

June 2007

The Honorable Jim Costa
1314 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Fax: 202-225-9308

Dear Representative Costa,

This is a critical year for our country's food and farming system. As you consider proposals for the next Food and Farm Bill, I urge you to expand economic opportunities for small and midsized growers and beginning and minority farmers in California by fully funding programs that help expand local markets, support organic research and extension and provide necessary funding and investment for value added farm business development and local infrastructure needed to access new markets. This farm bill offers a great opportunity to link farmers' needs for markets with nearby urban areas, including institutions, that want greater access to local, fresh and healthy food. I also urge you to expand funding for conservation programs, especially the Conservation Security Program that rewards farmers for practicing high levels of stewardship on their land.

As mark up on the Farm Bill continues, please support full and mandatory funding for the following programs that deliver important environmental, health and economic benefits for our state:

Help Farmers Protect the Environment by providing full, mandatory funding for the Conservation Security Program, establishing an *Organic Conversion and Stewardship Program* with adequate technical assistance within EQIP and significantly expanding mandatory funding for the *Organic Farming Systems Research and Extension Initiative (CSREES)*.

Strengthen Local Economies and Economic Viability of Farms by significantly increase funding for *Farmers Market Promotion Program*, expanding the *Value-Added Producer Grant Program*; establishing *Healthy Food Enterprise Program* to provide loans and technical assistance for healthy foods infrastructure; and allowing the policy of geographic preferences for local food within all Federal purchasing and nutrition programs.

Improve Access to Healthy Food while supporting increased markets for small-scale farmers at the same time by providing mandatory funding and significantly expanding the *Community Food Project Grant* program; expanding the *Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program* and *Farm to Cafeteria Program* and expanding WIC and seniors *Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs*.

Help build a new generation of entrepreneurial farmers by fully fund the *Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development* and *Outreach and Technical Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers* programs.

Thank you for taking action to advance food and farm policies that will improve the physical and economic wellbeing of our cities and rural communities in California. I look forward to hearing from you about your position on these issues in the Farm Bill.

Sincerely,