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May 15, 2012

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David J. Lewis, Director  
University of California Cooperative Extension - Marin  
1682 Novato Blvd., Suite 150B  
Novato, CA 94947

RE: Letter of support for proposed North Bay Food Systems Advisor

Dear David,

I am writing to convey my enthusiastic support for your efforts to create a new UCCE Food Systems Advisor position to enhance agricultural infrastructure and systems in Marin, Napa, Sonoma and Mendocino Counties. I understand that you have applied for funding from the University of California Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and I strongly endorse the funding request for this essential position.

Sustaining agriculture and its infrastructure in this area is very necessary because of the importance of the value of the agricultural industry in our region's economy. In spite of this importance, farmers face a wide range of serious challenges due to our location in the Metropolitan Bay Area, such as high land values, environmental concerns and regulations related to proximity to sensitive resources, and high industry costs, all contributing to a very high cost of operation. Farmers need our support now, more than ever.

A new UCCE Food Systems Advisor position would also be timely because it would capitalize on local efforts by farmers, counties and other ag support organizations to address these challenges. The position will add vital momentum to a number of ongoing and new local programs to support the agricultural value chain by encouraging diversification, expanding value-added production, and supporting marketing. The highly collaborative, multi-county North Coast Regional Food Systems Network is an important new opportunity to work regionally to achieve these goals. A Food Systems Advisor could sustain and build on this Network so that we can capitalize on our proximity to the urban Bay Area by enhancing agricultural marketing infrastructure and systems.

I am certain that funding from the University of California for this position will be a strong and successful investment, catalyzing local efforts to ensure that agriculture remains a thriving element of our economy for decades to come. I heartily endorse your proposal.

Sincerely,

Steve Kinsey, President  
Marin County Board of Supervisors