

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **As Farming Population Ages, New Partnership Offers Support and Tips for Transition Planning**

**Sacramento, CA** – Nearly 40 percent of producers in California are over the age of 65 according to the most recent U.S. Census of Agriculture, slightly higher than the national average. The stability of California agriculture, the backbone of U.S. food production, is largely dependent on the successful change of hands to the next generation.

As a result, many non-profits are instituting holistic succession planning programs to help farm families with the transition process. In California, California FarmLink offers a 12-month long program, *The Regenerator: A Year of Farm Succession Planning*, which addresses all aspects of transition, including tax and estate planning, business structure and valuation, as well as financing strategies.

California FarmLink recently partnered with the California Agricultural Mediation Program (CALAMP) to set the stage for productive farm transition conversations and help participating families with any communication related issues. CALAMP is a nonprofit organization that provides free mediation and facilitation to those working in agriculture.

CALAMP and California FarmLink offer these five tips for successful farm transition planning, an often overlooked but critical part of farm operations.

### **Have a Champion & Prioritize the Discussion**

Have someone at the farm who is dedicated to moving the process forward. Often transition conversations are put on the back burner because people get too caught up in the day-to-day.

### **Recognize Each Other's Point of View**

It's common for family members and stakeholders to have different visions for the future. It's important to listen and recognize each other's point of view as valid, whether you agree or not.

### **Understand the Financial Picture**

The next generation should have access to the finances for the best chance of success. For example, unknowns can cause issues and prevent a successful transfer.

### **Write Down Your Rough Draft for Transition of Assets and Management**

Write down your vision or ideas to ensure everyone is on the same page. This draft will help you finalize it with a professional.

### **Get Help as Needed from a Facilitator**

A facilitator or mediator with experience in family coaching and succession planning helps create a sense of fairness. They'll help set the agenda at family meetings, ensure nothing is missed, and help reluctant participants become more involved.

"We provide free mediation services on a variety of issues facing farmers, including farm transitions," said Matt Strassberg, CALAMP Program Director. "CALAMP's services helped many families reach agreements about how to manage the farm going forward."

CALAMP offers both on-site mediation sessions and teleconferencing sessions so that everyone has access to this service no matter where in California they live.

"Farm transition discussions don't have to be limited to only family members. Some may want to involve long-term employees in future ownership or young farmers outside the business," Strassberg said.

For more information on FarmLink's program, visit: <https://www.californiafarmlink.org/succession>. Or email Liya Schwartzman at [liya@cafarmmlink.org](mailto:liya@cafarmmlink.org).

For more information or to sign up for free mediation with CALAMP visit [www.CALAMP.org](http://www.CALAMP.org) where you can fill out an online request form. Or email Jenna Muller at [jennam@emcenter.org](mailto:jennam@emcenter.org) or Mary Campbell at [maryc@emcenter.org](mailto:maryc@emcenter.org).

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### **About the California Agricultural Mediation Program:**

CALAMP is a program of the Environmental Mediation Center (EMC), a non-profit organization that designs and administers environmental and agricultural dispute resolution programs. CALAMP provides free mediation services to the agricultural community in California on a variety of issues including farm loans, credit issues, farmer/neighbor conflicts, leases, USDA conservation programs, organic certification, wetlands determinations, family farm transitions, and many more.

### **About California FarmLink:**

California FarmLink is a 21-year-old nonprofit organization investing in the prosperity of farmers and ranchers through lending, education, and access to land. FarmLink works across the state with a focus on serving communities of color and beginning farmers and ranchers. The organization partners with farmers, ranchers, advisors, impact investors, public agencies and other nonprofits to grow and maintain support for next-generation growers.