



# Mendocino County Farm Bureau

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Affiliated with the California Farm Bureau Federation and the American Farm Bureau Federation

March 26, 2018

Via Email: [bos@mendocinocounty.org](mailto:bos@mendocinocounty.org)

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors  
501 Low Gap Road, Room 1010  
Ukiah, CA 95482

***RE: The Importance of the Mendocino County Department of Agriculture and the Agricultural Commissioner Position***

Dear Chair Hamburg and Supervisors,

The Mendocino County Farm Bureau (MCFB) is a non-governmental, non-profit, voluntary membership, advocacy group whose purpose is to protect and promote agricultural interests throughout the county and to find solutions to the problems facing agricultural businesses and the rural community. MCFB currently represents approximately 1100 members. MCFB would like to submit comments on the importance of the Mendocino County Department of Agriculture to be considered during the recruitment process for the agricultural commissioner position.

**Annual Crop Report**

To date, the most current Mendocino County crop report was released in 2016 and compiled the county agricultural statistics from 2015. The 2016 crop report was supposed to be completed last year, but to date, has not been released. County agricultural commissioners are required by Section 2279 of the California Food and Agricultural Code to submit crop reports to the Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA).

These statistics serve numerous purposes. The county statistics are referenced to compile statewide statistics which are in turn used by CDFA to determine various programs/services and to determine funding allocations at the state and local levels. The pest exclusion data is valuable in understanding the results of the annual inspection process and to see if any exotic pests were intercepted from shipments of plant material into the county. The overall shifts in economic value and production level of the various agricultural commodities in the county are important to show the transition from year to year.

MCFB uses the crop report statistics as reference in comment letters to elected officials, for specific issue related topics, to look at historic trends and for economic analysis. Some examples are below.

2018 is the centennial year for MCFB as we were officially organized in 1918. As part of the research for this event, crop statistics through U.C. Cooperative Extension reports, the County Agricultural Department reports, newspaper articles and personal accounts have been critical in compiling an understanding of the evolution of agriculture in Mendocino County and the contributions that agriculture makes to the county.

In 2015, MCFB and other partners sponsored a study by Dr. Robert Eyler with Economic Forensics and Analytics, Inc. to analyze the economic impacts of water related to the agricultural industries in inland

Mendocino County. The study analysis showed that within the study area (the boundaries of the Redwood County Water District and the Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation Improvement District) and with existing water supply, the total economic impact of the agricultural industry was \$743,387,400. The study also showed that for every 100 Acre Feet of water lost, there was a total agricultural economic impact of \$8,873,000. The annual crop report data was used as part of the analysis for this study and it was important that the crop report data was current.

In testimony in front of the California Air Resources Board (CARB) last week, MCFB staff were unable to provide current agricultural production value data for Mendocino County. The current data would have been useful to show that agriculture is a viable economic contributor to the county economy and would have supported the testimony of requesting additional funding from CARB to assist local farmers with stationary irrigation pump replacement.

Local agricultural businesses and farmers/ranchers also reference the report to know how specific commodities are fluctuating on an annual basis at the county level. The annual and historical statistics are reviewed to assist with business decisions along with other state statistics such as the annual California grape crush report which is assembled by the USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service.

MCFB urges the Board to recognize the importance of the annual Mendocino County crop report and to work with the County Department of Agriculture to start to assemble the required statistics to publish the 2016 data as soon as possible.

### **Fire Impact to Agriculture**

The October 2017 fires were destructive and significantly impacted people's lives and properties. A number of these properties were in some way connected to agricultural production. This ranged from range lands for livestock grazing, vineyards/wineries, farmer market row crops, olive trees and timber lands. Livestock, stored hay and affiliated farming structures and equipment were also lost.

Following the fires, MCFB received numerous calls asking for assessments on the fire damage related to agriculture. We encouraged the county and the agricultural department to create an online survey that we could help distribute in order to compile the information. The agricultural department did create a survey, but to date, MCFB is not aware of those survey results being tabulated and organized into a report.

MCFB encourages the Board to ask that the agricultural related impact statistics from the fires be organized by the agricultural department and provided in a written report.

### **Weights and Measures**

The agricultural commissioner is also the county sealer for weights and measures. In this position, the agricultural commissioner is responsible for working with the Secretary of Food and Agriculture for compliance and enforcement related to weights and measures. Within the scope of this work, scales of all sizes (from grocery stores to drive-on scales) that are involved in commercial sales are annually certified for accuracy and fuel pumps are also certified for accuracy.

In 2017, there were some issues with the timely inspection and annual certification of a number of scales that are owned and operated by MCFB members. These scales are used to weigh livestock, wine grapes, pears, aggregate and other products that are involved in commercial sales in the county. The scales were due to be recertified around April and most did not end up being recertified until September.

There were a few issues with the late inspection and recertification of the scales. The primary issue was that some business transactions could not take place without the scales being certified. This forced individuals to use private services to come certify the scales since the county was not able to provide these services in a timely manner. The second issue was that the late timing of the certifications in September directly conflicted with the harvest season for wine grapes. On some of the busiest days of the year, wineries were forced to stop receiving shipments of grapes since the county inspector showed up to certify the winery drive-on scales. This created added expense for grape growers who had to pay for additional truck time (drivers had to sit at the wineries waiting to be weighed and to off load fruit) and also created scheduling issues for the wineries who had to deal with a backlog of fruit that was waiting to be processed.

In the 2nd quarter budget report released at the March 13, 2018 Board meeting for the agricultural department, it was mentioned that the weights and measures projected revenue was 20% less than anticipated. MCFB does not know all of the details, however there is an assumption that the lack of services for the certification of scales and other devices in 2017 contributed to this deficit. MCFB does not want to see fees increased in 2018 for certification services to make up for lack of anticipated income in 2017.

MCFB requests that the Board ensure that the county has the ability to certify scales, fuel pumps and other required devices in a timely manner for 2018. If a contract has to be placed with an adjoining county such as Lake or Sonoma to do this, the contract should be finalized as soon as possible.

### **Nursery Inspection/Pest Detection Program**

The nursery inspection program works to prevent the spread of plant pests through infested nursery stock. The agricultural commissioner is in charge of inspections of wholesale and production nurseries at least annually, and retail nurseries as needed to assure that injurious pests are controlled or eradicated. For commercial nurseries wishing to ship plant materials out of the county, the agricultural commissioner is also responsible for issuing inspection compliance agreements which are often required for shipments out of the state or out of the country.

The agricultural commissioner is also responsible for the inspection of plant materials brought into the county through shipments at mailing facilities or through direct orders from farmers for planting. The inspection process is in place to try to prevent the introduction of invasive pests, weeds or other disease that could impact Mendocino County agriculture.

Additionally, the agricultural commissioner works with staff to deploy various pest detection traps throughout the county. The trapping program allows for timely detection of pests as well as statistical analysis on where various pest species have been found in the county. This was critical to the detection and eradication of the European Grape Vine Moth (EGVM) in Mendocino County in 2010-11. Without the early detection and proactive involvement of the Agricultural Commissioner at the time, EGVM could have significantly impacted the 72 million dollar wine grape (2011 statistics) industry in Mendocino County. The EGVM trapping program continues today within the county in order to be proactive in preventing possible re-infestation.

These programs are important to assist local nurseries with sales and transportation of plant products as well as the protection of the commercial agricultural industry in the county. MCFB encourages the Board to work with the agricultural department to ensure that these services continue.

## **Pesticide Use Compliance/Enforcement**

The agricultural commissioner works with CDFA and the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) to ensure compliance with the various regulations related to pesticide use in California. Some of these duties include: headquarters inspections for compliance with pesticide use record keeping, employee training records, written training programs, respirator fit test records and proper storage; field worker safety inspections for compliance with safety equipment (PPE), decontamination facilities, field worker training records, emergency response information, field re-entry information and application specific information; pesticide use reports for those applicators registered in the county who are required to submit monthly pesticide use reports; hosting annual continuing education courses for required training for applicators; and updates and workshops on related regulation updates.

One topic of key concern is the recently adopted (November 2017) regulations by DPR (REG. 16-004) related to the use of agricultural pesticides within a quarter mile of schools and licensed day care centers.

The new regulation:

- Prohibits many pesticide applications within a quarter mile of public K-12 schools and licensed child day-care facilities during school hours, Monday through Friday between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. This includes all applications by aircraft, sprinklers, air-blast sprayers, and all fumigant applications. In addition, most dust and powder pesticide applications, such as sulfur, will also be prohibited during this time.
- Requires California growers to provide annual notification to public K-12 schools and licensed day-care facilities, as well as county agricultural commissioners, of the pesticides expected to be used within a quarter mile of these schools and facilities in the upcoming year.

Since compliance with these new regulations directly involves reporting to the agricultural commissioner, it is important that Mendocino County has the ability to work with the agricultural community to process these reports. It is also important to have an agricultural commissioner in place that can assist both the agricultural community and the education community to understand the notification process with these new regulations. This communication will help to prevent undue hardship with farmers, ranchers, school administrators and parents.

In 2017, the agricultural commissioner provided notice to all farmers and ranchers within the quarter mile boundary of K-12 schools and licensed day care centers to make them aware of the possible changes related to the new regulations. 2018 will be the first year that these new regulations go into effect, so it is important that the agricultural commissioner be available to continue to assist in compliance with this regulation. MCFB is willing to partner with the agricultural department on workshops in 2018 on this topic, but there needs to be a qualified agricultural commissioner in place in order to do so.

## **Certified Farmers Market/Produce Sales**

The agricultural department is also responsible for the certified producers certificates for products that are sold at certified farmers markets in Mendocino County. There are seven certified farmers markets in the county and the certificates provided through the agricultural department expire on an annual basis. The agricultural department is also in charge of enforcing CDFA rules related to farmers markets through inspections and certification that goods being sold are produced by the farmer.

Illegal road side sales of produce (not associated with a farm stand) are also supposed to be enforced by the agricultural department.

To continue to support the growing local food movement in Mendocino County, it is important that the agricultural department and the agricultural commissioner continue to provide the certification and enforcement needed to preserve the integrity of the local certified farmers markets.

The agricultural department has a number of critical roles to assist local farmers, ranchers and citizens of Mendocino County. Due to this, MCFB encourages the Board to include MCFB in the process as the search for a new agricultural commissioner progresses. Historically, MCFB has had a great working relationship with the agricultural department and we look forward to continuing this relationship in the future. MCFB requests that the Board consider all of the points above in the process of filling the currently vacant agricultural commissioner position. If there are any questions on any of the above points, please do not hesitate to contact the MCFB office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frost Pauli". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Frost Pauli  
President

CC:

CEO Carmel Angelo