

California Hosts Lasseter and Johnson

May 7-9, 2007, California FSA hosted Administrator Teresa Lasseter and John Johnson, Deputy Administrator for Farm Program, for a whirlwind ag tour. The trip, which took three days and covered hundreds of miles, was intended to show Lasseter and Johnson the unique face of California's agriculture.



Administrator Lasseter, Al Montna, California SED John Smythe tour Montna Farms in Dingville.

Starting in the rice country north of Sacramento, SED John Smythe, Lasseter, and Johnson had an opportunity to meet with the California Rice Commission and to briefly tour Montna Farms and visit the Sutter/Yuba FSA County Office.

From there the group traveled 170 miles south to Salinas, long known as the Salad Bowl of America. After meeting with employees, Administrator Lasseter, Johnson and Smythe toured the strawberry operation of Felipe and Berta Herrera. The Herrera's lease their land and produce enormous berries nearly year round. They are packaged for sale right in the field by the pickers. A short

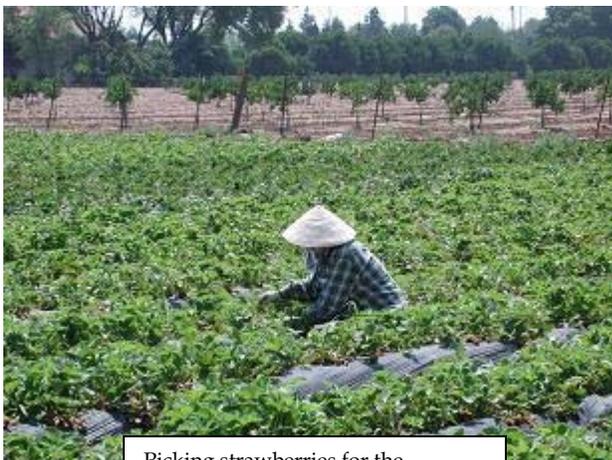
drive to the north and the situation was much more somber. Flower grower Delores Castorena stood among 50 acres of dirt which would normally be planted to flowers. She lost her entire crop to the winter freeze that has resulted in \$139 billion dollars in damage across the state. Castorena was forced to let her farm laborers go, and is not sure how she will manage when it comes time to replant.



Johnson and Lasseter listen as Farm Loan Manager LaVon Treasure translate for the Herrera's as they discuss the setbacks this year's weather has caused to their strawberry operation.

That evening the Administrator participated in a barbeque in her honor. Hosted by CHASCOE - California - Hawaii Association of FSA County

Office Employees - and the Merced County Office, employees from the nearby offices celebrated Lasseter's visit California style - with plenty of tri-tip.



Picking strawberries for the Tchieng's roadside stand in Fresno

The following day Lasseter, Johnson and Smythe had an opportunity to meet with the Fresno FSA County Committee and hear their concerns, most of which centered around the concern of finding adequate farm labor this year. All advocated a guest labor provision to allow workers to come from Mexico during the harvest.

From there the group traveled to the operation of Fong Tchieng who raises strawberries, flowers and a variety of Southeast Asian vegetables. The Tchieng's, who are Hmong, sell their crops through a roadside stand, several farmers markets and to the local school district.

The tour ended with a meeting of the California Cotton Growers Association and a 175 mile drive through the vineyards, cotton fields, citrus groves and almond orchards that follow the highways back to Sacramento.



California SED John Smythe, Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs John Johnson, Administrator Teresa Lasseter and Don Cameron, Chairman of the California Cotton Growers Association meet to discuss FSA issues, May 9 in Fresno.