

Healthy Food, Healthy People, Healthy Economy



Note: Not all farms and farmers who signed on in support have logos. The list at the end of this letter is comprehensive.

February 19, 2015

Ms. Karen Ross
Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture
1220 N St.
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: California Nutrition Incentives Act – Support

Dear Secretary Ross:

The undersigned 87 growers and agriculture organizations respectfully urge the leadership of the Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA) to support the establishment of the Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program through the 2015-16 state budget. This budget proposal has multiple common sense co-benefits of maximizing California's share of federal matching funds, improving the health of low-income Californians, and supporting California's farming communities and small business owners.

A modest investment of \$5 million per fiscal year in the Nutrition Incentive Matching (NIM) Grant Program is built on four years of evidence-based success through California Market Match, a pilot that doubles the value of nutrition assistance benefits when beneficiaries purchase fruits, nuts and vegetables at more than 100 farmers' markets across the state. Securing general fund monies for NIM leverages new federal matching funds under the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) provision of the Farm Bill. Only \$69 million of FINI's \$100 million remains and California should maximize its share considering the state's unparalleled agricultural bounty, vast network of farmers' markets and entrenched poverty.

Scaling up this program, with the support of FINI, also directly benefits our state's small- and mid-sized farmers. The inclusion of a pilot for small retailers will only expand the reach of this incentive model to those without access to a farmer's market, and open up new markets to California's specialty crop growers. A 2013 evaluation of California Market Match reported a six-fold return, and is a local economic development strategy for farming communities and small business owners up and down the state. It's a win-win for California's people, growers, and agriculture sector overall.

In farmer's markets that provided a Market Match incentive, 69 percent of growers reported they had new shoppers, and 67 percent reported earning more income. CDFA has been vital to the success of Market Match through specialty crop block grants and this proposal represents an opportunity for the Office of Farm to Fork to drive a larger portion of \$7.8 billion in CalFresh EBT to California's growers. According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, the number of beginning California farmers has decreased 20 percent since 2007, but the number of farmers below the age of 35 has increased by 463 farmers or 17 percent. The NIM grant could strengthen the economic link between its present and future farmers and up to a quarter of California's consumers who still find themselves below the federal poverty level.

We urge you to build for the future by scaling up this evidence-based nutrition incentive program of the present. A \$5 million NIM Grant Program, matched with \$5 million from USDA, could boost healthy food access to \$45 million for almost 300,000 families and generate hundreds of new farm jobs.

Sincerely,

Ecology Center
Hunger Action Los Angeles
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California
Public Health Institute

Roots of Change
San Diego Hunger Coalition
Agricultural Institute of Marin

Alchemist Community Development Corporation
Aroma Orchids
Avitua Farms
Bernard Ranches
Bill's Bees
Bloomfield Organics
Buon Gusto Farms
Buenrostro Farms
Burkart Farms
Cabral's Farm
California Alliance of Farmers' Markets
California Association of Food Banks
California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)
California Food Policy Council
Cardenas Farm
Castellanos Farm
Center for Food Safety
Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture (CUESA)
Certified Farmers' Market Management
Coleman Family Farm
Community Services Unlimited
Contra Costa Certified Farmers' Markets
Etheridge Farm
Farm to EVERY Fork
Feldyee Horse Farm
Finley Farms Organic
Flora Bella Farms
Food Chain Workers Alliance
Friend's Ranches, Inc.
Full Belly Farm
Gama Farms
Garcia Organic Farms
Gaytan Family Farm
Gean Farm, Inc.
Grace Gonzalez (individual)
Ha's Apple Farm
Haussler Organic Farms
Her Produce
Jack Balderama (individual)
Jimenez Family Farm
JF Organic Farms
JJ's Lone Daughter Ranch

Kennedy Farm
Ken's Top Notch Produce
Maggie's Farm
Maria Durazo (individual)
Mar Vista Farmers' Market Association
Milliken Family Farms
North Coast Growers Association
Novy Ranches
Ocean Breez Int.
Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association
Pama Valley Citrus
Phat Beets Produce
Polito Family Farms
Rair Hills
Raphael Cardenas Farms
R.C. Farms
Regier Family Farms
Rincon del Mar Ranch
Rivas Farms
Rock Canyon Vineyards
Rodriquez Family Farm
Russell Family Farms
Santa Monica Farmers Market
Schaner Farms
Sebastopol Farmers' Market
Slow Food California
Spring Hill Cheese
Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles (SEE-LA)
Sycamore Hill Ranch
Tamai Family Farms
Thao's Farm
The Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture (CUESA)
The Farmers Guild
The Wellington Square Certified Farmers Market
Trevino Farms
Valley Center Growers, Inc.
Windrose Farm
Wong Farms LLC

cc: Martha Guzman-Aceves, Governor's Office
Jim Houston, CDFA
Taylor Roschen, CDFA