



## CONSENT CALENDAR

June 12, 2007

**LINDA  
MAIO**  
Councilmember  
District 1

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

**FROM:** Councilmember Linda Maio

**SUBJECT:** United States Food and Farm Bill

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That City Council recommends to our federal representatives a Farm Bill that aligns United States food and farm policy with our public health policy and supports healthful and affordable food.

**BACKGROUND:**

The current Farm Bill is also fundamentally a “Food Bill” which inadequately addresses the issues of food security, national health, and gives an unfair advantage to agribusiness over smaller farmers and farming communities. The Farm Bill determines the spending levels for much more than farmer supports, but also of school lunch allocations, environmental conservation allocations, and food stamp allocations. The Farm Bill has diverged from its original purpose of stabilizing the economies of farming communities and producing strategic food reserves, to one of making processed foods (soda, fast food, overly-processed and packaged food) both cheap, widely distributed, and highly profitable. The focus on processed foods externalizes the social and environmental costs of farming, manufacturing, and marketing such foods, and has contributed to a public health crisis with high costs to society. The current Farm Bill promotes overproduction and over-consumption of high sugar, high fat, and high starch foods, a diet related to numerous deadly illnesses. The Farm Bill’s support of the industrial food system undermines our national security by making our food system highly centralized and therefore increasingly vulnerable to terrorist attack, internal contamination, and natural disaster.

Subsidizing large agribusiness production of corn, soy, wheat, rice, and cotton in the United States in combination with pursuing the variety of “Free Trade Agreements” world wide, has resulted in the “dumping” of cheap U.S. commodities into small economies around the globe, driving local producers out of business, creating economic refugees, and adding significantly to the drive to immigrate to urban centers, the U.S. and elsewhere. The last Farm Bill signed by President Bush allocated \$190 billion dollars, most of which went to subsidize large agribusiness concerns and make commodity foods cheap for processors and distributors. The current Farm Bill ignores the enormous population of immigrant farm laborers who labor in difficult conditions at exceedingly low wages.

In Berkeley, like the rest of the country, significant diet-related chronic illness and health disparities exist, resulting in increased suffering, shorter life spans, and reduced quality of life for low-income residents and people of color. The City of Berkeley bears the burden of providing health services and prevention programs for many diet related illnesses resulting in part due to the availability and advertising of cheap unhealthful foods. Multiple programs in Berkeley such as the Ecology Center's Farm Fresh Choice, Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative, Farmers' Market EBT access programs, and others like Spiral Gardens, Peoples' Grocery, the School Lunch Initiative, and the City of Berkeley Chronic Diseases Prevention Program, have all emerged to support a community-based model for making fresh local foods affordable, accessible, and a preferred part of the everyday diet. The City of Berkeley Food and Nutrition Policy also calls for the City to "Advocate for federal and state programs that increase access to nutritious food for low- income residents."

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

None.

**CONTACT PERSONS:**

Councilmember Linda Maio

Council District 1

(510) 981-7110

RESOLUTION NO. –N.S.

RECOMMEND A FOOD AND FARM BILL RESOLUTION THAT ALIGNS UNITED STATES FOOD AND FARM POLICY WITH OUR PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY AND SUPPORTS HEALTHFUL AND AFFORDABLE FOOD

WHEREAS, the current Farm Bill is also fundamentally a “Food Bill” which inadequately addresses the issues of food security, national health, and gives an unfair advantage to agribusiness over smaller farmers and farming communities; and

WHEREAS, the Farm Bill determines the spending levels for much more than farmer supports, but also of school lunch allocations, environmental conservation allocations, and food stamp allocations; and

WHEREAS, the Farm Bill has diverged from its original purpose of stabilizing the economies of farming communities and producing strategic food reserves, to one of making processed foods (soda, fast food, overly-processed and packaged food) both cheap, widely distributed, and highly profitable; and

WHEREAS, the Surgeon General has declared there is an epidemic of new diet-related illnesses such as childhood obesity and early onset diabetes; and

WHEREAS the focus on processed foods externalizes the social and environmental costs of farming, manufacturing, and marketing such foods, and has contributed to a public health crisis with high costs to society; and

WHEREAS, the current Farm Bill promotes overproduction and over-consumption of high sugar, high fat, and high starch foods, a diet related to numerous deadly illnesses; and

WHEREAS, the Farm Bill’s support of the industrial food system undermines our national security by making our food system highly centralized and therefore increasingly vulnerable to terrorist attack, internal contamination, and natural disaster; and

WHEREAS, subsidizing large agribusiness production of corn, soy, wheat, rice, and cotton in the United States in combination with pursuing the variety of “Free Trade Agreements” world wide, has resulted in the “dumping” of cheap U.S. commodities into small economies around the globe, driving local producers out of business, creating economic refugees, and adding significantly to the drive to immigrate to urban centers, the U.S. and elsewhere; and

WHEREAS, the last Farm Bill signed by President Bush allocated \$190 billion dollars, most of which went to subsidize large agribusiness concerns and make commodity foods cheap for processors and distributors; and

WHEREAS, in the current Farm Bill the more commodity food a farmer produces the greater the subsidy, resulting in the lion’s share of this money going to the largest producers, thus depriving small farms and farming communities of governmental support; and

WHEREAS, the Farm Bill ignores the enormous population of immigrant farm laborers who labor in difficult conditions at exceedingly low wages; and

WHEREAS, while supporting the Farm Bill through their taxes, urban populations and their representatives have traditionally (albeit incorrectly) regarded farm subsidies as a rural Midwestern issue with little or no relation to urban well being; and

WHEREAS, In Berkeley, like the rest of the country, significant diet-related chronic illness and health disparities exist, resulting in increased suffering, shorter life spans, and reduced quality of life for low-income residents and people of color; and

WHEREAS, the current Farm Bill distorts the food marketplace, making the most unhealthful foods the least expensive; and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley bears the burden of providing health services and prevention programs for many diet related illnesses resulting in part due to the availability and advertising of cheap unhealthful foods; and

WHEREAS, The Ecology Center's Berkeley Farmers' Markets are celebrating the 20th Anniversary of working to develop a viable alternative to the corporate industrial food system which profits most from taxpayer subsidy; and

WHEREAS, multiple programs such as the Ecology Center's Farm Fresh Choice, Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative, Farmers' Market Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) access programs, and others like Spiral Gardens, Peoples' Grocery, the School Lunch Initiative, and the City of Berkeley Chronic Diseases Prevention Program, have all emerged to support a community-based model for making fresh local foods affordable, accessible, and a preferred part of the everyday diet; and

WHEREAS, these programs and small responsible farmers and food providers desperately need additional funding to maintain and expand their services in support of residents; and

WHEREAS, providing increased support in the Farm Bill for healthful alternatives is one critical way to strengthen and expand this emerging alternative food system; and

WHEREAS, on September 25th 2001, The City of Berkeley passed the Food and Nutrition Policy which states that the City will "Advocate for local, state and federal actions that support implementation of the City of Berkeley Food and Nutrition Policy;" and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley Food and Nutrition Policy also calls for the City to "Advocate for federal and state programs that increase access to nutritious food for low- income residents."

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Berkeley desires a Food and Farm Bill that aligns our nation's food and farm policy with our public health policy and supports healthful food affordable food; a Farm Bill that supports small farms and farming communities, clean and

organic food production, healthful school lunches; a Farm Bill one that enlists food stamps as part of our nation's public health strategy, does not harm local farming economies internationally, and supports and honors farm labor as well as small farm ownership.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Berkeley City Council calls upon our federal representatives to champion changes to the Farm Bill and, to make these goals a priority and to change its focus from a "Farm Bill" to a "Food and Farm Bill".

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Berkeley City Council calls upon our federal representatives to bring said Food and Farm Bill into alignment with our national security, labor, and public health policies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Berkeley City Council calls upon our federal representatives to seek significant increases in the funding for local food systems, farmers' markets promotion, and community food security and nutrition education programs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Berkeley City Council calls upon our federal representatives to increase funding for Specialty Crop Purchases for our School Lunch Initiative, expand the Fresh Fruits and Vegetable Pilot Program to all 50 states, and provide significant funding for farm-to-school programs that combine fresh local food purchasing with experiential learning through farm and garden tours, and gardening and cooking classes.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Berkeley City Council calls upon our federal representatives to restructure the commodity subsidy policy such that it levels the playing field for small farmers and non-commodity farmers, and helps make healthful foods as affordable as unhealthy overly packaged foods.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Berkeley City Council calls upon our residents to join us in this effort by supporting our local community based food and farming programs through volunteerism, donations, and policy advocacy.

