

MEETING OF THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
SMALL SCALE PRODUCER ADVISORY **SUB-COMMITTEE**
ALL MEETINGS OPEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Location: Zoom Webinar

Contact:

Josefina Lara Chavez- Subcommittee Chair

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MEETING MINUTES OF February 21, 2025

Present: Josefina Lara Chavez- Subcommittee Chair
Patrick Mitchell
Lovepreet Kaur
Thea Rittenhouse
Carmen Carrasco

Notetaker: Lovepreet Kaur

Item No.

- I. Introductions & Roll Call
- II. SSPAC Sub-Committee Chair Josefina Lara Chavez calls meeting to order at 10:06 AM
- III. **ACTION ITEM:** Patrick Mitchell made a motion to approve Meeting Minutes of January 10, 2025, SSPAC subcommittee meeting. All in favor.
 - o Minutes approved.
- IV. Discussion Item- Defining "emergency" for small scale producers and ranchers
 - a. Reviewing recommendations
 - o Subcommittee Chair Josefina Lara Chavez provided context on how the original discussion on defining an emergency for small scale producers originated at the full SSPAC committee.
 - o Members of the subcommittee agreed that it is important to define the role of the committee in drafting and making the recommendations, identify staff/programs at CDFA that can use the recommendations, and a clearer understanding of CDFA's structure.
 - o Farm Equity Advisor Thea Rittenhouse mentioned that it is important to raise awareness of these recommendations and that they could serve as an umbrella guidance on how the State and its agencies can support

small-scale farmers and have a better understanding on how they are impacted.

- Patrick Mitchell agreed and said that having a definition of small-scale farmer would be helpful, understanding how they are impacted by emergency situations and the kind of support they need across all programs.
- Thea Rittenhouse suggested that if the recommendations will be used for program implementation purposes, the subcommittee can distill some key points (5 or less) and the message that they want to get across and how they see the recommendations be put into action.
- Member Patrick Mitchell asked for clarification on the percentage of small farms in California. Thea Rittenhouse said that from the 2022 census, two thirds of CA farms were small farms, making them more vulnerable to impacts of emergencies, thus the need to incorporate the recommendations from the subcommittee into policies and programs.
- Josefina Lara Chavez commented that she wonders how these recommendations can help small-scale producers from their standpoint, and if perhaps a better understanding and assessment of current CDFA programs is needed.
- Ms. Chavez suggested that within CDFA's Farm Equity Office there be a small-scale producer department (could be a staff person) and an immigration subset department to address issues and challenges that come up pertaining to immigrant farmers and farmworkers.
 - Identify bills and legislation that are related to small-scale producers and provide a small-scale producer voice and recommendations.
 - CUSP structure that supports organization cooperation and application standardization and vetting processes.
 - Identify appropriate amounts of funding for small-scale producers: not necessarily new funding but what is accessible and appropriately sized for small-scale producers.
- Patrick Mitchell agreed on the need for a small-scale department and landing place for concerns and needs for these producers and suggested the development of preemptive strategies and policies that help eliminate the need for funding for these farmers.

- The Rittenhouse clarified that CDFA has the small farm business liaison (Carmen Carrasco's position), but it would also be helpful to have a small-scale producer focused position. The immigration subset would be more challenging to have and would require a longer-term conversation/goal but encouraged the subcommittee to keep the language in their recommendations.
- Josefina Lara Chavez emphasized the need to develop a preemptive strategy and be prepared for future scenarios rather than reacting to situations/scenarios as they arise.
- Thea Rittenhouse agreed on the need for prioritization of small-scale farmers not only during emergencies but to offer them flexibility in grant programs and special funding allocations.
- On the immigration subject, Josefina Lara Chavez clarified her opinion came from thinking about the sustainability and future of farming as older farmers are retiring and many of the newer farmers are immigrants that would like to build their operations and need support.

V. Meeting for next month

- March 14 from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

VI. Next Steps:

- Each committee member will come up with some suggestions for purpose of committee, purpose of recommendations for the committee,
- Josefina Lara Chavez will create a structure/timeline - review at the next meeting
- Thea: share the current programs that CDFA has on their website for farmers
 - <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants/#programs>
- Thea: having staff members that take lead with Emergency Response to come in and share information about the following potential at the next meeting
 - Role of CDFA in emergency responses, how do they assess their programs in prevention, preparedness plan, how CDFA is connected and their outreach plan

VII. Meeting adjourned at 10:53 a.m.