

6-1-11
Presented as
Obscure Comment

MEMO

TO: Jefferson County Planning Commission
FROM: Diane Johnson, Ph.D.
DATE: June 1, 2011
RE: Barriers to Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture in Jefferson County

I would like to address five issues related to removing barriers from and enhancing the viability of agriculture in Jefferson County.

1. I applaud the idea expressed here to recommend that the County Commissioners declare Agriculture, rather than "development," as the highest and best use of all lands documented as having "ag soils." That would create a major shift in the cultural perception of the value of all kinds of agriculture within the county.
2. Equally important to perceptions of importance is to eliminate the "new ag/old ag" dichotomy, and start treating ALL AG the same. All would be subject to best management practices or whatever stewardship plans are put in place, and all would have to demonstrate protection of critical areas to continue to receive exemptions under the ag banner.
3. Water allocations are critical for ag. Instead of focussing on what's "allowed," or what is prohibited, I would like to see a truly good plan that benefits the community re: ag and food security, and use "community will" to pressure the state to release control of what we need to make it happen. We should, in my humble opinion, retain control of our water, with the caveat that we prove ourselves capable of managing it under the new sensitivities to protect it.
4. Advocate for the County Commissioners to "opt in" to ESHB 1886.
5. In defining "Ag uses," don't ignore ag-related or value-adding activities or products as "ag" when designating a parcel's use as "ag:" e.g., bee keeping, manufacture of bee hives, or bee selling, compost making and selling, crafted jams, jellies, pastries, or soaps, forest products or crafts, etc.