

Dear Ms. Bean,

In Governor Brown's April 1st call for statewide water use reductions and in comments since, he 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 farmers in San Diego have had our water cut twice in the last few years in order for the water districts to meet their conservation requirements. At this time the governor has excluded agriculture but San Diego County farmers are excluded from the exclusion. The reason to exclude agriculture at this time seems clear as we have cut more than our share and although agriculture does use a large amount of the water you must remember that our irrigation is not allowed to run off our property and much of the water used goes into the aquifers for future use. We have separate agricultural water lines and meters and our farms are not part of an urban landscape.

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. It is hard to continue to conserve water when we seem to be punished for conserving in the early drought years. Please consider and act on these comments as a matter of fairness.

Sincerely,
Victoria F Higgins
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