



Mendocino County Farm Bureau

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Affiliated with the California Farm Bureau Federation and the American Farm Bureau Federation

February 26, 2019

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
501 Low Gap Road, Room 1010
Ukiah, CA 95482

Via Email: bos@mendocinocounty.org

RE: February 26, 2019 Agenda Items 5h and 5i

Dear Chair Brown,

Mendocino County Farm Bureau (MCFB) is a non-governmental, non-profit, voluntary membership, advocacy group whose purpose is to protect and promote agricultural interests throughout the county and to find solutions to the problems facing agricultural businesses and the rural community. MCFB appreciates the opportunity to offer comment on:

agenda item 5h: the discussion and possible adoption of an urgency ordinance establishing a temporary moratorium on the cultivation of genetically modified organisms within the unincorporated area of Mendocino County pending the study and consideration of land use and other regulations pertaining to such cultivation and

agenda item 5i: discussion and possible action including adoption of urgency ordinance establishing a temporary moratorium on the cultivation of industrial hemp within the unincorporated areas of Mendocino County pending the study and consideration of land use and other regulations pertaining to such cultivation.

Agenda Item 5h: Moratorium on Genetically Modified Organisms

In 2004, during the development of the language for Measure H, MCFB made the decision to remain neutral in taking a position on the proposed ban of GMO's in the county since there were members on both sides of the debate. However, MCFB did not feel that the county should be the jurisdiction making decisions regarding the cultivation of GMOs as this could potentially put local agriculture at a disadvantage in comparison to other areas of California if GMO technology proved to be beneficial for improving upon such things as crop drought or disease resistance in the future. Similar concerns stand with the discussion in this agenda item.

With the proposed expansion of the definition of genetically modified organism in this urgency ordinance to include other genetic engineering practices, there could be unforeseen impacts to the agricultural industry in Mendocino County. For example, at Rutgers University in New Jersey research is underway using CRISPR/Cas9 technique to improve upon powdery mildew resistance in chardonnay grapes. Additional research is being performed at the USDA Agricultural Research Service's Grape Genetics Research Unit, focusing on developing new grape varieties that are resistant to fungal and oomycetes (water mold) diseases. This research, though not fully developed, may someday prove to be beneficial to the wine grape industry of Mendocino County. Examples such as these should be considered as the county moves forward with the discussion of the scope of the regulation of genetically modified organisms in Mendocino County.

Agenda item 5i: Moratorium on the Cultivation of Commercial Hemp

A number of counties are seeking a ban on commercial hemp cultivation on an interim basis as they wait for the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to release the draft regulations related to the cultivation of commercial hemp and related registration process later this year. MCFB agrees that waiting to review state regulations prior to developing county regulations regarding commercial hemp is a reasonable approach.

In terms of the language related to “Established agricultural research institutions” there are Farm Bureau members in California that are currently growing commercial hemp in partnership with legitimate, established agricultural research institutions without issue. These individuals have been in partnership with the University of Nevada, Reno on their farm in Sierra Valley in Sierra County to perform research on hemp in the areas of insect predation, weed control and plant disease. For more information on this operation, please visit: <http://a24farming.com/>

Section Q references the concerns with cross pollination of cannabis from hemp pollen. In speaking with members of the cannabis community who have expressed interest in cultivating commercial hemp and with Farm Bureau members who are growing hemp, there seems to be potential alternatives to assist in mitigating for cross pollination. This issue will require further vetting.

As hemp’s legality and commercialization becomes more clear at the state and federal levels, there will be an increased interest in the ability to produce hemp for fiber, food sources, CBD products, etc. The county needs to assess potential impacts and benefits from the local cultivation of commercial hemp prior to the development of a permanent ordinance for commercial hemp cultivation.

MCFB appreciates the consideration of these comments and looks forward to the continued conversation regarding these topics.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frost Pauli".

Frost Pauli
President

CC: Harinder Grewal, Mendocino County Agricultural Commissioner