



March 14, 2014

The Honorable Roger Dickinson
California State Assembly
State Capitol
PO Box 942849
Sacramento CA 94249-0007

RE: AB 1871 – Farmers’ Markets -- SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Dickinson:

The Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) is a statewide organization that represents both farmers and non-farm urban residents who support sustainable food and farming policies. CAFF is pleased to support your AB 1871, which will provide a much-needed increase in fees paid to CDFA, and through contracts the County Agricultural Commissioners, so that they can enforce the rules and sustain the integrity of certified farmers’ markets in California.

CAFF has been involved in supporting certified farmers’ markets since our organization’s inception over 30 years ago. We have started a number of markets and many of our members participate in one or more such market.

The original intent of farmers’ markets was to allow small farmers to sell their produce directly to the public without having to comply with standardization requirements created for commercial produce shipping. It is therefore offensive that some vendors are engaged in fraud by buying and reselling commercial produce in these markets. While some market managers are capable of policing such activity, most are not, and government authorities need more resources to fulfill this function.

For this reason, CAFF is a strong supporter of AB 1871’s requirement that market managers pay a \$2.00 fee per day on ALL vendor stalls at their markets. We believe this is the fairest means of increasing fees to markets. While markets could be charged based on square footage or total sales, the per-stall fee is simpler and universally applicable. Though markets have been charged only on the basis of the stalls in the certified section in the past, we believe it is fair to charge based on the total number of stalls. The non-farm vendors have proliferated at these markets and they are benefitting from the special consideration and permits given to farmers’ markets. This approach will also limit the fees paid by small rural markets that are mainly farmers. Finally, CDFA and the Agricultural Commissioners will have to police the non-certified sections of the markets to make sure that produce is not being sold there, further justifying this fee structure.

We also support the requirement that farmers post signs stating that they produced what they are selling. The Certified Producer Certificate is not adequate signage, was prepared at some point in the past, and was not prepared by the farmer. A clear signage requirement will make prosecution of fraud more straightforward. We should also note that the Food Safety Modernization Act will require all farmers given a qualified exemption from federal regulation who are selling directly to the public to post a sign at point of sale with the name and address of the farm, a requirement similar to that in AB 1871.

CAFF has participated in the CDFA task force on direct marketing and in the discussions surrounding this bill for a number of years. We believe it is critical to move forward with this legislation to restructure the program and give government authorities the funds they need to operate the program as it was intended. We will be watching closely to make sure that these outcomes are actually achieved and that better coordination is implemented among CDFA, the Agricultural Commissioners, and the market managers.

For all of these reasons CAFF supports AB 1871 and looks forward to working for its enactment.

Sincerely,



David Runsten
Policy Director