



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence
Board of Supervisors



DATE: 12/1/2011
BOARD MEETING DATE: 12/13/2011
SPECIAL NOTICE/HEARING: No
VOTE REQUIRED: Majority

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: Supervisor Don Horsley

SUBJECT: Direct to Consumer Agriculture: Small Dairy Exemption

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution authorizing the President of the Board to execute a letter to the State Department of Food and Agriculture indicating the County's support of the direct to consumer stakeholder process currently being undertaken, and stating further, the Board's support of reasonable state regulations so that small dairies can be relieved of burdensome regulation and directly contract with consumers.

BACKGROUND:

San Mateo County has a long history of providing food for local consumers. Early organized agricultural production provided food to Mission San Francisco de Asis. To this day, San Mateo County has played a key role in providing food to residents of this County and beyond.

As agriculture has developed into agribusiness and urban consumers and rural producers have become more separated from each other, knowledge about our food system has plummeted. A healthy, sustainable food system needs that knowledge. Consumers should understand the fundamental origin of their food: where it is harvested, how it is produced, processed, and transported. Our community will be healthier if individuals are more connected to the land that sustains them and can have direct access to local and fresh food. The County supports this work through its Food Systems Alliance and the As Fresh As It Gets program. Much of the work to reconnect consumers with their food is being done through small-scale farming. San Mateo's small farms, and family farms in particular, are working to grow and distribute food within the County. Through relationships with small farmers, consumers deepen their understanding of where their food comes from and the care that is taken when it is grown.

Since the National Farmer-to-Consumer Direct Marketing Act of 1976 was passed farmers have been selling fruits, vegetables, herbs and other commodities directly to the

public. This reestablishment of the direct sale between the consumer and the farmer benefits the farmers in reducing their distribution costs. San Mateo County consumers have been particularly responsive to opportunities to access food directly. The San Mateo Food Alliance is working to increase this access. One of the most popular ways that our community is reconnecting to its food is through farmers' markets. San Mateo County now has over 20 Certified Farmers' Markets, with the 2011 establishment of new markets in Pescadero and La Honda.

The Community Supported Agriculture Model is also an important tool to connect farmers and consumers directly. Consumers who purchase a CSA provide financial support upfront, for the cost associated with growing the crops and in return receive the product from that farm. This constitutes a direct relation with the farmer. Recently Pillar Point Harbor fishermen have begun providing fresh fish direct to the consumer through this model.

Ranchers are also marketing directly to consumers in a variety of ways such as small poultry farmers who may process and sell "on farm" poultry directly to consumers. They are supported by specific regulations that allow them to raise chickens for both eggs and meat, without the burdensome regulations required for large conventional operations.

DISCUSSION:

San Mateo residents are interested in contracting directly with small dairies to purchase milk. There are no exemptions to dairy regulations for small producers; these have to abide by the requirements of large commercial dairy establishments. These regulations are particularly burdensome and are not commensurate with the production level.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has stated a commitment to increase access to farm products. We encourage them to continue this support. CDFA is currently pursuing a stakeholder effort under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and the State Veterinarian to provide relief from wholesaler regulations to small dairy operations who wish to enter into private contractual relationships with consumers. San Mateo County believes that efforts to preserve our agricultural heritage are important and that efforts such as these, focused particularly on small farmers, are important to pursue. We encourage CDFA to continue the dialogue with stakeholders and to craft state regulations for these small dairies that are both protective of public health and reasonable.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact in sending the letter to the State Department of Food and Agriculture. Should changes in regulation have a fiscal impact, Environmental Health or the Agricultural Commissioner will bring the matter back to the board for further discussion.

RESOLUTION NO. _____

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF SAN MATEO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD
TO EXECUTE A LETTER TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
INDICATING THE COUNTY'S SUPPORT FOR
THE DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER STAKEHOLD PROCESS CURRENTLY BEING
UNDERTAKEN, AND AN OUTCOME OF REASONABLE REGULATIONS SO THAT SMALL
DAIRIES CAN BE RELIEVED OF BURDENSOME REGULATION
AND DIRECTLY CONTRACT WITH CONSUMERS.**

RESOLVED, by the Board of Supervisors, County of San Mateo, State of California, that

WHEREAS, as has been the case throughout our local history, the people of the County of San Mateo, have raised food for themselves, and their families, and the community at large; and

WHEREAS, in this day and age, there are many barriers to people raising their own food and livestock, including that land required for such activities, accessibility, time, knowledge and skills and urban consumers and rural producers have become separated from each other; and

WHEREAS, direct sales between the consumer and the farmer benefits both, and in San Mateo County, consumers enjoy purchasing directly from farmers at farm stands, farmer's markets, and through Consumer Supported Agriculture, and

WHEREAS, that efforts of small farms are vital to the ability of consumers to purchase from farmers, and the County of San Mateo supports this work, promoting local agriculture awareness and buying locally grown food, through its participation in the Food Systems Alliance and the As Fresh As It Gets program; and

WHEREAS, the California Department of Food and Agriculture has stated a commitment to increase access to farm products; and

WHEREAS, local dairies struggle with the onerous one-size-fits-all regulations and farmers and consumers would benefit from reasonable regulation that would allow private contractual relationships for purchase of milk from these producers, while at the same time protecting the public's health,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors supports the stakeholder process being undertaken by the CDFA to address this issue and the adoption of state laws that support and encourage continued and expanded direct to consumer farm products sales.

NOW, FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisor directs the President to send a letter to CDFA reflecting this position.