

Comments to be submitted to California Agricultural Listening Session

May 29, 2008

Sacramento, CA

- **What is your vision for California agriculture by 2030?**

By 2030, California's agricultural system will continue to provide the diverse and high-quality food and fiber products that it does today, but it will do so with greater respect for human health and the environment. We, at Pesticide Action Network and statewide coalition, Californians for Pesticide Reform, envision a system that is increasingly biodiverse and highly resilient to impending environmental crises. The recently completed UN-sponsored International Assessment on Agricultural Science, Technology and Development, endorsed by over 60 governments and hundreds of civil society groups, calls for an end to agricultural "business as usual." California's energy-intensive and chemical-intensive agriculture is responsible for many crises in human and environmental health as well as social and economic decay in rural communities throughout the state. It is time for California to take the lead in pioneering innovative solutions to these problems, and in ensuring health and agricultural sustainability for years to come.

We see CDFA leading this charge with substantial emphasis in ecological pest management (EPM) programs. CA and its UC system had been a leader in biological control. Let's rebuild that leadership in pest management and environmental stewardship. Invasive species, for example, have and will continue to present serious challenges to maintaining sustainable agro-ecological systems. Adequate state resources must be provided to agencies and universities to support research, development and implementation of ecological pest management, including biological control methods that rely primarily on native or already established exotic natural enemies. At a time when most of these resources are being heavily funneled into the dead ends of biotechnology, we call for CDFA to look beyond industrial quick fixes and invest in ecologically robust and socially secure agricultural communities.

This can be achieved by:

- Eliminating reliance on petroleum-based, synthetic pesticides. These chemicals, including organophosphates and fumigants, upset natural biological controls, place workers and communities at risk, and do not provide long-term solutions to any pest problem.
- Providing farmers with support for transitioning to organic or ecological pest management systems. The state can play a major role in providing economic incentives and technological support to farmers wishing to transition to more sustainable practices.
- Increasing small-farmer viability. Small farmers, when supported with access to and control over resources, hold a special power to provide food security to their local communities. Based on local knowledge and empowerment, these farmers will be the key to creating a net of agricultural sustainability and security far into the future.
- Promoting equity within agricultural systems, with an emphasis on safety, health and treatment of farmworkers. This includes adequate protections for workers and protections from exposure to pesticide drift for all communities.
- To the extent possible, instating fair local, regional and global trade policies that favor small farmers and communities over multi-national corporations.
- Adopting new governance mechanisms that are open, transparent and accommodate democratic participation in decision-making.

We appreciate the invitation to share our vision for a sustainable and secure agricultural future in California with CDFA and stakeholders. However, we wish to emphasize that the changes that we call for are long overdue, and the extended timelines characteristic of stakeholder processes will not bring relief quickly enough. We urge CDFA to craft a vision that incorporates these fundamentals of an environmentally and socially secure agricultural future for California, and then implement it, to the full extent of your power, as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Dr. Margaret Reeves, Senior Scientist

Pesticide Action Network

David Chatfield, Executive Director

Californians for Pesticide Reform