



June 10, 2009

Honorable Members
Legislative Budget Conference Committee
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Budget items of importance to the California Roundtable on Agriculture & the Environment

Honorable Members:

The California Roundtable on Agriculture and the Environment (CRAE) supports General Fund support for the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and the University of California (UC). 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 recognizes the unprecedented budget shortfall and the ensuing balancing measures that must be determined. Thus, as the conferees commence this difficult process, CRAE wishes to underscore the extreme importance of CDFA programs, UC agricultural research and the activities of Cooperative Extension relative to the production of a healthy and stable food supply. The activities of both these vital institutions are preventative in nature and will protect the State from more onerous financial burdens.

The Department of Food and Agriculture protects the state's farms, urban communities and natural environments by excluding, detecting and eradicating pests, diseases, weeds and animals that plague other states and countries. Working in conjunction with the county agricultural commissioners, CDFA conducts a comprehensive and effective program of trapping and early detection to guard against plant and animal pests and diseases that could otherwise adversely impact human health, commerce and California's natural resources.

With respect to UC research and Cooperative Extension, CRAE believes agricultural research, outreach and education services enable California's farmers and ranchers to compete in the global marketplace through the incorporation of new and innovative products and cultural practices. Most significantly UC helps farmers and ranchers succeed in the marketplace while operating in a sustainable and environmentally responsible manner. Equally important is Cooperative Extension's outreach to local communities with its youth development programs and nutritional education to foster healthier Californians.

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As the budget conferees commence the complex process of budget cuts and program reforms, CRAE strongly encourages that any cuts being made to CDFA and UC be done on an unallocated basis. This will enable administrative experts within both agencies to prioritize and allocate funds as necessary to address the most pressing and vital programs and services.

We thank you for your leadership and service to the people of California.

Respectfully,

California Association of Winegrape Growers
California Cattlemen's Association
California Certified Organic Farmers
California Farm Bureau Federation
California Federation of Certified Farmers' Markets
Community Alliance with Family Farmers
Cornelius Gallagher, Agribusiness Executive, Bank of America
Environmental Working Group
Great Valley Center
Markon Cooperative
Marrone Bio Innovations, Inc.
The Nature Conservancy
Richard Rominger
Roots of Change
San Joaquin Resource Conservation District
Sustainable Conservation
Western United Dairymen

CC. California State Assembly Committee on Agriculture
California Senate Committee on Food and Agriculture
California State Assembly Committee on Education
California Senate Committee on Education
The Honorable AG Kawamura, California Department of Agriculture
John Moffatt, Office of the Governor
Dan Dooley, University of California