

## **Californians can help farmers this harvest season**

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As you shop for fresh fruits, vegetables and meat this harvest season, stop for a moment to consider the source of these goods. Some come from California's farms, picturesque orchards and fields that you may notice from the freeway as you zip by at high speeds. Some, however, come from far away places like China, Argentina and Chile.

Why should you care? The food on your table may have been produced in countries with labor and environmental rules far more lenient than we tolerate in California. We demand tough labor and environmental regulations for California farmers, but we go to the store and buy produce from countries with appalling production practices.

Farmers in competing countries pay their workers as little as \$2 a day (China) to \$9 a day (Chile and Argentina). A local farmer seeking farming opportunities in Argentina noted that seasonal workers often work seven days a week and then sleep in the fields. Air, water and pesticide regulations are often more lax than in California, and sporadically enforced. Chemicals that California banned over 40 years ago are still in use in many countries. The lack of regulatory standards saves so much money that farmers in China and Chile can fly their produce to California and still sell it more cheaply than farmers can grow the same produce here - even when faced with record gas prices.

What can you do? Buy fruits, vegetables and other food products grown in California. California's farmers ensure a reliable, high quality food supply, preserve our rural landscapes and reduce reliance on imports of agricultural goods. They produce 300 different crops - more than any other state - and lead production in most of those crops. They receive the lowest level of subsidies of any state. California farmers also provide over 40 million acres of open space and wildlife habitat. Unfortunately, more and more farmers are selling their land to developers - at the rate of 50,000 acres per year - in part because it is tough to make a living when consumers buy based on price rather than production practices.

The harvest season is one in which we enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables unparalleled in the world. California farmers are more productive, environmentally conscious and progressive than many of their competitors in

developing countries, or even in other states. California farmers need your help to maintain these standards. Every one of us can make a difference by simply buying produce that is grown in California by our rural neighbors. Buy fresh, buy local and buy with your community in mind.

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