

Dear Board of Supervisors,

I am sure you have received a flood of emails and correspondence regarding the 10% expansion for the Cannabis Cultivation of Mendocino County. As a life-long resident of Northern California, I have grown up with a quality of life that I now understand to be privileged. I grew up with wild spaces and the beauty of nature, clean water and air, and a sense of peace that is priceless when such things are a part of one's daily life. I have lived in Round Valley for nearly 2 decades now. I have chosen to call this place my home, and to settle down and raise my children here. What I have seen this quiet and pristine Valley become in the last 3-5 years especially, has been heart-breaking. Where open pastures and meadows once stood, now are black plastic fences, and lights on every hillside and ridge as far as I can see. The traffic from water trucks and constant trucks hauling trailers fully loaded with materials for hoop houses has drastically changed the feeling of peace and safety that used to be the norm here.

The notion of expanding the legal market sounds like another nail in the coffin for what makes Mendocino County home to local residents. More out of town investors and big money stepping in where small farmers have been scrapping by for years, meanwhile battling to maintain their little piece of livelihood with the ridiculous regulations. At the same time, the non-regulation of the massive illegal grows is sprawling every corner and parcel. How are the small farmers who simply want to live a peaceful and healthy life with thier families, and grow their own food, and contribute to their community supposed to overcome the next hurdle of such an expansion that would completely crush their little bit of income?

Besides the economic devastation this expansion would create for the small farmer, the environmental impact of the demand for resources, such as the most precious one, water, does not make ANY sense. How can we even be considering the expansion of anything when we are facing a real limiting factor of water?

It is far overdue time to get real about what this county actually needs to be focusing on for the future. Small farms of all kinds are the answer. Supporting small organically grown produce and products ranging from wine, to greens, veggies, flowers, fruits, honey, cheeses, meats, eggs, fibers, and cannabis, would set Mendocino County apart from the worn-out capitalistic, commercial model, that is driving the entire system we depend on to its demise. Mendocino County could be an amazing example of Local-Based Economy where we take pride in our pristine landscape and wildlife, while also supporting the people and families who put thier heart and soul into what they do because they care, not because they are driven by money. This creates the landscape and culture that is enriching for all who visit or reside there. We are a very unique place, and we should be striving to keep it that way, not sell-out the highest bidder. My greatest hope and wish for this county, is to have leaders who genuinely care about the future for all who live here. For the leaders of the local government to want to improve, as well as protect, what makes this place so special. We can do so much better than simply handing over our land and resources to those with the most wealth in property and income including, big money.

My vote is No on the expansion. I want more for everyone who lives here, than to see something like this be a driving force in how the future of Mendocino County is shaped.

Sincerely,
Vashti O'Donnell