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Owner, Sierra Orchards

April 22, 2015

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Rodney Taylor, Director,
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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:

One of the priorities of the California State Board of Food and Agriculture is to improve access to safe, healthy food for all Californians. This is an effort that all of us share and must continue so we can enhance the availability of California's diverse agricultural bounty to those individuals and communities in need.

In California, almost 6 million individuals experience food insecurity on an annual basis. Over the last 2-3 years significant strides have been made to help counter this shocking statistic. Local communities have worked successfully to increase participation within the CalFresh program, local farmers' markets have flourished throughout the state, and there has been an increase in farm donations to food banks – a Board initiated effort – to more than 140 million pounds annually. Many additional efforts are also underway in communities throughout the state, but additional steps can still be taken.

In 2011, legislation was enacted that provided a tax credit on fresh fruit and vegetable donations by farmers to California food banks. An expansion of this tax credit that also enhances product eligibility (animal proteins, canned/frozen/dried foods, et.al) would further help to reduce food insecurity within the state. The Board encourages the Administration's support of such efforts.

The more we can do to address food insecurity in California communities the more we can contribute to the overall health of our citizens. In continuing our shared effort on this issue, individual board members will be meeting with agricultural marketing orders, agreements, councils and commissions to encourage grower participation in the Farm to Family Program, the farm donation program facilitated by California Association of Food Banks.

Thank you for your ongoing leadership and commitment to this issue.

Sincerely,

Craig McNamara
President

