

State Supt. Jack O'Connell
National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference
Friday, June 27, 2008

- **BEFORE I BEGIN, I'D LIKE TO RECOGNIZE JUDY CULBERTSON, THE CALIFORNIA DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM FOR HER SUPPORT AND LEADERSHIP ON THE CALIFORNIA INSTRUCTIONAL SCHOOL GARDEN ADVISORY GROUP AND HER LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO INCREASING AGRICULTURAL LITERACY AMONG CALIFORNIA STUDENTS.**
- **IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD, AGRICULTURE PLAYS A CRITICAL ROLE IN THE LIVES OF BILLIONS OF PEOPLE.**
- **WHETHER IT IS BY WAY OF PROVIDING JOBS OR FOOD FOR PEOPLE, THIS GLOBAL INDUSTRY IS AN IMPORTANT ONE FOR OUR STUDENTS TO UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE.**

- **THIS COULDN'T BE MORE TRUE THAN FOR STUDENTS IN CALIFORNIA, WHICH IS HOME TO ALMOST 90,000 FARMS AND RANCHES, AND WHERE ABOUT 1 IN EVERY 10 JOBS IS AGRICULTURALLY BASED.**
- **AND IT IS REALLY NOT SURPRISING WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT AGRICULTURE IN CALIFORNIA IS A ROUGHLY \$32 BILLION DOLLAR INDUSTRY EVERY YEAR.**
- **IN FACT, AS MANY OF YOU MAY KNOW, CALIFORNIA HAS BEEN #1 IN THE NATION WHEN IT COMES TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION FOR ABOUT THE LAST 50 YEARS.**
- **AND THAT'S WHY I'VE ALWAYS FELT THE NEED TO ENSURE THAT OUR STUDENTS ARE FULLY AWARE OF CALIFORNIA'S WELL-DESERVED AGRICULTURAL REPUTATION AND THE VITAL ROLE IT**

**PLAYS FOR BOTH OUR STATE'S
ECONOMY AND OUR PEOPLE.**

- **SO, SINCE TAKING OFFICE, I'VE WORKED TO PROMOTE THE INDUSTRY TO STUDENTS AND WE'VE GOT SOME VERY EFFECTIVE AND INFORMATIVE PROGRAMS IN PLACE THAT I FEEL ACCOMPLISH THIS.**

- **FOR INSTANCE:**

- **THE CALIFORNIA FRESH START PROGRAM (CFSP), WHICH ENCOURAGES AND SUPPORTS SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL PORTIONS OF FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES IN THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMS. THE AMOUNT OF FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES SERVED TO AND TAKEN BY STUDENTS HAS INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY, SO THE PROGRAM IS SUCCEEDING. I'M ALSO PROUD**

THIS IS THE NATION’S FIRST PROGRAM EARMARKING FUNDS TO INCREASE CONSUMPTION OF FRESH FRUIT IN A SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM;

- **THE CALIFORNIA FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PROGRAM (FFVP) PROVIDES AN ADDITIONAL FREE FRESH FRUIT OR VEGETABLE SNACK TO STUDENTS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY AS A SUPPLEMENT TO (AND NOT PART OF) SCHOOL BREAKFAST AND SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMS, AND TEACHES STUDENTS ABOUT GOOD NUTRITION. OUR STATE IS SCHEDULED TO RECEIVE APPROXIMATELY \$250,000 TO FUND 25 SCHOOLS THROUGH THIS PILOT PROGRAM NEXT MONTH; AND**
- **THE “GARDEN IN EVERY SCHOOL” INITIATIVE, LED BY MY**

DEPARTMENT’S NUTRITION SERVICES DIVISION, WHICH BRINGS TOGETHER INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT SCHOOL GARDENS, INCLUDING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE AGRICULTURAL AGENCIES, WASTE MANAGEMENT AGENCIES, HEALTH AGENCIES, AND OTHERS. WITH 3000 SCHOOL GARDENS, THE “GARDEN IN EVERY SCHOOL” PROGRAM REACHES THROUGHOUT THE STATE TO ENHANCE EDUCATION AND HEALTH.

- **THIS PROGRAM HAS ALSO EXPANDED TO FACILITATE THE LINKING SCHOOLS WITH LOCAL FARMERS TO PROVIDE FRESHER, TASTIER, AND HEALTHIER SCHOOL MEALS KNOWN AS “FARM TO SCHOOL” AND IS CONSIDERED A PART OF A**

HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT. WHEN FRESH, FARM-DIRECT, SEASONAL FOOD IS INCLUDED IN SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMS, BOTH CHILDREN AND FARMERS BENEFIT.

- **SO WHILE WE DO HAVE A LOT GOING ON IN THE CLASSROOM REGARDING AGRICULTURE, THERE'S ALWAYS MORE WE CAN DO.**
- **THAT'S WHY EARLIER THIS YEAR, I WROTE TO OUR CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION URGING THEM TO CHANGE FEDERAL LAW SO THAT SCHOOLS COULD MORE EASILY PURCHASE LOCALLY GROWN PRODUCE...AND I'M HAPPY TO SAY OUR DELEGATION ACTED ON THIS REQUEST.**
- **WE'VE GOTTEN OUR TECHNOLOGICAL ACT TOGETHER WITH "WAKE UP TO MORE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES," A**

PROGRAM DESIGNED FOR SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE PERSONNEL TO SUPPORT ADDITION OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES TO BREAKFAST OFFERINGS FOR STUDENTS.

○ **IT CAN BE ACCESSED ONLINE AT WWW.WAKEUPFV.COM**

- **WE'VE LAID A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR THE STUDY OF AGRICULTURE TO THRIVE IN OUR CLASSROOMS AND I WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD ON THIS BECAUSE OUR STUDENTS MUST BE KEENLY AWARE OF THIS INDUSTRY'S IMPACT ON OUR STATE AND HOW IT AFFECTS THEIR HEALTH, FITNESS, AND, IN A WORD, THEIR LIVES.**