

San Francisco Board of Supervisors
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 91102

RE: Support for Resolution to Rebuild San Francisco's Local and Regional Food System

Dear Board of Supervisors:

The undersigned local, agricultural, consumer, environmental, social justice, and public health organizations urge you pass a resolution calling upon California's U.S. Senators and Representatives to defend and advocate for initiatives that rebuild local and regional food infrastructure, support small and mid-sized producers and ensure that they are fairly compensated by buyers, promote sustainable and urban agriculture, increase access to healthy food, and connect San Francisco residents with local farmers and ranchers.

Our food system is not working for those who produce food or for those who eat it. Many farmers cannot make a living from farming, while many consumers lack access to healthy, sustainably-produced food. Conservation programs that help farmers steward our air, water, and climate are woefully underfunded. The infrastructure connecting farmers with consumers at the local and regional levels has all but disappeared. As a city with almost 1 million eaters San Francisco must ensure that important strides made in the 2008 Farm Bill to improve our food system are maintained in the 2012 budget and expanded upon in the upcoming 2012 Farm Bill.

In light of this, and the significant voice of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, we ask the Board to urge our elected Senators and Representatives to protect funding for programs which promote consumer's access to healthy, sustainable food, including but not limited to *the Business and Industry Loan Program, Rural Business Enterprise Grants, Organic transition programs, the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, the Fruit and Vegetable Program, Farmers Market Nutrition Program, Beginning Farmer and Rancher programs, the Office of Advocacy and Outreach and the Office of Tribal Relations, and conservation programs such as the Conservation Stewardship Program.*

Further, the ongoing federal budget negotiations have threatened the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as Food Stamps, which directly promotes the well-being of San Franciscans most in need. Currently SNAP assists over 49,000 San Francisco residents. The importance of this program to its beneficiaries only increases in times of economic distress due to their already vulnerable position. If this funding is reduced or restructured, its ability to provide vital services to as many people as possible will be severely impaired. Therefore, we ask the Board of Supervisors to urge our Congress members to robustly fund and protect the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program as an entitlement program rather than a block grant.

In addition, the leadership of the Board of Supervisors is needed to help implement a critical portion of the 2008 Farm Bill, the Grain Inspection Packers and Stockyard Act (GIPSA) Rules, which

would help California's family farmers and ranchers by forbidding unfair and abusive business practices by meatpackers and poultry companies. Many California ranchers are now facing extinction as a consolidated meatpacking industry pays them unfairly low prices for their livestock. We ask you to urge our Senators and Representatives to call upon President Obama and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Vilsack to finalize the proposed rules to clarify the Packers & Stockyards Act of 1921 directed by Congress in the 2008 Farm Bill. The 2008 Farm Bill directed the Department of Agriculture to clarify and strengthen protections for family livestock and poultry producers who are treated unfairly by large meatpackers.

Finally, we ask you to urge our Senators and Representatives to oppose the "*Foundation for the Future*" dairy legislation as currently written. The proposed legislation would allow processors to arbitrarily choose a price to pay farmers for their milk without any guarantee that it would even cover the cost of production. This unfair system would be compounded by the near monopolistic control of the dairy industry – both milk cooperatives and milk processors – which usually only provides dairy farmers a single buyer, forcing them to take any price given to them. After years of low milk prices that drove many farmers out of business, the "*Foundation for the Future*" proposal only offers "margin insurance" against chronic dairy farm losses. Such a system would provide a pseudo-subsidy that would supposedly help farmers recoup their losses without ensuring they receive a fair price for their milk. Taxpayers financing for this dairy margin insurance essentially lets big dairy processors profit off chronically low milk prices. As an alternative to the "*Foundation for the Future*" legislation we urge you to direct our Congress members to support reforms similar to the Federal Milk Marketing Improvement Act that was introduced in the Senate last year.

Thank you for your consideration on these timely issues and your continued efforts to improve the lives of San Franciscans. We look forward to your support.

Sincerely,