

CALIFORNIA BEEF Cattle PRODUCERS The original environmentalists

SACRAMENTO, CALIF. (APRIL 21, 2009) – For many people, April 22 marks the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement, Earth Day. For California beef cattle producers, however, every day is Earth Day. As the world prepares to celebrate Earth Day, it is important for the public to understand that the nation's farmers and ranchers were among some of the first environmentalists. People who derive their living from the land know that Earth Day is not a political or social statement, but a way of life.

Californians rely on farming and ranching families to manage and maintain more than 22 million acres of privately-owned rangeland in California. These families strive to produce food and fiber for the U.S. and the world, while also serving as environmental stewards. It is a job they do proudly and a job that most have done for multiple generations. There is no better group of people to entrust with the care of California's natural resources than farmers and ranchers.

A healthy aspect of sustainable beef production involves grazing cattle on U.S. rangelands, about 85 percent of which are unsuitable for crops. Raising cattle on this land contributes to the ecosystems by converting forages humans cannot eat into a nutrient-rich food humans can eat – beef.

Grasslands and beef production are providing a win-win situation for both people and the environment. Properly managed cattle grazing keeps the grasslands healthy and maintains the biodiversity of the plant community. Grasslands offer many other important environmental benefits such as prevention of soil erosion by wind and rain. In addition, grasslands help replenish the water table by slowing run-off and allowing rain and snowmelt to soak into the ground. Furthermore, agriculture land provides important habitat to 75 percent of the nation's wildlife, including species at risk.

“When consumers buy beef, they support a group of American businessmen and women who responsibly care for this state's and the nation's natural resources while helping feed the world,” stated Bill Dale, executive director of the California Beef Council. “Today, each American farmer and rancher feeds 144 people worldwide.”

Day in and day out, farmers and ranchers take steps to conserve our natural resources. U.S. beef producers observe Earth Day every day by helping preserve a healthy, safe, clean and sustainable environment for food production

while protecting the land for use by future generations. Both livelihood and a love of nature bind America's 800,000 beef producers to the land. America's beef producers care for the environment on Earth day and every day.

For more information about beef producers and their role as stewards of the land visit www.ExploreBeef.org. For more information about the California Beef Council visit www.calbeef.org.