



Craig McNamara  
Board President  
Owner, Sierra Orchards

June 29, 2012

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Nuffer, Smith, Tucker,  
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The Honorable Karen Ross  
California Department of Food and Agriculture  
1220 N Street, Suite 400  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretary Ross:

On behalf of the California State Board of Food and Agriculture, we would like to express our concern over the immediate labor challenges facing California farmers in regards to a reliable and adequate labor force.

During our regular June 5<sup>th</sup> meeting information was shared by several board members and farmers concerning labor shortages here in California ranging from 25 to 40 percent in variety of commodities. These shortages are occurring in production areas throughout the state and are very troublesome as we enter peak harvest season. As a result, these shortages will impact our food supply and food access for a variety of consumers.

What is unprecedented about these labor shortages is that with our nation's current economic situation, overall unemployment levels are up – yet jobs within the agricultural sector are going unfilled.

U.S. immigration policy is the obvious barrier and we recognize the limits of state action concerning a federal policy issue. However, California cannot continue to be silent on the need for agricultural workers. As the largest agricultural state in the nation and with a farm sector that is critical to California's overall economy – we need to bring focus on this situation and take actions that are available on the state level. We further believe that the current focus on agricultural I-9 audits is going in the wrong direction, risks a collapse of California agriculture and is in need of immediate redirection.

As the California State Board of Food and Agriculture we encourage you to:

- Advocate for a national solution to the agricultural labor shortage problem through regional and national organizations, such as the Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture (WASDA) and the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA). These organizations provide California a strong platform to actively contribute to and inform ongoing discussion.



- Collaborate with the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency and agricultural stakeholders (California Farm Bureau Federation, Western Growers, Nisei Farmers League, et.al) to determine immediate short-term actions that can assist farmers in meeting labor demands.

We believe these steps, while not a solution to the immigration challenge – will help further the national discussion and in the short term determine in-state action to address the critical agricultural labor shortages we are experiencing.

We support strong and sensible enforcement of our immigration laws. However, the labor challenges facing our agricultural sector are severe and we want you and the Governor to be aware of this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Craig McNamara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Craig McNamara  
President

cc: The Honorable Jerry Brown  
Secretary Marty Morgenstern, California Labor & Workforce Development Agency