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Organic Food Co-Op

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Joseph Gallo Farms

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Partner, Meyers/Oxford
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Chairman and CEO,
Driscoll Strawberry
Associates, Inc.

Kerry Tucker, CEO
Nuffer, Smith, Tucker,
Inc.

August 10, 2012

The Honorable Jerry Brown
c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown:

On behalf of the California State Board of Food and Agriculture, attached please find a summary of findings related to our recent board meeting on agricultural land preservation.

In accordance with our statutory authority to, "confer and advise with the Governor and Secretary," (Food & Agricultural Code 951) on agricultural and consumer issues we offer the following information related to agricultural land loss and conservation.

Sincerely,

Craig McNamara
President

cc: The Honorable Karen Ross



Findings Concerning Agricultural Land Preservation and Conservation

The California State Board of Food and Agriculture has made the following findings associated with agricultural land preservation and conservation related to statewide farmland loss. These findings are a result of testimony, presentations, and discussion that occurred at the July 10, 2012 meeting of the board.

- The State of California should adopt a policy of conserving agricultural land and water resources. (California Agricultural Vision: Strategies for Sustainability – Strategy #6)

On average, California loses approximately 55,000 acres of farmland per year. Between 1984 and 2008, more than 1.3 million acres of farm and grazing lands were lost in California. By enacting a statewide policy to conserve agricultural lands, the state can assist with establishing statewide and regional resource conservation goals. A statewide policy on agricultural land conservation will further maintain and support agriculture as an essential part of the state's economy. www.cdfa.ca.gov/agvision

- The Williamson Act (California Land Conservation Act of 1965) is critical to protecting agricultural lands

The Williamson Act protects 16.5 million acres of farmland or approximately 50 percent of farmland within the state. It is the state's largest investment within the agricultural sector and vital to ensuring the long term survival of agricultural land in the state.

- California's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program is a vital resource that provides important data on agricultural land resources and should be maintained.

The California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp) is funded through Williamson Act cancellation fees. With a significant decline in Williamson Act cancellations over the last three years funding constraints will significantly impact the mapping program and the measure of farmland loss within the state.

- Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Programs should expand to include the tracking of solar installations on agricultural land.

To meet California's renewable energy goals and local renewable energy goals by 2020, significant projects (solar, wind, bioenergy, etc.) will need to be developed. Renewable energy development may have significant impacts on agricultural lands as production

acreage, acreage placed in conservation, or fallowed lands may be converted to renewable energy development (i.e. solar). Protecting agricultural lands and meeting renewable energy goals is not a conflicting proposition – but further data is needed to understand the policy implications. By including the tracking of solar installations on agricultural lands within the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program further data will be available to policy makers.

- The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) should be a member of the California Strategic Growth Council

The California Strategic Growth Council (www.sgc.ca.gov) is cabinet level committee tasked with coordinating activities of state agencies related to air and water quality, natural resources and agricultural lands, public health, sustainable communities, et al. The CDFA can be a strong contributor to this committee with its expertise and oversight on farming, direct marketing, and protection of agricultural and public lands from invasive species. It is our recommendation that CDFA become a member of the California Strategic Growth Council to help fulfill the council's identified objectives.

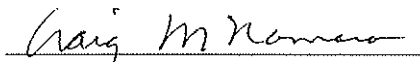
- Local government land use decisions should have appropriate local level jurisdiction oversight.

Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCo) are an important entity for preserving agricultural land resources within local communities through appropriate regulatory oversight mechanisms. To further agricultural land preservation, LAFCOs should provide similar regulatory oversight for County land use development.

- The Sacramento Area Council of Governments' Rural Urban Connection Strategy serves as a model for economic and environmental sustainability strategies for rural areas.

The Rural-Urban Connections Strategy (www.sacog.org/rucs) considers growth and sustainability objectives from a rural perspective and integrates the importance of agriculture, land use, and conservation into the plan. The unique mapping and analysis tools developed as part of this strategy combines crop mapping and forecasting to better understand development scenarios based on cropland production and the availability of locally grown food. This strategy, along with the developed modeling tools, can serve as a template for local level planning.

APPROVED:



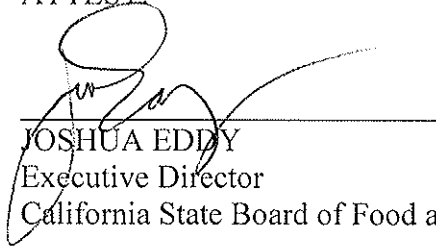
CRAIG/MCNAMARA

President

California State Board of Food and Agriculture

DATE: August 7, 2012

ATTEST:



JOSHUA EDDY

Executive Director

California State Board of Food and Agriculture