



A Tradition of Stewardship  
A Commitment to Service

**Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer of Weights and Measures**

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**David R. Whitmer**  
Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer

April 30, 2012

David J. Lewis  
Director  
Napa County U. C. Cooperative Extension  
1710 Soscol Avenue, Suite 4  
Napa, CA 94559-1315

Dear David,

I am happy to have the opportunity to provide you with this letter of support for a North Bay Food Systems Advisor position within the UC Cooperative Extension. As you may know, the Napa County Board of Supervisors has appointed a 15-person Napa County Local Food Advisory Council (NCLFAC). The Council's mission is "to help achieve a more sustainable local food system in Napa County" and have identified the goals of providing advice to the Board on the following critical areas:

- Community education on healthy eating and local food choices;
- Promoting an increase in local food production and distribution; and
- Increasing consumer access to fresh local agricultural products.

There is already tremendous momentum in the local food movement as you well know and we are already engaged in some of these regional efforts to collaborate and partner on strengthening the North Bay food system by leveraging the many things already going on. Some of the important reasons for this position include:

- The position assignment area has a \$1.3 billion annual agricultural production value. The area is characterized by 5,700 family farms that raise livestock and/or dairy, or grow tree and row crops. These operations are underpinned with off-farm incomes and include small-scale, semi-urban farms close to the S.F. Bay Area;
- A host of issues face these farmers, including zoning and planning policies related to high agricultural land values, taxation and inheritance, succession, and varying capacities, skill levels and experience;
- An NBFS advisor would link between producer groups, resource agencies, school programs, and local government to provide clientele with needed tools to implement value-added production and diversification businesses that can be viable and profitable;

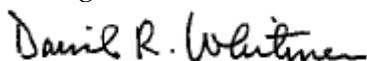
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- The advisor will deliver marketing, business, and enterprise transition management (succession/regulatory) extension programs for producers, processors, and related groups. They will provide agricultural value chain and regional economic data and analysis to county governments, business councils and leaders, and other organizations to improve and coordinate policies and programs that facilitate production of value-added agricultural products and therein the development of sustainable food systems. They will also provide information and analysis on the levels and trends in consumer demand for agricultural products to assist retailers and agricultural producers in their decision-making about product market development, processing, and distribution;
- Our close proximity to the S. F. Bay Area consumer base (8+million) also provides a unique opportunity. Providing local farms with the tools needed to adapt to local marketing opportunities, build direct market infrastructures (e.g. local harvest facilities, processing hubs), and community partnerships, will make significant contributions to the food system in this area, and deliver on a strategic vision of increasing the viability and profitability of the small and mid-scale farm sector;
- In 2011 area leaders initiated a North Coast Regional Food Systems Network to develop a more integrated restructuring. The group is composed of representatives from five northern California counties including three county supervisors, producers, farm bureau leaders, retail food outlets, local government departments, the financial sector, and underserved communities. USDA Rural Development is currently funding this effort and this new UC advisor would find a perfect launching pad in this project.

For these reasons, I highly support the addition of a North Bay Food Systems Advisor position.

As we put together the next NCLFAC agenda, I will be in touch to see if we could have you present this concept to the Council for their recommendation to the Napa County Board of Supervisors.

Best regards,



David R. Whitmer  
Agricultural Commissioner