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Angela Godwin
Agricultural Commissioner
Sealer of Weights and Measures

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 7, 2026
TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Angela Godwin, Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer of Weights & Measures
SUBJECT: April Fee Hearing

INTRODUCTION

The Mendocino County Department of Agriculture remains dedicated to supporting the agricultural community and ensuring consumer protection through efficient, equitable, and transparent services. In line with the Board's direction to align fees with operational costs, we are proposing updates to our fee schedule based on a recent time study and cost analysis. These adjustments aim to improve cost recovery, reflect current staffing and indirect expenses, and streamline the fee structure for clarity and fairness. Key changes include restructuring inspection and certification fees to hourly rates where appropriate, deleting obsolete or redundant fees, and adjusting device administrative fees to comply with state code requirements. The proposed updates will enhance service delivery while minimizing impacts on local producers and businesses.

BACKGROUND

The current fee schedule for the Department of Agriculture was last comprehensively updated in 2020. Since then, the Department has experienced increased costs due to salary adjustments, the incorporation of indirect expenses through the County's A-87 Cost Allocation Plan, and changes in supervision rates. These factors, combined with operational efficiencies from improved processes and software, necessitate fee revisions to more accurately capture the full cost of services. Many services, such as regulatory inspections and certifications, are essential for compliance with state and federal mandates but have historically not fully recovered costs. The proposed changes balance the need for fiscal sustainability with our commitment to supporting Mendocino County's agricultural economy and the integrity of weights and measures.

The Department provides critical services that do not always align with a fee-based model, including pest detection programs, consumer complaint resolution, and administrative support for industry outreach. These are primarily funded through state and federal revenues, with general fund support where needed. The fee updates focus on user-paid services to ensure those directly benefiting contribute proportionally, while maintaining accessibility for small-scale operations.

PROPOSAL

The proposed fee adjustments reflect an average increase of approximately 178% in retained fees, driven by the shift to fully burdened hourly rates that incorporate indirect costs, benefits, and updated time estimates. From a low base of \$7,114 in current annual revenue, this yields modest per-fee dollar

increases and adds \$8,814 in projected revenue (totaling \$15,928), a small share of the department's budget that offsets rising costs without substantial user burdens. This accounts for restructuring: fees consolidated into hourly models, deleted as obsolete, or reduced/waived to encourage compliance.

Key elements of the update include:

Restructuring and Increases: Fees for phytosanitary certificates, quarantine compliance certificates, and additional weights-and-measures inspections have been restructured to hourly rates (e.g., \$170/hour for phytosanitary services, up from flat rates of \$24–\$49). This reflects actual time spent, including travel, and ensures equity. New hourly fees for regulatory trapping (\$186/hour) and bee certifications (\$186) address specific service demands.

Decreases and Waivers: Device administrative fees have been reduced to fixed amounts set by state code (e.g., small scales, from \$37 to \$2.20, a 94% reduction). The bee apiary registration for 1–9 colonies is waived (from \$64 to \$0) to promote registration among small hobbyists, while introducing tiered fees for larger operations (\$100 for 10–50 colonies, \$250 for 51+ or brokers).

Deletions: Obsolete fees, such as specific certificate counts (e.g., 2–3 certificates at \$24), per-mile/per-hour scale testing breakdowns, and outdated registrations (e.g., third-party certifier at \$1,100), have been eliminated. This simplifies the schedule, reduces administrative complexity, and focuses on core services.

Overrides: The Department recommends that the Board apply overrides to certain fees, adjusting the calculated full-cost amounts downward to fixed rates in accordance with state code requirements, policy considerations, and alignment with neighboring counties. For example, the Certified Producers Certificates fee is proposed to be reduced from the calculated rate of \$220 to \$50, and the Certified Farms Markets fee is proposed to be reduced from the calculated rate of \$245 to \$75. These recommended adjustments align with rates in neighboring counties and reflect the Board's support for the value of direct marketing of fresh produce, which benefits both local producers by providing viable sales outlets and consumers by enhancing access to healthy, locally grown foods.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES DIVISION

The Weights and Measures Division does not request broad updates but has adjusted device administrative fees to comply with state code mandates, resulting in reductions for most categories. The hourly rate for non-standard inspections increases to \$186 to reflect full costs, ensuring consumer protection services remain robust without reliance on the general fund.

CONCLUSION

The proposed fee schedule promotes fairness, cost recovery, and operational efficiency while supporting Mendocino County's agricultural and commercial sectors. By aligning fees with actual expenses, the Department can continue delivering high-quality services in a fiscally responsible manner. We recommend approval of these adjustments to maintain transparency and sustainability.