

Dear Ms. Bean,

In his April 1st call for statewide water use reductions and in comments since, Governor Brown stated that the mandatory program of restrictions was not directed at agriculture. It has now been learned the proposed conservation framework considers farming in San Diego County to be part of the urban landscape and subject to the same restrictions designed to curb excessive landscape irrigation. This provision will create undue harm to farmers in San Diego County who are just as important as farmers in other parts of the state. The conservation framework should exclude all agriculture as Governor Brown promised, regardless of location.

We are a 3rd generation farm family and have been in business since 1925 (over 90 years now). Our family farms on 400 acres in north San Diego County and we employ over 250 people from farm workers through sales, distribution and supporting staff. We like all farmers I know in San Diego have made extensive investments in irrigation efficiency. At \$1700/acre ft that we currently pay there is no real option but to be "ultra efficient" leaving little to no room for us to "tighten our belt" without allowing or eliminating farmed acreage. We are heavy producers of perennial cut flowers so any reductions would result in a huge economic loss of what was intended to be a long term investment. Cutting back our water and leaving no options for emergency and/or unique situations not only jeopardizes the logical 25% production you would expect from the reduction but would jeopardize our entire business due to the lack of sales to cover our hard costs.

As I mentioned above, all water users in San Diego County have made heavy investments in a system that includes a variety of water sources. That investment has been so high as to force many local farmers out of business and idle thousands of acres of productive farmland. This investment was done intentionally based on lessons from previous droughts with the aim of lessening the impacts of future droughts. This exact strategy was promoted by Governor Brown last year when he called for increased regional self-reliance. San Diego County not only heeded that call, but we were practicing it long before the governor's proclamation. To now say those efforts cannot be used to mitigate the impacts of this drought is a powerful disincentive to make future investments in local water supplies.

Farmers in San Diego County are no less concerned about the ongoing drought as are other Californians. Please consider and act on these comments as a matter of fairness.

Sincerely,

Michael A Mellano
VP of Farming
Mellano & Company
Producers of Cut Flowers & Foliage