Elder Kenneth Browning

South Valley Farms

Wasco, California

Director of FRI Mission

Farmland Reserve, Inc.

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Dear Elder Estes,

In our monthly report it asks if we have any concerns. At this time I have a personal concern and feel that I need to get some counsel and advice from you, as my Director over this mission call. I apologize that this is my first correspondence with you since your calling to replace Elder Britzing.

On Sunday morning, September the 12th, my wife and I were woke up at day break with the sounds of equipment. It took a minute for my mind to register what was happening. I knew that it was Sunday and suddenly I realized that the equipment was going to the pistachio orchard to start the harvest. I had been told that when the pistachio harvest started it would be a continual busyness of noises and commotion around our place. It had not entered my mind that it included the Sabbath. The previous week in our Fast and Testimony meeting I felt impressed that I should bare my testimony as to the importance of observing the Sabbath. All of my life I have been taught that Sunday is the Lords day and we should not do any work on that day.

I have tried to find out why we are harvesting on the Lords Day and I have been given three reasons:

1st - pistachios are a perishable crop. After the fruit has been picked from the tree it has to be processed to remove the Haul around the shell within a relatively short period of time or the shell will be darkened which reduces its selling value. We have another company process the pistachios for us and they work 24 hours a day and 7 days a week during the pistachio harvest.

2nd - we do not have enough equipment to harvest the crop and therefore rely on another company to help with the harvest and they work 24/7 during the pistachio harvest.

3rd – the longer the fruit remains on the tree after maturity the greater the chance of damage to the fruit due to insect and disease.

I do not want to imply that I know very much about the raising and harvesting of pistachios and I do not know of the solutions that have already been explored. I realize that if the “*ox is in the mire we have to pull it out”* but if that ox continues to get in the mire I would either build a fence around the ox or the mire hole. I question that after 20 + years, if the *“ox in the mire”* is a valid excuse.

I have been told that this is not my concern and I shouldn’t worry about it. Would you please give me some input as to what, if anything, I can or should do to feel peace about this matter? We have 3,000 acres of pistachios and about 17,000 acres of almonds. South Valley Farms does have their own almond processing plant and equipment to do the harvesting and I am grateful that they do not harvest the almonds on the Sabbath.

Sincerely,

Elder Browning

*Note: Elder Estes returned a call a few days later to inform me that he had taken my letter to the presidency of Farmland Reserve and was informed that they were not aware of scheduled work on the Sabbath. They also assured him that if necessary they would take the matter to the Presiding Bishopric. I never heard another work about the matter but the following Saturday by 6PM all equipment was in the yard and the gates were locked and it remained that way until 6:30PM on Sunday. This remained the practice for the rest of the time that we served there.*