

April 10, 2007

The Honorable Nicole Parra
Chair, California Assembly Agriculture Committee
1020 N Street, Room 362
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 541 (Huffman) SUPPORT

Dear Assemblywoman Parra and Members of the Agriculture Committee:

The Sonoma County Water Coalition SCWC strongly supports AB 541, The Food and Farm Protection Act. The SCWC represents 33 member groups with a total membership of approximately _____,

AB 541 represents a reasonable, responsible and moderate way to address the concerns without banning GE technology or restricting choice.

AB 541 importantly establishes the right of farmers and other landowners to recover damages if their property is contaminated by GE crops and it places the responsibility for the economic harms that arise where it belongs--with the manufacturer and patent holder, titular owner of a GE seed or plant. Farmers who are victimized by genetic contamination should not have to fear legal reprisals, so the bill also protects farmers from liability should their farms become contaminated and they unknowingly raise a GE-contaminated crop.

As with other useful agricultural statistics and notification requirements, county Agriculture Commissioners need to know where and how many GE crops are growing within their jurisdiction. To meet that need, AB 541 also establishes a GE crop notification process so that farmers and researchers will report their growing of GE crops to their county Agriculture Commissioners and enable the state to keep track of how many acres of GE crops are being cultivated in each county, and what they are. Finally, AB 541 protects the food supply by implementing a ban on open-air cultivation of food crops that are genetically engineered to produce drugs. No one wants experimental hormones, vaccines or antibiotics in the food they serve their family. The drugs being researched are all currently produced using safe, controlled laboratory methods, and there is no need to risk the contamination of our food.

We therefore urge both you and the other members of the Assembly Agriculture Committee to consider this issue carefully, and vote to support AB 541. It will be a vote in favor of farmers, Californians, and the environment!

Sincerely,

Sonoma County Water Coalition Co-founder