



Senator Feinstein Calls on USDA to Move Quickly in Assisting California Farmers Affected by Freezing Temperatures

January 17, 2007

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today called on the U.S. Department of Agriculture to take fast action in assisting California farmers impacted by the state's severe cold temperatures.

Senator Feinstein today sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns, urging the Department of Agriculture to grant Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's request to expedite petitions for assistance from California farmers.

"We do not yet know the extent of the losses caused by this freeze, but initial estimates point to losses of up to \$1 billion. Up and down the state, crops have been hit: citrus, avocados, leafy greens, celery, strawberries, and nursery plants. This is a staggering and devastating loss.

Our family farmers need help, and those of us in Congress should make sure that the federal government provides California growers with the support and assistance they need. It is my hope that the U.S. Department of Agriculture will move quickly in approving petitions for assistance."

Senator Feinstein was instrumental in securing assistance to citrus growers after the 1998 freeze that caused almost \$700 million in crop losses, primarily in the San Joaquin Valley.

The following is the text of Senator Feinstein's letter:

Dear Secretary Johanns,

I am writing to you about the severe, ongoing agricultural disaster in California. Yesterday, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger declared a state of emergency and requested that you expedite petitions for assistance from California farmers. I ask that you grant the Governor's request.

We do not yet know the extent of the losses caused by this freeze, but initial estimates point to losses of up to \$1 billion. The prolonged nature of this freeze could have

devastating effects, not only on current crops, but also on the trees themselves, resulting in diminished production for years to come.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture is estimating that only 25 percent of this year's citrus and avocado crops had been picked before the cold temperatures set in. This is significant, because 95 percent of the nation's fresh citrus comes from California. It is likely that strawberries, leafy greens, celery, and nursery plants will also suffer.

By any estimation, \$1 billion in potential losses is staggering. I urge you to approve Governor Schwarzenegger's request to expedite petitions for assistance from California farmers, and look forward to working with you to best respond to this disaster.

Sincerely,

**Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator**

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