

# California Agricultural Vision: From Strategies to Results



**Progress Report**  
Spring 2012





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## **Greetings From the California Secretary of Food and Agriculture**

As I travel throughout the state of California, I am heartened by many community activities that have been informed and inspired by Ag Vision. The inclusive process of bringing together farmers, ranchers, environmentalists, public health, food access non-profit organizations and government representatives resulted in twelve strategies in the 2010 report that are challenging for us to meet. I am confident we will meet the challenge because Ag Vision is more than just a set of policy recommendations. It is a platform for thoughtful engagement of diverse stakeholder views about our food and agriculture system; and, it is a call for leadership by all those concerned about the future of California agriculture and its continued critical role in our state.

Renewed interest in agriculture has helped us identify numerous opportunities to re-connect farmers and ranchers with their consumers. There is growing recognition that the working landscapes of California's farmers and ranchers have much to offer beyond the production of food and fiber to include benefits for our environment, health systems, and energy sectors. We need to capture this opportunity and move forward initiatives that will implement the goals of Ag Vision while providing an innovative future for farmers and consumers alike.

From local Farm Bureaus to regional food policy collaboratives and general plan work groups, agricultural policy is being discussed, debated and implemented all over the state. The strategies of Ag Vision are a guide to help enhance the discussions and encourage action by individuals to find the common path to achieve our shared goals for the future of California agriculture.

I am pleased with the progress we have made working together thus far and look forward to many more accomplishments in the future. Most importantly I encourage you to join this process and be a part of the conversation. Ag Vision does not belong to a single person or entity – it is for *all* Californians.

Over the course of this year, I look forward to working with you to achieve more public engagement, stakeholder participation and measurable progress on making Ag Vision a reality. California's farmers, ranchers, and consumers deserve no less.

Karen Ross  
Secretary  
California Department of Food and Agriculture

## **From the President of the State Board of Food and Agriculture**

California agriculture is strong today because of growing demand for food – the world’s population just reached 7 billion – and the skill and hard work of our farmers, ranchers and farmworkers. But if it is to remain strong in the coming decades, it must successfully adapt to the changing environment in which it operates; an environment defined by the challenges identified by California Agricultural Vision.

When the State Board of Food & Agriculture outlined a vision for the future of California agriculture, it recognized that agriculture had to seize the initiative and that it could not succeed on its own. Whether it is dealing with government regulation, water and labor shortages, invasive species or the constant creep of urbanization on farmland, California agriculture must unite its own diverse sectors and join with others who have a stake in our food system. It must rethink its response to the challenges it faces and come up with new solutions that enjoy the kind of broad public consensus that will make their implementation easier than it seems to be these days.

I am happy to report that significant progress is being made in this direction. This report highlights some of the efforts being made, both by the current leaders of Ag Vision and by many others within, or concerned about, California agriculture. These initiatives represent positive steps toward the realization of a vision of a California agriculture and food system that is economically prosperous and environmentally sound, and that continues to provide the abundant, affordable healthy food on which California, the nation and the world have come to depend.

Craig McNamara  
Sierra Orchards  
President, California State Board of Food and Agriculture

AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST WISHES TO THANK THE S.D. BECHTEL, JR. FOUNDATION  
AND BANK OF AMERICA FOR THEIR CONTINUING FINANCIAL AND MORAL SUPPORT OF  
CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURAL VISION.

## Introduction

In 2008, the State Board of Food & Agriculture and the California Department of Food & Agriculture began a collaboration to articulate a vision for the future of the state's incomparable agriculture and food system, and to address on a long-term basis the many challenges facing those who produce, process and distribute food in the nation's leading agricultural state. After holding listening sessions attended by more than 500 farmers, ranchers and other citizens, they issued *California Agricultural Vision*, a statement of goals and objectives, and asked American Farmland Trust (AFT), a nonprofit conservation organization, to partner with the Department to organize a process by which to identify effective strategies to meet those goals.

In late 2009, AFT convened a series of workshops that brought together 100 experts and leaders from agriculture and other sectors with an interest in California agriculture and food to propose and debate ideas. Thereafter, it assembled a blue ribbon advisory committee,<sup>1</sup> composed of a smaller group of leaders from agriculture and other stakeholder interests, to review the recommendations that emerged from the workshops and to propose a concise set of action proposals. These were published in a report, *California Agricultural Vision: Strategies for Sustainability*, in December 2010.<sup>2</sup>

*Strategies for Sustainability* addresses twelve major challenges that California agriculture must meet to retain its economic vitality and leadership in producing health food in ways that are good for the environment. Importantly, it recognizes that, as resourceful and resilient as California farmers and ranchers are, they cannot succeed in meeting these challenges on their own in a state whose population is overwhelmingly urban; that it will take cooperation and collaboration among the many interests, within and beyond agriculture, that have a stake in the production, availability and quality of our food.

### **The Spirit of Ag Vision**

It is that spirit of cooperation that animates Ag Vision and those who are now involved in translating the vision and strategies into results. None of the challenges facing California agriculture – from water and government regulations to invasive species and climate change – are without controversy or susceptible of easy solutions. Factions that have different viewpoints may be able to block proposals by each other. But it is by approaching the challenges as “honest brokers” rather than as die-hard advocates that we have the best chance of making real, affirmative progress.

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<sup>1</sup> The Advisory Committee roster can be found on page 5.

<sup>2</sup> Read and download the report at <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/agvision/>

## Intent of This Report

The actions outlined in *Strategies for Sustainability* were not intended to be a panacea for the challenges facing California agriculture. From the outset, it was recognized that many people and institutions are already trying to address these same challenges. So, while the Ag Vision Advisory Committee formed leadership teams that have begun to pursue the action items it considered as the highest priorities, other initiatives have also contributed to the progress being made toward the Ag Vision articulated by CDFA and the State Board. This report summarizes the progress made by the leadership teams – almost always in cooperation with others – and attempts to capture other outstanding ventures that are moving California agriculture toward a bright and sustainable future.

This report, produced by American Farmland Trust as part of its continuing commitment to the success of Ag Vision, is organized into twelve sections corresponding to the initiatives outlined in *Strategies for Sustainability*. For each of the initiatives, the Vision is that articulated by CDFA and the State Board and the objectives are those defined by the Advisory Committee. Each challenge is explained more fully in the original report and in white papers prepared by the Agriculture & Natural Resources Division of the University of California, both of which can be downloaded from the Ag Vision page on the CDFA web site ([www.cdfa.ca.gov](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov)). The list of items representing progress toward the vision and objectives is not intended to be exclusive and we invite you to contribute other items by contacting American Farmland Trust's California office.

### Ag Vision Advisory Committee

Ralph Grossi, Marindale Ranch & American Farmland Trust (Co-Chair)  
Luawanna Hallstrom, Collaborative Communications & State Board (Co-Chair)  
Barry Bedwell, California Grape & Tree Fruit League  
Ashley Boren, Sustainable Conservation & State Board  
Michael Dimock, Roots of Change  
Cornelius Gallagher, Bank of America  
Billy Gatlin, California Cattlemen's Association  
Eric Holst, Environmental Defense Fund  
Tim Johnson, California Rice Commission  
Paul Martin, Western United Dairywomen  
Richard Matteis, California Farm Bureau Federation  
Craig McNamara, Sierra Orchards, President, State Board of Food & Agriculture  
Al Montna, Montna Farms  
Paul Muller, Full Belly Farm  
Tom Nassif, Western Growers Association  
Dave Puglia, Western Growers Association  
Emily Rooney, Agriculture Council of California  
Karen Ross, Secretary of Food & Agriculture (Ex-Officio)  
Sue Sigler, California Association of Food Banks  
Paul Wenger, California Farm Bureau Federation  
Chris Zanobini, California Pear Advisory Board  
Edward Thompson, Jr., American Farmland Trust (Staff)

## Progress Toward the Vision

### 1 Access to Healthy Food

#### *Team Leaders*

Sue Sigler, California Association of Food Banks  
Kerry Tucker, State Board of Food & Agriculture and Nuffer, Smith & Tucker, Inc.

#### *Vision*

All Californians have access to healthy food, understand the importance of meeting the U.S. dietary guidelines and have fundamental knowledge about how food is grown and prepared for the table.

Consumers have a California food supply at the highest possible level of safety using best management practices that protect California's unique natural resources.

#### *Challenge*

One out of eight Californian's does not have enough food to eat and many more do not have healthy diets. Only half of the four million Californians eligible for CalFresh, the federal food stamp program, now take advantage of their increased buying power. As a result, the state forfeits \$3.7 billion a year in federal payments, much of which could eventually make its way into the pockets of growers.

#### *Goals*

Eliminate fingerprinting as a condition of eligibility for feeding help programs.

Increase producer donations to the state's food banks.

#### *Progress*

- The state legislature passed and in September 2011 Governor Brown signed AB 6 to eliminate the requirement that food stamp recipients be fingerprinted. California was one of only four states to utilize the practice, which was known to be a significant barrier to program participation. Eliminating the stigma and inconvenience of finger imaging is predicted to increase program participation by at least 7 percent.

[http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab\\_0001-0050/ab\\_6\\_bill\\_20111006\\_chaptered.pdf](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab_0001-0050/ab_6_bill_20111006_chaptered.pdf)

- The state legislature also passed and Governor Brown signed AB 152, creating a 10 percent tax credit for donations of fresh fruits and vegetables to California food banks.

[http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab\\_0151-0200/ab\\_152\\_bill\\_20111006\\_chaptered.pdf](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab_0151-0200/ab_152_bill_20111006_chaptered.pdf)

- In November 2011, Secretary of Food and Agriculture Karen Ross partnered with the California Association of Food Banks to promote December as the first annual “Farm to Food Bank Month.”

<http://plantingseedsblog.cdfa.ca.gov/wordpress/?p=833>

- The State Board of Food & Agriculture set a goal of doubling the amount of farm products donated to the state’s food banks within five years, from 100 million to 200 million pounds. The Board devoted its July 2011 meeting to the topic of food access, and each Board member has provided information and contacts to reach out to individual growers and agricultural associations. In 2011, California food banks received 120 million pounds, up 20 million over the base year.

<http://farmprogress.com/california-farmer/customPage.aspx?p=45>

- In June 2011 Secretary of Food & Agriculture Karen Ross and Secretary of Health & Human Services Diana Dooley jointly convened a summit meeting to examine the challenges and opportunities of California’s feeding programs.
- In June 2011, the Health in All Policies Task Force held a series of public workshops throughout the state to hear opinions about which of its recommendations should be high priorities. Among the December 2010 recommendations that participants ranked highly were expanding farm-to-fork programs that promote fresh fruit and vegetables and using state-administered food assistance programs to increase consumption of healthy foods.

[http://sgc.ca.gov/hiap/docs/input/2011\\_Public\\_Workshop\\_Summary.pdf](http://sgc.ca.gov/hiap/docs/input/2011_Public_Workshop_Summary.pdf)

[http://sgc.ca.gov/hiap/docs/publications/HiAP\\_Task\\_Force\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://sgc.ca.gov/hiap/docs/publications/HiAP_Task_Force_Executive_Summary.pdf)

## 2 Regulatory Balance

### *Team Leaders*

Dave Puglia, Western Growers Association

Tim Johnson, California Rice Commission

Ashley Boren, State Board of Food & Agriculture and Sustainable Conservation

### *Vision*

An updated regulatory system recognizes and fosters ecosystem services provided by working farms and ranches and encourages the sustainability of our food supply.

### *Challenge*

The global competitiveness of California farms and ranches is at risk because of the increasing burden of regulation, which is estimated to cost the state's producers more than \$2 billion a year. Regulations aimed at protect health, the environment and agricultural workers are often duplicative, inflexible, uncoordinated and inconsistently administered. It is critical that we improve regulations and their application in ways that balance the economic viability of agriculture with achievement of the public benefits regulations were intended to secure.

### *Objectives*

Reduce regulatory conflict, duplication, inflexibility and cost to producers, both in dollars and time.

Promote cost-effective innovation in achieving the objectives of regulations.

Assure greater accountability of regulators for fair and even treatment of the regulated as well as to the public.

No reduction in environmental quality, labor standards or other public benefits of existing regulations, with the hope of increasing these benefits by making it easier for agricultural producers to comply with applicable regulations.

### *Progress*

- The California Roundtable on Agriculture & the Environment (CRAE) reached consensus on a set of recommendations to facilitate the permitting processes for on-farm environmental restoration projects. These recommendations are spelled out in the CRAE report, *Permitting Restoration: Helping Agricultural Land Stewards Succeed in Meeting California Regulatory Requirements for Environmental Restoration Projects*. If adopted, these proposals would increase opportunities to

provide enhanced wildlife habitat, air and water quality, soil health, and other public benefits.

[http://aginnovations.org/images/uploads/Permitting\\_Restoration.pdf](http://aginnovations.org/images/uploads/Permitting_Restoration.pdf)

- A federal-state interagency task force convened by the California Department of Food & Agriculture, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Agriculture is actively working to consolidate permitting requirements for methane digesters on dairy farms. These facilities convert what would otherwise be greenhouse gases from livestock manure into renewable energy to power farms and export to the electric grid. In addition to addressing dairy digesters, CDFA and others hope that this effort will serve as a model to address other situations where regulations conflict with one another and impede progress.

<http://www.calepa.ca.gov/Digester/Documents/GuideDigester.pdf>

- Sustainable Conservation recommended removing regulatory barriers to restoration of habitat and erosion control projects to improve water quality and the health of fish and wildlife populations. If implemented, its ambitious proposal would result in statewide programmatic permits for landowners and their partners to undertake small-scale riparian restoration projects.

<http://suscon.org/pir/pirreport/PIRreport.php>

### 3 Adequate Water Supply

#### *Team Leaders*

Rich Matteis, California Farm Bureau Federation  
Dave Puglia, Western Growers Association

#### *Vision*

A reliable water supply and conveyance system assures adequate quality and quantity of water to meet the needs of California and to sustain agriculture's prominence as a global food producer.

#### *Challenge*

Water is the lifeblood of agriculture in a semi-arid state like California. But an adequate supply is far from assured because of competition from urban users and the responsibility of agriculture to do its part to satisfy environmental needs. California farmers have greatly increased water use efficiency, producing almost twice as much food as they did four decades ago with only ten percent more water. Nonetheless, as California agriculture

is called upon to feed more and more people around the world, increasing urban demands and climate change will put additional pressure on its water supply.

### ***Objectives***

Assure an adequate supply of affordable water of acceptable quality to meet agriculture's future needs while accommodating reasonable urban needs and improving environmental quality.

### ***Progress***

- In February 2011, the State Board of Food & Agriculture produced a white paper on agricultural water conservation and efficiency calling for an “optimal” use policy.

[http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/state\\_board/pdfs/LettertoSecretaryRoss\\_March2011.pdf](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/state_board/pdfs/LettertoSecretaryRoss_March2011.pdf)

- The State Board held a hearing on agricultural water in October 2011 and invited the California Natural Resources Agency, the State Water Resources Control Board and the California Department of Water Resources to join in discussions of a “new system for water management that would involve an efficient movement of water through a variety of exchanges, market transfers, and decentralized banking arrangements resulting in greater use of existing storage capacity throughout California.”

[http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/state\\_board/pdfs/CA\\_State\\_Board\\_of\\_Food\\_and%20Ag-Water\\_Transfers\\_November-2011.pdf](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/state_board/pdfs/CA_State_Board_of_Food_and%20Ag-Water_Transfers_November-2011.pdf)

- The California Roundtable on Water & Food Supply issued report on Agricultural Water Stewardship (July 2011) that outlines a new approach to water management focusing, not on reducing consumption, but on optimizing uses to achieve agricultural as well as urban and environmental outcomes.

[http://aginnovations.org/images/uploads/CRWFS\\_Water\\_Stewardship\\_Recs\\_electronic.pdf](http://aginnovations.org/images/uploads/CRWFS_Water_Stewardship_Recs_electronic.pdf)

- The Safe, Clean and Reliable Drinking Water Supply Act, an \$11 billion bond measure to finance improvements in California's water system approved by the state Senate and Assembly, will be put to voters on the November 2012 statewide ballot, though there is a chance that it may be postponed and/or reduced in size.

[http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/California\\_Water\\_Bond\\_\(2012\)](http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/California_Water_Bond_(2012))  
<http://www.acwa.com/spotlight/california-water-2012-water-bond>

## 4 Strong Agricultural Workforce

### *Team Leaders*

Luawanna Hallstrom, State board of Food & Agriculture and Collaborative Communications  
Barry Bedwell, California Grape & Tree Fruit League

### *Vision*

Agriculture is a highly desirable green career of choice and will have a stable, well-educated and trained workforce.

### *Challenge*

Because of the prevalence of fruit, vegetable and nut crops, California agriculture relies to a great extent on hand labor. The remoteness of agricultural jobs, the seasonal nature of the work and its physical demands make it difficult to recruit domestic labor, despite competitive wages and high unemployment. An estimated 75 percent of California's agricultural workforce is foreign-born, primarily in Mexico, and about half the workers are believed to be unauthorized under current immigration laws. Reform of those laws is needed to alleviate a shortage of farm labor that is putting stress on the harvest and processing of California's crops, as well as to offer opportunities to those immigrant families who are responsibly seeking greater opportunity in America. In particular, mandating the use of E-Verify in agriculture could force California farmers to let go many of their employees without any realistic chance of replacing them.

### *Objectives*

Secure a sustainable agricultural workforce by decriminalizing agricultural workers and employers, and by providing a better quality of life for workers, employers and the communities they serve.

### *Progress*

- In October 2011, Governor Brown signed the Employment Acceleration Act, AB 1236 (Paul Fong, D-Cupertino), prohibiting state and local governments in California from forcing private employers to use E-Verify, an electronic method of checking the immigration status of workers, except where required by federal law. The E-Verify system has been shown to make a lot of mistakes, unfairly penalizing workers and employers.

[http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab\\_1201-1250/ab\\_1236\\_bill\\_20111009\\_chaptered.pdf](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab_1201-1250/ab_1236_bill_20111009_chaptered.pdf)

- The Agricultural Job Opportunities, Benefits, and Security Act (AgJOBS) is calling new attention to California agriculture's stake in immigration reform. Introduced in

2009 by California Sen. Dianne Feinstein (S. 1038) and Rep. Howard Burman (D-28<sup>th</sup> District, Van Nuys), the bill represents a compromise between farm labor organizations and major agricultural employers. It would create an "earned legalization" program enabling many undocumented farmworkers and H-2A guest workers to earn a "blue card" temporary immigration status with the possibility of becoming permanent residents of the U.S. by continuing to work in agriculture and by meeting additional requirements. Congress remains gridlocked over its passage.

[http://www.fwjjustice.org/files/agjobs/S\\_1038AgJOBSLanguage.doc](http://www.fwjjustice.org/files/agjobs/S_1038AgJOBSLanguage.doc)

- Rep. Dan Lungren (R-3<sup>rd</sup> District, Sacramento) introduced H.R. 2895, the Legal Agricultural Workforce Act, to provide for an agricultural guest worker program.

<http://www.opencongress.org/bill/112-h2895/text>

- Assemblyman V. Manuel Perez (D-80<sup>th</sup> District, Indio) introduced AB 1544, which would create a California Agricultural Jobs and Industry Stabilization Program. If the state receives the necessary authority from the federal government, whose immigration laws are pre-eminent, this bill would authorize a guest worker program under which permits could be issued to allow undocumented aliens to work in the domestic agriculture industry and to allow them and their families to legally reside in the state.

<http://e-lobbyist.com/gaits/text/552196>

## 5 Curtail Invasive Species

### *Team Leaders*

A.G. Kawamura, former Secretary of Food & Agriculture  
Barry Bedwell, California Grape & Tree Fruit League

### *Vision*

Natural and agricultural resources are protected from plant and animal diseases by preventing the entry and establishment of invasive species and diseases.

### *Challenge*

Non-native, invasive species now affect 20 million acres of California agricultural, forest and wild lands, posing a threat to our food supply and ecosystems. As global trade expands, infestations of new invasive species occur every year. The cost of controlling them is increasing and now approaches a half billion dollars annually. Yet the potential cost to the \$38 billion California agriculture industry of failing to control invasive species is much greater. However, funding and other support for invasive species exclusion and control are declining due to budget pressures and diversion of resources to homeland

security. Inadequate public understanding of the benefits and risks of invasive species control sometimes makes it impossible to use the most effective, yet safe methods.

### ***Objectives***

Increased detection, exclusion, control and eradication of invasive species through a comprehensive strategy that emphasizes exclusion as the most cost-effective and publicly supported approach.

Sufficient financial resources for all these approaches, plus research on new low-impact solutions.

Understanding and support from public and environmental organizations for responsible control measures.

### ***Progress***

- The California Department of Food and Agriculture is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a Statewide Plant Pest Prevention and Management Program. The overall goal of this statewide program is to create a vehicle that provides a time-sensitive and efficient framework for evaluating potential environmental impacts of the various pest management activities implemented by CDFA and its partners.

<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/plant/peir/>

- In November 2011, CDFA hosted a first in a series of symposiums focusing on invasive species. The symposium held at California State University, Sacramento, entitled “A New Beginning – 21<sup>st</sup> Century Invasive Pest Management “ was attended by 200 participants.

<http://plantingseedsblog.cdfa.ca.gov/wordpress/?p=839>

- The California Invasive Species Council, comprised of six state cabinet agencies and chaired by CDFA Secretary Karen Ross, adopted “Stopping the Spread,” a new strategic framework for protecting California from invasive species.

<http://www.iscc.ca.gov/cisac-strategic-framework.html>

## 6 Land & Water Conservation

### *Team Leaders*

Dan Dooley, State Board of Food & Agriculture and University of California  
Ralph Grossi, American Farmland Trust

### *Vision*

Agricultural land resources are conserved to maintain California's thriving agricultural economy and healthy ecosystems.

A reliable water supply and conveyance system assures adequate quality and quantity of water to meet the needs of California and to sustain agriculture's prominence as a global food producer.

### *Challenge*

Since 1980, California has lost more than 350,000 acres of agricultural land to urban development. The productivity of hundreds of thousands of additional acres is at risk because of problematic water supplies. Despite this, the state has no definitive goal or policy for conserving its irreplaceable farmland and the water essential to its productivity.

### *Goal*

Adopt a policy of conserving agricultural lands and water resources.

### *Progress*

- Ag Vision recommended that the University of California conduct a thorough assessment of the future need for agricultural land and water resources to establish a factual foundation for state conservation goals and a policy to achieve them. In 2011, under the leadership of Dan Dooley, U.C. vice president for external affairs, and Ralph Grossi, former president of American Farmland Trust, the University has convened a team of leading academic experts who are in the process of determining the scope of such a study. By early 2013, it is expected to result in the development of a model of the California agricultural landscape and economy that will allow the comparison of future scenarios.
- Regional strategies for the conservation and management of agricultural and natural resources are under consideration in both the San Joaquin Valley and the Bay Area. Called "greenprints," they are beginning with a comprehensive inventory and assessment of the resource base and, after an extensive process of input from interested groups, officials and the public, will establish principles and recommend optimal strategies to balance and harmonize competing uses of resources.

[http://agendas.fresnocog.org/itemAttachments/27/ITEM II F Greenprint Strategies.pdf](http://agendas.fresnocog.org/itemAttachments/27/ITEM%20II%20F%20Greenprint%20Strategies.pdf)

- In February 2011, the California Supreme Court let stand a decision by the state Court of Appeal upholding the legality of a Stanislaus County program that requires developers to preserve an acre of farmland for every acre they convert to a non-agricultural use. This kind of agricultural land mitigation program is becoming increasingly popular among local governments.

<http://www.agalert.com/story/?id=1645>  
<http://www.cp-dr.com/node/1665>

- In July 2011, Governor Brown signed AB 1265, a bill that authorizes counties to revise the term for Williamson Act contracts from 10 years to nine years – a 10 percent reduction in the length of contracts under which landowners agree not to develop their property, in return for retaining 90 percent of the property tax relief offered by the act. Since the property tax relief program was adopted in 1965, the state has reimbursed participating counties their foregone property tax revenue. But those payments, known as subventions, became a frequent bargaining point in state budget talks and were eliminated last year. That caused some counties to consider discontinuing the Williamson Act. The new law is intended to encourage counties to maintain the Williamson Act, which helps keep farms and ranches in agriculture.

<http://tribwekchron.com/2011/07/gov-brown-sgns-bill-to-preserve-williamson-act/>

## 7 Environmental Stewardship

### *Team Leaders*

Billy Gatlin, California Cattlemen’s Association  
Eric Holst, Environmental Defense Fund

### *Vision*

Consumers worldwide view California as the supplier of the highest quality and most nutritious food products using the most sustainable practices.

An updated regulatory system recognizes and fosters ecosystem services provided by working farms and ranches and encourages the sustainability of our food supply.

### *Challenge*

California farmers and ranchers have continuously worked to enhance environmental quality and reduce the impact of food production on air, water and living systems. But much progress still needs to be made in harmonizing agriculture with our environment.

Among the things that inhibit further progress are the cost and risk of changing farming practices and insufficient knowledge about which practices are effective at improving environmental quality.

### ***Objectives***

Documentation of existing environmental stewardship efforts by producers and their benefits to all Californians.

Widespread adoption of beneficial management practices that improve farm viability and the agricultural economy as well as the environment.

Adequate public financing of stewardship practices and ecosystem benefits that do not necessarily result in economic returns in the marketplace.

Avoid adoption by supply chain purchasers of multiple, conflicting systems for evaluating environmental performance by agricultural producers.

### ***Progress***

- The Ag Vision leadership team co-chaired by Billy Gatlin, executive director of the California Cattlemen's Association, and Eric Holst, manager of the Center for Conservation Innovations at the Environmental Defense Fund, is conducting research to identify outstanding on-the-farm examples of environmental stewardship with the intention of publishing them as models for other producers. American Farmland Trust has raised funding from the Adams Legacy Foundation to support this effort.
- The Stewardship Index for Specialty Crops (SISC), a multi-stakeholder process involving academics, producer groups, supply chain businesses and environmental and food organizations, has developed a standard set of metrics and procedures for measuring the results of on-farm environmental practices. In cooperation with producers, it is now field-testing them. Once adopted, the metrics will be a voluntary tool for producers and food purchasers.

<http://www.stewardshipindex.org/>

- In August 2011, CDFA Secretary Karen Ross announced appointments to the Environmental Farming Act Science Advisory Panel. The panel is charged with reviewing and documenting agriculture's positive impacts to the environment and will examine issues such as ecosystem services and how they relate to agriculture. CDFA's liaison to the panel is Dr. Amrith Gunasekara.

<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/EnvironmentalStewardship/Cannella.html>

- The California Roundtable on Ag and the Environment (CRAE) is a broad coalition of agriculture, environment, labor, and public agency leaders working to promote an

agriculture that is economically viable, environmentally sustainable and socially responsible. CRAE was founded in September 2004 to build broad-based support for the expansion of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program in the federal farm bill. Since that time, the group has expanded its efforts to include a broader array of strategic issues at the intersection of agriculture and the environment. New topics for CRAE in 2009 were improving coordination of regulations to facilitate on-farm conservation and restoration, and developing recommendations for state agencies on implementing California Agricultural Vision.

<http://aginnovations.org/roundtables/crae/>

## 8 Renewable Energy from Farms

### *Team Leaders*

Paul Martin, Western United Dairymen  
Eric Holst, Environmental Defense Fund

### *Vision*

California agriculture is a leader in providing renewable energy resources.

### *Challenge*

Agriculture in California, as elsewhere, is heavily dependent on fossil-derived inputs, including fertilizers, pesticides and diesel fuel for irrigation pumps and farm equipment. As oil prices rise, the substitution of alternative energy sources, particularly those that can be produced on the farm, will help California agriculture remain competitive and environmentally conscientious.

### *Objectives*

Achieve the maximum feasible substitution of renewable energy and other renewable inputs for fossil-derived energy and inputs now used by agriculture.

Increase agricultural economic productivity while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality.

### *Progress*

- A federal-state interagency task force convened by the California Department of Food & Agriculture, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Agriculture is actively working to consolidate permitting requirements for methane digesters on dairy farms. These facilities convert what would otherwise be greenhouse gases from livestock manure into renewable energy to power farms and export to the electric grid. The report from the task force is not yet complete but a

programmatic EIR has been completed and the following guidance manual for permitting of digesters is posted at:

<http://www.calepa.ca.gov/Digester/Documents/GuideDigester.pdf>

- In September 2011, CDFA and the California Energy Commission convened a Joint California Agriculture Biofuel Forum to promote understanding the key economic and policy drivers for agriculture and biofuel development; to identify the challenges and opportunities that intersect agriculture and biofuel development in California; and to examine the realistic expectations of biofuels and biofuel feedstocks that could lead to commercialization.

[http://www.energy.ca.gov/2010-ALT-1/documents/2011-09-22\\_forum/presentations/](http://www.energy.ca.gov/2010-ALT-1/documents/2011-09-22_forum/presentations/)

- The state legislature passed and in October 2011 Governor Brown signed SB 618 (Wolk) to encourage the development of utility scale solar photovoltaic energy facilities, but only on farmland that is marginally productive or physically impaired.

[http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/sen/sb\\_0601-0650/sb\\_618\\_bill\\_2011008\\_chaptered.html](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/sen/sb_0601-0650/sb_618_bill_2011008_chaptered.html)

## 9 Adaptation to Climate Change

### *Team Leaders*

Emily Rooney, Agriculture Council of California  
Ashley Boren, State Board and Sustainable Conservation

### *Vision*

California agriculture has adapted to changes in climate and maintained its competitive advantage in the global food production system.

Agriculture will help meet California's climate change goals through innovative management practices and technologies that recognize the unique opportunities in agriculture to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

### *Challenge*

Few sectors of the California economy will be as affected by a changing climate as agriculture. Among the potential climate-related phenomena that could threaten agricultural production are further reductions in water supplies, increases in plant heat stress, decreases in night time chill needed to break dormancy in tree fruit and nut crops) and shifts in pollinator life cycles. While contributing to greenhouse gas reduction, agriculture must begin to develop strategies to adapt to the changing conditions likely to occur under the most probable climate scenarios.

## *Objectives*

Assure that all sectors of California agriculture can adapt to the most likely climate-related changes in seasonal weather, water supply, pests and diseases and other factors affecting agricultural production.

## *Progress*

- In November 2011, CDFA and the State Board on Food & Agriculture held a forum on Extreme Climate Risks and California's Future Agriculture and Food System, featuring several panels of experts.

[http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/State\\_Board/extreme\\_climate\\_risks.html](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/State_Board/extreme_climate_risks.html)  
[http://sio.ucsd.edu/extreme\\_climate/1%20Jackson.pdf](http://sio.ucsd.edu/extreme_climate/1%20Jackson.pdf)

- In December 2011, Governor Brown convened a governor's conference on Extreme Climate Risks and California's Future that, among other issues, addressed agricultural impacts.

<http://gov.ca.gov/ecrcf.php>

- Bank of America, in collaboration with the University of California Berkeley and UCLA, has sponsored a series of forums on the impact of climate change on California business sectors, including agriculture.

[http://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/Room\\_to\\_Grow\\_March\\_2010.pdf](http://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/Room_to_Grow_March_2010.pdf)

## **10 Promote Regional Markets**

### *Team Leaders*

Rich Matteis, California Farm Bureau Federation  
Michael Dimock, Roots of Change

### *Vision*

California agricultural policies encourage and foster diverse agricultural production systems to meet a variety of market demands.

### *Challenge*

The global market is important to California agriculture, which earns more than \$11 billion annually from exported farm products. But consumer demand for locally-sourced fruits, vegetables and other foods is growing rapidly, especially in California, offering our producers – large and small, conventional and alternative – an opportunity to

diversify their revenue streams while capitalizing on their distinct competitive advantage in serving the dietary needs of their communities.

### ***Objectives***

Take full advantage of regional marketing opportunities within the state, particularly those that capitalize on the growing public demand for locally sourced food.

### ***Progress***

- The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) Rural-Urban Connections Strategy, a strategic plan for growing the sustaining regional agriculture, includes a local marketing initiative.

<http://www.sacog.org/rucs/>

- In October 2011, Secretary Karen Ross established a Direct Marketing Ad Hoc Committee to review and analyze various business functions related to local marketing and sales of food products. This committee, composed of a broad based spectrum of farmers and consumer stakeholders, is tasked with making recommendations to CDFA concerning potential recalibration of direct marketing programs through an inclusive and transparent process. The committee is focusing on several issue areas, including: certified farmers' markets; community-supported agriculture; farm stands; and larger issues related to food access, community gardens, and general farm sales. The committee is still engaged in dialogue on the issues and initial recommendations to the department is anticipated for July 2012.
- American Farmland Trust, Greenbelt Alliance and Sustainable Agriculture Education issued a report on the potential of locally-sourced food production and marketing in the Bay Area and, together with other partners, are doing a feasibility study of an agricultural economic development finance corporation to attract and deploy strategic investments in supply, demand and infrastructure projects to boost local food.

<http://www.farmland.org/documents/SustainingOurAgriculturalBountyMARCH2011.pdf>

- The University of California Small Farm Center has published many studies and has other useful resources on direct marketing.

<http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/marketing/>

- In January 2012, Roots of Change made a three-year commitment to support with funding and staffing California's first statewide Food Policy Council. It will link the work of 24 existing regional food policy bodies such as city-based food policy councils, county-based Food System Alliances and Ag Futures Alliances. These local

entities are focused on the development of policies, projects and relationships needed to stimulate development of local and regional food systems.

<http://www.rootsofchange.org/content/activities-2/california-food-policy-council>

## 11 Next Generation of Farmers & Ranchers

### *Team Leaders*

Corny Gallagher, Bank of America  
Paul Muller, Full Belly Farm

### *Vision*

Agriculture is a highly desirable career of choice and will have a stable, well-educated and trained workforce.

### *Challenge*

The farm population in California, as elsewhere, is aging. But significant barriers exist to the intergenerational succession of California farms and ranches. Estate and inheritance tax laws make it difficult and expensive to transfer land and businesses from one generation to the next. The cost of land in California is a particular barrier to entry of young and beginning farmers and ranchers. Extension and educational opportunities are not as robust as they should be in this increasingly complex, technological and “green” agricultural era.

### *Objectives*

Assure that California farms and ranches can and will be passed to the next generation of qualified, committed owner-operators.

Train and equip the next generation of young and beginning farmers in agronomic, economic and environmental stewardship skills.

### *Progress*

- The Ag Vision Next Generation leadership team, co-chaired by Corny Gallagher of Bank of America and Paul Muller of Full Belly Farm, is pursuing two initiatives. The first is aimed at promoting farm succession planning workshops supported by California farm groups, commodity organizations, and Cooperative Extension. A model for the workshops is Farm Journal’s “Leave a Legacy Project” and the work of Kevin Spafford at Legacy-By-Design.

<http://www.agweb.com/legacyproject/>

- The second Ag Vision initiative will identify support systems for new and entry farmers and new rural enterprises, including urban edge farmers that are utilizing smaller scale more diversified production systems. This will include mentoring, training, apprenticeships and involvement of community colleges in placing and sponsoring students on farm. A key feature will be creating a legal pathway for apprenticeships on California farms.

<http://smallfarms.wsu.edu/>

- The Center for Land Based Learning in Winters has launched the California Farm Academy to train new farmers of all generations, including returning American war veterans.

<http://landbasedlearning.org/farm-academy.php>

- The State Board of Food & Agriculture held a session in September 2011 on the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

[http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/State\\_Board/pdfs/Septembe\\_28\\_2011\\_Minutes.pdf](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/State_Board/pdfs/Septembe_28_2011_Minutes.pdf)

## 12 Agricultural Research

### *Team Leaders*

Dan Dooley, State Board and University of California  
Chris Zanobini, California Pear Advisory Board

### *Vision*

Research and extension of research stimulates innovation and adaptability to keep California's agri-food system the world's most productive, profitable and environmentally sound.

### *Challenge*

California producers have stayed competitive by being early-adopters of cutting-edge research, new technologies and best practices. The University of California Division of Agriculture & Natural Resources (UC-ANR) has played an indispensable role in this. It is critical that it continue to do so, but tight budgets are putting pressure on its capacity. A new strategic plan adopted by UC-ANR will help focus research on the highest priorities.

### *Objective*

The State Board and University of California should collaborate to identify the most critical research and extension needs and assure that the financial and academic resources are available to carry out those needs.

### ***Progress***

- U.C. Davis and Cooperative Extension researchers are participating in a large-scale research effort aimed at improving food safety by reducing the occurrence of illnesses linked to E. coli bacteria. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is funding the \$25 million, coast-to-coast project, to which UC Davis is providing expertise in livestock health, foodborne disease and consumer food marketing.

<http://health.universityofcalifornia.edu/2012/02/02/uc-davis-partners-in-beef-e-coli-research-project/>

- A pro-active chemical ecology research project funded by the Agriculture & Natural Resources Division of the University of California will help develop modern strategies to intercept and control invasive insect pests. The project will focus on research and development of enabling technology creating sensitive, reliable, and simple methods of detecting incursions of dangerous invasive insects at the earliest possible opportunity.

[http://ucanr.edu/sites/anrstaff/Divisionwide\\_Programs/Competitive\\_Grants/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/anrstaff/Divisionwide_Programs/Competitive_Grants/)

- U.C. Cooperative Extension researchers have developed a quick test to measure soil nitrate in the field so growers can match fertilizer rates with plant needs and reduce leaching to groundwater. The test has reduced nitrogen-loading rates by an average of 70 pounds per acre in lettuce. On-farm demonstration trials have shown that by testing the soil, growers can reduce their fertilizer use by about 30 percent. Major growers in Monterey County, who manage a significant number of vegetable acres in the Salinas Valley, have begun using the quick nitrate test in their operations.

[http://ucanr.edu/News/Healthy\\_crops\\_safe\\_water/Research\\_on\\_nutrient\\_and\\_fertilizer\\_management/](http://ucanr.edu/News/Healthy_crops_safe_water/Research_on_nutrient_and_fertilizer_management/)

## Making Further Progress

California agriculture is blessed with a combination of land, water and climate that is the envy of the world. The industry is diverse, creative and resilient, with an entrepreneurial class of farmers and ranchers who produce an abundance of remarkably safe, healthy and affordable food. They are also stewards of almost half of all the land in the Golden State, responsible for “producing” clean air and water, wildlife and other contribution to a clean and healthy environment. Through California Agricultural Vision, the industry has risen to the challenge of addressing the unprecedented challenges it faces in collaboration with consumers and many others with a stake in what it produces and how it does so.

The progress it is making can best continue if the collaboration grows and engages still more stakeholders. Thus, the leadership of Ag Vision is taking additional steps to encourage this result.

- The Ag Vision leadership teams are eager to recruit additional “honest brokers” to contribute to the dialogue and the actions being taken in their pursuit. To express your interest, please contact AFT California Director Edward Thompson, Jr. ([ethompson@farmland.org](mailto:ethompson@farmland.org)).
- The State Board of Food & Agriculture intends to continue to organize its monthly meetings around the twelve Ag Vision challenges to gather information and ideas that will be helpful in addressing them. To stay abreast of the State Board’s meetings, visit [www.cdfa.ca.gov/state\\_board/](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/state_board/) and to submit ideas for its consideration, contact its Executive Director, Joshua Eddy ([jeddy@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:jeddy@cdfa.ca.gov)).
- Through updates on their web sites, American Farmland Trust ([www.farmland.org/california](http://www.farmland.org/california)) and the California Department of Food & Agriculture ([www.cdfa.ca.gov](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov)) will keep everyone abreast of progress being made across the board toward fulfilling the vision and goals articulated by CDFA and the State Board.

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