



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)
CERTIFIED FARMERS' MARKET ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CFMAC)**

**March 30, 2026 Meeting Minutes
Hybrid Teleconference**

2399 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 200, Sacramento, CA 95833

REMOTE MEMBERS

PRESENT

Portia Bramble – Chair
April Lancaster
Kurt Floren
Doug Hayden
Alexander Zadeh
Chris Flores
Alyssa Burkhart Gonzales
Allen Moy
Samuel Thorp
Cara Mae Woledge
John Poto
Jaclyn Allen
Jasmine Leong

INTERESTED PARTIES

Nina Zlatkov – Los Angeles Co.
Timothy Lewis
Cree J. Morgan – San Francisco
Co.
Yvette Pellman
Kevin Gallego
Brijet Myers – Market Little Italy
Mercado San Diego

CDFA

Marcee Yount
Danny Lee
Jennifer Leidolf
Sarah Cardoni
Andrea Cano
Jasmine Toledo
Rene Mendoza
Leslie Fernandez
John Pedigo
Robin Root
Fredrick Gonzales
Daniel Godinez
Amar Hariharan

MEMBERS ABSENT

Annika Knoppel
Cynthia Ojeda
Jackie Rivera-Krouse

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Andrea Cano, Interim Branch Analyst. Roll was called, a quorum was established, and self-introductions were made.

ITEM 2: PUBLIC COMMENTS

Portia Bramble opened the floor to public comments. There were no public comments.

ITEM 3: REVIEW OF February 2, 2026 MEETING MINUTES

Chris Flores motioned an amendment to remove her name off the interested party since she is on the committee.

Chair Bramble requested a motion to approve the February 2, 2026, Meeting Minutes as amended.

MOTION: Kurt Floren moved to approve the February 2, 2026, Meeting Minutes as amended. April Lancaster seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 4: PROGRAM UPDATES

i. Vacancies and Terms Report

Jennifer Leidolf provided the Vacancies and Terms report. Three Producer New Members joining this committee are: Alexander Zadeh, Samuel Thorp, and Annika Knoppel. One CFM Operator New Member joining this committee is: Jasmine Leong who was previously an alternate. One CFM Operator Alternate New Member joining this committee is: Allen Moy. Current vacancies include: one public member, six certified producer alternates, and four certified farmers' market operator alternates. The following members will be eligible for reappointment on January 22, 2027: Alyssa Burkhart Gonzales, John Poto, Jaclyn Allen, Cara Mae Woledge, Doug Hayden, April Lancaster, and Chris Flores. Portia Bramble will be terming out on January 22, 2027.

ii. Financial Report

Leidolf provided the financial report, which includes the approved budget and a snapshot of where the funds are being spent. The report includes actual expenditures through January 2026. The percentage of Budget Remaining is 52%, and 71% of projected revenue has been collected.

iii. Enforcement Report

Leidolf provided the enforcement report. The report includes completed data from the last fiscal year FY 24/25, and partial data for this fiscal year FY 25/26.

The Inspection summary for FY 25/26 was 262 market inspections conducted by County Staff and CDFA, and 127 production site inspections. The complaint summary for FY 25/26 was 15 complaints this year. 8 complaints have been referred to counties to follow up, and 6 complaints have been investigated by CDFA. For the pesticide screening summary, 8 samples have been taken. This pesticide screening started as a pilot project and this year has become statewide. CDFA and county staff have issued 728 Notices of Noncompliance. There was one appeal submitted to CDFA for a County Agricultural Commissioner's Decision in FY 25/26.

iv. Committee Survey Results

Leidolf provided the results from the Certified Farmers' Market Advisory Committee Survey. The results showed 3 responses to the survey. The results highlighted enforcement, fee structures, and regulatory updates as top priority areas. Respondents emphasized the need for stronger enforcement, more inspections, improved communication, and maintaining the current fee structure.

v. Direct Marketing Stakeholder Working Group

Leidolf introduced the plan for the direct marketing stakeholder working group. The Direct Marketing Stakeholder Working Group will be modeled after the successful State Organic Program (SOP) effort in 2016. This group will include about 20 industry stakeholders from across the state and will meet roughly four times. A professional meeting facilitator would guide the process under an estimated one-year, \$30,000 contract, though the final cost may differ once updated estimates are obtained. The working group report will be used to develop the program's Strategic Plan.

Danny Lee explained how the previous SOP workgroup led to major improvements to the Program, including statutory changes and clearer priorities such as streamlined registration, enhanced data use, stronger enforcement, better outreach, and increased coordination across agencies. The committee will eventually need to evaluate and approve any budget adjustments, but for now, the program is in early exploratory stages. Once more precise cost information and planning details are available, they will be presented to the committee for review.

vi. Annual Report

Leidolf provided an update to the annual report. The draft outline for a new annual report was reviewed by the committee, emphasizing that it is a preliminary working version and will be refined for clarity and presentation. The report will include data such as number of CFM certificates issued by county, number of certified producer certificates issued by county, percentages of vendors by type, percentage of markets by type, annual revenue and expenditures, and detailed enforcement statistics including inspections, violations, and trends since the 2015 fee increase from \$0.60 to \$2. Future reports, beginning in 2026, will incorporate expanded data such as total vendors by type, average market size, and regional production and sales pattern.

ITEM 5: CFM DATABASE

i. Features Update

Leidolf provided the CFM database feature updates. Leidolf reported that all four database improvement priorities previously approved by the committee have now been fully completed, coming in under budget at a total of \$87,000. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility fixes have also been finished. Leidolf is now working with state IT teams to address and prioritize remaining reported bugs.

ii. CDFA Secretary Response to Committee Memo

The committee reviewed the response from Secretary Ross to the committee's memo regarding the Certified Farmers Market (CFM) database. CDFA IT representatives Fredrick Gomez and Robin Root summarized the Secretary's response, noting that CDFA has spent \$1.14 million on the system to date, largely on maintenance, and that the original database was a custom-built .NET application developed around 2019. Root explained that CDFA's strategic plan for years 2025 to 2030 shift away from custom-built systems toward enterprise-wide Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solutions to reduce technical debt, and she emphasized lessons learned, including moving from time and materials contracts, to a deliverables-based contract process and recognizing the resources turnover that has affected the project.

The Secretary's letter outlined key technical risks: the current .NET framework is outdated, requires a \$78,000 upgrade, and may soon lose Microsoft support, potentially destabilizing the system. Root described three options: stabilizing the current system using annual maintenance funds without credit card capability, pursuing an enterprise SaaS solution, or allowing each county to create its own system, though the third option is not recommended. CDFA recommends transitioning toward enterprise-wide architecture, especially now that recent negotiations have significantly lowered Salesforce licensing costs. Gomez added that CDFA is also exploring possible

stabilization funding through the Department of Technology. The system will remain in maintenance mode while long-term solutions are analyzed.

Leidolf explained that producers and 47 counties use the database to apply for, review, and issue certificates. Cara Mae Woledge raised concerns about credit card fees, prompting Root to explain that CDFA will have an e-check option. Portia Bramble concluded by thanking IT and staff for the progress made and suggested that the database subcommittee meet to draft a response letter to Secretary Ross for committee approval.

ITEM 6: CFMAC SUBCOMMITTEES

i. Legislative Subcommittee Membership

Bramble outlined the difference between legislative work, which involves changing laws governing the direct marketing program, and regulatory work, which focuses on how those laws are implemented within farmers markets, noting that the Database Subcommittee remains active. Leidolf listed current members of the Legislative Subcommittee: Chair Portia Bramble, April Lancaster, Cynthia Ojeda, Doug Hayden, Kurt Floren, Portia Bramble, and Ed Williams. Samuel Thorp and Cara Mae Woledge joined the subcommittee.

ii. Database Subcommittee Membership

Bramble spoke about the Database Subcommittee, which is expected to meet again before the next full committee meeting, is chaired by April Lancaster and currently includes Jordan Key of San Diego County, Kurt Floren of Los Angeles County, Monica Winters of San Diego County, and Portia Bramble. Alan Moy joined the subcommittee.

iii. Regulation Subcommittee Membership & Report

The Regulations Subcommittee members include April Lancaster (chair), Doug Hayden, Kurt Floren, and Portia Bramble, Jasmine Leong, Samuel Thorp, and Jaclyn Allen joined the subcommittee.

Lancaster reported that recent discussions focused on processed agricultural products, mobile farmers markets, and emerging clarification needs in the direct marketing program. Lancaster emphasized the group's concern that California Code of Regulations Section 1392.2 does not clearly inform producers that additional licenses may be required for processed goods. Committee Members agreed that clearer alignment between statute and regulation is needed while cautioning against enforcing requirements inconsistently interpreted by local health departments.

Lancaster also summarized the subcommittee's examination of wine regulations, noting inconsistencies between proposed statutory changes and direct marketing rules. Lancaster explained that proposed statewide changes could allow wine made from non-producer grapes to be sold at farmers markets, conflicting with longstanding direct

marketing definitions. Chair Bramble recommended the topic referred to the Legislative Subcommittee.

The subcommittee's largest discussion centered on mobile farmers' markets. Kurt Floren contributed detailed citations from Food and Agricultural Code (FAC) and Health and Safety Code, helping identify areas where the new mobile market framework intersects or conflicts with existing law. Concerns included aggregation, resale, traceability, inventory tracking, enforcement capacity, and ambiguity around the term "immediate vicinity", which determines where mobile markets may operate. The subcommittee suggested developing standardized load sheets, improving record-keeping, clarifying jurisdiction between CDFA and county agricultural commissioners, and revisiting fee caps that may not cover enforcement costs. Lancaster stressed that regulatory clarity and feasibility should guide all recommendations.

Doug Hayden elaborated on growing conflicts with county environmental health departments, explaining that some counties had recently attempted to require Temporary Food Facility (TFF) permits for producers selling processed agricultural items. Doug Hayden, Allen Moy, and April Lancaster previously met with California Department of Public Health (CDPH) staff, who asserted that such enforcement should not be occurring. Hayden recommended CFMAC committee write a formal clarification letter to prevent inconsistent local enforcement.

ITEM 7: FISCAL YEAR 2026/27 PROPOSED BUDGET

Leidolf presented the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026/27 Proposed Budget. Total proposed expenses include: \$768,882 for Personal Services; \$657,650 for Operating Expenses and Equipment; and \$303,719 for Departmental Services, and a Gas Tax credit of \$42,000. The Total Proposed Budget for the FY 2026/27 was \$1,688,252 with projected revenue of \$1,582,616.

Leidolf clarified that increase in indirect branch charges reflects increased staff costs. The \$30,000 strategic planning contract was not included because details are still being finalized. Once details are finalized, a budget adjustment will be brought to the committee for approval. The pesticide testing program continues to be funded at \$20,000, although rising screening costs could mean fewer tests available. Counties are increasingly using the pesticide screening program.

Chair Bramble asked for a motion to approve the FY 2026/27 Proposed Budget as submitted.

MOTION: Cara Mae Woledge moved to approve the FY 2026/27 Proposed Budget as submitted. Samuel Thorp seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with one abstention by April Lancaster.

ITEM 8: CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE OF FARMERS MARKET SURVEY RESULTS

Chair Portia Bramble presented the results of a survey conducted by the California Alliance of Farmers' Markets. Results showed that only 46% of respondents felt very knowledgeable about CDFA's regulatory responsibilities and use of fee revenue, while 35% said they were somewhat knowledgeable, and about 19% indicated limited understanding. This suggested a need for greater industry education around CDFA's role and the fee structure.

When asked about satisfaction with CDFA's service, inspection, enforcement, and promotion, responses were mixed: 32% were dissatisfied, 32% were neutral, and the remainder were satisfied. Strong opposition appeared when questions turned to allowing the CDFA Secretary, rather than the Legislature, to adjust the fee. There was also strong opposition when respondents were asked directly whether the \$2 fee should be increased at all. Kurt Floren pointed out the contradiction between industry interest in more inspections and enforcement, and simultaneous resistance to fee increases, emphasizing that field inspectors and enforcement cost money. Doug Hayden noted that misunderstandings about the proposed legislation had previously caused confusion, and Bramble stated that clearer messaging is needed to align industry expectations with program realities.

Further discussion highlighted the importance of transparency and communication. Bramble and Lancaster agreed that the database project controversy, initially costing the industry \$1.5 million and failing to meet expectations, had influenced earlier resistance to fee changes. However, recent progress by CDFA and Secretary Ross has helped to rebuild trust. Allen Moy emphasized that CDFA's forthcoming annual report will be a key tool for increasing understanding of how fee revenue is used.

ITEM 9: NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS

The next meeting will be held in late July via Zoom. Agenda items will include subcommittee reports, and an update on progress toward launching the new strategic stakeholder working group. For the fall meeting, the committee expects to review the enforcement report, financial report, and fund condition.

ITEM 10: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:56 p.m. by Chair Bramble.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jennifer Leidolf, Program Supervisor
Direct Marketing Program