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Santa Barbara County
Board of Supervisors
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Re: Item # 7 2009-2010 Work Plan and Reference to Ag Diversity and Intensification Study and Rural Plans by Region

Dear Honorable Board of Supervisors:

Regrettably, I am unable to attend your hearing today as I am traveling to Washington DC as a delegate of the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation. I found it necessary to express my views and utmost concern for the Work Plan presented by your Planning and Development staff. An Ag Diversity and Intensification Study and Rural Plans prepared by Comprehensive Planning epitomes the challenges the original Ag Planning Program faced and the concerns commonly expressed by the agricultural community of applying urban standards to agricultural land.

History in our county has proven repeatedly that Comprehensive Planning lacks the expertise in developing such programs. We need not look far, the adoption of the Uniform Rules or the Greenhouse Ordinance, to get a glimpse of what might lay ahead. Understanding and acknowledging the nuances of agriculture was the purpose of developing an Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) and an Agricultural Planning function. Had it not been for the insistence of the AAC this Work Plan was headed for the Board of Supervisors without any input from the Committee charged with giving advice and recommendations to the BOS on agricultural policies. That in itself represents a clear lack of interest in working with the community stakeholders who have the most experience and expertise in the matter.

Many state and federal programs, agencies, and universities spend years of study and research to evaluate and assist our farmers and ranchers in maximizing use of their land. How are our scarce county resources and taxpayer dollars available to fund such an extensive Comprehensive Planning effort? How can Comprehensive Planning consider they have the expertise and knowledge to engage in such a program without so much as consulting with the AAC? Santa Barbara County does not have the budget nor the expertise to develop these strategies.

A reoccurring theme expressed by every working group representing every commodity in preparation of the AREA study was the damaging affects of over-regulation and lack of flexibility from local government. The AREA study was intended to represent the challenges facing agriculture and the importance agriculture plays in resource protection, economic stability, quality of life, and general welfare of our communities. To suggest the AREA study

was intended to lead into this next phase of beauracracy on our farmers could not be further from the truth.

To develop Rural Plans requires extensive coordination and public input. I need not remind the Board of the delays and controversy over extending the Santa Ynez Community Plan into the Rural Regions. How is this any different? The concern of agriculture is well placed and must be understood. It is not an issue of agriculture opposed to regulation, as agriculture is one of the most regulated industries working to comply with continually more rigorous and ever-changing legislation in nearly every agency of government. It is an issue of agriculture staying viable and remaining the backbone of our local economy and quality of life when it is continually faced with new rules and regulation.

The County budget should not expend the kind of financial resources towards programs that will forestall and hinder the county's economic driver in a time when many other programs are in dire need of such resources. I have confidence in your Board of Supervisors that you are mindful of your budget and will utilize General Funds to help offset the economic shortcomings for more important programs such as public health and safety, education, and welfare and not on Work Plans that have the potential to undermine our most valued resource in this county.

Consider the sheer facts agriculture is a \$34 billion dollar industry in California and a \$1 billion industry in Santa Barbara County alone. Santa Barbara County ranks the 13th County in agricultural production out of 42 counties in the State and 19th Nationwide. Agriculture is our food system. If we do not manage our agriculture as a resource we will become dependent on other countries to produce our food as we have become dependent upon other countries for our fuel; other countries that lack the same standards and regulations to ensure the delivery of safe and healthy foods to our tables.

I strongly urge your Board of Supervisors to remove these items from the Work Plan and only develop policies and programs that have the support of your AAC. If your Board has any interest in considering this program more time should be spent in alerting the property owners and community members to fully understand the ramifications of the programs. This should not be taken lightly or considered without more vetting.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Bodrogi
Teixeira Farms, Ag Land Use Planner
Delegate of CA Agricultural Leadership
SB Co Immediate Past Ag Land Use Planner