



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)
CALIFORNIA ORGANIC PRODUCTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (COPAC)**

**January 23, 2025 Meeting Minutes
800 Asilomar Ave, Pacific Grove, CA 93950**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Matthew Grieshop – Chair
Amanda Felder – Vice Chair
Kenny Likitprakong
Ben Diesl
Mark Squire
Phillip LaRocca
Blake Alexandre
Jeff Chean
Maroka Kawamura
Lena Brook
Jamie Carr
Wendy Reynolds
Joe Deviney
Christopher Little

MEMBERS ABSENT

Erin Raser
Leslie Myrick

INTERESTED PARTIES

Nick Woodrum – California
Department of Public Health
(CDPH)
Thu Dinh – CDPH
June Nakagawa – CDPH
Houston Wilson – UC Organic
Agriculture Institute (OAI)
Krista Marshall – UC OAI
Rebekah Weber – California
Certified Organic Farmers
(CCOF)
Jane Sooby – CCOF
Joji Muramoto – UC Santa Cruz
Richard Ordonez – Monterey Co.
Sapna E. Thottathil – California
Department of Pesticide
Regulation (CDPR)

CDFA

Marcee Yount
Kristi Garcia
Danny Lee
Mayze Fowler-
Riggs
Scott Renteria

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 12:35 p.m. by Kristi Garcia. Roll was called, a quorum was established, and self-introductions were made.

ITEM 2: ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Garcia opened the floor to nominations for Chair.

MOTION: Amanda Felder nominated Matthew Grieshop for Chair. Jeff Chean seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Garcia opened the floor to nominations for Vice Chair.

MOTION: Phillip LaRocca nominated Amanda Felder for Vice Chair. Lena Brook seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

ITEM 4: REVIEW OF SEPTEMBER 18, 2024 MEETING MINUTES

Chair Matthew Grieshop requested a motion to approve the September 18, 2024, Meeting Minutes as presented.

A revision to Item 7: Phillip LaRocca requested Rebekah Weber, Policy Director of the CCOF, be invited to the committee meeting.

MOTION: Chair Matthew Grieshop moved to approve the September 18, 2024, Meeting Minutes as amended. Jamie Carr seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 5: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATES

Wendy Reynolds provided a CDPH Organic Program update. For organic complaints received for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024/25, 16 were completed and 10 remain open. All complaints were from the 2024 calendar year.

At the September 18, 2024 committee meeting, Mark Squire made a motion requesting a report from the CDPH outlining opportunities where COPAC could provide guidance or educational materials that would help CDPH frontline inspectors identify potential fraud at retailers and restaurants. Reynolds explained that the California Health and Safety Code (HSC) 110875(a) gives the CDPH, Food and Drug Branch (CDPH-FDB) jurisdiction over operations that process or handle processed products for human consumption, pet foods, and cosmetics sold as organic. However, HSC specifically exempts CDPH-FDB's authority over processors and handlers of processed meat, fowl, or dairy products and retailers that are engaged in the processing or handling of products sold as organic. Further, the CDPH-FDB does not have statutory authority to add a scope of work to the local county environmental health department's workplan. Reynolds followed by stating that the CDPH-FDB recommends that COPAC create a proposal for the California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health (CCDEH), who can determine whether they are able to add this scope of work to their inspections.

MOTION: Mark Squire moved to recommend that COPAC form an Enforcement Education Subcommittee, with the intent of creating a proposal for the California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health on whether they can add this scope of work to their inspections. A vote was called and the motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

The Enforcement Education Subcommittee will consist of the following members: Jamie Carr, Jeff Chean, Wendy Reynolds, and Mark Squire, who will also serve as Chair.

Reynolds continued reviewing the CDPH updates. For 2024, there were 3,128 licenses issued for organic processors of which 727 were new and 2,401 were renewals.

Thu Dinh provided an overview of the CDPH Organic Program's budget and revenue reports. For FY 2024/25, projected expenditures for salaries and benefits total \$654,789, total direct costs are projected at \$105,825, total indirect costs are projected at \$273,974. Year-end projected expenditures total \$1,034,588 with revenue projected at \$1,213,003. Total revenue for FY 2023/24 was \$1,243,667. As of October 2024, total FY 2024/25 revenue is \$422,933.

ITEM 6: FUND USE RECOMMENDATIONS/STATUS OF STATE ORGANIC PROGRAM UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA CONTRACT UPDATE

Houston Wilson, UC OAI Director, gave an update on the UC OAI contract. All key UC OAI positions were filled, including outreach, mentorship, research, and technical training coordinators. UC OAI hosted three field days focused on soil management and dairy, nitrogen and vegetable management, and participated in an organic resources fair. With increased staffing, UC OAI has been able to perform outreach at events such as the Organic Grower Summit, Latino Farmer Conference, and EcoFarm. Initiatives that are currently in progress include an online resource database, an organic farm demonstration network, eight field days planned throughout the state, and educational content that includes technical resources and videos. Research projects in progress include an organic production geography, lifecycle analyses, and soil amendment availability in response to Senate Bill 1383.

Dr. Joji Muramoto, Associate Professor of Cooperative Extension at UC Santa Cruz, gave an update on UC Santa Cruz deliverables and research highlights that included studies on nitrogen mineralization from artichoke residues, no-till farming practices, and nitrate immobilization using almond shells. Dr. Muramoto also delivered several academic presentations and was invited to co-author a review paper on anaerobic soil disinfestation (ASD). Dr. Muramoto also co-led a nitrogen management workshop, developed instructional materials including an ASD video, and gave multiple guest lectures at UC campuses, and responded to grower inquiries on soilborne diseases and sustainable practices. Planned work for early 2025 includes finalizing ongoing studies, publishing research findings, expanding workshop offerings across California, and creating bilingual educational materials on ASD and nitrogen management.

ITEM 7: STATE ORGANIC PROGRAM UPDATES

i. Vacancies and Terms

Garcia provided the Vacancies and Terms Report. There were two member vacancies: one technical representative and one consumer representative. Additionally, there were 14 alternate vacancies: six producers; two processors; one retail representative; one environmental representative; two technical representatives; one consumer representative; and one accredited certifier representative.

ii. Revenue from Registration/New Registrations

Mayze Fowler-Riggs presented information on organic registration fees collected by month and year. For FY 2024/25 through December 16, 2024, \$692,004 in registration fees were collected. A total of 4,086 operations registered with the State Organic Program (SOP) for 2023, in which 3,370 were producers, 1,094 were handlers, and 159 were processors.

iii. Fund Condition Update

Danny Lee provided the Fund Condition update. As of November 30, 2024, the beginning fund balance for FY 2024/25 was \$1,720,798. Total revenue was \$705,816, making the available cash \$2,426,614. Total expenditures were \$888,315, with an ending balance of \$1,538,299.

iv. Compliance and Enforcement/Appeals Summary

Scott Renteria provided the Compliance and Enforcement/Appeals Summary. For FY 2023/24, there were 130 total complaints of which 94 were investigated by CDFA and county staff; 17 were referred to Accredited Certifying Agents; 16 were referred to CDPH; two were referred to the National Organic Program; and one was referred to the Organic Input Materials Program.

There were 1,654 total inspections: 1,006 of these were conducted at certified farmers' markets; 234 were conducted at production sites; 90 at handling facilities; nine at processing facilities; 308 at retail facilities; and seven at locations not within the above categories.

A total of 388 samples were collected, of which 371 were surveillance and 17 were investigative. Of the 371 surveillance samples, 31 samples had residues detected, with 13 containing residues above tolerance levels and 18 containing residues below tolerance levels. Of the 17 investigative samples, only one sample had residues detected and it contained residues above tolerance level. Eleven appeals were received, of which four have been closed and seven remain active.

v. Complaint Activity Report

Renteria provided the Complaint Activity Report for 2024. A total of 39 open complaints were active in which 20 were open for more than 120 days; three were open between 90 and 120 days; six were open between 60 and 90 days; one was open between 30 and 60 days; and nine were open for less than 30 days. An additional 75 complaints were closed.

vi. Complaint Summary Log

Renteria presented the Complaint Summary Log, detailing complaints and investigations that were assigned and closed for 2024.

vii. Surveillance Sampling Summary Update

Renteria provided the Surveillance Sampling Summary update, detailing the results of samples collected by the SOP during routine and investigative efforts. For the 2024 calendar year, there were 402 surveillance samples: 84 at certified farmers' markets; 84 at production sites; three at handling facilities; and 231 at retail wholesale facilities. Of the 37 samples with residues detected: nine were at certified farmers' markets; eight were at a production site; and 20 were at retail wholesale facilities.

viii. Cost Share Update

Renteria provided an update on the Cost Share Program. There were 1,719 applications that have been reviewed and approved in 2024. As of December 31, 2024, the total reimbursement amount has been \$1,809,468.94. Total applications and reimbursement amounts may vary due to CDFA financial services still reviewing and processing applications. New Cost Share funding for 2025 was not included in the recent Farm Bill and SOP staff are waiting for USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) to provide further information on Cost Share funds for 2025.

There was a brief discussion on whether the CDFA or the state had a plan to assist in providing funding to organic farmers if the Cost Share Program is not funded adequately in 2025.

MOTION: Lena Brook moved to submit a recommendation to Secretary Karen Ross requesting that the Secretary write a letter of support expressing the CDFA's endorsement of the federal Cost Share Program and its reinstatement; and to request a budget change proposal that would allocate \$2 million to support a California Cost Share Program in the event the federal program is not reinstated. Phillip LaRocca seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

ITEM 8: UPDATE ON STATE'S DEFINITION OF REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

Rebekah Weber, Policy Director of the CCOF, began the discussion on the state's definition of Regenerative Agriculture and stated that the State Board of Food and Agriculture voted to approve a recommended definition of Regenerative Agriculture to the CDFA. Weber stated the committee could submit a request to the Secretary to make an amendment to the California State Board of Food and Agriculture's recommended definition of Regenerative Agriculture for State Policies and Programs.

Further discussion continued amongst the committee members and meeting attendees regarding Regenerative Agriculture, the principles it's based on, and how the committee would update its definition.

MOTION: Phillip LaRocca moved to recommend that the CDFA Secretary amend the California State Board of Food and Agriculture's recommended definition of Regenerative Agriculture for State Policies and Programs to add a reference to the state's Organic Transition Program under "Examples of target outcomes include: (c) Furthering sustainable pest and integrated pest management to reduce the reliance on pesticides; (Accelerating Sustainable Pest Management: A Roadmap for California); (UC Statewide Integrated Pest Management), (USDA NRCS pest management conservation system)". Blake Alexandre seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

**ITEM 9: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PESTICIDE REGULATION'S
SUSTAINABLE PEST MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

Sapna E. Thottathil, CDPR Deputy Director of Sustainable Pest Management (SPM), began the discussion by stating that the CDPR's SPM roadmap seeks to phase out harmful pesticides in agriculture and urban areas, and aligns with organic agriculture. A discussion ensued and committee members emphasized investing in organic infrastructure to support SPM goals. Questions were raised on how existing organic systems could serve as models, and whether transition assistance will be adequately funded.

ITEM 10: NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS

The next meeting will be hybrid and will be held on Thursday, May 8, 2025, in Sacramento and via Zoom, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Agenda items will include regenerative agriculture and the Enforcement Education Subcommittee.

ITEM 11: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m. by Chair Grieshop.

Respectfully submitted by:

Danny Lee, Supervising Special Investigator II
State Organic Program