

For Immediate Release

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California Strawberry Commission to Speak on Strawberry Export Markets at Congressman Farr Luncheon - A National Export Initiative (NEI) Update

Monterey, Ca, Crazy Horse Restaurant, Wednesday, May 18th

Santa Cruz, Ca., May 10, 2011 – The **Monterey Bay International Trade Association (MBITA)** (www.mbita.org) today announced that Mark Murai, President of the **California Strawberry Commission** has been added as an additional speaker to the Congressman Farr luncheon to be held at the Crazy Horse Restaurant – Bay Park Hotel in Monterey on May 18th.

'Export markets are important to California strawberry growers and shippers, both statewide and locally. California fresh and frozen exports in 2010 equaled 276 million pounds, valued at \$341 million. Exports represent 23% of California production, and most of that exported product grows right here on the Central Coast. These overseas markets provide a crucial outlet for local growers during summer when an abundance of other fruits, such as peaches, apricots, melons, cherries, etc., compete in the domestic marketplace', states Mr. Murai.

The event is produced in cooperation with the **Monterey County Business Council** (www.mcabc.biz). Congressman Sam Farr returns to the Monterey Chapter of MBITA for his annual presentation on Washington D.C.'s perspective on the progress of the National Export Initiative (NEI) in helping create new export related jobs both locally and nationally primarily in the small to mid-sized enterprise (SME) communities.

Also included as a guest presenter for this luncheon is Paul V. Oliva, Founder and Principal of **OlivaGlobal Communications** (<http://www.olivaglobal.com/>), who will give a presentation on the annual Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting that will be held in San Francisco, Ca. this year. The **Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)** annual meetings are hosted by a different 'pacific rim' country every year

Envisioned for San Francisco is an intensive series of meetings, including the Senior Officials' Meeting, working group and committee meetings, public-private forums involving senior government and private sector leaders, and a high-level meeting of energy and transportation officials. Issues addressed at these meetings will include those related to APEC's core mission to promote free and open trade and investment and strengthen economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as making regional economic growth more inclusive and sustainable.

Susan Arcady Barich, Director of **Project 17 – Monterey Bay** (<http://www.project17-montereybay.com/>), will also give a presentation on the emergence of 'regional innovation clusters', (RICs) in particular, the Project 17 - Agriculture Innovation Cluster recently launched on the Central Coast region will be discussed in detail.

Geographic concentrations of interconnected firms and supporting organizations have re-emerged as a key tool in Washington, D.C. for economic development. The federal branch and Congress have joined state and local policy makers in embracing "regional innovation clusters" (RICs) as a positive framework for structuring the nation's challenged economic development activities. The Small Business Administration (SBA) has recognized the emerging importance of RICS with the creation of its Innovative Economies pilot program, of which Project 17 - Agriculture Innovation Cluster, is among one of 10 initially selected "innovative economies" of 173 submitted for consideration nationwide. This designation was awarded to Barich Business Services of Santa Cruz to create a regional cluster of agricultural technology companies in the tri-county Congressional District. Susan Barich will discuss this regional initiative, what it means to the region, and how you can be a part of it.

'Congressman Farr has long promoted regionalism throughout his Congressional District 17. Project 17 is designed to leverage the powerful agricultural industry in the Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties with the region's extensive technology capacity to solve agriculture's wicked problems and ensure that the region continues to feed the world while increasing growers' bottom line profitability and decreasing the negative impacts on our unique environment', states Susan Arcady Barich, Director of Project 17 – Monterey Bay.

Further details and registration for this luncheon can be found at <http://www.mbita.org/events/home.php>