



July 18, 2008

Al Montna, President
California State Board of Food and Agriculture
AgVision@cdfa.ca.gov

RE: Vision for California Agriculture in 2030

Dear Mr. Montna:

The Association represents 150 vegetable and strawberry growers with farming locations along California's central coast. We believe agriculture will undergo substantial changes by the year 2030. The following issues have been identified with suggestions as to how California Department of Food and Agriculture could respond.

- Association members have experienced conflicts between **federal and state endangered species laws** and the application of such laws to curtail normal agricultural activities. We believe this unfortunate situation will increase. CDFA needs to advocate for agriculture with resource agencies and support amendments to endangered species laws exempting normal agricultural activities. Information explaining the environmental benefits of agriculture needs to be developed and made available to environmental policy makers.
- The Association believes the incremental effect of **new legislation and regulatory mandates** will continue to undermine the economic conditions of California farmers and ranchers. CDFA needs to establish a legislative analyst that would review proposed legislation and quantify the economic impact on California agriculture.
- We anticipate in the year 2030 California agriculture will be using the **H2-A Program** to obtain the majority of the labor force. That program can only be used if employers supply housing for those workers. CDFA needs to create a farm worker-housing specialist who can work with other agencies to remove regulatory and permitting obstacles and provide assistance to farmers attempting to provide such housing.
- We anticipate **agricultural lands will continue to be threatened by urban development**. CDFA needs to support Agricultural Commissioners who become involved in the local land use planning process. The outstanding agricultural land use program in San Luis Obispo County is a program that should be supported and expanded to other areas.

- The Association believes competition and demand for **irrigation water** will greatly increase by the year 2030. CDFA should develop a water resource position to explain agriculture's water requirements and the success of conservation efforts. Expanding water diversions and new conveyance systems will need to be supported. Water rights of overlying landowners need to be protected.
- California's specialty crops will continue to be hand-harvested. We believe **immigration reform efforts** will eventually include an electronic verification process to determine a worker's eligibility to work. CDFA needs to recognize the impact that will have on production agriculture and become involved with the California Congressional delegation emphasizing the need for a guest worker program.
- The Association believes that the labor supply will be constricted by 2030 and some production and harvesting activities will need to be **mechanized**. CDFA should anticipate this and support research and technology to develop harvest aids that reduce the amount of hand labor required to produce specialty crops for which California is noted.
- The Association anticipates **food borne illnesses** will increase. A single incident can undermine an entire commodity and many innocent growers are economically impacted. It will become critical that an effective trace back process be implemented so that contaminated food can be quickly located and isolated from the channels of commerce. CDFA can assist producers in achieving this end. CDFA should support efforts to eliminate microbial contamination at the processing step for packaged food items.
- The Association believes that by 2030 consumers will recognize the benefits of a domestic food source. CDFA should support "**country of origin**" labeling and continue to strongly promote the benefits of California agriculture as well as emphasizing the strategic dangers of relying on foreign countries for our food source. Toward that end, California's labor, environmental, food safety, and quality standards need to be explained to the public.
- CDFA should continue to support subvention funding for the **Williamson Act**, which the Association believes, is California's single most effective agricultural land preservation program. Funding for agricultural easements that divert development from rural to urban areas should also be supported.
- We believe farmers need to improve their **marketing practices** so that producers capture a greater amount of the sales proceeds. CDFA should support the use of Agricultural Co-Operatives by producers to negotiate on an equal scale with consolidated retailers.
- The Association fears that California's crops will be threatened by **exotic pests**. CDFA will need to expand its pest eradication efforts and develop new pest control methods for urban areas that don't involve aerial application of chemicals. The impact on crops and the

possibility of other jurisdictions placing quarantines on the introduction of food crops from infected areas need to be explained to the public.

- The Association is concerned with the **loss of agricultural chemicals** and the lack of newer replacement products for minor crops. The complexity and cost of achieving registration of these newer chemicals for California's specialty crops needs to be overcome.
- By the year 2030, we anticipate advances in **biotechnology** and the development of genetically modified crops. We think CDFA can plan a role educating the public about the benefits of this powerful new technology and the opportunities to conserve rural resources and improve nutrition and food quality.
- Association members farm in close quarters next to large population centers. Public policy is being decided by those urban people who are divorced from agriculture. The state will continue to be dominated by urban interests and will be governed from an urban viewpoint. It becomes very important that these future policy-makers have some knowledge about agriculture and how our food is produced. It should be a high priority for CDFA to **educate the public about agriculture** and its production practices. This can most effectively start with school-age children. It's no longer enough to teach, "Old MacDonald." Children need to learn what makes MacDonald's farm work.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our vision of the challenges that California agriculture will face in 2030. I hope this assists your efforts in planning for that future.

Sincerely,

Richard S. Quandt
President