



SONOMA COUNTY FARM BUREAU

Affiliated with the California Farm Bureau Federation and the American Farm Bureau Federation

February 22, 2013

Board of Supervisors
County of Marin
Civic Center
San Rafael, CA 94903
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Members of the Board:

Local Coastal Plan Amendment

As the voice of agriculture in your neighboring county, Sonoma County Farm Bureau wishes to express its appreciation for your recognizing agriculture as a vital element of your society and economy. As we watched your draft evolve over the past year, we were impressed by the progress made as a result of the intensive dialogue between the County and the agricultural constituents led by Marin County Farm Bureau (MCFB).

However, there still remain some gaps that have to be bridged. They are clearly identified and solutions suggested in MCFB's letter dated February 19, 2013, and its Attachment #1. We fully support their view that the requested changes are essential for the survival of agriculture in the coastal areas of Marin and should be helpful for protecting your County government, too.

Agriculture is a constantly evolving industry. Between 1950 and 2000, the average hourly agricultural output per farmer in the U.S. grew 12 times, and the annual milk production per cow increased 240%. We now produce more from less land and using less water. Yet, even with increased productivity and improved resources conservation, we have to struggle for our survival due to the rising costs of production, intensifying inter-regional and international competitions, ever-growing regulations, and frequent natural calamities.

If we compare agriculture to manufacturing industry, land is our factory floor and the buildings our offices. No manufacturing industry will survive if it did not have the freedom to optimize the use of their plant and facilities; to change their products, production methods, and distribution systems; and to have an option for vertical integration. In agriculture, all these necessary freedoms are tied to land use. This is why land use regulations for agriculture deserve unique attention.

The Sonoma County Local Coastal Plan recognizes this fact, and puts a broad emphasis on the protection of agriculture (and forestry) in the coastal areas while doing away with most of the detailed stipulations. Local government is given the power to formulate its own local coastal plan. All the changes, additions, and deletions being proposed by MCFB are in line with the basic policies of the Coastal Act. Therefore, we believe it is the best for the future of Marin County that you adopt all the changes requested by MCFB, and we earnestly urge you to do so.

Respectfully submitted,

Tito Sasaki, AICP
President



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