March 7, 2013

California Air Resources Board

1001 I Street

Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Cap-and-Trade Program revenue allocation and investment

Dear Air Resources Board Chairman Mary Nichols,

We write you in support of Cap-and-Trade revenue investment in sustainable agricultural practices, specifically the innovative and truly unique research and outreach being conducted by the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (UC SAREP).

UC SAREP and its partner program, the Russell Ranch Sustainable Agriculture Facility at UC Davis, work to find and share solutions that address climate change mitigation and adaptation, enhance practices for natural resource stewardship, and reduce farmers’ production costs.

Agriculture is uniquely vulnerable to climate change. It can also be a powerful tool to fight climate change and reduce GHG emissions through on-farm conservation methods. Many of the practices modeled by sustainable and organic farmers offer some of the best strategies for reducing agriculture’s carbon footprint, mitigating climate change and helping farmers adapt. Techniques such as the use of cover crops and manure, management of nutrient inputs and irrigation for optimal efficiency, conservation tillage, planting perennial buffers and management of the timing and density of livestock grazing can increase soil organic matter and sequester more soil carbon on farm and rangeland, thereby capturing atmospheric carbon and lowering GHG concentrations. Widespread adoption of these methods could make a significant impact on California’s climate challenge.

Multiple co-benefits can accompany these and other climate-protecting agricultural practices. For example, properly managed livestock grazing has the potential to increase soil carbon sequestration while also increasing water retention, reducing soil erosion, increasing forage quality and enhancing wildlife habitat and native grass populations. Furthermore, practices that reduce agriculture’s GHG emissions can also help the industry adapt to the coming changes in weather and water availability induced by climate change. Farms, ranches and food processors can achieve greater water conservation and energy efficiency and unleash the potential for generating renewable energy.

Over the past 27 years, UC SAREP has helped to launch several initiatives, programs and studies that have provided, and are still providing, solutions–such as those mentioned above—to California’s agricultural and environmental challenges. As the California Air Resources Board considers where to invest the Cap-and-Trade revenue, we recommend that the investment plan include funding for UC SAREP, which is the only statewide sustainable agriculture program with a mandate from the California Legislature.

UC SAREP’s well-established small grants program is now unfunded, but could be reactivated to stimulate innovation in California agriculture to address climate change and the closely-related topics of energy efficiency, water-use efficiency and nutrient management.

By investing in UC SAREP, California would be supporting technical assistance and collaborative action on:

* sequestering carbon in soils, orchards and rangelands
* farm practices that minimize GHG emissions
* replacing fertilizer-intensive urban landscapes (lawns) with carbon sequestering food gardens and urban agricultural parks, while increasing the food security of disadvantaged communities
* long-term, large-scale research asking big questions about climate/energy, water, and soil health that – 18 years into a 100-year study – is already generating data and advancing knowledge to support practical steps for climate change mitigation and adaptation in California agriculture
* sharing important information through the UC SAREP Solution Center, an online and in-person platform to share solutions with the agricultural community to big challenges. SAREP’s first Solution Center focuses on climate change, water management and nutrient efficiency.

There are many proposed initiatives across the state that could be scaled up. UC SAREP and its partner program, the Russell Ranch Sustainable Agriculture Facility, bring organizations and people together to develop collaborative solutions to the challenges we face today and to achieve broader adoption and impact. This is why we call for your on-going commitment to support UC SAREP, a research program with a strong focus on reducing agricultural GHG emissions in order to assure the profitability, viability and resilience of California agriculture in the face of climate change.

Sincerely,

**John Diener**, President, Red Rock Ranch, Five Points, CA

and

**AG Kawamura**, Founding Member, Orange County Produce, Irvine, CA and former Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture, Sacramento, CA

Joined by:

**Marcus Benedetti**, President and CEO, Clover Stornetta Farms, Petaluma, CA

**Ashley Boren**, Executive Director, Sustainable Conservation, San Francisco, CA

**Michael Dimock**, Executive Director, Roots of Change, San Francisco, CA

**Cornelius Gallagher**, Senior Vice President, Food, Agriculture and Wine Executive, Bank of America, Roseville, CA

**Carl Johnson**, Executive Vice President, Brands, Del Monte Foods, San Francisco, CA

**Craig McNamara**, President, California State Board of Food and Agriculture, Sacramento, CA; President, Sierra Orchards; Co-Founder, Center for Land Based Learning, Winters, CA

**Haider Nazar**, Chief Executive Officer, Verliant Energy Partners, Walnut Creek, CA

**Judith Redmond**, Owner and Partner, Full Belly Farm, Guinda, CA; Community Alliance for Family Farmers Board Secretary

**Richard Rominger**, Rominger Farms, Winters, CA; former US Department of Agriculture Deputy Secretary; former California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary

**Howard-Yana Shapiro**, Ph.D., Chief Agricultural Officer, Mars, Incorporated; Senior Fellow, Plant Sciences, College of Agriculture, UC Davis; Distinguished Fellow, The World Agroforestry Centre; and Co-founder, Seeds of Change

Cc:

**Karen Ross**, Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture, Sacramento, CA

**Martha Guzman Aceves**, Deputy Legislative Affairs Secretary, Office of Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr., Sacramento, CA

**Barbara Allen-Diaz**, Vice President, Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of California, Oakland, CA

**Mary Delany**, Interim Dean, College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences, University of California, Davis

**David Wehner**, Dean of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, CA

**Rachel Surls**, Sustainable Food Systems Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension, Los Angeles, CA

**Thomas Turini**, Vegetable Crops Farm Advisor, UCCE Fresno County, Fresno, CA

**Katharina Ullmann**, UC Davis Dept. of Entomology

**Kase Wheatley**, student, UC Davis Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems major