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# environmentalcommons

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June 15, 2008

Dear Supporter,

I hope this note finds you well and enjoying the start of summer 2008. I am writing to update you on our ongoing projects as well as a new undertaking and development affecting Environmental Commons.

To fulfill a long-held aspiration, I have decided to attend law school beginning in the Fall 2008. I have chosen the University of Hawaii due to its strong program in environmental law. Because I will have the sizeable commitment of school, I will be paring down the operations of Environmental Commons for the next few years. However, Environmental Commons will be continuing our grant-funded projects and we will undoubtedly continue to have a presence in the arena of environmental protection. As such, while I attend school, the organization will have an office in Honolulu, HI.

I would like to thank you for your generous support that has allowed us to continue to advance the following programs:

## **Precautionary Principle**

In June 2006, Environmental Commons led the effort to have Mendocino County adopt the Precautionary Principle Policy, becoming the second county in the U.S. to do so. Since then, we have continued to work closely with County officials to develop a framework for implementing the Principle.

The Mendocino County Department of Environmental Health along with Environmental Commons completed our first implementation pilot study in May 2008. The pilot was extremely successful and we are now preparing to have the Precautionary Principle adopted for the Public Health Department in its entirety. A report is scheduled to be presented to the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors in Fall 2008. For continually updated information regarding this program and our actions, see [www.mendoprecaution.org](http://www.mendoprecaution.org)

## **Local Foods**

The last 50 years has brought a vast consolidation of food production, distribution, and retailing. Currently, decisions regarding how food is grown and sold are orchestrated by just a handful of multi-national corporations. Kraft, Nestle, Cargill, ADM, and Unilever are among the giant corporations manufacturing and marketing 95% of the food in the United States. Our food is now likely to have been grown in various parts of the world and has undoubtedly traveled many thousands of miles before reaching our dinner plates. This food consolidation centers on growing food intensively, which does little to serve the interests of local communities.

Intensive food systems create tremendous pressure on natural resources and surrounding habitats, compromise the economic health of rural communities, and jeopardize the food security of economically disadvantaged citizens. While foods grown and distributed globally are touted for being inexpensive, the International Food Policy Research Institute's recent report states that by 2020 environmental and other changes will contribute to higher prices and greater demand for food.

For anyone who has followed the rise of the global economy, we recognize that corrections must be made if we are going to protect our unique regional characteristics, bolster local economies, and better support our environment. For even as the global food sector continues to amass over \$200 billion annually, farming incomes are decreasing. With fewer dollars reaching farmers, fewer funds are cycling through rural farming communities.

As such, Environmental Commons has been preparing educational fact sheets materials on the value of localizing our food systems. Foods that stay close to home require fewer resources, bring greater economic profit to farmers, provide health benefits to consumers, foster job growth, and assist in weaving the social fabric of communities.

To date, we have distributed the fact sheets to hundreds of organizations, universities, farmers, food retailers, activists, and policy officials throughout the United States and Canada. As of May 2008, we have printed and distributed 6,000 hard copies of the fact sheets and have made the materials available on the Internet in both English and Spanish. For an 18-month (November 2006- April 2008), 21,857 copies of the materials have been downloaded in both html and pdf. [www.environmentalcommons.org/LocalFood](http://www.environmentalcommons.org/LocalFood)

### **Food Democracy**

Since 2005, Environmental Commons has been maintaining a “legislation tracker” providing up-to-date information on state legislation and regulation impacting local sustainable farming systems and community decision-making. In 2008, we are monitoring local food bills that support sustainable farming systems, farmers, local economies, and the regional distribution of foods. This program provides critical information for the general public, organizations, and policy makers. It is one of the most active areas of our website attracting thousands of visitors a month. [www.environmentalcommons.org/tracker2008.html](http://www.environmentalcommons.org/tracker2008.html)

As Director, I would like to extend my deep gratitude for your commitment to the environment and to Environmental Commons. Your support of the organization has allowed us to develop important programs and provide necessary information to effect change in our world.

Warm regards,

Britt Bailey, Founder & Executive Director