



September 26th , 2012

Honorable Supervisors,

The Valley Ford Young Farmers Association submits this letter in hopes that you will make necessary changes to the Planning Commission Approved Marin County Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan & Development Code Proposed Amendments (Proposed LCP) to minimize permit requirements and costs consistent with the recently passed California State AB1616, The Homemade Food Act.

In the proposed LCP, agricultural practices such as cheese making, other types of agricultural processing, and sales require Coastal Permits and Use Permits in some situations. These permits, added to the cost of Building and Health Permits, which can (and often do) add up to many thousands of dollars, that a small farm wanting to make a value-added product- simply does not have. To not allow us to affordably process and sell our farm products to the best of our ability does not reflect well of our historical 'foodshed', and the ability to continue providing local food.

I, as a young farmer living on my families' ranch in North-West Marin have looked through our family photo albums and heard the stories from my grandparents and parents of the ways agriculture has evolved through the generations. When my great-great grandfather first bought the property it was a Jersey dairy; when my great- grandfather managed our land; in the height of Petaluma's "butter and egg capital" days, it was a hatching egg business; when my grandfather managed the land it was a beef and sheep operation. Now, as it is beginning to transition from my fathers' generation to my generation, we are continuing the beef and sheep operation, while also going back to raising chickens for eggs and meat. As diets and markets change in the general population, we as local producers must adapt, and we must be able to make a living too.

All of the permit requirements and regulation for practices necessary for a family farm or ranch to adapt, may be cost prohibitive to continue in agriculture. If a family farm or small farm that gives farm tours for the education of the general publics' understanding of food systems is subject to extensive permitting, it will discourage rather than encourage that farm to continue, and not only is there a loss to the farmer, but a loss to the greater education about food systems. We unfortunately live in a time where two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese. The knowledge value of healthy, fresh food systems is priceless.

Giving farmers and ranchers more ability with straight forward, economically realistic policies will only increase the economic potential of small family farms, such as reflected in these Countywide Plan policies:

Policy AG-2.3. Support Small-Scale Diversification. Diversify agricultural uses and products on a small percentage of agricultural lands to complement existing traditional uses, ensure the continued economic viability of the county agricultural industry, and provide increased food security.

AG-2.4 Encourage Agricultural Processing. Encourage processing and distribution of locally produced foods to support local food security and strengthen Marin's agricultural industry.

These policies, minimizing the need Coastal Permit and Use Permits, and the passage of California AB1616 will only strengthen our farming communities and local food sources for generations to come.

Respectfully Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anna Erickson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "n" at the end.

Anna Erickson
President,
Valley Ford Young Farmers Association
www.valleyfordyoungfarmers.com