

April 22, 2005

Dear Honorable Members of Congress:

The board of directors of the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF), a non-profit organization of family farmers and urban consumers, at our board meeting April 8, 2005, acting on behalf of our members adopted a resolution urging California's Congressional delegation to oppose the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

We understand that international trade is important to California's economy but feel very strongly that the CAFTA trade agreement will only continue to expand the negative impacts of previously adopted trade agreements, in the United States and the other participating countries. We must stop this race to the bottom in sectors that include the economy, the environment, human rights and social justice.

Labor costs are a major component of California agriculture. CAFTA does not implement enforceable requirements for participating nations to achieve International Labor Organization standards with regard to labor issues. It only provides that domestic labor laws be enforced, which will continue to provide a competitive agricultural production and processing advantage to other CAFTA nations relative to the United States in both bi-lateral and third-country trade. It also enables countries to continue to exploit workers holding down their standard of living and opportunities.

Additionally, CAFTA does not establish a timeframe or enforcement procedures to harmonize environmental standards with U.S. levels. Environmental compliance is a major element in California agriculture production and to forfeit these standards in trade deals makes no sense to California's interests.

CAFTA does not address exchange rates, yet participating countries currencies have continued to decline against the U.S. dollar providing trade advantages to those nations and the international corporations operating out of those countries.

Additional market access and tariff relief for a few U.S. products will not offset the negative impact of increased agricultural imports from CAFTA countries. CAFTA would substantially open the U.S. market to agriculture products that compete with California fruits and vegetables and other commodities and products, such as sugar and ethanol. In 2003, the U.S. agricultural trade deficit with the five CAFTA countries was more than \$900 million. CAFTA may result in even greater trade deficits with a direct result of increased economic stress on the livelihood of California fruit and vegetable producers.

The concerns relative to the CAFTA trade agreement is not a partisan political issue, opposition to the CAFTA trade agreement is strong among Republicans, Democrats and Independents and throughout the United States. A national poll conducted in early

February found that 51 percent oppose the CAFTA trade agreement altogether and only 32 percent support it. Americans are concerned about their future, their jobs, their environment, the exploitation of labor, and where their food comes from. This survey was commissioned by the Americans For Fair Trade and conducted by the national public opinion and public affairs research firm of Ayres, McHenry and Associates, Inc.

California agriculture contributes significantly to California's economy. We urge you to oppose the passage of CAFTA. CAFTA will have a negative impact on California's family farmers, on our environment and on our ability to provide good jobs at fair wages.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judith Redmond". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Judith Redmond, President
Community Alliance with Family Farmers