



The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman
State Capitol, Room 2003
Sacramento, CA 94249-0013

March 27, 2013

RE: SUPPORT – AB 823

Dear Assemblymember Talamantes Eggman,

We are pleased to co-sponsor AB 823, the California Farmland Protection Act. California farmland is a scarce, valuable and largely irreplaceable resource that is being permanently converted to non-agricultural uses at a rate of 30,000 acres per year. At this rate, California will lose another million acres of farmland by 2050. Mitigation of farmland conversion to developed uses will help reduce this loss by providing an incentive for more efficient development, and by permanently protecting a significant percentage of the state’s agricultural land base.

Protecting California’s agricultural land base is essential to sustaining the state’s ability to produce one-eighth of the nation’s food, including half of domestic fruit and vegetable production. While agricultural productivity is increasing, so is the global population and demand for food, making it imperative that California protect its productive farmland.

The protection of agricultural land also plays an important role in limiting the impacts of climate change. California’s Global Warming Solutions Act, AB 32, requires the state to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. Research funded by the California Energy Commission’s Public Interest Research (PIER) program found that an average acre of urban land emits 70 times more GHG emissions than an average acre of irrigated cropland.

AB 823 is intended to clarify CEQA requirements for farmland mitigation. AB 823 would adopt a minimum statewide agricultural mitigation of one-to-one (i.e. for every acre of developed farmland an equal number of acres of farmland will be permanently protected through conservation easements) for residential, commercial, civic, industrial, and infrastructure projects.

AB 823 would also offer an incentive for developers to do greater mitigation should they choose by detailing what measures would be recognized as having fully mitigated the project level and cumulative impacts on agricultural resources.

Furthermore, AB 823 provides that local jurisdictions with current farmland mitigation programs may continue their programs as long as they meet the minimum requirements set forth in the bill. Local jurisdictions without farmland mitigation programs will not be required to adopt such programs. Rather, AB 823 offers local agencies flexibility in implementing the one-to-one mitigation standard.

Thank you for your leadership in authoring AB 823, the California Farmland Protection Act.

Sincerely,

Ed Thompson
American Farmland Trust

Jeanne Merrill
California Climate and Agriculture Network

David Runsten
Community Alliance with Family Farmers