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PRESS ADVISORY

Series Aims to Increase Local Awareness About Farming and Ranching

Santa Barbara County AFA Presents the *Farm to Fork Series*

Santa Barbara, CA- The Santa Barbara County Ag Futures Alliance (AFA) is proud to announce the kick-off to their agricultural education campaign, "*Agriculture in Santa Barbara County: The Field to Fork Series.*" The goal of the four-part series is to inform and educate local residents about food and farming practices in the County, looking at agriculture from the production, processing, distribution, and consumer perspectives, among others.

WHAT: Ag Futures Alliance presents the *Field to Fork Series*; Refreshments provided; **FREE.**

WHEN: **Wed. March 23rd, 6-8pm**, *Faulkner Gallery*, Santa Barbara Public Library; **Wed. April 6th, 6-8pm**, *Shepherd Hall*, Santa Maria Public Library

WHO: Cathy Fisher, Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner; Victor Tognazzini, Gold Coast Packing, Santa Maria; Robert Abbott, Hilltop and Canyon Farms, Carpinteria; Dr. Neil MacDougall, Agribusiness Professor at Cal Poly, SLO.

Forum facilitator, Joseph McIntyre, president of Ag Innovations Network and former facilitator of the Santa Barbara AFA, will provide an introductory synopsis of current trends around food, farming and agricultural viability from a statewide perspective. He will introduce four local experts who will provide the audience with background on issues related to and affecting agriculture including local agricultural statistics, farming in today's economic climate, regulatory realities, environmental resources and considerations, and the future of farming, among other topics. The public will be encouraged to pose questions of panelists through a moderated format.

The 4-part series will continue in June (Part II) and September (part III) with two planned bus tours to local farms, ranches, agricultural processing and distribution centers, the Food Bank of Santa Barbara County and other relevant points of interest.

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Finally, a concluding panel in December will look at the consumer's role in supporting local farms (Part IV). This final panel will focus on diet-related illness, access to fresh, healthy food, institutional purchasing, and school food reform. **Please note exact dates for parts II-IV TBD.**

The Santa Barbara County AFA, supported by the Ag Innovations Network, has been operating as part of a statewide system of AFA and Food Systems Alliance since 2009. The AFA is dedicated to "promoting the long-term viability of agriculture in Santa Barbara County while addressing environmental and social concerns through a process that values dialogue and collaboration."

The group's most recent accomplishment is the presentation of a draft agricultural buffer policy that is now making its way through the County's review process.

To find out more about AFA, please visit <http://santabarbaracoafa.org>. To find out more about the series or the opening panel discussions, please contact Teri Bontrager at 805.688.7479 or Jennifer Dolan at 805.310.1462

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