

Listening and Listening and Listening

The CDFA State Board Came to San Luis Obispo by Mary Silveira

As California goes, so goes the nation. Or as Warren Buffett put it in 2003, "If California has troubles, the country has troubles. If California prospers, the country prospers." CNN/Money stated in 2003 that with output of about \$1.35 trillion in 2001, California's economy is smaller only than the economies of the United States, Japan, Germany and Britain. How much greater will it be in the year 2030?

Without a doubt, there is a good reason for the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) State Board to be providing public forums for input into a process called Vision 2030, which is expected to "help guide public policy and investment priorities as well as

give direction for agriculture within regional development efforts around the state," according to the CDFA Newsletter (5/23/08).

Questions Addressed

Participants at the San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau site for the July 1 Listening Session had plenty to offer. They addressed pre-set questions such as: "What is your vision for California agriculture by 2030?" "What will be the biggest challenge in achieving that vision?" "In 2030, how has public perception of agriculture changed?" "What is a 'must have' in an Ag Vision for California?" Responses to these questions and individual questions were welcomed by the state board.

The CDFA State Board consists of 15 members, appointed by the governor, and carefully selected to represent a broad range of agricultural commodities, a variety of geographic regions and both the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) academic systems.

The board is responsible for advising the governor and the secretary of CDFA on agricultural issues and consumer needs. They often act as a host to bring together local, state and federal government officials, agricultural representatives and citizens to discuss current issues of concern to California agriculture.

CDFA Board Members Attending

The following board members participated at the SLO session.

- Ann Bacchetti Silva, co-manager of Bacchetti and Silva Dairy in Tracy, where she has worked since 1977.
- Luawanna Hallstrom, chief operating officer and general manager of Harry Singh and Sons, the largest single vine-ripe tomato producer in the United States.
- Marvin A. Meyers has owned and operated Meyers Farming I-IV, Oxford Farms, Inc., and Meyers Farm Family Trust since 1982.
- Board President Al Montna owns and operates Montna Farms, Montna Farms Dryer, American Commodity Company, Darwazeh Montna Development, LLC and the Dingville Duck and Social Club.



State Board of Food & Agriculture members visited San Luis Obispo July 1 to hear local residents' views on the future of agriculture. CDFA Secretary A.G. Kawamura (blue jacket) responds; State Board President Al Montna (next right) moderated.

"Thank you, San Luis Obispo, for helping us create an Ag Vision for California. The future of agriculture is a four-legged sustainable platform that includes economics, equity, the environment and education. Your comments and participation in this process ensures that a vibrant future for agriculture will continue for decades to come."

– CDFA Secretary A.G. Kawamura

"It is with great personal pleasure that I return to SLO, the place where I was educated in agriculture and met my wife. This community has proven again the importance of the agricultural industry at local, state and federal levels. In creating this Ag Vision, the voice of SLO will not be forgotten."

– Al Montna, president, California State Board of Food and Agriculture



“A robust Pest Prevention Program is important for California agriculture’s future. This will include keeping invasive pests out of the state, vigorously looking for new pest infestations, and the public’s cooperation in eradicating new urban pest infestations before they become widely established.”
 – Bob Lilley, San Luis Obispo County Agriculture Commissioner

- Karen Ross is president of the California Association of Winegrape Growers, executive director of Winegrape Growers of America, and executive director of the California Wine Grape Growers Foundation.
- Ashley Boren, public member, is executive director of Sustainable Conservation.
- Daniel M. Dooley, UC member, was recently appointed UC vice president – Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR).
- David J. Wehner, Ph.D, CSU member, was named dean of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo in 2002.



Participants sign-in for a full afternoon of listening and presenting a variety of views about the future of agriculture.

CDFA Board Responsibilities

The board is charged with the following responsibilities.

- 1) Inquire into the needs of the agricultural industry of this state and the functions of the department in relation to such needs, and confer and advise with the Governor and the Secretary as to how the agricultural industry and the consumer of agri-

cultural products may best be served by the department.

- 2) Make recommendations to the Secretary regarding project agreements to be funded.

- 3) Make investigations, conduct hearings and prosecute actions concerning all matters and subjects that are under the jurisdiction of the department.

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“Today’s society perceives agriculture as something distinct from their own lives—a curiosity on the landscape—disconnected from the food they eat... That perspective will have to change as our soils are losing value, water is becoming more precious and we have reached the end of cheap oil.

To change this perception will require a shift in paradigms.... Education about agriculture must move beyond a specific course or program or location. It must pervade the entire learning experience, regardless of age, place, discipline or time. It won’t be easy—but it must be done.”

–Rob Rutherford, Professor of Animal Science, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

