-Smith, a UC Cooperative Extension 4-H Advisor and Food & Society Policy Fellow and historian on this subject has devoted an entire web site to this topic, entitled [www.victorygrower.com](http://www.victorygrower.com).

### **Liberty and Victory Gardens**

The Liberty Garden campaign (after Armistice, this became known as the Victory Garden campaign) encouraged a variety of home, community, and workplace gardening efforts. Using the power of mass media, the government appealed to Americans' sense of patriotism. It also appealed to immigrant populations, showing that they were 100% American by gardening.

The government produced a wide variety of home gardening and food preservation publications, which it provided free-of-charge. The program was phenomenally successful. In the first partial year of the campaign, 1917, home food producing lots in the U. S. were estimated at 3.5 million. By 1918, that figure had risen to 5.3 million. The program was so successful that it was reinstated as the famous Victory Garden Campaign in World War II.

### **United States School Garden Army**

A second program was the United States School Garden Army (USSGA), sponsored by the Federal Bureau of Education. It was an unprecedented governmental effort to make agricultural education a formal part of the public school curriculum. Patriotic appeals encouraged children to raise food for America. By the end of the war, several million had "enlisted" as "soldiers of the soil."

These unique historical programs, could very well be an important part of reconnecting the American public, especially the California consumer with their agriculture roots. As part of the 2030 Vision, the CDFA could have a vitally important role in helping reconnect children and adults with their agricultural heritage, and by doing so promote increased self-reliance, help address the staggering rate of childhood obesity, help promote the production and consumption of local grown produce, and help conserve and protect our natural resources, while also investing in the protection of our nation's security and national defense.

**Mandatory agriculture education curriculum for K-12 grade**, continued support and expansion of school garden programs, encouraging a return to "liberty and victory gardens," funding of new and enhanced nutrition education programs, and additional investments in career technical education (to support the continuance of vocational trades, and outstanding programs such as 4-H and FFA) must be **championed**. Efforts to reconnect the public and decision makers with agriculture will only be made possible if we begin in our school system and influence parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders through this renewed effort.

### **ADEQUATE RESOURCES – BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN ACHIEVING VISION**

Agriculture needs three key elements to flourish as an industry, land, water and the flexibility to grow crops that will return a positive cash flow. With these key elements, growers will have the opportunity to produce crops that will scrub the carbon from our air, while producing food, fiber and fuels needed by our residents.

### **LAND**

To do this, we need adequate land resources. **CDFA and county government need to work together to develop land use policies that value the protection of agricultural land and rangeland.**

Land is such a critical part of our 2030 vision, because when we lose farmland we not only lose the farm, but the mechanism that drives rural communities, where farm employees, truck drivers, processing plant workers, salesmen, insurance agents and bankers, to name a few, all rely upon.

*Protecting the right to farm will not be as important as protecting the **ability to farm**.*

## **WATER**

Agriculture cannot survive in California without an affordable, reliable, and consistent supply of water. California is failing to plan, and therefore planning to fail in this arena. It is critically important that we help shape water policy and influence decision makers to invest in infrastructure, conveyance, and additional storage throughout the state.

## **FLEXIBILITY**

Finally, we must stress the importance of flexibility in agriculture. It is not uncommon for the public and especially agencies, to look at agriculture today and assume that this is what the industry will look like in the future. When you compare the number of farms today compared with fifty years ago the numbers are very different. Where once small farms and dairies existed, now larger more vertically integrated and consolidated farms exist. The key in all of this is that we have a planning process that recognizes that agriculture must change to survive and that whatever we are growing today may not be relevant in one year, so planning for 20 or 50 years is even less certain. What we do know is that agriculture is an ever-changing working landscape that needs flexibility to thrive.

## **BASIC NEEDS – “THE MUST HAVES”**

The following is not an exhaustive list of needs that agriculture has, but to name some of the very most important must haves...

- Reliable water supply and investment and implementation of sufficient conveyance and storage
- Strong interaction between state agencies and county governments to streamline regulatory process; a renewed and enhanced effort to help farmers, ranchers, and dairy producers streamline permitting requirements and environmental compliance between air, water, and land. Flexibility must be adapted into the process at the local level of government to help producers comply with the myriad of overlapping, and sometimes even contradictory rules and regulations that are ever being re-written, modified, updated, or re-authorized. This will require a regulatory framework that recognizes the value of farming and ranching in this state.
- Reliable labor supply – both Management and Field Labor – this must be a broad bi-partisan process that engages our state and federal lawmakers to champion this effort
- Reliable and affordable fuel supply

- Reliable and affordable production inputs
- Efficient transportation systems and port facilities
- Land Use policies that value the protection of agricultural land and rangeland – this will require that state and county governments work together to help develop a more consistent framework for protecting farmland in the state.
- Reliable rural crime prevention funds and programs, supported unilaterally throughout all 58 counties in California. Expanded funding, support, and integration of existing rural crime prevention taskforce efforts, the central valley's ACTION network, and the central valley's ag investigation units need to be fully utilized and expanded through statewide effort.
- A system and a statutory foundation that allows for the smooth transition of farms from one generation to the next.
- Enacting of a fail-safe food safety regulatory framework that assures consumer confidence and establishes a consistent, science based, industry initiated process for greater food safety protection.
- Investment in research, and additional dollars to keep California agriculture on the cutting edge of the industry. Some of those key areas include: improved pest management systems, improved production practices, food safety and security, new agricultural technologies, and assistance in educating the public about the importance of making these tools, resources, and knowledge available to California agriculturalists.
- A more informed public regarding agriculture and our production challenges – including an adult public education campaign that is sustained and focused on helping consumers and lawmakers understand agriculture at a level sophisticated enough to make decisions that help instead of harm agriculture.

## **SERVICES TO AGRICULTURE**

There are also many essential services being provided to agriculture which we need to continue investing in and supporting.

- ☞ The Sheriff's Department, especially the Rural Crime Investigations Unit provides an essential service to the agricultural community to address the unique problems we face in our industry. Adequate funding for this type of law enforcement is essential.
- ☞ The Agricultural Commissioner's office also provides unique and essential services that help our growers comply with the myriad of federal and state laws that we face, especially related to the use of crop protection tools. In addition, they provide essential services in terms of pest exclusion activities that must be expanded in the future.

- ☞ Another key entity is the UC Cooperative Extension Service. This entity provides the science based answers to so many of the problems we face in our industry. Funding for this entity must continue as they help us develop our youth and our farming operations.

## **Final Remarks**

Agriculture in California is remarkably resilient, ever changing, adaptive, and progressive – but in 2030 and beyond the fate of agriculture will be largely determined by consumer demands, perceptions, and economic realities – just as they are today. Our industry will continue to be expected to deliver an abundant, high quality and safe supply of agricultural products for both domestic and foreign markets. We are asking CDFA to continue to play a large leadership role in protecting the production practices, crop protection tools, technologies, and resources available to keep agriculture viable in California.

Regardless of laws, regulations, costs of production, environmental radicalism, changes in climate and weather, natural resource availability and a whole host of other equally important considerations... public perception is one of the most critical elements in securing a viable future for California agriculture. We need to be part of initiating new stewardship concepts, more responsible (and scientifically sound) animal care practices, and responding to consumer demands regardless of what the regulatory framework requires.

Finally, we encourage CDFA to insert themselves into all issues that are relevant and important to agriculture. This includes agricultural biotechnology issues, animal agriculture controversies, climate change and greenhouse gas reduction programs, coexistence challenges within industry, the rural/urban interface and the inherent conflicts emanating from urban encroachment, and more.

Agriculture needs to have a seat at the table with regard to all government decision making that impacts agriculture. Too often public opinion leaders, lawmakers, and agency officials are creating regulations, laws, and unnecessary burdens without having sound science to drive their policy decisions. The cumulative impact of over-regulation should be fully reviewed as a result of these listening sessions and dealt with to minimize future impacts to agricultural productivity.

To have a viable agriculture industry in California will require hard work, determination, and a renewed commitment from all within in the industry to tell our story more effectively, more articulately, and with more science and resolve to the California public. The stakes are too high, and the results too important.