

Introduction

My name is Joe Del Bosque. I grew up on a farm, the son of farm workers on the Westside of the San Joaquin Valley. Thanks to this great country, I went to college, and was able to become a farmer in 1985. Some of the land that I now own, I worked as a boy picking melons. I now grow cantaloupes, organic cantaloupes, asparagus, almonds, and cherries on about 2300 acres. At peak season, my farm employs over 300 people growing, picking, and packing nuts, fruits, and vegetables, feeding people across America. My wife, Maria Gloria, who was also a farmworker, helps me manage the operation. My farm would be considered average in size and representative of the very diverse Westside.

Our water supply

Our farm lies in several water districts, but all are federal districts that receive water through the CVP. Our water comes from the Delta, pumped into canals that provide water for farms and cities. About 25 million people receive some of their water through this system, including San Jose, Los Angeles, and San Diego.

We have been farming with chronic water shortages since 1992 when the CVPIA took effect. Before 2009, in our worst years we received a 25% water supply. The recent biological opinions for smelt and salmon have cut our water supply deeper than solely hydrologic conditions. That is the reason that we only received 10% in 2009.

For over fourteen years we have been adopting high tech irrigation systems to become more efficient and conserve water. This has required large investments and learning new methods. Last year, 170 acres of land with high tech drip irrigation systems laid idle because there wasn't enough water. At some point, we can no longer conserve our way out.

Impacts to my farm

Since 2007, the amount of crops that my farm produces has been reduce by almost half. I no longer grow tomatoes or wheat. My bread-and-butter crop, cantaloupes has been reduced by 55%. Asparagus acreage has been cut in half. Last year I terminated leases on 300 acres of land, and another 850 acres were left idle. I still had to pay rent or mortgage payments, taxes, and assessments on this land. We have had to find other sources of water to make up the shortfall for the survival of our trees, always at expensive rates. Since 2007 my water cost has tripled causing me to exhaust cash reserves.

Right now is the time of the year when my banker is reviewing our loan requests. I will have to provide him with sources and quantities of water for our farm. All I have to show him now is what I have left over from last year, which is very little. We typically start planting in March. The Bureau of Reclamation didn't allocate water to us last year until May 7. This makes ag bankers very nervous.

Impacts to the community

Some of the most vulnerable people in our farming communities, our farm workers, have been hit hard by this drought. With less produce to grow and harvest, many workers were not rehired. Those that

had jobs were often underemployed. During the summer harvest season when people normally work six or seven days a week, most employees worked only five. This is a terrible impact on our worker's and their families. Some of our workers bought homes for the first time in late 2008, only to struggle to make payments in 2009. In our local towns of Mendota and Firebaugh the unemployment rates skyrocketed to 35% and 40%. Hundreds of people who should have been growing and picking our food were gathered in food distribution lines. Several times that I volunteered to distribute food, I found the wives of our employees waiting in line. These are people who would rather be working. Handouts are appreciated, but they do not pay rent or children's clothing. God only knows how they are surviving the winter. I'm sure many have gone back to their home countries. Madam Chairwoman, we need these people. They are just as important to our farms as our land and water.

Other economic impacts

The impacts of starving our farms is far-reaching. Just from the reduction of our cantaloupe acreage is a significant economic loss to our economy. That reduction, 595 acres, would have generated over \$4 million to our economy, \$1.1 million of that in wages, and several hundred thousand dollars in taxes. Every farm dollar would have been multiplied by four or five in our distribution and retail sectors. The crop produced would have fed over 2 million people their annual consumption of the fresh fruit. All this for about 900 acre feet. About the same amount that waters about 600 lawns per year.

What do we face for 2009?

The biological opinions for smelt and salmon have restricted pumping from the delta since November 1, and consequently choking our water supply. Even during storm events such as this week when rivers have tripled in size, the pumps are restricted, and water flows to the ocean. This week we have lost about 10,000 acre-feet per day. That is enough water to irrigate my entire farm for two years. As rivers reach flood stage, we expect pumping to be restricted even further due to turbidity standards. Apparently when the smelt can't see the pumps, these must be shut down.

Our government has not helped us. Most of the aid that Washington sent to California for drought relief went to environmental projects such as fish screens, and didn't produce any water at all. Some went to fund groundwater wells which will exacerbate the depletion of our aquifers. The two-gates project has been all but scuttled by the Interior Department. Secretary Salazar came to my farm in October, gave us little hope, and he has made it real. Madam Chairwoman, who else can we turn to?

Among farmers in the San Joaquin Valley, there is a very real urgency. We are watching as our future spills out the Golden Gate Bridge to the Pacific every day. We cannot sustain another 2009. We have already seen farmers pull out their almond orchards in the San Joaquin Valley, and avocado growers decimate their trees in San Diego County. All the water that has been deprived us, causing economic and social devastation, has not improved the populations of smelt or salmon. We have come to the point where our leaders must make some sense of this and prevent further disaster to our farms and people. It was done in New Mexico with the silvery minnow; it can be done here. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to you and the committee.