

# California Food and Farming Policy Update

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## **CAFF Farm to School Legislation Vetoed**

On the final day before the October 9 deadline, Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed AB 826 (Nava), the California Farm to School Child Nutrition Improvement Act, co-sponsored by CAFF and the Community Food and Justice Coalition (CFJC). The bill enjoyed widespread support in the Legislature. It passed the Assembly 77-2 and was co-authored by Jeff Denham, the Republican Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. The bill also was supported by numerous school districts, health and nutrition advocates, and some of the state's largest farm organizations, including the California Farm Bureau Federation and the Western Growers Association.

In his veto message, Schwarzenegger cited the enactment of another bill, SB 281, which is the centerpiece of his Childhood Obesity Initiative. SB 281 provides \$18 million to school in 2005-06 to increase the amount of fruits and vegetables in school meals. The initiative also includes a ban on soft drink sales at high schools. He also cited the lack of funding to implement a statewide Farm to School program, even though the bill required no expenditures unless funding was made available in the state budget.

The veto is disappointing to CAFF and CFJC, who are the leading groups in California working on-the-ground with farmers and school districts to implement Farm to School programs. The groups sought the state's involvement in helping to establish new Farm to School programs because their limited resources cannot meet the demand for assistance from the growing number of school districts and farmers interested in starting new local programs. CAFF and CFJC will work this fall to decide whether to pursue Farm to School legislation in 2006.

## **Genetically Modified Organisms**

With the Legislature adjourned, all eyes are on Sonoma County to see if voters approve the voter initiative to impose a 10 year moratorium on GMO use in the county. The outcome of the Sonoma election will influence what happens on the issue in the Legislature in 2006. Two carryovers from 2005 will be heard next year: AB 984 (Laird), which shields farmers whose crops have unknowingly been contaminated with GMO from being sued by the GMO manufacturer and instead imposes liability on the manufacturer for GMO contamination, and SB 1056 (Florez), which prohibits local governments or voters from passing local measures to restrict the use of GMOs. Whether the Sonoma County initiative passes or fails, expect fireworks in the Legislature in 2006.

## **Final Tally on Other State Legislation**

AB 1058 (Koretz) - Required beef sold at the retail level, not including restaurants, to be labeled with its country of origin. CAFF supported AB 1058, consistent with its support of the federal Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) law. **Vetoed by Governor.**

AB 1011 (Matthews) - Closes a loophole that allowed "big box" retailers to avoid paying the mill assessment on the sale of pesticides. Will generate \$3-\$4 million in additional revenues to the Department of Pesticide Regulation. **Signed into law.**

AB 1328 (Wolk) - Adds portions of Cache Creek to the state's Wild and Scenic River system. The bill includes numerous provisions to retain local input and authority over the use of the river. **Signed into law.**

SB 646 (Kuehl) - Tightened requirements for agricultural and timber land waivers from waste discharge requirements, which are required of all dischargers of pollutants into waters of the state. Required the State Water Board to impose fees to cover the cost of issuing the waivers and to make water monitoring results public. **Defeated in Assembly.**