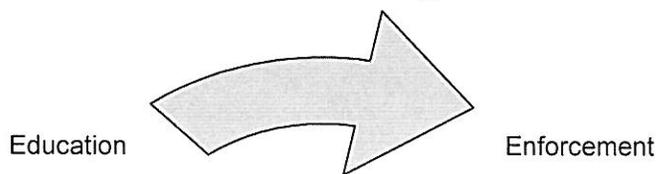




## Synopsis of the Certified Farmers' Market Listening Sessions Common Themes and Significant Issues

Four Listening Sessions designed to solicit input for improving the Certified Farmers' Market Program were held from October 27, 2010 until November 8, 2010 in Sacramento, Santa Monica, Fresno, and Berkeley. The demographics of each Listening Session varied significantly, with some sessions composed mainly of producers while others were composed mainly of market managers and consumers. Several common themes were echoed throughout the sessions, specifically, that the Department, county agricultural commissioners, and market managers should enhance enforcement, communication, and education. The following is a composite of the themes and significant issues raised at the Listening Sessions.



### Certified Farmers' Market Recalibration



The general consensus throughout each of the listening sessions was that the Department should enhance enforcement by building on specific compliance activities. Many comments, while broad and not specific, reflected the general sentiment of the participants. These were statements regarding an urgency to ensure the integrity of the markets, return to common sense, and to "do the right thing". The common themes for accomplishing effective enforcement were education, communication, appropriate state and county funding, and technology. These themes were applied to all stakeholders in the certified farmers' market industry and are reflected in the following comments.

#### **MARKET MANAGERS**

Several individuals iterated that market managers are the first line of enforcement throughout the listening sessions. Accordingly, market managers require communication, enforcement, and educational tools to properly manage a successful and compliant market.



## **Synopsis of the Certified Farmers' Market Listening Sessions Common Themes and Significant Issues**

Several participants specified that a training curriculum and/or market manager certification should be developed in order to equip market managers with the tools necessary to ensure adequate enforcement. Some individuals explained that problems at certified farmers' markets are more likely to occur with managers that are weak or inexperienced. Several individuals suggested that market managers should be educated on the storability and seasonality of agricultural commodities to better enhance enforcement.

Some individuals stated that market managers should have a greater level of accountability and be subject to increased penalties for improprieties.

Some individuals specified that market managers should ensure that their producers do not make fraudulent claims, e.g., no spray, pesticide free, organic.

One individual specified that a market manager coalition should be developed between managers and inspectors for enforcement work with funding coming from government fees. Another stated that all fees should be redirected to allow market managers to do inspections in lieu of state or county personnel.

A few comments were related to issues of who can run a certified farmers' market, requesting definitions of a qualifying producer and a nonprofit entity.

### **COUNTY AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONERS / CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

Several individuals encouraged the Department to standardize load lists and producer certificates in order to enhance consistency, uniformity, and opportunities for enforcement.

Several individuals encouraged the Department to post noncompliance lists on the Internet and provide them to market managers.

Many individuals encouraged the Department to improve lines of communication between the Department, county agricultural commissioners, market managers, producers, and the general public.

Several individuals encouraged the Department to utilize technology to enhance enforcement, specifically for collecting load lists and inspections.

Several participants argued that the Department and county agricultural commissioners should foster regional staff cooperation as well as inter-county enforcement to ensure adequate enforcement.



## **Synopsis of the Certified Farmers' Market Listening Sessions Common Themes and Significant Issues**

Some individuals specified that the Department and county agricultural commissioners should conduct inspections at the time of harvest rather than at the time of planting.

Several individuals specified that the Department and county agricultural commissioners should develop a uniform approach for the administration of penalties.

One individual specified that the Department should develop regulations to clearly define the definition of practicing "agricultural arts", especially in regard to nursery stock.

Several individuals encouraged the Department and county agricultural commissioners to ensure communication of regulations and legal requirements/changes with the impacted industry.

Some individuals stated that the term "certified producer" confuses consumers and explained that many consumers believe that a certified producer is organic. Consequently, the Department should change the name of certified farmers' markets and/or certified producers. Several individuals also stated that it is important for the Department to educate consumers on the meaning of a certified farmers' market.

Some individuals explained the need for county and staff enforcement personnel to have training and knowledge of agricultural commodities, harvest seasons, investigations, etc. Some individuals also explained that the state should have regional inspectors dedicated to specific areas of the state.

Many individuals encouraged the Department to enhance communication and educational opportunities for local municipalities and governments in regard to certified farmers' markets statutes and regulations.

Some individuals stated that county agricultural commissioners should be more responsive to complaints received in regard to certified farmers' markets.

One individual stated that the Department should prohibit olive oil that does not meet designations for minimum quality, e.g., virgin or extra virgin olive oil.

Some individuals stated that the Department should alleviate language barriers during the enforcement process and develop multi-language producer certificates, particularly for Hmong and Asian variety fruits and vegetables.

Some individuals specified that the Department should prohibit the use of second certificates while others argued that second certificates increase the variety of fruit and vegetables sold at certified farmers' markets, particularly for rural communities.



## **Synopsis of the Certified Farmers' Market Listening Sessions Common Themes and Significant Issues**

Most of the individuals that spoke in regard to funding argued that it is necessary to increase state and/or county fees to ensure adequate enforcement, although approximately two to three producers stated that funding levels are currently adequate to ensure proper enforcement.

### **PRODUCERS**

Some individuals echoed concerns about the percentage of certified producers vis-à-vis craft vendors.

Some individuals specified that growing locations should be clearly defined on the producer's certificate.

Several individuals specified that producers should be required to clearly delineate their conventional and organic items. Specifically, some participants argued that producers should not be allowed to advertise organic with a large banner if the majority of the items they are selling are conventional.

Some individuals argued that producers should be subject to mandatory suspension for "cheating."

Many individuals specified that the Department should ensure that small farmers are protected throughout this process.

Some individuals specified that producers should be subject to employee verification requirements.

Some individuals stated that producers are overregulated and should be able to receive clearly defined and easy to understand instructions and rules.

Some individuals specified that the onus should be put on the producer to prove production of the agricultural products he or she sells at certified farmers' markets through record or site audits.



## Synopsis of the Certified Farmers' Market Written Comments

The following represent new thoughts received via written comments since the conclusion of the state-wide listening sessions:

- Would like to see products that can be in the Certified Farmers Market (CFM) not allowed in the non-certified section.
- "Certified" Farmers Markets should be like "organic". You can't use the term unless you are... For instance having a name like "Smith City CFM" should not be used unless the whole event is a CFM....if have both areas should be something like Smith City CFM and Fair.
- Should have clear physical delineation between CFM and Non-CFM section, and/or signs around the perimeter of the CFM literally stating something like, "You are leaving the certified section of the market, anyone outside of this section may not be selling items of their own production..."
- Get rid of the whole program and government oversight.