

# California Food and Farming Policy Update

Brought to you by Community Alliance with Family Farmers

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## Nutritious Foods in Schools and Beyond

CAFF has long supported greater linkages between sustainable farming and nutritious foods. That's why we work around the state to promote Farm to School programs that bring fresh produce directly from local farmers to local schools: it's good for our farmers and good for our kids.

Farm to School is only one facet of the Legislature's focus in recent years on improving the availability of nutritious foods. California, for example, has adopted tough standards to replace soft drinks and junk food with more nutritious foods on campus. This year there are several legislative efforts to provide more nutritious foods at schools and beyond. Assembly Speaker Fabian (D-Los Angeles) has introduced AB 1381 to fund the state's School Gardens program. Senator Abel Maldonado (R-Santa Maria) has introduced SB 284 to secure funds for food banks. SB 1329 by Senator Elaine Alquist (D-San Jose) would allow cities to use redevelopment funds to help site grocery stores and small market in underserved areas.

And Assemblyman Pedro Nava (D-Santa Barbara) has introduced AB 2121, sponsored by CAFF, to establish a statewide Farm to School program and provide grants to farmers and schools to set up local farm to school programs. Introduced as a spot bill, CAFF will work with last year's supporters including the Community Food and Justice Coalition, Western Growers Association and the California Farm Bureau, as well as local organizations around the state that support increased consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.

## The Many Faces of Direct Marketing

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) administers the state's Certified Farmers Market (CFM) program, but there are many other direct market opportunities for California farmers. Many CAFF Farmers and members, for example, participate in Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), where farmers provide produce to families on a subscription basis.

CAFF is also working with a number of Kaiser hospitals to locate farmers markets in Kaiser parking lots to serve patients and the surrounding community. Neither of these activities qualify as Certified Farmers Markets, but they certainly are examples of direct market opportunities for farmers that should be encouraged.

CAFF is part of an ongoing discussion with CDFA and direct market farmers and associations to determine if the state's direct marketing program should be expanded to other types of direct marketing. Changes to existing law may be needed to remove barriers to direct marketing and to make it easier for farmers to take advantage of additional direct market opportunities.

## Integrated On-Farm Drainage Management

In 2002 CAFF successfully sponsored legislation by Senator Mike Machado (D-Linden) reducing the regulatory hurdles for farmers to use an innovative drainage management

system that eliminates off-farm drainage and restores salt-degraded land. Under Machado's bill the system, called Integrated On-Farm Drainage Management (IFDM), can only be installed on a single farm. This year Senator Machado has introduced follow-up legislation to allow multiple farms within an irrigation or resource conservation district to establish a shared IFDM system. The change will make IFDM much more cost-effective for farmers and increase the amount of salt-laden drainage water that can be kept out of tributaries. The bill is sponsored by the Westside Resources Conservation District, which worked closely with CAFF on the original bill.

### **DPR and Legislature Tell Big Box Stores to Pay Up**

All pesticide sales in California are supposed to include a 2.2% mill fee that is used to fund the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR). But state auditors learned several years ago that many "big box" retailers were failing to assess the fee when they sold pesticides, mainly to urban, non-agricultural users. DPR, backed up by state legislation clarifying the obligation to pay the fee, has begun to collect from these retailers and to pursue still legal penalties for non-compliance.