

February 23, 2010

Dear Nevada Legislators,

I recently learned of Senator Horsford's proposed budget cuts that will end the administration of the Nevada Organic Program and potentially eliminate the Nevada Department of Agriculture's Plant Industry Division. Given the growing need for local organic agriculture, I would like to express my opposition this proposal.

At a time when demand for organic produce exceeds production, Nevada's organic program under NDOA's Plant Industry Division has been working to include Nevada's farmers in this market, helping them become more viable in today's marketplace. If the program is not staffed, Nevada farmers will be unable to maintain their certification as it is too costly to hire an out of state certifying agency. Federal law prohibits marketing produce as "organic" without certification, so this niche would no longer be available.

The Nevada Organic Program over the last ten years has become virtually self-sustaining through its fees and federal funding, and it would be a dreadful irony if the program were dissolved before becoming eligible for continued funding through the Obama administration's green policies and expanded support of organic markets.

The environmental impact of organic agriculture extends to watersheds and wildlife, conserving water through better soil practices and helping maintain our unique rural lifestyle in Nevada.

We urge our representatives to allow the Nevada Organic Program and Plant Industry Division to continue operation under its present management.

Sincerely,