

## SB 623 MONNING -- SUPPORT



The above listed agricultural organizations support Senate Bill 623 (Monning) which establishes a Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund within the State Water Resources Control Board. The bill proposes a modest fee structure that will be assessed on agriculture, urban and commercial water users to ensure necessary upgrades to infrastructure and provide critical financial assistance for operation and maintenance of drinking water systems in disadvantaged communities statewide.

The act of farming necessarily requires nutrients in the soil to be replenished to allow for the continued production of crops. The use of organic and commercial fertilizers are necessary to replenish soil nutrients to allow for crop production. We believe it is in the best interests of the people of the State of California to have a safe and secure food supply grown in California for the benefit of people everywhere. To accomplish this, agriculture must be able to continue to use nitrogen-based fertilizers to replenish soil nutrients to ensure healthy crop production.

The United States government and the land grant universities encouraged and guided farmers on application of nitrogen fertilizer for over half a century to increase food production and efficiency, and farmers have relied on and used that advice and guidance, which represented the best management practices of the time.

Additionally, California's dairies are heavily regulated for water quality issues. These regulations include surface runoff and groundwater quality. In 2007, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board adopted new regulations requiring all dairies to account for manure and fertilizer nutrient applications and exports with limits on how much nitrogen could be applied to cropland. This program requires reporting to the water board of all nutrient applications and exports and is followed up with regular on-farm inspections. Other Regional Boards have followed suit with regulations tailored to their climate, topography, and facility types. Dairies have hired expert consultants to prepare nutrient management plans, waste management plans, and annual reports that utilize the information from tracking manure quantities and laboratory analyses of manure and plant tissue.

Furthermore, Central Valley dairy producers have formed the Central Valley Dairy Representative Monitoring Program to monitor the progress of these efforts on groundwater quality and report the results to the regional board in publicly available annual reports. This is an extensive effort funded by dairy farms (along with grant funds) that continues to seek improvements to on-farm practices to better protect groundwater quality.

While agricultural practices of the past may have resulted in nitrate reaching groundwater that have caused exceedances of nitrate drinking water standards, the agricultural practices of today significantly reduce or eliminate the potential for nitrates to reach the groundwater. Nevertheless, farmers and researchers continue to seek opportunities to improve management practices and should not be subject to an enforcement action by the state water board or regional water boards, subject to certain conditions within the timeframe provided by SB 623.

Due to the challenges of reconciling nitrogen use by agriculture with human health and water resource protection, we have been working with the environmental justice community as well as other stakeholders for over a year in an effort to address the critical needs in disadvantaged communities relating to safe drinking water. Since these challenges are numerous, both from naturally occurring contaminants and human sources, we believe the solution should be shouldered by a broad array of sources and stakeholders.

SB 623 strikes the needed balance between providing necessary resources for addressing critical drinking water needs, while protecting agriculture from certain nitrate related enforcement actions in the short-term.

Again, we are pleased to support SB 623 and ask that you vote for this measure when it comes before you for a vote.

Agricultural Council of California  
Almond Alliance of California  
California Citrus Mutual  
California Fresh Fruit Association  
California Rice Commission  
California Strawberry Commission

Kern County Farm Bureau  
Kings County Farm Bureau  
Western Growers Association  
Western United Dairymen