



July 23, 2007

Local Agency Formation Commission of Santa Clara County  
70 West Hedding Street  
11<sup>th</sup> Floor, East Wing  
San Jose, CA 95110

Dear Commissioners:

Greenbelt Alliance supports the staff recommendation regarding the definition of agricultural use and urges the Commissioners to adopt this definition. The purpose of the agricultural mitigation policies is to preserve a resource that has been rapidly disappearing throughout California and especially in Santa Clara County.

A definition that is too narrow would undermine the effectiveness of LAFCO's recently adopted policies. The focus should be on land that currently supports crops, orchards and cattle or has the potential to do so, even if the land has been left fallow.

The face of agriculture is changing as communities grow and the need for locally grown fresh produce becomes more apparent. Smaller parcels that support specialty crops at the urban fringe are becoming increasingly popular as a nationwide and international Slow Food Movement begins to take off. A broad definition of agricultural uses supports this movement and again Greenbelt Alliance encourages the Commissioners to support staff's definition.

LAFCO is charged with the promotion of orderly growth and the protection of farmland. Directing new development into existing cities before greenfield development is the right way to grow. Annexing land- especially land that can support farming- should be viewed as a last resort. However, in instances when annexations of these valuable lands are approved, strong policies that protect additional farmlands must be in place to make this loss apparent. Making it easy to avoid this mitigation would be a disservice to the greater community.

Sincerely

Michele Beasley  
South Bay Field Representative