



February 21, 2025

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Ventura County Board of Supervisors
Clerk of the Board
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Re: Support for Supervisor Lavere's Proposed Ordinance Restricting Camping and Overnight
Parking Near Agricultural Lands

Dear Honorable Members of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors and Clerk of the Board:

Marz Farms, Inc. ("Marz") writes in support of Supervisor Lavere's Proposed Ordinance Restricting Camping and Overnight Parking Near Agricultural Lands. Marz is one of the largest berry growers in Ventura County, producing high-quality, sustainable berries while upholding ethical principles and maintaining positive relationships throughout the supply chain and community we operate in. Around 75% of the crops we grow are organic. Our company was established in 1995, and we are proud to call Ventura County our exclusive growing region and home. We have a deep appreciation for Ventura County, a community that consistently demonstrates a proactive approach to addressing its challenges.

I am writing to express our strong support for Supervisor Lavere's proposal to work with appropriate county agencies to draft an ordinance restricting camping and overnight parking on or near agricultural lands in the unincorporated areas of Ventura County. We believe this ordinance is necessary and will ultimately benefit both the agricultural community and those individuals who are currently camping or parking near agricultural lands by directing them to appropriate resources and support.

Based on our direct experiences, we support this proposal for the following reasons:

Safety Concerns for Workers and Service Providers: We have experienced a troubling increase in violent encounters that endanger our employees and service providers. Our beekeepers have been threatened with firearms by individuals in homeless encampments when attempting to move beehives at night. Personnel servicing our portable restrooms have been harassed and denied access to facilities after being threatened with violence. These dangerous situations compromise the safety of people simply trying to do their jobs.

Critical Food Safety Issues: We have documented illegal dumping of human waste by RVs near our ranches and public canals. This presents a serious health hazard to the general public and compromises the safety and integrity of our produce. Some campers treat farm properties as personal space, defecating in fields and indecently exposing themselves. The litter generated by



these encampments attracts rodents and wildlife, creating additional food safety concerns for our operations.

Escalating Property Crime: Our ranches have experienced break-ins where security measures such as fencing, wires, and plastic barriers have been cut to gain access. Surveillance cameras have been dismantled, and equipment has been broken into or stolen. Losses include solar panels, agricultural implements, water containers, and expensive mechanical parts. While we understand many campers are experiencing mental health challenges and need assistance, some have intentionally set fires to our properties. These incidents have resulted in losses exceeding \$500,000 in just two separate events without referencing others. Contrary to common assumptions about insurance coverage, these incidents have made it extremely difficult for us to obtain property insurance as carriers now consider our operations high-risk.

Residential Security Threats: Some of our ranch locations include housing for employees. These workers and their families have had their safety compromised as individuals from nearby campsites have attempted and sometimes succeeded in breaking into their homes.

We understand this is a complex issue requiring compassionate solutions. We support efforts to connect affected individuals with appropriate resources while also protecting the agricultural operations that are vital to Ventura County's economy and food supply. The proposed ordinance strikes that necessary balance.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. We are available to provide additional information or testimony if needed.

Respectfully submitted,

Audelio Martinez
Chief Executive Officer