

# **AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT**

## **I. DEPARTMENT MISSION AND PROGRAM**

### **GOALS Agricultural Department:**

The Department serves the citizens of Contra Costa County through effective enforcement of the California Food and Agricultural Code and provisions of the California Business and Professions Code. The Department's main mission is protecting and promoting the County's agricultural industry and the environment, ensuring the health and safety of the County's citizens, and fostering confidence and equity in the marketplace through education and fair and uniform enforcement of state laws, regulations and county ordinances. Our goal is to achieve compliance at the lowest levels of enforcement when possible, with emphasis on education of the regulated community. Progressive enforcement is used when violations occur.

### **University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE):**

The University of California's Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) is a statewide network of University of California researchers and educators dedicated to the creation, development and application of knowledge in agricultural, natural and human resources. Our educators and Advisors work and live in this community, saving public dollars and enhancing the quality of life for people in many ways. Overriding goals are to safeguard our food and water supply by promoting sustainable agriculture and environmental stewardship, improve the health and well-being of county residents through good nutrition, and to prepare youth to be positive and productive citizens.

## **II. MAJOR PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS**

### **A. DEPARTMENT DATA**

BUDGET: \$7,833,870

FTE: 47.7

Permanent/Intermittent Employees: 14.6

U.C. Funded FTE: 14

<b>CLASS</b>	<b>ALLOCATED POSITIONS</b>
Agricultural Commissioner-Director of Weights & Measures	1
Assistant Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer	1
Executive Secretary	1
Deputy Agricultural Commissioner	3
Deputy Sealer of Weights & Measures	1
Clerk-Senior Level	1
Clerk-Specialist Level	1
Agricultural Biologist/Weights & Measures Inspector III*	12
Agricultural Biologist I or II*	5
Weights and Measures Inspector I or II*	1
Agricultural and Standards Aide	2
Lead Pest Detection Specialist – Project	1
Pest Detection Specialist – Project	17
Glassy-winged Sharpshooter Specialist – Project	1
Weed and Vertebrate Pest Control Technician-Project	3
UC Paid Personnel (Director, Advisors, Field Assistants and Nutrition Program Administrative Assistant)	14

\* Flexibly staffed based on time in grade and # of state licenses.

**EMPLOYEE PROFILE (county staff):**

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Caucasian	15	15	30	68%
Hispanic/Latino	4	0	4	9%
African/American	2	2	4	9%
Pacific Is/Asian	3	1	4	9%
Hindi	1	1	2	5%
Total	56%	44%	44	100%

**B. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS**

1. Enforce State and Federal quarantines. Inspect plants and goods arriving in the County for the presence of exotic invasive insects, nematodes, pest animals, diseases, noxious weeds, and seeds that are or might be detrimental to the environment, agricultural industry or private property.

2. Eradicate infestations of exotic pests that threaten agriculture, county residents or the environment.
3. Survey agricultural, commercial, and residential areas for pests and diseases not generally distributed in the county. Deploy and inspect specialized insect traps to intercept new or serious pests of economic significance.
4. Monitor pesticide applications for compliance with state law. Review requests for restricted use pesticide permits and issue the permits if environmental and safe use conditions and concerns are met. Perform pre pesticide application inspections to assure that safety and environmental conditions have been properly evaluated.
5. Enforce Pesticide Worker Safety and other pesticide laws to ensure safe working conditions for employees who may be exposed to pesticides, compliance with environmental protection requirements, and safety to the citizens of the county.
6. Investigate all pesticide-related illnesses and complaints alleging misuse of pesticides.
7. Tabulate reports on pesticides used by growers, the pest control industry, and government agencies.
8. Register and inspect apiaries for disease and infestations and supervise the destruction of hives when necessary.
9. Control and eradicate certain noxious weeds to protect the county from damage and invasion into agricultural lands, parklands, open space and endangered species habitat.
10. Register industrial hemp growers in the county and ensure they meet the rules in the county ordinance, state, and federal regulations.
11. Continue to make contact with all cannabis growers and manufacturers to ensure they are complying with all pesticide, CalCannabis, and Weights and Measures laws and regulations.
12. Continue involvement with the Integrated Pest Management Committee (IPM) and work cooperatively with a diverse set of county stakeholders to maintain, and keep current with the changing times, a comprehensive IPM policy used in regard to managing pests.

BUDGET: \$5,100,000

FTE: 30

**C. CONSUMER PROTECTION PROGRAMS**

1. Inspect nursery stock, fruits, nuts, vegetables, eggs and agricultural seed to ensure compliance with regulations and quality standards.
2. Inspect Certified Farmers' Markets, certified producer operations and organic grower operations to assure that they comply with federal and state laws and regulations.
3. Inspect weighing and measuring devices such as gasoline pumps, taxi meters, electric meters, and retail store scales in order to ensure accuracy.
4. Inspect scanners, pre-packaged consumer goods, and petroleum products to ensure compliance with regulations and accuracy of labeling.

BUDGET: \$2,200,000

FTE: 12

**D. SERVICE PROGRAMS**

1. Provide the public with information on control options for minor pests encouraging Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and biological control techniques.
2. Administer a ground squirrel control program to protect agricultural land, roadways, dams, earthen levees, and other critical structures.
3. Compile an annual crop and livestock report to show agricultural conditions, acreage, production and value.
4. Develop special reports for disaster relief purposes and provide updates on local conditions for the news media.
5. University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Urban IPM Program: This program is designed to provide education and outreach, informed by collaborative applied research, about IPM

principles and practices for use against key urban pests. Clientele include urban pest management professionals, municipalities, housing management professionals, and extenders to the public such as UCCE Master Gardeners and retail home and garden store employees. Outputs included production of peer-reviewed publications, newsletter articles, blog articles, videos, and dozens of in-person presentations. Regionally, the urban IPM program directly served pest management professionals, professional landscape managers, Master Gardeners, and hundreds of other individuals through educational presentations and workshops. Outcomes and potential impacts included increases in knowledge amongst clientele regarding urban IPM principles and practices, changes in behavior regarding urban pest control, and reduction of negative impacts associated with pest management on communities and the environment.

6. UCCE Agricultural and Natural Resources Program: The UCCE Agricultural and Natural Resources Program serves the county's agricultural producers with research and education that is adapted to local needs while drawing from the University of California's large network of experts statewide. The program aims to support the economic resilience and environmental sustainability of agricultural enterprises through evidence-based technical information. Some of the top priorities for the program include training and technical support for those new to agriculture, exploration of challenges and opportunities facing farmers at the rural-urban interface, leadership in the effective management of emerging and existing pests and in the adoption of practices with reduced environmental impact, and research on the effective use of water resources.
7. UCCE Nutrition, Family and Consumer Sciences Program: Provides science-based information to promote a healthy lifestyle free from chronic disease. Families and children are taught healthful ways of eating, where food comes from, how to prepare simple and healthy meals and how to stretch the food dollar. Two financial literacy curricula are offered: Making Every Dollar Count (adults), and Money Talks (teens).

Nutrition Educators delivered programming to youth and parents through the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program. In the youth program, nutrition educators delivered an average of 6 hours of nutrition education to low-income students (K-12th grade). In the parent program, the nutrition educators delivered an average of 6 hours of nutrition, food safety, fitness, and food resource management education to low-income parents of young children. Surveys of students and parents have shown improvements in

choosing healthy foods, physical activity, food safety, food resource management, and food security.

Nutrition educators delivered summer programming for at-risk youth focusing on building healthy living skills through nutrition and culinary activities. The youth report improved nutrition knowledge, eating habits, and cooking skills.

8. Urban Horticulture Program: The program focuses on promoting healthy urban and suburban environments. The urban forestry advisor delivers programs on arboriculture, tree species selection for urban areas in the changing climate, integrated pest management for trees, and water conservation to landscape and pest management professionals.
9. UC Master Gardener Program: The program volunteers deliver science-based gardening information directly to local residents in order to reduce pesticide and water use, engage in sustainable gardening practices, and produce fruits and vegetables in home and community gardens.

UC Master Gardener volunteers receive 90+ hours of training and have an annual Continuing Education requirement. A large variety of research-based information is available to the public on their website at <http://ccmg.ucanr.edu/>

Goals include promoting:

- *Healthy Communities*: Enhance local, sustainable, healthy food systems.
- *Healthy Plants*: Support healthy plants with sustainable landscaping practices, water conservation, water quality, green waste reduction, wildlife enhancement, and energy conservation.
- *Healthy Environments*: Preserve and encourage healthy environments with sustainable gardening practices, green waste reduction, and water conservation. Prevent, detect and manage invasive and endemic species.

10. 4-H Youth and Development Program: Educate future farmers and consumers, youth and adults, on the importance of agriculture and where food comes from. Proudly based in agriculture, 4-H offers projects including raising livestock, vegetable gardens, farm machinery, entomology, food preparation.
11. Urban Agriculture Program: Provides educational and technical advice to urban food growers, master gardeners and other county

residents through educational presentations, workshops, tours, radio commentary and client inquiries.

Goals include:

- Increasing awareness of: risk management and heavy metals-exposure prevention in urban agricultural operations; urban agriculture policies among urban agriculture producers, policy makers and residents; sound land management practices to optimize food growing, support pollinator habitat, natural resource conservation, and minimize environmental impacts.
- Developing and distributing free online educational materials to urban food growers on soil quality and food safety, urban Ag land access and edible landscaping policies and best practices.

BUDGET: \$283,870

FTE: 1

U.C. Funded Staff Allocation: 14

#### **E. ADMINISTRATIVE/SUPPORT SERVICES**

1. Provide employee development through training, mentoring and participatory management.
2. Provide personnel, payroll, fiscal administration, department clerical supervision, and automated systems services.
3. Develop policy and direction to meet mandates and respond to local needs.
4. Administer University of California Cooperative Extension program.

BUDGET: \$250,000

FTE: 4

### **III. DEPARTMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

#### **A. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS**

1. High Risk Pest Exclusion work encompasses early morning inspections of all express carriers. This facilitates industry's need

to expedite deliveries and improves our ability to intercept potentially devastating exotic pests. In FY2122, our Biologists performed approximately 72,796 exclusion inspections. 289 shipments that were in violation of shipping requirements were rejected. In addition, during the course of inspecting these shipments, 57 pests with significant potential to cause detriment to our agricultural industry, the environment and urban landscaping were intercepted.

2. As a part of the High Risk Pest Exclusion Program, one county Agricultural Detector Dog handler works in twelve Bay Area counties at UPS, FedEx and the U.S. Post Office parcel facilities. Operational costs for the program are reimbursed through a contract with the California Department of Food and Agriculture using pass-through USDA funds.
3. The Glassy-winged Sharpshooter (GWSS) presents a threat to agricultural crops, backyard fruit crops and landscape plants. Our program continues to be very successful in keeping this pest out of Contra Costa County. Our staff inspected 2,853 nursery shipments for GWSS in FY2122. Over the 20-year span of the program a number of nursery shipments were found with live life stages of GWSS and were destroyed or rejected entry into our county.
4. Agriculture Department and UCCE conduct numerous outreach events and training sessions on a multiple subjects including plant disease, pesticide safety and pest exclusion. Training sessions were held to train pesticide handlers, growers, and agricultural fieldworkers in pesticide safety. In FY2122, some of these trainings were presented in English and Spanish by bilingual staff to 80 people attending the 3 classes, reduced from previous years due to COVID.
5. The California Department of Pesticide Regulation continues to perform annual effectiveness evaluations on our Pesticide Use Enforcement program. Suggestions for improvement to keep pace with changes in pesticide laws and regulations have been incorporated into our existing program and have met with approval by state evaluators.
6. The noxious weed program involved controlling three invasive weed species. Treatments were made on a total of 52 properties that included private farm and ranch land, park lands and open space areas. In total, approximately 69,000 acres were surveyed with 63 net acres treated.



## **B. SERVICE PROGRAMS**

1. UCCE: Conducted studies to understand public perception attitudes toward grazing and as a result have developed outreach materials and an interpretive trail for park users to understand the value of working rangeland to ecosystems.
2. UCCE: Engaged youth in the yearlong 4-H youth development programs. Participating 4-H youth were 1.6 times more likely to report better grades (B or better), 1.8 times more likely to go to college and 3 times more likely to contribute to their communities. 4-H girls were two times more likely to have plans to pursue science careers compared with non 4-H girls.
3. UCCE: Trained and supported 161 4-H volunteers who each donated a minimum of 75 hours to the 4-H program.
4. UCCE: Educated future farmers and consumers, youth and adults, on the importance of agriculture and where food comes from. Proudly based in agriculture, 4-H offered projects covering a range of interests including raising livestock (i.e., swine, beef, goat, poultry, sheep, etc.), vegetable gardens and crops, farm machinery, entomology, food preparation (i.e., cooking, nutrition, preservation, table setting, etc.), plus projects in science, engineering, technology, rocketry, sports, money management, drama, arts, woodworking, etc.
5. UCCE: Trained teachers who delivered an average of 6 hours of nutrition education to pre-K to 12th grade students. Surveys of students showed improvements in choosing healthy foods, food safety, and physical activity.
6. UCCE: Coordinated an after school program for at-risk youth focusing on building healthy living skills through nutrition and fitness related activities, food preparation, and edible gardening. Participating youth reported improved nutrition knowledge, eating habits, and cooking skills.
7. UCCE: Has 244 active Master Gardener volunteers who educated local residents on a wide range of topics that promote healthy and sustainable homes and communities: proper plant problem diagnosis; safe pest management techniques that minimize pesticide use; water conservation and drought tolerant landscaping; composting and green waste reduction; and home food production with an emphasis on food security and healthy eating.

8. UCCE Urban Horticulture Program focuses on promoting healthy urban and suburban environments. Advisors deliver programs on urban forestry, integrated pest management, green-waste reduction, and water conservation to landscape and pest management professionals. About 244 well trained Master Gardener volunteers deliver information directly to local residents helping them to reduce pesticide and water use and produce fruits and vegetables in their home gardens.
  
9. UCCE: Provided instruction and technical assistance to school and community gardens. UC Master Gardeners in partnership with UC Nutrition Education have helped many schools develop gardens to grow edibles. The food goes either directly to the students or into the cafeteria for consumption. In collaboration with the public libraries, the Master Gardeners delivered talks to the public on topics including garden pests, protecting wildlife, growing vegetables in small spaces, soil testing, water conservation.
  
10. UCCE: Made a large variety of research-based information available to the public on its website: <http://ccmg.ucdavis.edu/>

## **VI. DEPARTMENT CHALLENGES**

### **A. INTERNAL TO DEPARTMENT**

1. Providing the right type and balance of training necessary to keep existing staff current on issues and regulations, while at the same time, keeping staff in the field to meet program workloads with limited staff, as the Department is charged with a wide array of complex functions. Almost two-thirds of the staff are state-licensed professionals. Staff training and development are essential to maintain a high level of competency.
  
2. Providing adequate and qualified staff for seasonal program demands.
  
3. Continuing to educate retail stores that use scanning systems for pricing in an attempt to improve the level of compliance in what they charge the consumer.
  
4. Developing staff expertise necessary to keep computer systems running effectively and to keep our website current and vibrant.
  
5. Developing effective e-government options that will benefit the regulated community as well as the citizens of the county.

6. Training new staff to achieve the high level of quality work that is required in the inspection and enforcement arena.
7. Working with over half of the management team as first time managers, training them on management, county operations, and their programs.
8. Developing the expertise to work with emerging issues such as air and water quality, endangered species, agricultural preservation and new technology.

**B. INTERNAL TO COUNTY OPERATION**

1. Working with limited IT support and keeping systems up and running.
2. Finding a way to make the new office for Agriculture and UC Cooperative Extension and Health Services work efficiently for all tenants.
3. Continuing to develop and improve the Integrated Pest Management Program.

**C. EXTERNAL TO COUNTY OPERATION**

1. Expanding local efforts to resolve agriculture/urban interface issues.
2. Preserving a viable agricultural industry and working with growers, local agricultural land trusts, and government agencies.
3. Addressing environmental issues involving endangered species, water quality, air quality, and habitat preservation.
4. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Noxious Weed and Biocontrol programs are being restored bringing about old programs without the institutional knowledge that was previously available.
5. Addressing concerns over staffing and dealing with invasive weeds in agricultural and open space areas with new infusions of funding.
6. Alternative fuel hydrogen and electric vehicles are entering the marketplace. This will involve greater staff time and new equipment needs as weights and measures inspectors will be required to test new measuring devices.

7. Taxi meter, transportation network companies, and other measuring device technology is evolving resulting in increased staff training requirements and inspection time.
8. European Grapevine Moth program is still being reduced and Light Brown Apple Moth program has ended as a federal program, which will be a decrease in revenue of close to \$50,000.
9. Developing compliance and inspection procedures for cannabis cultivator and retailers under in a constantly changing regulatory environment.
10. Continuing to regulate industrial hemp, a new legal agricultural commodity in California, as the state program develops and conforms to the federal regulations. Filling in the gaps in state regulations with a local ordinance while working on keeping industry viable and public happy.
11. Effectively responding to budget cuts or increases in operational costs while maintaining an appropriate level of service.

## **V. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

1. We have been working to ensure that our Pest Detection program meets the state's protocols. We are laying the groundwork to transition the detection program field activities from paper inputs to a statewide electronic system using tablets. The transition will result in increased efficiencies and real-time data access. There were issues statewide with the 2022 implementation, but we are prepared to start in the 2023 season.
2. We currently have two staff members in the areas of heavy capacity and industrial scales Inspection with one retiring soon. Ensuring a succession plan for heavy capacity given the difficulty in finding qualified staff for this program is a priority. All Weights and Measures staff attend training for different aspects of Weights and Measures programs, including administrative hearing and investigations, to keep up with the ever changing industry. We are looking at adding over 700 Electric Vehicle Charging stations to the list of devices we will be inspecting soon, this adds challenges to new equipment and training that will be needed.
3. The number of weights and measure devices inspected per hour continues to hold at a high level. Inspectors sealed 11,370 devices in 8,371 hours. This is a reflection of focused training, staff

experience and efficiency, and specialized testing equipment that was obtained for this program. Equipment is still being upgraded to be more efficient and accurate for our testing and to keep up with the ever evolving industry.

4. Staff performed 322 point-of-sale (scanner) inspections in FY2122. 47 violations.
5. UC Master Gardener Program: Master Gardener volunteers help educate local residents on a wide range of topics including safe pest management techniques that minimize pesticide use, water conservation, and drought tolerant landscaping.
6. NFCS: Graduated low-income parents from the “Eating Smart Being Active” nutrition series (completed 6-8 lessons) and tracked marked improvements in nutrition and food resource management practices made by participants.
7. The Detector Dog Team continue to find tens of thousands of plant parcels with many of them being unmarked. This is notable as the human inspectors only find the parcels that are marked as containing plant material, are leaking, or odiferous, while unmarked parcels slip by unnoticed. This gives the canine inspectors a huge advantage over human inspectors.
8. The Agricultural Department has worked on controlling artichoke and purple starthistle by conducting surveys and spot treatments of historically infested sites each year. Work is done on parkland, rangeland, open space, and infested areas adjacent to cropland. In addition, the Department has treated new areas in East Bay Regional Park’s Wildcat Canyon and Tilden Park under contract to help them reclaim their open space from artichoke thistle and other targeted noxious weed species.

	<b>Artichoke Thistle</b>		<b>Purple Starthistle</b>	
	<b>Acres Treated</b>		<b>Acres Treated</b>	
<b>Year</b>	<b>Net</b>	<b>Gross</b>	<b>Net</b>	<b>Gross</b>
<b>2004</b>	369	79,126	129	13,724
<b>2005</b>	296	80,359	116	17,106
<b>2006</b>	59	86,994	74	12,096
<b>2007</b>	207	56,256	155	8,158
<b>2008</b>	394	45,536	29	94,327
<b>2009</b>	128	67,858	97	16,046

<b>2010</b>	143	82,323	91	27,182
<b>2011</b>	206	67,037	153	22,787
<b>2012</b>	105	185,524	61	27,089
<b>2013</b>	179	181,566	91	29,902
<b>2014</b>	206	153,823	140	20,137
<b>2015</b>	113	61,547	35	2,086
<b>2016</b>	49	71,195	12	6,106
<b>2017</b>	45	41,239	5	24,335
<b>2018</b>	82	30,374	6	4,757
<b>2019</b>	28.9	57,514	3.6	5,405
<b>2020</b>	101	43,562	52	11,919
<b>2021</b>	50.3	34,919	22.4	5,485
<b>2022</b>	57.6	66,159	357	2,938

In addition to protecting Contra Costa County's natural environment and endangered species habitat, the control of noxious weeds helps to reclaim and protect land from pests that render it unusable for continued agricultural and open space enjoyment.

The Department of Agriculture provides technical assistance to the public and agencies on the proper control methods for ground squirrels. We also perform work at cost to protect critical infrastructure that includes highway and railroad rights-of-way, flood control sites, reclamation and sanitation plant levees, water canals, earthen dams and county maintained roads.