

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)**

**FEED INSPECTION ADVISORY BOARD (FIAB)  
SPRINGHILL SUITES BY MARRIOTT SACRAMENTO NATOMAS  
2555 VENTURE OAKS WAY, SACRAMENTO, 95833 / HYBRID**

**NOVEMBER 5, 2025  
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

**MINUTES**

**BOARD MEMBERS**

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Michael DeGroot

**CDFA STAFF**

Amanda Staudinger  
Angelia Johnson  
Ashley James  
Brandi Alston  
Erika Lewis  
Frankie Aguilar  
Jenna Leal  
KC Gutenberger  
Lindsey Collier  
Maria Tenorio Alfred  
Rachelle Kennedy  
Ryan Kyeremeh  
Samantha Moran-Defty  
Ted Bert

**INTERESTED PARTIES**

Jim Langston  
Jessica Lawrence  
Joe Boyd  
Joe Proudman  
Karyn Bischoff  
Kelly Gardner  
Michael Lefever  
Nina Cabanyog  
Rani Youngman  
Tad Bell

**INTRODUCTIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Dr. Marit Arana, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM and self-introductions were made.

**ROLL CALL – ESTABLISH QUORUM**

Roll was taken and a quorum was established.

**DEPARTMENT / DIVISION / BRANCH UPDATES**

Jenna Leal provided division level updates, stating that the Division continues to watch the events associated with the federal shutdown. Currently, it does not affect any of the programs within the Feed, Fertilizer, and Livestock Drugs Regulatory Services (FFLDRS) Branch because federal funds for this fiscal year (FY) were appropriated last year. A handful of federal employees continue to work through the shutdown and Natalie Krout-Greenberg has weekly calls with her contacts at the federal level to keep a close eye and stay advised about what is happening there.

Leal stated that due to the federal shutdown, the December 11, 2025, release of a longitudinal study that may affect the Division's Produce Safety Program (PSP) and the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meeting related to the State Organic Program (SOP) has been delayed.

Leal stated that the Commercial Feed Regulatory Program (CFRP) is participating in a work group, based on the signing of Assembly Bill (AB) 411, pertaining to livestock carcass disposal. KC Gutenberger is the point of contact and will work with Paula Batarseh in CDFA's Rendering Program to put together Best Management Practices (BMPs). Leal elaborated that Gutenberger will also collaborate with Michael Koewler to ensure the CFRP is appropriately representing the rendering industry. Koewler added that BMPs must be established before the law can be implemented.

Leal provided updates on the work being done by Geetika Joshi, Environmental Program Manager of PSP, on Senate Bill (SB) 279, which is the bill that allows for significant changes in composting allowances. Leal stated that a lot of resources for outreach and education will be required.

Leal provided an update on a Regulatory Alignment Study, led by 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 align agencies. Recommendations are high level and could be adopted for regulatory programs that interface with those agencies.

CDFA's Climate Resilience Strategy Report was released for public comment, which discusses work around enteric methane and products. 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 and provide comments as an industry.

Leal shared that she and Krout-Greenberg are having discussions around waste disposal streams and post-consumer packaging products, recognizing that the agricultural industry does not want to accept contaminated material with compostable products. Krout-Greenberg will meet with the Compost Council, Executive Association of Compost Producers, and Neil Edgar about how this issue impacts California and agriculture.

Leal provided branch-level updates, stating that the Fertilizer Research and Education Program (FREP) held its annual conference last week in Fresno and had over 100 attendees.

A report was recently released that could affect the Fertilizing Materials Inspection Program (FMIP) within FFLDRS. The report was released through a committee that Dr. Martin Burger participated in regarding Nitrous Oxide emissions, pertaining to fertilizer

application. A collaborative study was conducted about 25 years ago, with funding from FREP, the California Energy Commission, and California Air Resources Board (CARB), and some of those issues will be revisited in the near future, including Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) and Nitrogen emissions.

FFLDRS staff recently testified in front of the State Water Board, who is exploring setting nitrogen application limits for fertilizer materials. Secretary Ross and staff from FREP, the Office of Agricultural Resilience and Sustainability (OARS), and the Healthy Soils programs testified about the extensive research that has been done. The Agricultural Expert Panel that received the testimony was comprised of researchers familiar with the work of the FREP Program.

Leal concluded the branch updates by announcing that there are a couple of vacancies in FFLDRS to be filled.

### **PROGRAM UPDATES**

Rachelle Kennedy, CFRP Manager, gave personnel updates. Kennedy shared that Samantha Moran-Defty's prior position will be filled by Valerie White who currently handles the lab desk, and Ted Bert's prior position as Compliance Officer has a candidate pending. Valerie White's position as the Lab Desk Coordinator will be advertised. Mike Davidson's old position of Supervising Special Investigator is being re-classified as an Environmental Scientist, but program is not planning on backfilling his position at this time.

#### *i. Fund Conditions / Tonnage Reporting / Proposed FY 2026/27 Budgets*

Kennedy went over the fund conditions for CFRP and the Safe Animal Feed Education (SAFE) Program. She also reviewed the Antimicrobial Use and Stewardship (AUS) and Livestock Drugs (LD) Programs for the board's awareness.

Kennedy explained CFRP recently finished billing the Animal Food Contract for \$30,000, which will close out FY 2024/25. An extension was completed for the Animal Feed Regulatory Program Standards (AFRPS) contract to allow ~\$67,000 to be moved into the next FY (2025/26), which will show as a recovery to the program budget.

The ending adjusted balance for CFRP is a little over \$5 million. Kennedy explained that the program foresees that balance decreasing because of the decreasing offsets for AUS and lower AFRPS funding. SAFE's adjusted ending balance is a little over \$765,000, for a total combined adjusted ending balance of almost \$6 million.

Kennedy reviewed the current tonnage report, highlighting two million tons are from diversion and 22 million tons are from regular tonnage. As of October 6, 2025, there are 2,106 licensees, of which 2,017 are conventional licenses, and 89 are incentivized diversion licenses. Of the same 2,106 licenses, 976 are in California, and 1,130 are out of state or out of country. The current licensing income is approximately \$1 million annually.

Prior to Kennedy reviewing the proposed FY 2026/27 budget, Leal explained that the Governor's Office has not released their budget, so a revised budget may have to be presented and approved by this board if there are significant changes released in the January 10, 2026, budget. However, the FIAB still needs to review and approve the budget being presented today so that the program can move forward with their Continuous Appropriations (CA) packets.

Leal further explained that the Governor's budget is always included within the proposed budget spreadsheet so the FIAB can see the CFRP's authority. The program must have authority to spend the money allocated to the budget and the Governor's budget should ideally always be higher than the program's working budget to allow actual spending authority.

Kennedy reviewed the proposed FY 2026/27 budget with FIAB. She highlighted that staff salaries and benefits are slightly lower, which reflects staff changes. This is also due to the mandatory reduction of 3.5% to 5% due to the Personal Leave Program (PLP), which is mandated until the end of 2027. The in-state travel line item increased due to the American Association of Food Control Officials (AAFCO) meeting being held in San Diego in 2026, which will provide the opportunity to send more staff to that meeting. Out of state travel increased because Samantha Moran-Defty now sits on the Board of Directors for AAFCO and this will ensure that she can attend necessary meetings. There is also an allowance for one vehicle built into budget costs. However, there will likely not be a vehicle purchase unless CFRP is allowed to purchase a non-electric vehicle. The operations line item slightly increased to ensure that the current fleet can be maintained. All other line items are straight-lined across from previous years.

Shay Rambur asked about the decrease in IT costs. Leal explained that those are distributed costs and the budget numbers are provided to us. That number most likely decreased because there is a new division at CDFA, with a couple of new branches. The professional services costs are included in the budget in case there is a need for the Attorney General's Office for legal services.

SAFE costs have slightly increased for out of state travel to ensure that Gutenberger can attend the AAFCO meetings, as she sits on many of the committees. SAFE budget decreased overall because of positions moving, salary decreases, and lower indirect costs. Dr. Arana asked why the Governor's Budget reflects an unallocated line item for \$52,000 when CFRP is projecting only \$1,000 and SAFE is projecting \$0. Brandi Alston, FFLDRS Budget Analyst, explained that that line item is a catch all for funds that have not been allocated to a specific line item. Leal explained that the Hemp Dairy Cow study grant funds were disencumbered, in the amount of approximately \$140,000, which goes back into SAFE's account.

Kennedy briefly reviewed AUS and LD's budget, which is proposed at \$1,313,932 for FY 2026/27, noting the mandated decrease will be absorbed by not backfilling Davidson's old position.

CFRP and SAFE's proposed combined FY 2026/27 budget is \$3,526,073. Kennedy requested a motion be made to approve the proposed budget.

**MOTION:** Michael Koewler moved to approve the CFRP and SAFE budget as presented; Dan Rice seconded. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed with a vote of 8-0.

*ii. Technical Advisory Subcommittee Appointments*

Gutenberger discussed the two upcoming vacancies on SAFE's Technical Advisory Subcommittee (TASC). Two of the current member terms will be expiring in February 2026, and both Noelia Silva Del Rio and David Isen reapplied and there were no new applications. Gutenberger requested a motion to approve the reinstatement of the TASC members who reapplied.

**MOTION:** Jeremy Banducci moved to recommend the reappointment of Noelia Silva del Rio and David Isen to the Secretary; Shay Rambur seconded. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed with a vote of 8-0.

*iii. Legislation Updates*

Inspection Tonnage Tax -

Kennedy presented draft language for a legislative change to the inspection tonnage tax fee schedule, which proposes that all manufacturers on the label and all firms subject to Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) inspections would be responsible for paying tonnage tax. Banducci asked about reducing the tonnage tax cap from \$0.25 to \$0.20 per ton in law. Discussion ensued.

Kennedy also reviewed alternative draft language that the program explored prior to developing the proposed tonnage tax model, including minimum inspection fees, tiered tonnage, caps on tonnage payments, and mill assessments. Discussion ensued as to why these alternatives were not viable to maintain the program.

**MOTION:** Dan Rice moved to approve the proposed draft tonnage tax language as presented; Michael Koewler seconded. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed with a vote of 8-0.

Nutritionists/Formulators -

Kennedy discussed the proposed Nutritionist/Formulator Registration. The fee for registration would be set based on the administrative costs to process the registration. Implementing this registration would provide the CFRP with the ability to accept, deny, or revoke registration based on violations and would allow the program access to nutritionist/formulation records. The registration cost range would be set in legislation along with the associated penalties for not registering or renewing. The details would then be clarified in regulation.

Tad Bell, California Grain and Feed Association (CGFA), suggested CFRP develop a concept to assess opposition and ensure any bill put forth would be successful and has industry support before proceeding down the path of pursuing legislation. Furthermore, it would be a tight timeline trying to move two bills forward and if one bill had opposition it could jeopardize the work done with the other bill. Bell suggested prioritizing the tonnage tax language change. FIAB agreed that outreach should be done first regarding nutritionist registration. This can be done through an ad hoc subcommittee prior to the next meeting. Members of the subcommittee are Jed Asmus, Mike DeGroot, and Dr. Arana; Bell will be included in discussions as a public member.

Kennedy discussed how many tons of diversion were reported in 2024. The total amount of diversion was approximately 2 million tons or approximately 9% of the total tonnage reported. CFRP used CalRecycle's Food Waste Prevention Benefits calculator and entered the tons diverted to establish the benefit of by-product diversion to livestock feed. Net GHG benefits over three years have a net reduction of 9,045,716 of MTCO<sub>2e</sub>. Kennedy explained that traditional by-products account for 34% of tonnage reported to CFRP and that this does not account for by-product ingredients that are going into the mills for further manufacturing, only what was shown as going dairy direct.

FIAB discussed meeting with the University of California (UC) Clarity and Leadership for Environmental Awareness and Research (CLEAR) Center to see if they would be interested in this data, or potentially releasing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to conduct a life cycle analysis study to analyze GHG reductions from by-product diversion, utilizing the grant funds that were disencumbered from the Hemp Dairy Cow study. Asmus asked what the goal of the research would be and how it would be used in California.

Banducci noted that the diversion tons seem low; Leal agreed the number seems inaccurate, which is what led to the development of the proposed tonnage tax language to more accurately capture the tons flowing through industry. The data reflected is representative of about three years.

Asmus asked whether the program still sees a large influx of methane reducing products, aside from Bovaer. Kennedy confirmed there are still regular inquiries about California specific approvals.

**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 that is used to run metals and minerals. Langston explained this is state-of-the art equipment and it was purchased because their previous machine would no longer have a supported maintenance contract. Additionally, the Laboratory Flexible Funding Model (LFFM) grant was renewed for this year. The only change from last year will be the addition of three samples of Canola Meal.

Rani Youngman of the UC Davis Analytical Lab stated that they also purchased an ICP OES, and their crude fiber machine was down for a while. Furthermore, the lab has hired a new person to assist in decreasing turnaround times.

Joe Proudman, Associate Director of the UC Davis CLEAR Center, introduced himself and explained that the CLEAR Center is focused on Sustainability and Livestock. Proudman explained that they have two cores, Research and Communications led by Dr. Frank Mitloehner. Under this shop, they have a couple of large trials being funded by CDFA OARS Livestock Enteric Methane Emission Reduction Research Program (LEMER-RP) regarding feed and feed additives. The other side is Communications and that is the part that Proudman handles.

Dr. Arana explained that discussion with Proudman would be to see if the UC Davis CLEAR Center would be interested in conducting a life-cycle analysis on the GHG Diversion and correlation with tonnage reporting.

Proudman elaborated on the topic and explained that he was surprised at the impact, and he thinks a lot of people would be interested in the data. Proudman emphasized some key points and questions, such as how we tell this story with this lifecycle analysis, and how can we really portray this in terms of mitigation from landfills in terms of feed. Other questions include how we conduct outreach to tell the story of by-product diversion to animal feed that matters to the industry about the GHG numbers, suggesting possibly a white paper or a published paper. Proudman suggested packaging the lifecycle analysis as an “explainer” which are knowledge-based articles to attract a lot of traffic to explain something as simple as what do cows eat. He gives examples of popularity of “explainers” in terms of viewing traffic, that they have outranked the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Proudman further stated that they can promote videos on the topic and even hold podcasts with expert speakers presenting.

Kennedy asked Proudman how they would define our audience. Proudman explained that they can tailor the type of content and target communications at regions and audiences, which is done extensively with other commodities. It is just a matter of the “who” and that decision would not be made in a vacuum and would involve decisions and input from FIAB.

Asmus asked what that would cost. Proudman stated that the cost would be for a graduate student, with most funds going towards tuition, approximately \$50,000 - \$60,000. If FIAB wanted to go further, then we could look at the nutritionist side of things and potentially involve a second graduate student.

Leal suggested CFRP meet with Proudman to develop a scope that covers Mitigation, lifecycle analysis, Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) and target the audience, including CARB, legislators, etc. Kennedy will work with Proudman to develop a proposal and will also collaborate with FIAB to gather information on what needs to be discussed and what the board's goals are with the GHG information.

### **ALMOND ALLIANCE UPDATES**

Bell reports there are not many updates. A Notice regarding Damaged Feed has been issued to almond hullers and shellers about high moisture and damaged feed.

Asmus inquired about the cost of a membership to CGFA and suggested to add a Nutritionist registration if the cost for individual membership is not too high. This could be an alternative mechanism to reach the nutritionists.

### **CALIFORNIA GRAIN AND FEED ASSOCIATION**

Bell explained the history of moving CFRP's funds to a banking institution outside of the state accounts. He explained that the State had included language in statute to allow programs to invest in outside banks and that the State could borrow those funds, but are required to pay them back with interest, whereas historically the State could have swept funds in the scenario of a budget deficit. Bell explained that Leal and the Secretary are looking for FIAB's wishes on what to do with the bank accounts. CDFA is neutral on where the money sits and wants to make the board aware of costs for maintaining the outside accounts and interest accrual.

Banducci asked about the money currently in CFRP's Bank of America account. Leal and Kennedy explained that we have a healthy reserve in the bank account right now and the board has done a great job keeping a 25% - 50% reserve. If the reserve goes below the 50% mark, it is a red flag to CDFA's Financial Services Branch and creates a heavy programmatic burden. At the next FIAB meeting, the account balances should look different. Leal agreed to present a cash flow analysis at the next meeting. Leal reiterated that there will be a special joint meeting (Feed and Fertilizer boards) to discuss the program's Bank of America accounts and the possibility of those accounts being brought in-house. CDFA is seeking a decision on the board's wishes to either bring the funds into the State Treasury or maintain the outside account(s). The board briefly discussed the nuances of the outside accounts and the state's ability to access those funds.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comments were made.

**NEXT MEETING**

The next FIAB meeting will be in March 2026 in Modesto, California. Members will be sent a Doodle poll to select a date. A meeting must be scheduled in March 2026, to ensure board vacancies can be discussed before member's terms expire.

Agenda items to be included in the next meeting include:

1. Ad Hoc Nutritionist Subcommittee meeting results
2. The CLEAR Center on GHG emissions and how that story will be told
3. Tonnage projections based on revenue
4. Board vacancies
5. An author for the legislative changes for tonnage tax model, certificate of free sale, and license change for integrators

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Shay Rambur moved to adjourn the meeting; Dan Rice seconded.  
The meeting was adjourned at 11:28 AM.

**ORIGINAL SIGNED BY RACHELLE KENNEDY**

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

11/05/2025  
Date