



## ***For Immediate Release***

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### **Productive & Historic Farmland Protected in Three Central Valley Counties**

STOCKTON, Calif., Sept. 8, 2011 -- Sitting in the middle of what is arguably the best walnut and cherry orchard land in the world is the Brandstad Farms. This highly productive land, located five miles east of Stockton, has been permanently preserved for agricultural production for future generations, the Central Valley Farmland Trust (CVFT) announced today.

"This is a beautiful example of California's prime farmland," CVFT executive director Bill Martin said. "This 187-acre property has been in the Brandstad family for over 80 years, and we're very pleased it's among several Central Valley properties we've been able to preserve with the help of our federal and state funding partners."

The Brandstad family on September 8 played host to an event to announce the completion not only of their easement, but also several others in the valley:

- The Brazil/Van Ryn Farm, 216 acres northeast of Manteca in San Joaquin County.
- The Ulm Farm, 151 acres on Hwy 132 west of Modesto in Stanislaus County.
- The Alvernaz Farm, 211 acres southwest of Livingston in Merced County.
- The Bear Creek Ranch, 244 acres fronting on Hwy 140 between Merced and Planada in Merced County.

"What we have here is unique and we need to protect it. There's not another California Central Valley anywhere else in the world. The soil, the climate, the distribution system, you can't just pick that up and move it somewhere else," added Martin.

The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), part of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, contributed funding to all the projects. The California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP), part of the state's Department of Conservation, helped fund all but the Brazil/Van Ryn easement.



Additionally, the CVFT used farmland mitigation funding from several different jurisdictions within San Joaquin County. This funding source allowed the CVFT to complete two additional easements within San Joaquin County totaling 291 acres. Since September, 2010, this brings the total to seven easements, across three counties, for an aggregate of 1,288 acres protected.

“The Central Valley is one of the most productive farming regions in the United States if not the world and we are happy to help these landowners protect their farms for future generations,” said Ed Burton, state conservationist for NRCS California.

The CVFT will hold the easements on all of the properties, while management of the agricultural operations remains in the hands of the family farmers.

“This farm has been in our family for over 80 years and I am very pleased it will remain in productive agriculture in perpetuity,” stated Jon Brandstad. “I really appreciate the efforts of the Central Valley Farmland Trust and all the funders who helped make the placement of a permanent agricultural conservation easement on our farm a reality.”

According to the most recent report from the state’s Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, loss of agricultural land, particularly Prime Farmland, occurred at a record pace from 2006-2008. Irrigated farmland decreased by 203,011 acres in California during that span, with Prime Farmland representing 49 percent of the decrease (98,471 acres). Land idling, at 260,412 acres, increased by 29 percent over the prior two-year mapping period. It was predominant in the southern San Joaquin Valley, primarily due to water shortages.

“We commend the landowners who have created easements on their properties for their commitment to agriculture, and hope other farmers and ranchers in the Central Valley will explore this option,” Department of Conservation Acting Director Derek Chernow said. “We congratulate the landowners, the Central Valley Farmland Trust, and our federal and local funding partners on the completion of these conservation easements.”

**About the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP):** The federal FRPP is a voluntary easement program that protects productive agricultural land by providing funds for the purchase of conservation easements to limit conversion of farm and ranch lands to non-agricultural uses. NRCS partners with state, tribal or local governments, and non-governmental organizations to fund the acquisition of conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. More information is available at [www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov).

**About the Department of Conservation’s California Farmland Conservancy Program:** Begun in 1996, the CFCP has provided nearly \$70.5 million in funding to permanently shield more than 49,300 acres of the state’s best and most vulnerable agricultural land from development. Landowners and trusts are encouraged to contact the Division of Land Resource Protection for information about the program and potential funding. For details, visit [www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp](http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp).



**About the Central Valley Farmland Trust:** The CVFT is a private, non-profit 501 (c) (3) corporation. Its mission is to work with landowners and conservation partners to preserve agricultural lands in Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties. The CVFT's board includes farmers and agricultural business professionals with expertise and interest in protecting farmland.

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