Califonia Produce Industry Tour - October 11-13, 2016

The California Department of Food and Agriculture’s (CDFA) Inspection Services Division (Division) hosted a three day produce industry tour for officials from the United States Department of Health and Human Services Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to learn about California’s diverse farming operations and meet with producers. This event brought together a team from the FDA led by Dr. Stephen Ostroff, Deputy Commissioner for Foods and Veterinary Medicine, and also included CDFA Secretary Karen Ross, state partners from the California Department of Public Health and industry representatives.

The three day event kicked off in Fresno, beginning with a tour of a stone fruit and table grape operation, a citrus orchard and packing house, and an almond processing operation. Shortly thereafter, tour participants joined in a lively round table discussion and presentation by the California Farm Bureau on California Water. The water round table, provided FDA officials first-hand information on California’s complex water system and the many challenges faced by agricultural producers and the impacts as a result of the FDA’s Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). After the round table, participants traveled to the Salinas Valley with visits to a Leafy Green growing operation, processing facility and small farm strawberry grower.

The tour concluded in San Francisco with a visit to the Golden Gate Produce Market, a wholesale market with deep knowledge of the California Produce Industry that works closely with farmers, retailers, foodservice professionals and the public.

Since the produce industry tour, the Division conducted several meetings with agriculture stakeholders to provide an update on the implementation of FSMA’s produce rule.
2016 Latino Farmer Conference

The California Department of Food and Agriculture’s (CDFA) Division of Inspection Services hosted three booths at the second annual Growing Together Latino Farmer Conference, held on Tuesday, November 15, 2016 in Monterey, California.

The annual conference is unique in that it is conducted in Spanish and translated into English for all attendees.

CDFA’s Division of Inspection Services was joined by representatives from the Division of Animal Health and Food Safety Services, Marketing Services and the Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation. The conference provided CDFA an opportunity to showcase many of its program’s and provide outreach and education materials to the Latino farming community. CDFA featured programs included Office of Farm to Fork’s “Farmer MarketPlace”; Certified Farmers Market Program, Fertilizer Research and Education Program, as well as information regarding the Department’s Market Enforcement Program and lastly; the Department’s Animal Health and Food Safety Services Division’s Animal Health Branch.

**Featured from left to right:** Laurel Rudolph, I&C Branch; Gabriel Benevides, I&C Branch; Addison Ford, Office of Farm to Fork; Nancy Iljana, Laurene Chiesa, Arnold Garcia, Division of Marketing Services; and Scott Weeks, Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation.

**From left to right:** Natalie Jacuzzi, FREP; and Adriana Avalos, FFLDRS.
**Promotions**

The Division’s Administrative Unit recently promoted Jennifer Lei-dolf to a Staff Services Manager I (Specialist). Jennifer began working in the Division in 2012 and since then has been instrumental in assisting the Division in several capacities, including budget and fiscal oversight, participating as the Division’s lead Hearing Officer and most recently developing the Mentoring and Internship program.

Congratulations Jennifer!

The Inspection and Compliance Branch, Direct Marketing/Certified Farmers’ Market Program recently filled the vacated Agriculture Program Supervisor II position with Maria Tenorio. Maria was promoted to her new position in December 2016. Maria started her career in state service with the Inspection and Compliance Branch in 2009. For the past 2 years, Maria has served as APS I for the Feed, Fertilizer, Livestock Drugs Regulatory Services. Maria brings her knowledge of administrative duties, budgets, accounting, advisory boards, contracts, regulations, and legislation, she has proven to be a valuable asset to the two branches.

Congratulations Maria!

Fiona Mattson was recently promoted to Environmental Scientist and joined CalCannabis Cultivation Licensing Branch in the medical licensing section. Fiona joined the Division in 2013 as an Agriculture Technician after her internship in the Executive Office. Fiona graduated from UC Davis with a B.S. in Nutrition Science, with an emphasis in public health.

Congratulations Fiona!

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**The Division of Inspection Services welcomes the following new team members:**

- John Halligan, *Supervising Special Investigator II* - CCCL
- Rebecca Foree, *Information Officer II* - CCCL
- Kimberely Gillies, *Staff Services Manager I* - CCCL
- Lynn Grogan, *Staff Services Manager I* – CCCL
- Rachelle Kennedy, *Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist)* - CCCL
- Zeshawn Ahmed, *Environmental Scientist* - CCCL
- Sarah Wassmund, *Environmental Scientist* – CCCL
- Misty McDaniel, *Staff Services Analyst* - CCCL
- Samuel Santander, *Agriculture Program Supervisor I* - I&C
- Ashwin Pal, *Environmental Scientist* – CACL
- Loyd Williams, *Senior Laboratory Assistant* – CAC

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**CalCannabis Cultivation Licensing Program**

The last quarter of 2016 was a busy time for the Division’s CalCannabis Cultivation Licensing (formerly known as the Medical Cannabis Cultivation Program). Most noteworthy was the passage of Proposition 64, or the Adult Use of Marijuana Act (AUMA), on November 8. AUMA, which passed with 57% of the vote, establishes laws that allow adults aged 21 years or older to possess and use cannabis for recreational purposes. AUMA also establishes a licensing structure for the commercial cannabis industry and names CDFA as the department responsible for licensing recreational cultivators. AUMA does not dissolve the legislation that established the Medical Cannabis Regulation and Safety Act (MCRSA), and as such, CalCannabis will license both medical and recreational commercial cannabis cultivators starting in January 2018.

CalCannabis participated in several industry, state, and local agency conferences to provide information about what our branch is tasked to under MCRSA and AUMA.

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*Center: Amber Morris (with microphone), Branch Chief of CalCannabis Cultivation Licensing, fields questions from participants at a recent conference.*

*Fiona Mattson, Environmental Scientist CalCannabis Cultivation Licensing Branch, greets participants at a recent conference for California cannabis growers.*
Office of Farm to Fork

Things are very busy with the Division’s Office of Farm to Fork— they applied to the USDA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant Program for funding to match the state general fund dollars to run the California Nutrition Incentive Program (CNIP). CNIP will help address food insecurity and access to fresh fruits and vegetables, while at the same time supporting California farmers and the local food system. With FINI matching funds, CNIP would be able to offer nutrition incentives to CalFresh participants at 339 certified farmers’ markets and mobile markets in California.

The Office also worked on the State Employees Food Drive. CDFA did an amazing job and surpassed last year’s Turkey Drive donation by nearly 350 pounds. From Coffee with the Secretary and the associated bake sale, employees helped raise nearly $800. Online donations were over $1,300, more than doubled compared to last year. All California state employees have donated the equivalent of over 500,000 pounds of food. The drive is well on its way to reach its goal of 750,000 pounds of food. Final numbers will be announced at the end of February.

The Office continues to develop its online presence and just launched a Facebook account to better communicate statewide efforts to increase food access. To stay connected with Office of Farm to Fork projects, subscribe to their blog, Tales from the Field, and follow them on Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest.

Inspection and Compliance Branch Updates

State Organic Program (SOP)

During the spring of 2016, Secretary Ross convened the State Organic Stakeholder Working Group (Working Group) to review the existing SOP and provide recommendations to the Secretary on how to maximize program efficiency and responsiveness. In response to the Working Groups recommendations, the California Organic Products Advisory Committee (COPAC) created a subcommittee to prioritize the Working Group’s recommendations.

The first meeting was held on October 28, 2016, in Sacramento. The committee was successful in prioritizing the goals of the Working Group and on December 19, 2016, the subcommittee presented to COPAC the list of priorities and recommendations of ways the SOP and COPAC can start to implanting those goals.

Danny Lee, Supervising Special Investigator and David Carlson, Special Investigator, attended a Certified Farmers’ Market question and answer forum on October 24, 2016 in San Diego. The forum was hosted by the San Diego County Agricultural Commissioner. Attendees were able to participate in an open dialog, asking questions pertaining to Organic Products.

Assembly Bill 1826, State Organic Program legislation was signed into law by Governor Brown. As one of the results of that law, the California Organic Products Act of 2003 was recast and renamed the California Organic Food and Farming Act. One of the major changes for the SOP is the online registration component. The SOP is working diligently to have those changes implemented for a January 1, 2018 launch.
This year FREP and the Western Plant Health Association (WPHA) hosted the 24th annual Fertilizer Research Conference in Modesto, California, on October 26 and 27, 2016. The event brought together over 200 industry professionals and academic researchers to learn about the latest research on efficient fertilizer management practices. Speakers from academia, agricultural consulting, regulatory agencies, and industry provided general and technical information, current research, and practical applications addressing statewide and regional nutrient management issues.

**FREP-Funded Projects**

FREP is pleased to announce that, in 2016, FREP awarded almost 1.9 million dollars in grant funds to universities and agricultural organizations. These grants will provide funding for nine projects that will improve the efficiency of nitrogen fertilizer use on farms, empower growers and field workers to optimize their nitrogen and irrigation management practices at the field level, and elucidate potential benefits of organic fertilizers and soil amendments in California.

**Technical Training Programs**

Through the FREP Grower Training Program, growers learn key aspects of nitrogen management in farms and information on how to complete Nitrogen Management Plans as required by Central Valley water quality regulations. Growers may self-certify their own nitrogen management plans if they participate in this CDFA training program and pass the exam. The first year of these trainings were exceptionally successful with over 30 sessions held across the Central Valley where, 1,878 growers participated and 82% successfully passed the certification exams. More than 20 trainings are scheduled for this winter and the program’s funding has been extended through to 2018.

Additionally, FREP will be supporting one more Nitrogen Management Training certification course, in 2017, for Certified Crop Advisors on March 7th and 8th.