

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE



May 26, 2015

Ms. Janet Wolf, Chair
County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors
123 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

RE: Hoop Structure Code Fixes

Dear Chair Wolf and Members of the Board:

On May 6, 2015 the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) discussed the need for code fixes regarding the use of agricultural hoop plant shelters. **These temporary plant shelters are known by many names**, including “hoops,” “hoop houses,” “hoop structures,” and “seasonal tunnels.” Regardless of what they are called, **their use as a production practice has become critical to our county’s continued agricultural vitality**. Because of the increasing importance of hoop structures to growers in this county, the AAC unanimously voted to submit this letter supporting revisions to the Building Code and Land Use Development Code regarding hoop structures.

Hoops: Important Tool for Agriculture in Santa Barbara County

Hoops have become an indispensable tool for agriculture in Santa Barbara County because they **extend the traditional growing season of many of our county’s delicate, high-value, healthy food crops**. Although they are a relatively expensive tool, growers are increasingly turning to hoops because they can better match the timing of crop production to market opportunities and deflect the impact of damaging weather conditions on produce.

We are now **able to provide fresh, local produce like raspberries, blueberries and strawberries** to consumers here and around the country for a greater portion of the year, in large part because of these shelters. **The extended growing season and increased reliability provided by hoops allow Santa Barbara County growers to remain viable in an increasingly competitive global marketplace. Hoops will be an important tool to maintain and enhance the County’s economic competitiveness now and in the future.**

Environmental Conservation Practice

Hoops are **recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service as a conservation practice** through its Environmental Quality Incentives Program: “This practice assists agricultural producers to extend the growing season for high value crops in an environmentally safe manner.” Hoops can also assist growers to **manage pests and diseases** as a part of an integrated pest management program, which may result in fewer chemical applications to produce a marketable product than might otherwise be required. Hoops may also assist growers to **optimize water resources** through microclimate management. In an environment in which growers need to be absolutely diligent in their water use, hoop shelters provide an important tool to assist them with that essential task. Hoop structures are a multifaceted tool recognized for potential environmental benefits.

Recommendation

The Agricultural Advisory Committee supports revisions to the Building Code to allow hoop structures as exempt and to the Land Use Development Code to include hoop and shade structures as allowed, exempt uses in AG-I and AG-II zones.

Sincerely,

Claire Wineman, Chair

Committee Members Representing

Bradley Miles	1 st District Supervisor, Salud Carbajal	Claire Wineman	Grower-Shipper Association of SB & SLO
Ron Caird	2 nd District Supervisor, Janet Wolf	Paul Van Leer	Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau
Sharyne Merritt	3 rd District Supervisor, Doreen Farr	June Van Wingerden	SB Flower & Nursery Growers' Association
A.J. Cisney	4 th District Supervisor, Peter Adam	Morgan McLaughlin	Santa Barbara Vintners
Ruth Jensen	5 th District Supervisor, Steve Lavagnino	Willy Chamberlin	Santa Barbara County Cattlemen’s Assn.
Chrissy Allen	California Women for Agriculture	Jason Sharrett	California Strawberry Commission