

From: [Christine Gemperle](#)
To: [ARB Clerk of the Board](#)
Subject: Carb Meeting Comments on Ag Burning
Date: Tuesday, February 23, 2021 8:07:51 PM

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Hello, I was unable to send my comments last night due to an error so I am submitting them this way. Because I will be in a SWEEP meeting during the hearing another Almond Alliance member may be reading them for me at the hearing. But here they are for the record. Thank you, Christine Gemperle

Hello, my name is Christine Gemperle and I operate a small/medium sized almond farm with my brother in Stanislaus and Merced Counties. We have been chipping our prunings for over a decade and more recently have become huge proponents of whole orchard recycling but even so we still find ourselves in the position where burning is our only option at times. I will admit that it does go against our philosophical belief in being a part of the solution when it comes to climate change. We are always searching for a viable alternative to burning.

Farming these days can be likened to "Death by a Thousand Cuts". In agriculture, every year a new regulation prohibits an activity, creates an added expense, adds more work and removes another tool from our tool chest. When you look at the bigger picture the regulation aims to do good, it may clean up the air, keep our water safe or promote human health and there is no good argument against doing those things. What is often forgotten or ignored is what happens to those who have lost their tools? Normally you would just go out and replace it with something else, maybe something better, right? But what if you can't afford it? What if that tool isn't accessible or doesn't exist? What if losing that tool is the cut that finally takes your last drop of blood? The economies of scale do not favor small growers when it comes to woody biomass removal. I know from the experience of working in the field cutting up that wood and from doing the books and seeing the expense of dealing with it eat away at our income. The small farms of the almond industry are experiencing this right now with the complete elimination of burning without other viable options to replace it. We all hear the complaints about how industrial or corporate farms are taking over and yet no one is willing to put their money where their mouth is to save the small farm and insure its future, whether that be paying more for food at the grocery store or having more tax dollars through programs and incentives going to support small scale farming. Look, I don't like burning any more than the non farmer but they don't have to deal with wood accumulating on their property and creating problems. So, give us a new tool to work with. We are begging for one so burning can truly be phased out and only an option for special cases. Start a year round mobile chipping program that is free to qualifying small growers and subsidized for medium growers. People will do it if it pencils out. A lot of good can be gained. Wood chips on small operations can be easily spread around to reduce dust, used in landscaping to conserve water or incorporated to build healthy soils. It could be a Win, Win program- Eliminate particulate matter, Reduce dust, Conserve water, Build soil. Each county could run their own program jump started by government grants. It doesn't seem that complicated but maybe that's just how I see it because farmers are pretty straightforward. Let's find a solution and replenish the tool chest. Thank you for your time.