

Mister Chairman and Members of Congress, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

As you know, nobody in the world farms better than American farmers. We still continue to feed the world and have some of the most innovative, sustainable practices at our disposal. We can do more. The 2012 Farm Bill needs to include increased incentives for farmers to commit to even more sustainable practices and create more ways to create new income bases for our communities, some of which are in dire straits. The 2012 Farm Bill can go beyond being our father's farm bill – it can look toward the future, be a greener farm bill and add new life to our industry.

For example, the City of Mendota and surrounding areas have been hit hard by a number of factors which has caused it to have an employment rate of over 40% and a serious reduction in its tax base.

The Spreckles Sugar Refinery which closed in September 2008 after almost 50 years of operation was a major employer in the community. This closing not only had a significant impact in Mendota, it trickled down to surrounding communities in the Central Valley. The refinery allowed area farmers to grow an important value-added commodity, sugar beets.

A group of these same farmers previously grew this crop for sugar have now banded together to create a co-op to grow this same crop for a new market - green energy.

The "Beet Energy" Mendota Advanced Bioenergy Beet Cooperative has undertaken the type of project that should be an important part of the 2012 Farm Bill – a project that creates a technologically advanced, sustainable biorefinery, a project that will create jobs and be an important, green business for this community.

We have taken a holistic approach to creating and addressing multiple resource and environmental issues with a long term view towards sustainability and employment. The graphic I have provided to you will give you an overview of how this project integrates a number of processes to:

- Create green energy through advanced low-carbon ethanol, biomethane and biomass power
- Use locally grown crops and byproducts
- Create a tax base and employment in a community sorely in need of both

The advanced sugar beet to ethanol facility takes in energy beets grown within a 40-mile radius of the plant to produce advanced low carbon ethanol for cars and farm vehicles, use byproducts to create soil amendments and biomethane, capture CO<sub>2</sub>, and take almond prunings that can no longer be open burned from within 50 miles to make Green-e electricity for the grid.

A water treatment unit will take City of Mendota waste water and recycled sugar beet waste water and use it for biorefinery process water. It will also take in agricultural drainage water for treatment. The Mendota biorefinery will be a net exporter of irrigation quality water south of the Delta.

We are currently partnering with California State University, Fresno, UC Davis, California Department of Water Resources, and the USDA-NRCS (United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resource Conservation District) to create a pilot-project for this process. The undertaking is expensive, but with support for these types of projects in the 2012 Farm Bill, we can have new avenues for funding and setting up facilities to support a project that has a significant impact on our communities and our nation's energy future. The definitions of farm bill programs need to be expanded so they include a broader depth of energy resources – as our industry grows we cannot be stifled by narrow definitions.

We are not just corn based energy resources any longer. We now must include the ability to apply our sugar beet technology.

There are many other examples of what can be done to take farming practices to the next generation while still being cost-effective for our bottom line. On Red Rock Ranch where I farm we are undertaking a number of innovative solutions to make our farming practices greener:

Water Cleaning Project: We are currently spearheading a pilot project that will clean up to 200 gallons of saline water per minute. We will be using a desalination process used on ships to provide drinking water out of the ocean. We will be able to clean out contaminants such as boron, selenium and the salt we remove will be converted to marketable chemicals commonly used in plastics, glass and building materials. The cost to clean the water may be as high as \$2,500 per acre-foot, but through selling of the by-products, our clean water will only end up costing \$300 per acre-foot.

Conservation Tillage: We work with the UC Conservation Tillage Workgroup in implementing a minimum tillage program on our ranch. It reduces the inputs across our fields. Conservation tillage is aimed at reducing tillage operations associated with multiple cropping seedbed preparation, thereby reducing tractor and implement passes, reducing fuel and maintenance while increasing profit. This, combined with the overhead irrigation, not only reduces cost, but also reduces energy requirements as well as saves the land nutrients and environment.

Irrigation Efficiency: We have recently taken a new look at an old technology that traditionally has not been well accepted in California – center pivots. We have worked with manufacturers on finding solutions to meet our needs here and they are working. We have saved on labor costs, been able to use water that we might not be able to use with other irrigation methods and have had excellent production.

We need your help including funds in the 2012 Farm Bill that will promote creation of and support for next generation projects like these nationally that create a future for communities like Mendota and help create a sustainable, green energy source for the United States. The future of agriculture can be even greener and should not be narrowly defined by our next farm bill. We must embrace the American Farmer's ability to be innovative and forward thinking by including broader definitions for programs that include our expanding technologies. The foundation of our industry will always remain the same, we are truly some of the first conservationists, however, we continue to be innovative and expand the definition of "green technology" as we grow and adapt our industry to our ever-changing environments and markets.

Thank you for your time and please contact me if you have any questions.

Cordially,

John E. Diener  
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Mendota Advanced Bioenergy Beet Cooperative  
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## John E. Diener

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### Biographical:

John Diener was born in 1951 in Five Points, a small farming community on the westside of Fresno County, CA. His uncle Frank first came to the area in 1927 and were followed by John's parents, Vince and Amelia Diener, in 1927. John grew up working on his father's and uncle's farms. John and his older sister Margaret attended Westside Elementary School. From 1965 to 1969 he attended Ryan Prep College Seminary in Five Points. In 1974, John graduated from the University of California, Davis with a BS in Agricultural Economics and Business Management. In 1978, John married Georgene Werstler and in 1980 they returned to Five Points. They have four children: Justin, Anne Marie, Mark, and Craig.

### Farm history:

John started farming for himself on the Westside in 1980. Today, he farms both conventional and organic land.

- Conventional crops (~ 5,200 acres): almonds, alfalfa, broccoli, corn, cotton, garlic, wine and raisin grapes, lettuce, melons, safflower, string beans, canning tomatoes, walnuts and wheat
- Organic crops (~200 acres): dry beans, broccoli, corn, spinach, processing beans and tomatoes and wheat

John has extensive experience growing fresh-market crops, however his current focus is on growing processing crops for the cannery and various agronomic crops for certified seed production.

John has been very active in conservation and reclamation efforts. He developed a pilot Integrated On-Farm Drainage Management prototype (1985 to present). By tiling saline land and recycling water through a series of fields, farmers can reclaim land, harvest runoff water, produce marketable crops, and ultimately mine salts for commercial use. As such, it turns a regional problem into a resource -- productively contributing to the health and integrity of regional and state water systems.

### Community Service:

John has been very active in conservation and reclamation efforts. He developed a pilot Integrated On-Farm Drainage Management prototype (1985 to present). By tiling saline land and recycling water through a series of fields, farmers can reclaim land, harvest runoff water, produce marketable crops, and ultimately mine salts for commercial use. As such, it turns a regional problem into a resource -- productively contributing to the health and integrity of regional and state water systems.

*Leadership:*

- Westside Resource Conservation District Charter Member, 1982 to present
- California Agricultural Leadership Program, Class XX, 1990 to present
- 4-H Leader Community
- Riverdale Joint Union High School Board, 1987-1992

*Also served as:*

- Advisory Committee for UC Davis's Vegetable Research and Information Center
- Invited panelist at numerous conferences and speaking events
- Frequently host for farm tours

**Associations:**

Blue Diamond, 1989 to present

Los Gatos Tomato Products

Director for CalWest Seed Company

**Awards:**

*2009 Leopold Conservation Award winner for California*

*2002 California Agricultural Leadership Program's "Profile in Leadership" in the category of Environment and Natural Resource Stewardship*

*2000 Award of Distinction from the UC Davis College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences*

*1999 Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award*

Awarded for "for excellence in protecting the environment and conserving natural resources, while at the same time promoting compatible, sustainable economic development." This was the first time this award was given to an individual.

*1998 Irrigator of the Year*

Awarded by the California Vegetable Journal, Center for Irrigation Technology.

**Additional information:**

a.u. 2000. "John Diener pioneers innovative land and water reclamation system," *Almond Facts*, 68(1), pp. 26-30 (January/February).

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- Thompson, Willard. 1998. "Uncommon Ground," *California Vegetable*, 3(6), pp. 13-15 (October).
- Wolfshol, Karl. 2003. "The Big Boys of Organics," *Progressive Farmer*, pp. 38-40 (February).
- Lieberman, Lisa. 2003. "Revival of an Older Cultural Practice Helping Tap Early Markets," *The Tomato Magazine*, pp. 6-7 (August).
- Cline, Harry. 2004. "California Continues to Grow as Cotton Belt Seed Producer," *Western Farm Press*, 26(5), pp. 1, 6, 9 (February).
- Pollock, Dennis. 2004. "West Side Seeks Revolution," *The Fresno Bee*, pp. C1, C7 (Friday, March 19).
- Rodriguez, Robert. 2004. "State, Federal Officials Tour Sites That Developed Ways to Solve Problems," *The Fresno Bee*, pp. C1 (Wednesday, August 18).
- Werblow, Steve. 2005. "The Struggle Against Salinity," *The Furrow*, pp. 7-8 (February).

Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Required Witness Disclosure Form

House Rules\* require nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of Federal grants received since October 1, 2007.

Name: JOHN DIENER

Address: P.O. Box 97 FIVE POINTS, CA. 93624

Telephone: 559-884-2840

Organization you represent (if any): MENDOTA BEET ENERGY Co-op.  
FARMER FRESNO COUNTY OF Veg + (Almonds, Wine, Grapes, field crops)

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) and field crops you have received since October 1, 2007, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract. House Rules do **NOT** require disclosure of federal payments to individuals, such as Social Security or Medicare benefits, farm program payments, or assistance to agricultural producers:

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

2. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) the organization has received since October 1, 2007, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract:

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check here if this form is NOT applicable to you: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: John E. Diener

\* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(4) of the U.S. House of Representatives provides: Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof. In the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by any entity represented by the witness.

PLEASE ATTACH DISCLOSURE FORM TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.