



# CCOF

*Organic Certification Trade Association Education & Outreach Political Advocacy*

For Immediate Release

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## **CCOF Urges Organic Participation in Leafy Green Product Marketing Agreement**

**(January 22, 2007) Santa Cruz, CA** – CCOF submitted comments last Friday on behalf of organic farmers and handlers in response to a proposed California Leafy Green Products Handler Marketing Agreement presented by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA).

“Food safety is a top priority for CCOF and our members, and we appreciate the efforts of the CDFA and the organizations that drafted the proposed agreement. Our goal is to produce food that is safe for consumers to eat and beneficial to their health and the health of the environment. We’re encouraged that the entire leafy green industry is moving toward some practices that organic farmers have been required to follow for years,” said CCOF Executive Director Peggy Miars.

CCOF, however, expressed concern about the lack of transparency in the development of the proposed Marketing Agreement. The organic trade association, representing more than 1,500 certified organic members and 300 supporting members, requested that organic producers have a role in the development of the agreement and its metrics as well as representation on the proposed Advisory Board.

Other areas of concern mentioned by CCOF include:

- The proposed Marketing Agreement refers to “Best Practices,” yet those “Best Practices” have not yet been developed.
- The proposed Marketing Agreement is apparently a response to the E. coli outbreak in spinach. CCOF believes that the feeding and manure handling practices of cattle operations, and their impact on water supplies, should be the focus of the CDFA.
- Small organic farmers are concerned about their ability to meet requirements that necessitate a financial investment. The group offered suggestions to resolve those concerns, such as a subsidy program or a level of annual sales that would exclude small farmers.
- If the marketing agreement moves forward, it is imperative that it be written to avoid any conflict with regulations from various State and/or Federal agencies, such as the National Organic Program.

The proposed California Leafy Green Products Handler Marketing Agreement is a voluntary document that handlers would sign acknowledging that they have adopted Leafy Green Best Practices and will only buy or handle leafy green products from a grower who has grown the produce in accordance with the Best Practices. A trace-back system is required to verify the growing and handling processes. The produce industry expects a mandatory California Leafy Green Grower Marketing Order to follow.

“We look forward to working with the produce industry and the CDFA to ensure that organic producers are included in this important food-safety issue,” said Miars.

### About CCOF

*CCOF, a nonprofit organization, was founded in 1973 and is one of the nation’s largest and oldest third-party organic certifying agencies. CCOF certifies, educates, advocates and promotes organic in California and elsewhere through:*

- *A premier organic certification program for growers, processors, handlers, and retailers.*
- *Programs to increase awareness of and demand for certified organic product and to expand public support for organic agriculture.*
- *Advocacy for governmental policies that protect and encourage organic agriculture.*

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