

The House of Representatives this week passed H.R. 1633, “the Farm Dust Regulation Prevention Act of 2011,” to prohibit the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from expanding the federal regulation of dust on farms and ranches. If allowed, this regulation would significantly hurt the Northern California economy.

This legislation became necessary after the EPA released a report that recommended expanding the regulation of “coarse particulate matter,” or particles found in the air, to include farm dust. Farm dust is organic and is created by tractors cultivating the soil and the normal movement of livestock, for example. This regulation would severely restrict how farmers and ranchers work their fields and handle their livestock, hurting job creation and raising food prices. While the EPA recently indicated that it does not currently intend to impose the regulation, fringe groups continue to petition the agency to move forward with it. H.R. 1633 would prevent any change in the regulation for one year and would require the EPA to prove that the dust hurts health and that the benefits outweigh the cost of implementing the regulation for local communities.

I believe blocking the potential imposition of this harmful regulation provides much-needed certainty to our farmers and ranchers in Northern California and across our nation. For this reason, I strongly supported House passage of H.R. 1633 and hope that the Senate works quickly to move it to President Obama’s desk.