

# CALIFORNIA CANNABIS APPELLATIONS OF ORIGIN



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The Office of  
Agricultural Resilience  
& SUSTAINABILITY

Appellations celebrate and protect the unique qualities of place-based cultivation, preserving local heritage while helping consumers identify the origin and associated characteristics of products. Wine regions are famous examples of appellations. The appellations program facilitates cultivators identifying the soil, climate, growing methods, and plant varieties working together to create a unique product that can't be replicated anywhere else.



## To qualify for labeling with an appellation, cannabis must:

- Be 100% produced in the designated region
- Comply with all appellation-specific standards, practices and cultivars
- Be planted in the ground under full sun without using greenhouses, hoop houses or artificial lighting

## How do producers establish an appellation?

In California, cannabis appellations of origin will be established through producer-led petitions to CDFA and enforced through labeling rules by the Department of Cannabis Control. CDFA assesses petitions for completeness and meeting the regulatory requirements, facilitates an independent technical review, and collects public comments. CDFA uses this information to make a final determination.



## Key Elements of an Appellation Petition

Regulations lay out the required elements of a petition. In addition to petitioner information and background information on the area, the petition must include the following critical components:

- Evidence that the proposed appellation is a name already used for the area
- Evidence that the appellation represents a unique area based on overlapping geographical features affecting cannabis qualities
- A description of standards, practices or cultivars requirements unique to the proposed appellation

## Who Can Use an Appellation?

Only cultivators can designate their cannabis as an appellation of origin product. Cultivators using an appellation of origin must maintain records of compliance with the production requirements and submit a Notice of Use to CDFA once every 3 years.

**MORE INFO**

[www.cdca.ca.gov/OARS](http://www.cdca.ca.gov/OARS)

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## Steps in the Petition Process

1. Petitioner submits a petition and \$2,850 submission fee to CDFA
2. CDFA conducts an initial completeness review
3. If **incomplete**, CDFA requests additional information; if **complete**, petitioner pays \$14,250 proposal fee
4. CDFA facilitates independent technical review and a 90-day public comment period
5. CDFA makes a final decision based on all inputs
6. If approved, CDFA notifies program stakeholders and licensees in the vicinity of the new appellation

## Benefits of an Appellation



Promotes cannabis farming traditions and region-specific standards, practices, and cultivars



Protects the name of a place recognized to have a notable effect on cannabis



Encourages community collaboration around outdoor cannabis production, potentially resulting in added value



Gives consumers more information about where and how cannabis was produced

## What's *required* in an Appellation Petition?

The California Code of Regulations (Title 3, Division 8, Chapter 2) defines the contents of an appellation petition. CDFA cannot process incomplete petitions but will work with producers to remedy deficiencies. Petitions to establish an appellation must include:

- Contact and licensing info for the petitioner(s)
- A general description of the area
- The legacy, history, reputation & economic importance of cannabis in the area
- Evidence of long-term name use
- Assessment of existing use of the name in the cannabis marketplace
- Maps and description detailing the boundaries
- A description of the local geographical features affecting cannabis
- A detailed description of how at least 1 of these features cause a specific characteristic in the cannabis
- Evidence that the overlap of geographical features creates a unique area
- Standards, practices, and cultivar requirements specific to the appellation

**For detailed petition requirements, please refer to our website:**  
**[www.cdfa.ca.gov/oars/cap](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oars/cap)**

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