

For Immediate Release

Attn: Business Editor

Contact: Tony Livoti , MBITA, 831-335-4780 (tlivoti@mbita.org)

Assemblymember William Monning Keynotes 'The Importance of Agricultural Exports in our State Economy' Luncheon/Seminar, Salinas March 19

Santa Cruz, Ca. – Feb 18 – The **Monterey Bay International Trade Association (MBITA)** (www.mbita.org) and the **Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce** (www.salinascchamber.com) today announced that the upcoming luncheon seminar '***The Importance of Agricultural Exports in our State Economy***' will be held at the Cathay House in Salinas on March 19th and the 'keynote' speaker will be Assembly Member William Monning.

Starting with a seminar at 10:00am, **Candy Hansen-Gage**, Director of the **Center for Int'l Trade Development – Fresno**, will discuss how the California Agricultural Export Training Program or "CalAgX" benefits the producers, processors and marketers of California grown or processed specialty crops. This successful program is starting its 5th consecutive year and is offered statewide. Also, she will discuss current agricultural trends, emerging markets, and export services available through the California Centers for International Trade Development (CITD) network.

This seminar will feature **Robert Tse**, Deputy Secretary of **Trade Development for the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)**, who will provide a comprehensive overview of the past history and future opportunities for California agricultural exporters including information on the USDA's 2010 forecast. Also, presenting at the seminar will **Brooks Ohlson** Director of the **Centers for International Trade Development (CITD)** in **Sacramento** who will discuss how creative export packaging and enhanced export marketing techniques can be the 'key' to success for agriculture exporters. **Jerry Avila**, Regional Manager for **SBA's Export Express Loan Guarantee program** will also be discussing trade finance services from the **SBA**.

During the lunch portion of the event, **Paul V. Oliva**, Founder and Principal, **Oliva Global Communications** will open the luncheon with a presentation on how food products are getting caught in a "spaghetti bowl" tangle of bilateral trade agreements in the Asia-Pacific where officials are now discussing further rules on food safety, food security, and public health. Additionally, Mr. Oliva will discuss how Europe is embarking on a grand experiment with paper-free import and export shipments. "Northern California has some of the world's richest land, a history of innovation in food and agriculture, and strong international growth potential. I'm excited to see how growers, packagers, and ag technology suppliers can be a force for meeting President Obama's export expansion goals," Paul Oliva declares.

The 'keynote' speaker for the luncheon will be **Assembly member William Monning**, of the **27th Assembly District** who will speak about how California's Economic Revival is dependent on International Trade Expansion and Promotion. "California's budget crisis continues to unfold as we face a \$20 billion projected deficit through the 2010-11 budget year. This projected deficit comes on top of a \$41 billion budget gap last year and a combined \$60 billion deficit over the past 18 months.

It is precisely because of the recession and the global economic crisis that Assemblymember Monning is a supporter of expanding California's trade promotion and opportunities to create good paying jobs. As the former Director of the International Trade and Commercial Diplomacy Master's Degree program at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, Monning is well aware of the critical role of international trade to our state and nation's economy. "I will continue to be a strong proponent of export promotion, especially for agricultural products that are vital to the economic health of our region and the state, and I believe that the road to California's economic recovery must include an expansion of exports and promotion of our region's products and services," says Monning.

Further details and registration for this special seminar/luncheon can be found at

<http://www.mbita.org/events/calagexports-seminar.html>

About MBITA: Founded over 25 years ago supporting SMEs by providing bilateral trade promotion and investment services. www.mbita.org.

About the SALINAS VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE: The Chamber is committed to creating a strong local economy, promoting the community, providing networking opportunities, representing the interests of business with government and political action. www.salinascchamber.com