



TULARE COUNTY FARM BUREAU

Mission: to promote and enhance the viability of Tulare County agriculture.

February 25, 2021

CA Air Resources Board
Members of the Board
PO Box 2815
Sacramento, CA 95812

via Email: cotb@arb.ca.gov

RE: Item 20- 21-1-6: Public Meeting to Consider the San Joaquin Valley 2020 Agricultural Burning Assessment

The Tulare County Farm Bureau represents over 1,200 farm and ranch members and their respective businesses in Tulare County. We are issuing comments on the February 25 agenda item 21-1-6, the Agricultural Burning Assessment.

We respectfully request that the Board move to adopt the staff recommendation to adopt the gradual phasing out of open agricultural burning in the San Joaquin Valley, by January 1, 2025. The eventual elimination of agricultural burning cannot be met without significant financial support from the State of California to meet this moment.

Burning alternatives, such as the chipping of trees, pruning and vines, requires new capital investments in machinery, or expanded opportunities for biomass energy generation or the creation of renewable fuels, requires new capital for infrastructure. As farming operations vary in size and sophistication, we must ensure equity of access for the tools required to eventually meet the 2025 goal.

Sincerely,

Tricia Stever Blattler
Executive Director

My oral comments provided on 2/25/2021 to the CARB Webinar:

The Tulare County Farm Bureau represents over 1,200 farm and ranch members and their respective businesses in Tulare County. I live in Exeter, California in eastern Tulare County.

We respectfully request that the Board move to adopt the staff recommendation to adopt the gradual phasing out of open agricultural burning in the San Joaquin Valley, by January 1, 2025.

The eventual elimination of agricultural burning cannot be met without significant financial support from the State of California to meet this moment.

Burning alternatives, such as the chipping of trees, pruning and vines, requires new capital investments in machinery, or expanded opportunities for biomass energy generation or the creation of renewable fuels, requires new capital for infrastructure. As farming operations vary in size and sophistication, we must ensure equity of access for the tools required to meet the 2025 goal.

I live in this beautiful Central Valley, in eastern Tulare County where views of the Sierra Nevadas are unrivaled. I value clean air for our valley, and for my family. I celebrate the days when a good rain fall and winter storm clears out our skylines to enjoy those views. I know farmers and their families want clean air too. Their families are generationally tied to their land and want to be good stewards of their land and our shared air resources too.

Last September I worked on fire evacuations for 21 days, from devastating fires in the backdrop of the Tulare County foothills, the SQF Fire displaced people and animals for weeks, while this catastrophic fire raged through our mountains and foothill communities. The air quality impact of that one fire was devastating, severe, and far reaching. These catastrophic fires burn year after year and seeing firsthand their impact on air quality is tragic. It was a vivid and poignant moment in time that is seared in my memory and the loss of human life, the long-term health effects are severe. Perhaps the more important air quality goal would be to properly manage our forests and reduce the incidence of these catastrophic fires.

Agriculture is not the villain, agriculture is the vitality of our region, that creates jobs, amplifies and multiplies economic activity, and provides food and fiber for our country and the World. This last year during the pandemic food scarcity and grocery store shelves were bare, and it should serve as a critical reminder that agriculture is an essential industry doing the most essential work for our nation.

Our Valley deserves better, our farmers deserve solutions that are economically viable, and cost effective and our valley residents deserve clean air.

Thank you again for the opportunity today to comment.