



Contact:

Naomi Starkman, Straus Communications
917.539.3924-c; Naomi@StrausCom.com

**COMMUNITY ALLIANCE WITH FAMILY FARMERS URGES SENATOR FEINSTEIN
TO RESCIND PROPOSED FARM BILL AMENDMENT TO REGULATE LEAFY GREENS**

Industry-Driven Food Safety Approach Threatens Local Food Movement

Davis, Calif. (November 13, 2007)—The Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) today urged Senator Dianne Feinstein to rescind her recently proposed Leafy Greens Amendment (No. 3505) to the 2007 Farm Bill. Feinstein’s amendment, introduced on November 6, would make it possible to regulate all leafy green vegetable production in the United States, and could negatively impact thousands of traditional leafy green farmers, effectively eliminating access to local leafy greens nationwide.

Feinstein introduced this amendment without consulting family and organic farmers who are the pioneers in the local food movement, according to CAFF, a California organization that includes thousands of organic and sustainable farms statewide, as well as consumers supporting local and sustainable agriculture. Instead, the amendment was vetted solely with the Western Growers Association, which helped to create the recently-developed and industry-sponsored California Leafy Green Marketing Agreement (LGMA) guidelines. The LGMA was crafted in reaction to the tragic 2006 bagged salad *E. coli* 0157:H7 outbreaks, which resulted in more than 200 illnesses and three deaths.

“The LGMA is not appropriate for traditional leafy green farmers in California and similar federal regulations would devastate the local farm economy, not only of this state, but nationwide,” said CAFF Board President Judith Redmond. “CAFF recommends that alternative rules for practical and environmentally-sound food safety be developed for all farms, including those that grow traditional leafy greens. Feinstein’s amendment is an inappropriate approach to solving a processed-industry problem.”

CAFF believes that the pre-cut salad processing industry (which industry calls “fresh cut”) has unique food safety risks that need to be addressed. However, Feinstein’s proposed marketing order approach allows the industry to dictate the scope and rules to every farmer in the country, including producers of traditional whole leafy green vegetables who have not been shown to have a food safety problem.

The experience of the LGMA in California this year has demonstrated the problems with Feinstein’s approach:

- No distinction is made between fresh-cut produce and traditional whole greens. Data provided by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and compiled by CAFF, shows that

since 1999, 98.5 percent of *E. coli* 0157:H7 illnesses from leafy greens in California have been traced to “fresh-cut” (processed, bagged) salad.

- The LGMA is controlled by the largest grower-shippers and processors. Small distributors and farmers have no representation.
- The rules created for the large farms of the fresh-cut processing industry are deemed appropriate for all producers of leafy greens, even though they would not be feasible for small farmers or most organic growers.

"A national marketing order is not the way to regulate food safety. If this approach is extended to other crops, it will become nearly impossible for small farmers to comply with the impractical regulations being proposed," said Kira Pascoe, CAFF Family Farm Food Safety Coordinator.

The industry has used the LGMA rules as a precedent to strike against the heart of biological agriculture, calling for sterile zones on farms, fences to keep wildlife out, cancellation of conservation projects and removal of grassed waterways. The Resource Conservation District of Monterey County's *A Growers Survey* documents that 89 percent of the growers who responded to the survey indicated that they have adopted at least one measure to actively discourage or eliminate wildlife from cropped areas.

"In addition to threatening farmers nationwide, most of the rules that require degrading the environment for safe food are not scientifically proven," Pascoe added. "The choice should not be between food safety and the environment, especially when research shows that practices like wetlands and microbial diversity in soil may actually reduce pathogens."

The USDA is currently accepting public comment on whether it should enact or invoke a federal Marketing Agreement. The public comment period closes on December 3.

"We buy from over 340 farmers and growers and have hundreds of customers, most of whom are located in California" said Bu Nygrens, co-owner of Veritable Vegetable, America's oldest distributor of organic produce, and one of many produce handlers who oppose the LGMA and Feinstein's amendment. "If made mandatory, the LGMA and Feinstein's amendment would have the practical effect of making it impossible for small and medium sized growers to reach independent retail markets."

CAFF maintains that if a compulsory approach is necessary, it should be confined to the pre-cut salad processing industry and its suppliers. CAFF and the farmers it represents acknowledge that all farms face potential food safety problems. It is working with local produce distributors, the University of California, and other government agencies to create a more rational, less costly approach to food safety that diversified farmers growing for the traditional market could implement.

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Community Alliance with Family Farmers (www.caff.org) is a statewide non-profit whose membership includes family farmers and urban residents, working to build a movement of rural and urban people to foster family-scale agriculture that cares for the land, sustains local economies and promotes social justice. Growers Collaborative LLC (www.growerscollaborative.org), is wholly owned by CAFF, and part of CAFF's Community Food Systems program.