

February 13, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
235 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Joe Baca
United States House of Representatives
1527 Longworth House Off. Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Dennis Cardoza
United States House of Representatives
435 Cannon Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Act Quickly to Pass a Healthy and Fair Food and Farm Bill that Increases Access to Healthy Food and Strengthens Local Food Systems

Dear Representative,

We the undersigned organizations representing diverse nutrition, agriculture and community interests in California, urge you to act quickly to pass a Farm Bill that includes provisions that will restore fairness to America's food and farm policy; improve access to healthy, affordable foods in low-income and underserved communities; and expand market opportunities for California's small and mid-sized farms.

The 2008 Farm Bill is an historic opportunity to link the needs of underserved communities, or "food-deserts", with California's struggling small and mid-sized specialty-crop growers. The House and Senate bills contain multiple provisions (detailed below) that promote links between rural producers and underserved urban communities. Collectively these programs support a systemic approach to improving community health and strengthening local food systems that also create jobs and increase economic security in rural and urban communities.

As we create new opportunities to improve community health and local food systems, we must also reform commodity programs that exacerbate America's health problems by flooding our communities with an abundance of "cheap" highly processed, calorie dense and nutritionally deficient foods. Left as they are, these programs will continue to drive family farm loss by pushing up land values and consolidating market power towards the largest growers. Without a meaningful cap on these payments and closed loopholes, they will also continue to compromise the food sovereignty of other nations, resulting in poverty and hunger worldwide.

In the interest of food insecure communities and the farmers who are poised to serve them **we strongly urge you to champion the inclusion of the following provisions in the Farm Bill:**

- **Meaningful commodity program revisions that begin a process of reform.** The administration veto threat opens an opportunity to negotiate a “more reform-minded Farm Bill”, as Speaker Pelosi called for in the Des Moines Register last November. Californians consistently express overwhelming support for meaningful commodity program reform. We strongly urge you to join with Senators Boxer and Feinstein who supported reform in the Senate Farm Bill, and work to make commodity reform the greatest food justice victory of this next Farm Bill.
- **Mandatory funding for Community Food Projects Grants program at \$10 million annually, as provided in the Senate bill [Sec. 4801].** This highly successful program has financed 32 local initiatives in California, and 240 nationwide, that increase access to healthy, local foods in communities with high incidences of nutrition-related diseases and food insecurity, while also providing new markets for small farmers. Despite widespread support among members, the House bill failed to provide mandatory funding. With the funding for this program in jeopardy USDA has suspended grants under this program, leaving dozens of eligible California applicants, including San Francisco’s Alemany Farm, on hold.
- **Expand the use of USDA Rural Development Business and Industries Loan and Loan Guarantee Program to support enterprises that increase access to local food in underserved communities [Senate bill Sec. 6017].** The House and Senate bills both add a no-cost provision that allows this existing USDA program to finance enterprises that market local agricultural products into nearby urban and underserved communities. The final farm bill must include language that allows funds to be used in urban areas when doing so would directly benefit rural producers. Such enterprises could include urban-based distribution or processing centers that would give rural producers increased access to urban markets, while creating jobs in urban areas that support the local food system.
- **Creation of a Healthy Food Enterprise Development Center with mandatory funding [Senate bill Sec. 1843].** The Center would be established through USDA to provide technical assistance and planning grants to support the development or improvement of enterprises for processing and marketing locally produced agricultural products in underserved communities. Language from the House bill should be included that includes socially disadvantaged producers in the list of eligible entities.
- **Mandatory annual funding for the Outreach for Minority Farmers and Ranchers program at \$15 million [House bill Sec.11201].** This is a critical program for ensuring that minority and limited resource farmers have equal access to USDA programs. Similarly, **the final bill must include Senate**

language that requires states to consider the needs of socially disadvantaged producers when allocating Specialty Crop Block Grants. USDA estimates that at least 12% of specialty crop producers in the U.S. would be classified as socially disadvantaged. The unique marketing and research needs of these producers must be fairly considered in the allocation of state block grants.

- **Adopt the strongest Food Stamp Program improvements in the House and Senate bills, including House Farm Bill language that allows Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE) to support public health approaches.** Investments in the Senate version of the nutrition title will increase food stamp eligibility among working poor families and the improvements in the House version will strengthen the buying power of food stamp recipients to purchase healthier foods and allow FSNE to promote improvements to environments where food choices are made.

Together, these provisions will increase availability of locally grown and healthier foods in underserved communities plagued by high levels of nutrition-related disease, while preserving our nation's farmland by creating profitable, nearby markets for small- and mid-sized farmers and ranchers. We would greatly appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

The California Food and Justice Coalition
Contact: Heather Fenney 310-591-4017

Additional Signatories

Organizations by City – 72 total

Alameda Point Collaborative/Growing Youth Project, *Alameda*
American Farmland Trust, *Sutter*
Oil Independent Berkeley, *Berkeley*
New Harvest Consulting, *Berkeley*
Ecology Center, *Berkeley*
Berkeley Media Studies Group, *Berkeley*
Goldman Associates, *Berkeley*
Anew America, *Berkeley*
Center for Nutrition and Activity Promotion at California State University, Chico *Chico*
California Institute for Rural Studies, *Davis*
Collective Roots, *East Palo Alto*
Community Alliance with Family Farmers-Humboldt Chapter, *Eureka*
Classic Organic, *Gaviota*
Center for Urban Agriculture at Fairview Gardens, *Goleta*
Sustainable Economic Enterprises of LA, *Hollywood*

Green Fire Farm, *Hoopa*
Dietitian of the Desert, *Joshua Tree*
The Lunch Box, *Long Beach*
Hunger Action Los Angeles, *Los Angeles*
Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, *Los Angeles*
Volunteers of East Los Angeles, *Los Angeles*
Center for Food & Justice, *Los Angeles*
Progressive Christians Uniting, *Los Angeles*
Blacksmith Records, Inc, *Los Angeles*
Beverly Vermont Community Land Trust, *Los Angeles*
MCCAA WIC Program, *Merced*
Oakland Institute, *Oakland*
Bay Localize, *Oakland*
Prevention Institute, *Oakland*
Public Health Law & Policy, *Oakland*
Environmental Working Group, *Oakland*
Farms to Grow, Inc, *Oakland*
Genetic Engineering Policy Project, *Occidental*
Food For Thought Ojai, *Ojai*

Walk Your Talk Productions, *Ojai*
FOOD Share, Inc, *Oxnard*
Native Foods Inc, *Palm Springs*
Valley of Heart's Delight, a project of
Conexions, *Palo Alto*
Collective Roots, *Palo Alto*
Bread for the World, *Pasadena*
Tierra Miguel Foundation, *Pauma Valley*
Pie Ranch, *Pescadero*
Page's Organics, *Ramona*
California Church IMPACT, *Sacramento*
California Black Farmers and Agriculturalists
Association, *Sacramento*
Pesticide Watch, *Sacramento*
California Association of Nutrition & Activity
Programs, *Sacramento*
Soil Born Farm Urban Agriculture Project,
Sacramento
Center for Civic Partnerships, *Sacramento*
Office of Social Concerns - Diocese of San
Bernardino, *San Bernardino*
Jimbo's...Naturally!, *San Diego*
Community Farms and Gardens, *San Diego*
Veritable Vegetable, Inc, *San Francisco*

Individuals By City – 86 total

Jessica Greaves, *Alameda*
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Erica Etelson, *Berkeley*
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James Hosley, *Berkeley*
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Asta Schuette, *Berkeley*
Lenore Goldman, *Berkeley*
Cindy Crawford, *Chino Hills*
Kelli Gray Meisner RD, *Chula Vista*
Julia Schreiber, *Davis*
Tree Kilpatrick, *Davis*
Leah Smith, *Fairfax*
Judith Kahle, *Fairfield*
Lilli Wells, MS RD, *Huntington Beach*
Petra Cruser, *Little River*
Susan Wiggins, *Long Beach*
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Katy Atkiss, *Los Angeles*
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Marta Teegen, *Los Angeles*
Charlene Orszag, *Los Osos*

Food From the Parks, *San Francisco*
Let's Be Frank, *San Francisco*
Alemany Farm Collective, *San Francisco*
Hayes Valley Neighborhood PARKS Group,
San Francisco
Roots of Change, *San Francisco*
Nature Works, *San Francisco*
Mission Pie, *San Francisco*
Pesticide Action Network North America, *San
Francisco*
Urban Tilth, *San Pablo*
Marin Farmers Markets, *San Rafael*
California Student Sustainability Coalition,
Santa Cruz
Organic Farming Research Foundation, *Santa
Cruz*
Santa Monica Farmers Market, *Santa Monica*
St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church, *San
Francisco*
Edge Land Farm, *Sebastopol*
Green Man Organics, *Soquel*
Eat Outside the Box, *Walnut Creek*
Health Education Council, *West Sacramento*
Oxfam America

Susan Payne, *Meadow Valley*
Jennifer Miller, *Mill Valley*
Shirley Ingalls, *Mountain View*
John Berchielli *North Highlands*
Nancy Hughes, *Novato*
Naina Khanna, *Oakland*
Max Cadji, *Oakland*
Chia Hamilton, *Oakland*
Katie Myszka, *Oakland*
Kim Baranek, *Oakland*
Gail Weller Brown, *Oxnard*
Emily Ventura, *Pasadena*
Elizabeth Powell, *Quincy*
Rob Lang, *Rancho Cordova*
Doria Robinson, *Richmond*
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Amy Van Scoik, *Santa Cruz*
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Todd Sinderbrand, *Santa Monica*
Kim Ryals, *Sonoma*
Cheryl Greene, *Stanford*
Veronica Raymond, *Temple City*
Tricia Keen, *Ventura*
Marilyn Godfrey, *Ventura*
Rachel Rott, *Vista*
Patricia Rotunno, *Whittier*