

PRESS RELEASE  
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## Farmers Move to Improve Water Quality

In a historic move, farmers from Santa Barbara to Santa Cruz have agreed to join together to form a coalition to improve water quality. A proposal detailing this plan was submitted on December 3 by the California Farm Bureau Federation on behalf of the Ag Working Group, which is composed of a dozen regional and statewide farm organizations.

“Water Quality is a precious resource that must be protected,” said Bob Martin, a Salinas Valley farmer. “This cooperative approach will be more effective and more practical than the proposal from the regional water board staff, which would lead to lost jobs for our work force and to food safety challenges.”

The agricultural groups’ proposal is based upon a coalition approach to enhance water quality. Growers who have participated in creating this proposal believe it is a better alternative for local communities. The basis of the proposal is to use an auditable grower survey to determine what general practices farmers are using to improve surface water and groundwater quality. A coalition will be formed to address crops with high nitrate loading potential and irrigated water runoff and sediment. This coalition will work with farmers to address issues of concern and find solutions. Milestones have also been created to measure effectiveness and major achievements in water quality improvement.

The coalition will provide compliance assistance, education, and audits to help farmers achieve the toughest environmental regulations in the world. In many states, agriculture is exempted from water regulations. In California, farmers take a different approach. For more than a decade, Central Coast farmers have contributed to water quality improvement.

“As a California farmer, I am committed to being the best farmer possible and using the best management practices,” said Tom AmRhein, a strawberry grower. “This proposal allows farmers to continue growing safe, healthy crops while focusing on improving water quality.”

The Central Coast of California is situated within a unique biosphere that creates the perfect climate to produce the vast majority of all of the fresh fruits and vegetables for the nation.

“This submission of a document on behalf of so many agricultural trade associations shows that farmers are committed to finding workable solutions,” California Farm Bureau Associate Counsel Kari Fisher said, “with the ultimate goal of improving water quality for our communities.”

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The Ag Working Group is led by the California Farm Bureau Federation and includes the California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers; California Artichoke Commission; California Strawberry Commission; Central Coast Ag Water Quality Coalition; Central Coast Agricultural Task Force; Central Coast Vineyard Team; Central Coast Water Quality Preservation Inc.; the Grower-Shipper Association of Central California; the Grower-Shipper Association of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties and Western Growers.