

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)

**FEED INSPECTION ADVISORY BOARD (FIAB)
STANISLAUS COUNTRY FARM BUREAU
1201 L STREET, MODESTO, CA 95354 / HYBRID**

**MARCH 10, 2026
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS

Alejandro Hernandez
Dan Rice
Eric Benziger
Jed Asmus
Jeremy Banducci
Dr. Marit Arana, Chair
Michael DeGroot
Michael Koewler
Shay Rambur, Vice Chair

CDFA STAFF

Alejandro Ramirez
Amanda Staudinger
Angelia Johnson
Ashley James
Brandi Alston
Brittnie Williams
Erika Lewis
Frankie Aguilar
Jenna Leal
Justin Jacobson
KC Gutenberger
Kelly Leon
Lindsey Collier
Maria Tenorio Alfred
Rachelle Kennedy
Samantha Moran-Defty
Shelly King
Ted Bert

INTERESTED PARTIES

Chris Zanolini
Gigi Berthier
Jessica Lawrence
Jim Langston
Joe Proudman
Michael Lefever
Rani Youngman
Tad Bell

INTRODUCTIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Marit Arana, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and self-introductions were made.

ROLL CALL – ESTABLISH QUORUM

Roll was taken and a quorum was established.

APPROVE THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

Chair Arana requested the FIAB review the meeting minutes from September 23, 2025, November 5, 2025, and November 5, 2025, Special Meeting.

MOTION: Jeremy Banducci moved to approve all minutes as presented; Michael Koewler seconded. The motion passed unanimously by all members present with a vote of 9 to 0.

DEPARTMENT / DIVISION / BRANCH UPDATES

Jenna Leal, Branch Chief, provided department level updates, stating that this is the last year of this administration. CDFA's Climate Resilience Strategy Report was released which discusses work around enteric methane and by-product diversion. This report mentions the \$2 million funded to build a framework for the California Reduction of Enteric Methane Emissions Block Grant Program (CREME-BGP) that would incentivize enteric methane products and practices. Leal suggested the industry review the Report.

Leal provided an update on a Regulatory Alignment Study, led by an outside contractor, Crowe, which is essentially a multiagency study between CDFA, the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), and the State Water Resources Control Board. The report will provide a list of several recommendations for near, mid- and long-term outcomes on how to better align agencies. Recommendations are high level and could be adopted in the future for regulatory programs that interface with those agencies.

Leal recapped the mid-year projection exercises with the budget stating the Feed program and the rest of the programs are solvent and the 8% anticipated budget cut that was proposed in the fiscal year 2026-27 budget last November for General Funded programs, was approved by the Governor's office.

Leal concluded the branch updates by summarizing the November 5, 2025, Special Meeting and Arima Kozina's presentation about external bank accounts. Leal stated the Fertilizer Inspection Advisory Board is going to look into other higher yielding interest rates at other outside banks, however the Fertilizer Inspection Advisory Board decided to keep funds in the external Bank of America (B of A) account and not move the funds internally.

MOTION: Jeremy Banducci moved to approve keeping Feed Program funds as is, and in the external Bank of American account; Michael DeGroot seconded. The motion passed unanimously by all members present with a vote of 9 to 0.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Rachelle Kennedy, CFRP Manager, gave personnel updates. There are two vacant Environmental Scientist (ES) positions that have been advertised; one is waiting on CDFA's Human Resources to present a job offer to a candidate in the Fresno region, and the other ES position will backfill the Northern California ES field inspector position. The advertisement for the Northern California position will close on March 11, 2026. Kennedy shared that Mike Davidson's former position and a vacant ES position have been transferred to the Center for Analytical Chemistry (CAC).

A Notice to Industry for Camelina meal will be released to provide clear guidance to industry on the feeding requirements, species/production class the product is approved for, and the labeling requirements of the product.

FUND CONDITIONS/TONNAGE PROJECTIONS

Kennedy discussed the fund conditions for CFRP as of December 31, 2025, starting with \$3.8 million in the CDFA account and \$1.04 million in the B of A account, totaling about \$4.9 million for the Feed program. The Animal Feed Regulatory Program Standards (AFRPS) Cooperative agreement is \$300 thousand and did not start until September 2025 due to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) delays. The first billing was done in January.

Kennedy explained tonnage revenues are about the same as prior years with the inspection tonnage tax rate at \$0.13 cents per ton and collecting on approximately 22,687,840 tons, totaling \$2,833,056.59. These numbers are inclusive of regular tonnage and diversion tonnage.

Program revenue and expenditures give the Feed and SAFE programs an adjusted balance of approximately \$5.2 million, which includes encumbrances, at the end of the first half of the Fiscal Year. Kennedy predicts that the \$.13 cent inspection tonnage tax will continue to increase the reserve. Historically, the reserve has been kept closer to 50% of the total balance of the program's funds. Options presented to the board to reduce the reserve are as follows:

Option 1: Lower the licensing fee. Each \$100 reduction = ~\$210,000/year revenue loss

Option 2: Lower the tonnage tax rate. Each \$0.01 reduction = ~\$220,000/year revenue loss

Alternatively, it is suggested that the program could hold the inspection tonnage tax rate and set it at a lower amount under the inspection tonnage tax model language proposed for the 2027 legislative cycle.

Discussion ensued regarding options and outcomes to lowering the license fee or tonnage tax rate.

MOTION: Jed Asmus moved to decrease the inspection tonnage tax rate from \$.13/per ton to \$.11/ton leaving the diversion rate at half the cost of regular tonnage tax; Michael Koewler seconded. The motion passed unanimously by all members present with a vote of 9 to 0.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ACTIVITIES REPORT

Kennedy discussed the program's strategic planning which includes updating the current Legislation/Regulations for the program. Additionally, the program will address emerging issues on a state and federal level; develop policies; and outline long-term goals for the program. The biggest change is the livestock drugs regulations for registration and recategorization; policy development on supplements; and feed and drug label claims.

The Pet Food Uniform Regulatory Reform Act (PURR Act) and the Innovative Feed Enhancement and Economic Development Act (Innovative FEED Act) are two

significant pieces of federal legislation focused on the modernization of regulating pet food and animal feed products in the United States. With the AFRPS ending in June of 2028, the program will explore mutual reliance opportunities with the FDA. The program is also researching potential quick test options for aflatoxin.

Ted Bert, Senior Environmental Scientist (SES) (Supervisor), explained that there has been a total of 11 Inspection Tonnage Tax Examinations conducted to date with \$87,343.02 recovered in past due tonnage. Moving forward, examinations will only be conducted for cause.

Alejandro Ramirez, SES (Specialist)-Compliance Officer, reported the 2025 inspection numbers: Commercial Feed 254 inspections, Retailers 56, CA Feed Safety (Comp) 24, and Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) 41. Ramirez summarized compliance and enforcement updates, presenting 109 violation reports with 104 received follow ups, 5 outstanding, and 90 regulatory notes recorded. Ramirez further reported 248 Notices of Warning have been issued which include 47 unlicensed firms, 113 delinquent tonnage reports, 59 delinquent licenses and tonnage reports, feed safety inspection findings, 2 almond hulls, 5 sample violations, 6 VFD related, 6 restricted livestock drugs related, and 9 cottonseed certificates of movement.

Samantha Moran-Defty, SES (Supervisor), reviewed the complaints: 10 have been received: 2 Feed Safety – animal deaths (Resolution: not caused by feed), 1 unapproved feed ingredient, 3 quality complaints, 2 damaged/adulterated feed, 2 hay complaints. Moran-Defty shared that the online complaint submission process has been updated, which will request information about complaint details at the time of the complaint submission.

Valerie White, SES (Specialist), reviewed the 2025 Feed Sampling numbers explaining that the 5% other shown on the displayed chart, are all milk replacers. During 2025, 660 samples were taken with an anticipated 800 samples as the goal for 2026. White presented a breakdown of all assays screened on food safety samples, heavy metal, and mycotoxin. The sample violations were as follows: 119 individual violations were issued with the most common violators being crude protein, crude fiber, label violations, and calcium. 20 violations for Crude Fiber were almond hulls.

SAFE UPDATES

KC Gutenberger, SES (Specialist), gave the SAFE program updates. The Preventive Controls Qualified Individual (PCQI) training in Modesto had 21 participants and PCQI refresher is being planned for 2026.

SAFE continues to work with CDFA's Fairs and Exhibitions Branch on outreach and education on Feed and Livestock Drugs. Kennedy shared that a drug residue was found in a market animal from a fair which led the Livestock Drug Program to investigate. This and other issues with live animals testing positive have led the program to define feed, drugs, and supplements including clarifying label claims.

AD HOC NUTRITIONIST SUBCOMMITTEE

The Feed Inspection Advisory Board Ad Hoc Nutritionist Subcommittee meeting recommended a registration for individual consulting nutritionists to establish a contact list. There would be no cost to nutritionists and would establish a contact list for the program. There will be training/outreach to educate on current laws; and regulations and subsequent outreach for feed related issues.

The plan of action proposed a May 6, 2026, scoping meeting in collaboration with California Animal Nutrition Conference (CANC) and American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists (ARPAS). Upon recommendation of the FIAB and SAFE to develop an outline of a program and prepare for the meeting. The Subcommittee will meet again on April 14, 2026.

CLEAR CENTER PROPOSAL

Joe Proudman, Associate Director of the University of California (UC) Davis CLEAR Center, introduced himself and gave a presentation on the UC Davis CLEAR Center's proposal for how to tell the story of by-product diversion using the data provided by the Feed program. Proudman explained that the intention is to build out a life cycle analysis (LCA) on the products and then communicate that story to the public emphasizing the reduction in emissions by diverting by-products to livestock feed instead of ending up in landfills.

Proudman outlines the objectives as follows:

Objective 1: Develop a comprehensive database of Agricultural by-products, which would Identify, classify, and design products currently used in California as livestock feed in California (CA).

Objective 2: Conduct an LCA of the four most widely used by-products in California dairy rations.

Objective 3: Develop science-based communication resources to disseminate project findings to stakeholders, policymakers, and the public through videos, documentaries, social media, feature stories, etc.

The budget requested would be \$85 thousand utilizing a graduate research assistant to conduct the LCA's, modeling and more.

Discussion ensued regarding the approach to four widely used by-products in California and overall, the time it would take for this proposal.

The board requests that the CLEAR center conduct LCA on canola, cottonseed, almond hulls, soybean meal, wet distillers' grain, liquid whey, citrus, and carrots.

Discussion ensued regarding identifying other potential byproducts to be analyzed in the proposal and increasing the proposed budget and scope.

MOTION: Michael DeGroot moved for the CLEAR Center to look at the eight by-products and cap the budget at \$120 thousand, with the ability to come back and increase budget if needed; Jed Asmus seconded. The motion passed unanimously by all members present with a vote of 9 to 0.

FEED INSPECTION ADVISORY BOARD VACANCIES

Chair Arana announced three upcoming board terms expire at the end of April 2026. Applications were submitted and reviewed for the following candidates: Michael DeGroot, Michael Koewler, Dan Rice, and Joseph Boyd.

MOTION: Shay Rambur moved to reinstate Michael DeGroot (public member), Michael Koewler, and Dan Rice; Jed Asmus seconded. The motion passed unanimously by all members present with a vote of 9 to 0.

LEGISLATION/REGULATION UPDATES

Moran-Defty provided legislation updates. The rulemaking packet regarding label modernization, focused on updating label requirements to better align with the American Association of Feed Control Officials (AAFCO), is in the routing process. The rulemaking proposes to remove “charcoal (vegetable)” from CA ingredient regulations (Section 2791(f)). As mentioned by Kennedy, the program is also drafting regulations to better categorize products under the livestock drugs regulations. The Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) bill (HR7291) pertaining to discontinue the federal allowance for self-determination of GRAS.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA (UC), DAVIS – LABORATORIES UPDATE

Jim Langston of UC Davis, California Animal Health and Food Safety Services (CAHFS) Lab updated FIAB on the replacement of an Inductively Coupled Plasma Optical Emission Spectroscopy (ICP OES) instrument stating that it is fully installed and is working. The Laboratory Flexible Funding Model (LFFM) grant samples are as follows: 3 DDG, 20 corn, and 8 canola samples. Additionally, CAHFS will be renewing their ISO Accreditation in April of 2026 and will be presenting to the board at the next meeting about the anticipated cost increases for running assays, etc.

Rani Youngman of the UC Davis Analytical (An) Lab stated that they also purchased an ICP OES, so they can be a back up to the CAHFS as needed. The An Lab is currently renewing their ISO Accreditation.

ALMOND ALLIANCE / CALIFORNIA GRAIN AND FEED ASSOCIATION (CGFA)

Bell reports there have been many inquiries made by CGFA members about feed through treatment for New World Screwworm. They have inquired about it with FDA, and the response by FDA is that there have not been any feed products approved by the FDA for New World Screwworm, to date.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were made.

NEXT MEETING

The next FIAB meeting will be in the 3rd week of August 2026 in Sacramento, California. Members will be sent a Doodle poll to select a date.

Agenda items to be included in the next meeting include:

1. CAHFS Budget increase presentation
2. The CLEAR Center proposal and final numbers

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Arana adjourns the meeting at 11:09am.

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY RACHELLE KENNEDY

Rachelle Kennedy, Environmental Program Manager I
Feed, Fertilizer, and Livestock Drugs Regulatory Services

03/10/2026

Date