



CDFA's Early History

The California Department of Food and Agriculture traces its roots back to 1880 when the Legislature appointed a seven-member State Board of Viticulture to protect grape vines from phylloxera root rot. Social and technological changes around the turn-of-the-century created the need for additional agricultural protection and consumer assurance.

In 1899, California pioneered the fight to keep the Mexican fruit fly out of the United States. In 1911, California officials began inspecting the baggage of ship passengers from Hawaii in response to a discovery of the Mediterranean fruit fly on the island. Increased automobile use in the 1920s led to the state's first agricultural border inspection station to prevent introduction of the alfalfa weevil.

In 1919, the California Legislature created a single department responsible for protecting and promoting agriculture. For 91 years, the California Department of Food and Agriculture has fulfilled its mission in a manner that encourages farming, ranching and agribusiness, while protecting consumers and natural resources.

Programs are continually being developed to support improved quality assurance, production and on-farm food safety management practices. The department continues to strengthen pest and disease prevention activities and enhance the ability to respond to emergencies that threaten California and impact foreign trade. Efforts to promote marketing strategies that expand exports as well as domestic consumption are underway.

Among its 2,300 employees statewide are scientists, veterinarians, economists, marketing specialists, laboratory technicians, administrators and communicators. These skilled individuals work to help our farmers feed America and the world in a sustainable way.

Inspectors examine meat, poultry, vegetables, fruits, dairy and other foods to ensure safety and quality; pest eradication teams work to prevent infestations of unwanted pests and diseases; international trade representatives help growers create new markets for their products overseas; and biological control researchers work to discover new, environmentally sound and effective crop protection tools. These are just a few of the vital functions performed by the department's many professionals.

In partnership with other governmental agencies, the agricultural industry and the community, the California Department of Food and Agriculture will continue to protect agriculture, promote its growth, and progress towards a thriving and abundant agriculture.