



AGRICULTURE TODAY AND TOMORROW

Community Meeting
March 14, 2009
Morgan Hill Community and Cultural Center



Open Space Authority

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INTRODUCTION

Patrick Congdon, OSA General Manager

The Open Space Authority (OSA) was formed in 1993 by legislative act. People saw development moving into rural areas and were concerned about the impact on the environment and farming. Citizen groups envisioned a new organization that would include preservation of agriculture in its purview.

There was a planning period in OSA's early years, with work done by a Community Advisory Committee (which is still active today and the Agriculture Representative position is vacant, so please apply). The committee developed a 5-year plan that defined open space, land preservation, light recreation, agriculture and other land use concepts. The definition of agriculture settled on was the growing of food, fiber and plant materials.

OSA has been working with other agencies that are also dealing with agriculture. In 2000 County of Santa Clara established agriculture easements; OSA was seen as the most likely agency to facilitate this type of preservation. LAFCO has taken up the issue of agriculture mitigation. Is it good? Bad? Should OSA help meet community agriculture mitigation needs? These are questions yet to be answered.

Today we'd like to hear from the public, from consumers, community gardeners, agricultural producers and others with involvement in agriculture. The focus of our discussion will be on two questions:

1. What does agriculture mean to you?
2. What is your vision for local agriculture in the future?

A note about the Open Space Authority: We cover most of rural Santa Clara County as well as the cities of Milpitas, Santa Clara, Campbell, San Jose and Morgan Hill. As an independent special district we have an elected board of directors and separate funding. Board members in attendance today include Garnetta Annable, Jim Foran, Sequoia Hall, Virginia Holtz and Alex Kennett.

Skip Spitzer, Facilitator

There are 4 ways to communicate your thoughts to us:

1. speaking - comments are being recorded by note takers
2. written forms at the meeting
3. written forms available online at www.openspaceauthority.org
4. call or email staff with comments

We have a sign-up sheet if you would like to receive copies of the written notes. Speakers will have four to five minutes to talk with a warning when time is

running out. Everybody has something important to say, so we encourage a respectful tone and a spirit of listening. At the end of the discussion period there may be time for additional comments and dialog, but first everyone will have a chance to speak once.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

JAN GARROD, Fourth-generation agriculturalist, Farm Bureau president

My family got its start as fruit growers. Now I'm in the wine-grape-equestrian business. I've served on the Farm Bureau board for many years. I've noticed that farmers leaving Santa Clara County have gone all over the state, which gives Santa Clara County agriculture a wide influence.

What agriculture means to me: fresh fruit, blossoming orchards, laughter and Spanish songs, mooing of cattle, sheep, smells of the earth and manure, grass, views for miles with mountains in the background, farmers' markets on the weekends, fruit stands, the freshest best food, not being in a hurry, going with the timing of nature, the satisfaction of bringing in a harvest, working in the field at sun up, watching the day beginning, sharing this experience with others who also work in farming.

How to keep farming in the valley in the future? It's a struggle with the high cost of land. Today farmers are surrounded by houses. But there have been many technological advances in recent years. Farmers are using 40% less water and less pesticides, and getting 40% more yields. But farmers need the cost of water to come down.

There is more of a focus on sustainability, of keeping open space land and putting food on the table. Slow food is becoming a reality. I enjoy driving through California and seeing all the open space and land and also having food on my table. Agricultural easements can help save land for farming in the future. Ultimately we need farmers to farm and ranchers to graze. Their cows help reduce the fire danger.

MIKE MILLER, President of Santa Clara County Cattlemen's Association

I ranch in the Mt. Hamilton-Alum Rock area. The cattlemen's group focuses on taking care of 4H kids and the fair. We also work to educate our members on the newest technology and science. Taking care of the land better than before is a big issue with the group.

What agriculture means to me: a lifestyle, history, especially kids. Raising them in a better environment with open space, things to do and things to learn. High quality food, produce and animal products.

For the future: It's important to keep agriculture in California, especially this part where I live. I want to keep as much of the valley in agriculture and as open as possible. We should keep a handle on development and channel it.

CAROLYN TOGNETTI, Farmer

I'm a third-generation resident of Morgan Hill married to a second-generation farmer. My family grows row crops and cherries. We own about 60 acres and farm around 1,500. We owned Garlic World for 16 years but I'm retired now from what was a seven-day-a-week business.

What agriculture means to me: Agriculture is important both personally and for other people so that we can get food locally and not from China.

I'm a representative of Save Open Space Gilroy (SOSG), which failed in an effort to preserve 668 acres of farmland. Farmers themselves opposed the effort. They saw the land as their retirement and wanted to protect their right to sell to developers. At the same time, they also don't want to see the land lost for agriculture, so there's a contradiction.

In the future: OSA could be another buyer of agriculture land, another way for farmers to meet their retirement goals. OSA could also educate farmers and reach out to farmers not yet close to development. Buying a small parcel in the middle of larger open land could keep the whole area from being developed.

RUBEN DELAROSA, Resident

I grew up working on farms. My parents worked in farming too. I'm interested in the idea of locavores, people eating from local food sources within a 100 mile radius. OSA could support local farmers who want to provide fruits and vegetables locally. For instance, bring back California garlic rather than buying Chinese garlic.

In the future: Farmers need to be supported in a way that makes it feasible to farm and so they can make money. We also have to be concerned about increased traffic and global warming because it all ties into a local circle. It's part of providing local work.

MARK MEDEIROS, Representing Veggielution

What agriculture means to me: I grew up in San Martin, and became politicized about the loss of open land, especially in relation to the proposal to develop Coyote Valley.

Veggielution operates educational programs about community farming with a focus on leadership training and youth. We want to acquire more space at Emma Prusch Park to operate a larger educational farm. The organization is exploring a number of partnership options including the development of a sustainable agriculture program at SJSU.

There is a huge demand for locally grown food. Many CSA (community supported agriculture) projects operate in surrounding areas like Salinas and Half Moon Bay, where people buy into the farm and get a share of the produce every week. Santa Clara County doesn't have the structure to support small farms. OSA could buy easements on land to help support farmers so they can do this. Urban garden projects are also useful. There are some urban gardens and farms in the county like Full Circle Farm in Sunnyvale; OSA could buy parcels to encourage more urban farming.

An important focus for agriculture preservation is Coyote Valley. It's both farmland and a wildlife corridor; preserving agriculture also preserves the environment for wildlife.

Vision for the future: youth participation in farming that is a regular part of community life. Farming is a historical anomaly. We need to look at community garden space, small producers, educational programs, and supporting diversity.

MARY COFFELT, Family cattle rancher

What agriculture means to me: Agriculture is more than a lifestyle, it's a responsibility and obligation to preserve and enhance our earth, which is imperative for the survival of our species. Agriculture is a management tool that helps create and maintain the landscape description for the earth. Our cows are tools, grazers that can accomplish incredible things, though financial pressures make ranching difficult.

Vision for the future: In order to survive as human beings we must preserve the environment we're in and ensure that it thrives. Historically farmers have worked with the earth and understand it. OSA can understand our tools. We can work together to manage our ecosystem and achieve an appropriate and sustainable landscape description.

KATHRYN MATHEWSON, Landscape designer

As a child growing up on land along Uvas Creek that was planted in walnuts, I was able to swim in the creek. As water was diverted through dams the land was put into apples. I've watched the evolution of the landscape. As president of the American Nursery & Lands Association I saw the evolution of nursery operations as well. I also worked on the effort to save BAREC, the research farm in Santa Clara.

What agriculture means to me: getting food directly from the land, food that tastes good. Compost piles, no pesticides, the great smell and feel of healthy soil. (A handful of healthy soil has an incredible number of living organisms and needs less water.) Also the fair, 4H, FAA, healthy people. An insectary to attract and maintain beneficial insects. Agriculture is also growing plants and herbs and protecting everything, all the living things because the more we have the better.

Good examples of agriculture preservation programs are MALT (Marin Agricultural Land Trust) and the program in Sonoma County.

Vision for the future: bus lines to rural farms and urban farms, clean up of pesticide residue, a focus on soil biology, and an agriculture museum because of the county's incredible agriculture heritage. More agriculture research, carbon sequestration and especially local organic food.

REGGIE KNOX, Resident of Santa Cruz County

What agriculture means to me: I worked on a small diverse row crop farm. My heart is in farming, being close to the land, and working with others on the land.

I've had a 20-year career in central coast agriculture, representing CA Farmlink, supporting agriculture by working with small farmers, pushing national legislation and nurturing partnerships with California Certified Organic Farms and the Farm League. Our goal at Farmlink is to create opportunities for new and beginning farmers, which aids the broader local agriculture economy.

Vision for the future: I see a trend toward organic farming and small farms, whose numbers are increasing even as consolidation into large operations continues. We need to support aspiring farmers by making land available through leases, financing and succession planning. (Farmlink has a loan fund for operating and infrastructure loans; the farmer makes a regular contribution and that money is matched from grant funding.)

Access to farmland is a huge issue for new farmers. OSA could support conservation easements, which lower the cost to farmers of acquiring land. Or OSA could take fee title to farm lands and lease them to farmers.

DOUG HAYDEN, President of California Farmer's Market Association

There are over 35 farmers' markets in the Bay Area. Our organization is a little sustainable-farming machine, helping small farmers with marketing and presentation. We're making sure small farmers can make it financially. With direct-to-consumers market access, farms as small as three acres can make it if there is affordable water. Water is a huge issue for small farmers. When planning for the preservation of agricultural land be sure water is in considered.

The direct farmer-consumer connection means fresher food that has traveled less, not the 1,500 miles some research suggests for the mainstream food network. The average distance to market for the Morgan Hill farmer's market is 63 miles. This helps the carbon footprint, another reason keeping things local is important.

Farming is about community. In the past most life was agriculture based. We need to get back to the old method of agriculture and back to our historical roots. With farmers' markets many small farmers specialize and people know their growers. Today it's important to know where your food comes from. It's safer from a quality standpoint and local food also offers more food security in the event of a major emergency.

Vision for the future: more small farmers, emphasis on eating locally, farm tourism and more CSAs with new legislation to make organizing them easier.

LESLIE MILES, Architect

I grew up in Carpinteria in a farming family and lived in Sebastopol when it was the Gravenstein apple capital of the world. I studied sustainable agriculture at Cal Poly, worked in Guatemala and served as community garden coordinator in Santa Barbara.

What agriculture means to me: Focusing on appropriate agriculture, which is sustainable and more. Like our renovated granary in Morgan Hill, where we drilled through concrete to plant an orchard in the parking lot. It creates resonance with people who grew up in the valley. It's a small patch of recollection, what our valley was with its small-town farming communities.

Vision for the future: a way to reconnect people with the land and re-interest them in agriculture.

GARY PETERSON, Deputy Director of Agriculture and Land-Based Training (ALBA)

What agriculture means to me: Agriculture means an opportunity for people who are seeking to invest themselves in our communities. ALBA works with aspiring farmers, many of them farm worker families from diverse backgrounds. More than a third are beginning farmers with less than ten years experience.

OSA could support their aspirations by acquiring farm land. Santa Clara County has an aging farming community so investing in new farmers is important.

Vision for the future: As oil is depleted agriculture will need to transition to localized farming industries. This will require an inflow of resources including innovative marketing and opportunities to farm. We have seen 20% growth in the last couple of years for produce distributed through ALBA organics. People with land call ALBA often, looking for tenants or a way to exercise their agricultural water rights.

A good discussion of agriculture and the future is presented in Michael Pollan's letter to President Obama, which ran in the *New York Times*.

BOB COFFELT, Local rancher

What agriculture means to me: I want to see my sons go into agriculture. It's been good to us, though sometimes, because of the financial challenges, it seems like a nonprofit without the tax break.

Vision for the future: I want to see agricultural preservation, but only with production of something to eat, not production of paperwork. People who produce food will do the right thing.

CYNTHIA D'AGOSTA, Executive Director of Committee for Green Foothills

I grew up in east San Jose surrounded by orchards that aren't there anymore. My husband lived in Modesto and saw the land lost to development. He doesn't want to see it happen in Santa Clara County.

What agriculture means to me: I learned about the business end of agriculture and saw that it took community effort to pull off the crop in summer. We used to have jobs for youth in the orchards.

Vision for the future: We'll need to think of how to provide youth employment and community involvement with small farms. It's also important to ensure food safety by knowing how our food is grown and bringing it back under local control. There's an inspiration that has to happen to develop in people a passionate connection to the earth. We need to understand that connection, capture and bottle it.

GEORGE GUGLIELMO, Third-generation vintner

I would love to be able to market all my wine in this valley, but we cannot. Wine is a world commodity. We're in commercial agriculture even though we're surrounded by development including a high school on one side. We work to mitigate our impacts in order to be good neighbors. We also have to diversify for

financial stability. This is not small-scale agriculture, not five- and six-acre parcels.

Vision for the future: I have seen the transition in Santa Clara County agriculture as development has spread. Even though we farm locally, we have to think about other markets and getting our products to them. Farms today are multi-generational so they need to create enough profit to support several families. Why does the next generation fail to go into agriculture? Is it because the money is not as good as it could be?

AMOR SANTIAGO, The Health Trust

My organization is involved in a national movement against obesity, which drives chronic disease. How we understand or don't understand food is a major cause of obesity. Kids identify food as something that comes from a box or fast food restaurant.

What agriculture means to me: Agriculture means health and healthy communities. It's more than just a business, it's a spiritual connection to the land, knowing how our food is raised. That's a connection our kids have lost.

Vision for the future: We need local healthy food to be present and available to everyone. Smart growth, which puts people closer together as a way of preserving more land, is important. Our organization wants to make a big difference in the health of the community by promoting links with agriculture to ensure healthy food and support family farms.

Kellogg Foundation and other health organizations have said they want to create regional infrastructures of food production and fresh food for schools. Perhaps we could replicate the foodshed assessment that was done for San Francisco to understand where the food in our area comes from.

KEVIN O'DAY, Santa Clara County Department of Agriculture

Vision for the future: There are two important things to consider in agriculture planning. First, agriculture is a system. It is an interaction among the land, farmers, farm equipment, and processing facilities. It's all part of a web.

Second, farming is not static, it changes. We can preserve the land but not the past. There were once thousands of acres of prune trees in Santa Clara County; now fewer than 100 acres are left. Things change, tastes change and farmers will always grow what people want to eat, so whatever model is developed for agriculture in the future has to have flexibility built in.

CARRIE HAMILTON, Land-use activist

Change happens. We must adapt. I'm glad to see the environment and agriculture communities coming together. Forty percent of greenhouse gas emissions come from growing and transporting food. Local food is better for the environment. It means getting back to more appropriate and sustainable practices. Access to healthy food doesn't exist in some communities. We could develop community gardens in housing developments. People need to understand food and their relationship to the land. The average American takes our food system for granted.

Vision for the future: It's important to preserve larger scale urban-edge agriculture like Coyote Valley. We also need small-scale farming and community gardens. There's also an education role in the urban/suburban environment, to understand why we need to protect our local food system for food security. It's an environmental, food, health and land-use issue.

GEORGE CHIALA, Farmer

Our whole family has been in farming for three generations.

What agriculture means to me: You can't say what agriculture is all in one word. It's farming - production and family farming - and educational farming, which may not be profitable but it's important to the community. Production farming has to make a profit. Farmers have to know their land, their seed, when to take the crop. Then their work will feed their family and many others.

We're quick freezing produce to lock in the highest value. Then the product can be distributed when the market is right. This is new technology that allows us to feed a lot more people.

Agriculture is not one thing, it's lots of different things. I can't exist on less than 100 acres. We're currently farming 1,000 acres. Smaller farms are important and should also be supported. And farmer's markets are good but more in the gardening end.

DENNIS KENNEDY, Board member of Silicon Valley Land Conservancy and former mayor of Morgan Hill

Vision for the future: A situation in Santa Clara County where cities can live side by side with successful agriculture operations. This has to work for the farmers: They have to be able to make a living.

TRIXIE JOHNSON, Former San Jose councilmember

I grew up in Utah and learned early that agriculture was a system from watching produce coming in and going out of town on the trains. I served on the general

plan committee for the City of San Jose in 1976 and am part of FROG (Friends of the Greenbelt).

My mission has always been to keep growth within limits so there can be agriculture on the edge of the city. Agriculture is what can happen at the urban edge, what is viable. Big farmers in the valley are stressed by the pressure of urban growth. Local governments should do what is necessary to make agriculture work.

As a consumer, I want those fresh foods that don't have such a large carbon footprint getting to me. Our way of doing food has to change. The issue of agriculture and the urban edge is occurring all over the country. OSA can be part of the system that will make it financially viable for agriculture to remain on the edge of our cities.

JUSTIN FIELDS, Fifth-generation cattle rancher

What agriculture means to me: Is cattle ranching really agriculture or is it just being a cowboy, riding a horse and all that fun stuff? Actually, I'm a grass farmer. My livelihood depends on my ability to grow grass to feed the cows. My 4-legged combines harvest grass and convert it to beef.

Vision for the future: Besides managing grasslands to produce beef, we provide wildlife habitat, including habitat for endangered species like California red-legged frog, tiger salamander and western pond turtle, who hang out around stock ponds, and also the bay checkerspot butterfly. Grazing and farm lands provide a wildlife corridor and need to be around for a while. I see farmers and ranchers working with environmentalists because it's becoming apparent we have the same goals.

DAVID COLLIER, Gilroy resident and activist

Vision for the future: We need to focus on the long-term vision of agriculture. We naturally think of what has happened in the past when we look into the future, but things may change for us quickly. Our agriculture system is built on cheap fossil fuels right now. The pressures of climate change and limited oil will make local agriculture very important. It could be the best use of the land and the cheapest way to produce food in the future. The savings may balance out the high cost of labor and water.

What happens when we realize we need local land for food production and we no longer have it? We have to look to the far-distant future. Local food may be cheap enough for us to afford, but the local land may no longer exist to grow it.

CONNIE ROGERS, Gilroy resident

I grew up in Vermont where everybody has a garden so I know the value of small farming, backyard gardens, and community gardens. They're all a good thing but we have to find a way to preserve production agriculture. It's not just the visual impact, the big open spaces, but it's also good for global warming. The question is how can we sustain the large agriculture producers and help them resist development? We need both large and small farms.

MARK LANDGRAF, Peninsula Open Space Trust

POST has protected 12,000 acres of agriculture land.

AZIZ BAAMEUR, University of California farm program

I have a cautionary comment. In our work we don't look at small or big farms, conventional or organic farming, because this is divisive. We focus on what is economically, environmentally and socially sustainable.

What's at stake is not five or ten years but three, four or five generations from now. The vision exists to make life better than it was before us. We don't want to succumb to the immediate profit concept. We have to make a living, but there is a higher cause, the sake of future generations. Will we have an urban jungle hell or will life be continuing as we see it now and hope to leave it even better?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

... It's pretty clear we want to keep farming in the valley. OSA directors have the power and the tools to keep us in farming. Work with your partners.

... Grazers are farmers. OSA has a big responsibility. You have done some innovative things. I trust that you can handle it. Thank you for opening this conversation.

... The next big thing to do is educate the community about the importance of local agriculture, to get programs and speakers on the subject.

... We can work with the federal farm bills to get more support for California specialty crops and beginning ranchers and farmers. There are a number of Farm Service Agency programs available. The USDA budget is \$90 billion a year. That's money that can be used. We can integrate conservation efforts with land acquisition to help new farmers get going.

... We need production agriculture. How can we gain the consumer food dollar and make farming more profitable? This needs to be defined. We need to look at the

multiple benefits of agriculture and define those benefits. This will help with education and creating the connection to agriculture and the land that we want to see happen.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMMENTS

ALEX KENNETT, District 1

Agriculture people have done a good job with their food production but are taken for granted. People who need to be reached aren't at this meeting. We need to reach out and educate people.

SEQUOIA HALL, District 3

I have a small winery in Campbell and have seen first-hand that agriculture is not always pretty; there are a lot of processing aspects to it. Housing on agriculture properties is another issue. I think small farms will have a place in the future as well as big grazing on large parcels and big row crop operations.

JIM FORAN, District 2

I see two themes - big commercial farms and small sustainability farms. We have to plan for how to feed people and not pave over the best farm land. It's important to maintain that connection of people to the land. We have to feed ourselves with local agriculture and also feed others who don't have our soils, water and climate. The high price of prime farm land is really difficult for production farming. We have to work together, the large and the small.

GARNETTA ANNABLE, District 4

The Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) has put together an agriculture study and recommendations that are available online at www.openspaceauthority.org.

CITIZEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTS

DORSEY MOORE, Chair and parks representative

Farming is hard work. I've done enough of it to appreciate farmers. The CAC is a research and advisory arm for the Board of Directors. And the agriculture seat is open so please apply.

SUSAN MCKUHEN, District 1 representative

Having agriculture education in the schools would be valuable. School gardens are a program that teach appreciation for fresh locally grown foods. The kids benefit from learning how to grow food and the schools benefit by having a local source of fresh produce.

CONCLUSION

Patrick Congdon

Now we have to bring all these views and information together to fit the OSA perspective. There are many different groups that have something to do with agriculture and can contribute different things, including underrepresented and non-English-speaking agriculture communities.

OSA has limited funding and staff and must work within the constraints of the agency. We can't be the savior of all agriculture in Santa Clara County. It's time to move away from the idea of public agencies doing everything to public/private partnerships. They will be critical in the future.

Where do we go now? We will continue to want to hear from you. OSA doesn't have a pre-formed vision. We want to get a deeper understanding of the many aspects of agriculture and the many challenges. There are other things we haven't touched on: aquaculture, mushrooms, flower growers.

All these questions will be discussed publicly. We can't draft a vision of agriculture in Santa Clara County solely on our own. Thank you for helping us to create our vision and please come back or feel free to call or email us any time with more of your ideas.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

DANA WOLFE, Gilroy resident

What agriculture means to me: To put it simply, it means food. In Santa Clara County it means beef cattle, poultry, row crops, orchards, and vineyards. All of these commodities contribute millions of dollars to our economy, they provide jobs, and they sustain our lives.

Agriculture land also helps to minimize global warming and helps to replenish our ground water supplies by allowing the rain water to be absorbed into the soil rather than running off into the drainage system in our urban areas. Agriculture land compared to urban areas can clearly show the connection between land use and climate change.

Vision for the future: My vision for the future of local agriculture is to protect it at all costs. South Santa Clara County has the last remaining large sections of agriculture land. They must be protected to feed south Santa Clara County residents as well as our northern neighbors who have developed much of their agricultural land. We cannot rely on other counties in California to provide our

food as more than 60% of developed land in San Joaquin Valley was prime farmland. Almost two-thirds of urbanized land in California between 1990 and 2004 was agricultural land. We must push for infill development of our cities and save our farmland for food production. We obviously cannot rely on other parts of California to protect their agriculture land and depending on foreign countries for food is a dangerous position to be in due to lack of food safety and political challenges.

Thank you for reaching out to the community on this very important issue that impacts everyone in Santa Clara County as well as the rest of California. I hope that our need for locally grown food, our food safety, and climate change are taken into consideration when future land use decisions are being made.

KYLE WOLFE, Owner of Kickam Ranch

What agriculture means to me: Agriculture is a lifestyle. It's a way of life that has been lived for generations. It's a family heritage to be passed down to each generation. It's stewardship of the land to ensure that it is maintained for the future.

Vision for the future: People need to understand the connection of agriculture and agricultural land to the food they buy in the grocery store.

ANGELA D'ORFANI

What agriculture means to me: As the primary purchaser of food for my family of four I am thrilled that I am able to purchase 99% of my fresh produce at local farmers' markets. The fact that the fruits and vegetables I provide and prepare for my family are locally grown is THE MOST important factor in my choosing to shop at the farmers' market. Of my farmers' market purchases 90% are from organic growers. Needless to say I believe we must do all we can to ensure locally grown food is available in Santa Clara County. It is the right thing to do for our population and our planet.

Vision for the future: In order to make locally grown crops readily available to all citizens I envision a patchwork of small sustainable farms interspersed with homes and all of the other businesses that make up our society (i.e. the spas, service providers, shopping malls, movie theaters, grocery stores and restaurants - these last two will benefit from the readily available food produced next door).

We have paved over the majority of the Valley of Hearts Delight, as the Santa Clara Valley was once known, building shopping malls, condos, homes and freeways. It is time to preserve the majority of what is left for small farms that can safely be located in neighborhoods. In order for them to be safe they would ideally be organic but at worst they would use the absolute minimum of

pesticides and herbicides, something that is possible with small scale farms growing a variety of crops as opposed to the giant monoculture "farms" run by agribusiness that have turned healthy food into petroleum guzzling biotrap.

Of course the big down side of this concept is that the food will cost more but we will be paying the true value of sustainably grown healthy food and reap the benefits of healthy seasonal foods for our bodies and our planet.

ROBERT MEANS

What agriculture means to me: As "transportation" can mean anything from walking to BART, agriculture means growing food in pots at apartments and on farms. I believe that food of all sorts should be grown and consumed locally. Any efforts you make in that direction will help.

Vision for the future: Food growing on most land that is not paved over or built upon. Obviously, hillside land that is too unstable or steep for homes is a prime candidate. So are vacant lots awaiting development (oftentimes years in the future). I could even see us reclaiming some of the land in and around freeway interchanges. Cuba provides a good example of what can be done.

JIM LEAP, CASFS Farm Manager

I am sorry that I was unable to attend the recent OSA Agriculture Workshop. I am sending written comments via this email in support of promoting and maintaining a viable, productive and sustainable food production system within the Santa Clara Valley.

I grew up in the Great Central Valley of California and farmed on a small scale in the Fresno area for 15 years prior to taking my current position here at the University of California at Santa Cruz where I have been farming and teaching for the past 19 production seasons. If you are not familiar with the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems (CASFS) here on the UCSC campus you can certainly learn more by visiting our web site @ <http://casfs.ucsc.edu/>.

As farm manager here at CASFS I have had the opportunity to work with and train over 700 participants in our highly acclaimed 6 month apprentice training course. Our program alumni are numerous here on the Central Coast, in California, in the US and the world helping to transform the food system. I know from communications with these motivated and influential farmers and gardeners and policy makers and educators that there has never been a greater opportunity than now to educate consumers about the importance of what I will call "food shed awareness". More importantly than that, there has never been a greater opportunity than now to create opportunities in our communities,

through organizations like OSA, to provide land at a reasonable cost to entry level farmers.

With high fuel prices and a new economic paradigm that is creating greater focus on the important things in life, as well as creating a much greater awareness of self-reliance both on an individual level and on a community level, I would highly encourage you to explore all options available to move in the direction of creating and supporting a local food system in the Santa Clara Valley. Despite what people say, it is possible to re-introduce agriculture to the Santa Clara Valley. Agricultural production will never generate the millions of dollars in real estate value that homes and offices do but we all need to be mindful of the fact that you can't even begin to put a value on a sustainable food production system that is intrinsically linked to the community where the food is being consumed.

I guess what I really want to communicate to you all, based on my experience here at CASFS, is that the demand for our program has never been higher. Our graduates are seeking out and finding amazing opportunities to use their skills to set up amazing community based farms and CSA's. If any of you are interested I would be more than willing to introduce you to many of our graduates who are actively involved in our communities running economically viable and beautifully integrated farms and non-profit organizations whose mission it is to facilitate the continuation - and/or reintroduction - of responsible land stewardship.

What they are really all about is facilitating reconnecting society back to the land. Seeing these operations first hand may help you to form a stronger vision of how current open space in the Santa Clara Valley could be transformed to better serve as a foodshed resource for future generations. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any desire to take me up on my offer.

SIBELLA KRAUS, President of SAGE

What agriculture means to me: Local agriculture provides local communities with fresh, safe, food, of a selection appropriate the local cultures. Local agriculture entails the stewardship of a local foodshed, including its natural and human resources. Locally agriculture is equally in the interests of rural and urban populations.

Vision for the future: In the future local agriculture will be more highly valued than it is today. It will provide and be compensated for providing significant environmental services. It will also serve as a permanent buffer between cities, dedicate a measure of its production for local consumption, provide new jobs,

support the engagement of new farmers, and engage the public through many types of agri-tourism.

LOUISE LACEY, Owner of Growing Native

What agriculture means to me: Fresh! Frequently organic. Directly responsible to buyers who are often retail customers.

Vision for the future: Don't sell any more land to developers! It is almost all gone. I remember huge space for stone fruit trees as well as other things. One summer I worked in a factory for apricots. I took the washed ones and cut out the seeds and spread them along the moving way.

MICHELE BEASLEY, Senior Field Representative for Greenbelt Alliance

What agriculture means to me: Local agriculture adds to the rich culture, environment, greenbelt of the Bay Area. We plan for people, jobs, shops, traffic and water, but repeatedly fail to plan for the food that will feed this growth. The highest and best use of the land is not always development. We need to see the land as a valuable resource that filters our drinking water, provides habitat for fauna and produces food for our table.

Fruits, vegetables and nuts are an important part of our diet and are grown right here in the Bay Area. Why ship food from across the country, adding to greenhouse gas emissions, when we have food right here in our backyard? Complete and great communities have quality jobs, a variety of homes, nearby services, parks and open space and farms. Local agriculture means life, community, health and environment to me.

Vision for the future: Local agriculture feeds the huge metropolitan region that is the Bay Area. Urban edge farms and community gardens thrive as people realize that they need to be closer to the source of their food, as it's good for their health and good for the environment.

More people get back to farming, farmers' markets are ubiquitous, more restaurants, schools, grocery stores, businesses buy local. It becomes as natural as recycling. Local agriculture is part of the fabric that makes up the Bay Area's greenbelt and urban life. To pave it, thinking it can't survive, is no vision of a sustainable future.

DIANE DEL SIGNORE, Executive Director of Community Alliance with Family Farmers

Please accept the following comments from Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) in regard to the March 14, 2009 community conversation about the future of agriculture in Santa Clara County. We were unable to send a

representative to participate in the meeting, but feel strongly about this subject and hope that you will add our written comments to the conversation.

As a farmer-member organization, we work to protect and enhance the viability of family farming in the state of California. One of the threats to that viability is the shrinking amount of land available for agriculture. CAFF is hard at work rebuilding the infrastructure for local food systems, and has experienced success with the growth of the current food movement, but land is clearly the basis of all farming industry. Preserving access to land for farming, whether it is on the rural Central Coast or in the more urban Silicon Valley, is critically important to the health of our food system and we urge the Open Space Authority to recognize the central role of agriculture in all communities.

While family farmers have long struggled to stay in business, the current food and farming movement and the accompanying resources provided by organizations like CAFF are ensuring that family farming continues. We've had some encouraging success: CAFF's Community Food Systems programs are actively supporting farmers with four different projects. 1) Farm to School, which focuses on connecting the classroom and cafeteria with fresh and local produce and providing agriculturally-based nutrition education, 2) Buy Fresh Buy Local, a social marketing campaign that educates consumers about the importance of supporting local agriculture, 3) Farm to Institution, which provides technical assistance to institutions for implementing local procurement programs, and 4) Growers' Collaborative, a small-scale alternative distribution venture that provides source-verified local produce to institutional and corporate cafeterias. Each of these programs have contributed to local farming economies across California that are steadily becoming more robust.

The thriving food and farming movement is creating demand for more farmers and more farmland; Santa Clara County is no exception. In the middle of downtown Sunnyvale CAFF has found a wonderful program partner in Full Circle Farm. And increasingly area institutions, consumers and policymakers are looking to local farmers to create a healthier, more resilient Silicon Valley. We hope that the Open Space Authority will preserve Santa Clara County's ability to produce healthy, fresh foods and strengthen the local farming economy.

Cover photo of Michael Coffelt taken by Rachel Santos