

McNerney Bill Endorsed By California Farm Bureau Federation

Dec. 15, 2011

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Jerry McNerney (CA-11) introduced the Fairness for Family Farmers Act to streamline assistance for farmers who have lost crops and income due to federal quarantine zones. In September, a federal quarantine in Stockton cost farmers over \$1 million dollars in the middle of their harvest season.

“In the last three years, 107 federal quarantine zones have been established across America. In California alone, there were 26, with three right here in San Joaquin County. It is time that the farmers affected by these quarantines are properly compensated for their crop losses,” said Rep. McNerney.

The Fairness for Family Farmers Farmers Act directs the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a better support system for farmers in quarantine zones. Currently, farmers are eligible for emergency loans from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), but they must first prove that they have been unable to obtain a private loan. Along with other restrictions, this places an undue burden on farmers and has hampered their ability to cope with the vast numbers of federal quarantines.

“The current obstacles to getting federal loans are often insurmountable. In these tough economic times, farmers need to be able to weather whatever storms come their way,” said Rep. McNerney. “A robust farming community is essential, especially in our region. Our farmers are a key component to our economic growth.”

The legislation eliminates the need for farmers to provide proof that they were denied private credit. Additionally, the bill requires the USDA to establish a new system for providing direct monetary assistance to affected farmers. The Secretary of Agriculture will determine the payment amounts as well as the aggregate amount to each affected farmer.

"The CFBF supports the Fairness for Family Farmers Act. Our policy, adopted by the Farm Bureau's House of Delegates, supports the establishment of a program to compensate producers for costs incurred by them to quarantine, destroy, or otherwise dispose of plants, plant material or animals. We believe that your legislation marks a major step forward in addressing these producer interests. We look forward to working with you as you seek to advance this legislation in Congress," said Paul Wenger, President of the California Farm Bureau Federation.