



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

March 3, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Hybrid Teleconference

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

REMOTE MEMBERS

PRESENT

Portia Bramble – Chair
Cheyenne Erickson – Vice
Chair
Phillip Rhodes
Nick Schuller
Cynthia Ojeda
Kurt Floren

MEMBERS ABSENT

Chris Flores
Ed Williams

INTERESTED PARTIES

Daniel Delgado – Los Angeles Co.
Nina Zlatkov – Los Angeles Co.
Sommer Woolley – Napa Co.
Cara May Wooledge – Napa
Farmers' Market
Ameer Atrash – Ventura Co.
Andrew Salazar
April Treona Lancaster –
Downtown Visalia Farmers' Market
Jack de Wit
Mario R. Maldonado – San Diego
Co.
Rudy A. Valencia
Priscilla Pierce
Travis Howard
Doug Hayden – California
Farmers' Market Association
Jennifer Grissom

CDFA

Marcee Yount
Jennifer Leidolf
Sarah Cardoni
Kristi Garcia
Steve Patton
Jasmine Toledo
Danny Lee

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Jennifer Leidolf, Direct Marketing Program Supervisor. Roll was called, a quorum was established, and self-introductions were made.

ITEM 2: ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Leidolf opened the floor to nominations for Chair.

MOTION: Phillip Rhodes nominated Portia Bramble for the office of Chair. Nick Schuller seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

Leidolf opened the floor to nominations for Vice Chair.

MOTION: Phillip Rhodes nominated Cheyenne Erickson for the office of Vice Chair. Cynthia Ojeda seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

ITEM 4: REVIEW OF SEPTEMBER 16, 2024 MEETING MINUTES

Chair Bramble requested a motion to approve the September 16, 2024, Meeting Minutes as submitted.

MOTION: Kurt Floren moved to approve the September 16, 2024, Meeting Minutes as submitted. Cynthia Ojeda seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 5: PROGRAM UPDATES

i. Vacancies and Terms Report

Kristi Garcia provided the Vacancies and Terms report. Current vacancies include: five certified producer members, six certified producer alternates, one certified farmers' market operator member, and six certified farmers' market operator alternates. The following members will be eligible for reappointment when their terms end on January 22, 2026: Kurt Floren, Cynthia Ojeda, Nick Schuller, and Cheyenne Erickson. Phillip Rhodes will be terming out on January 22, 2026.

ii. Legislative Update

Leidolf gave the legislative update and discussed Assembly Bill 2786, which became effective January 1, 2025 and establishes certified mobile farmers' markets. These mobile markets must source their produce from certified producers or certified farmers' markets and are considered an extension of the direct marketing exemption. Concerns were raised by multiple committee members regarding the lack of enforcement mechanisms, potential misuse of the "certified" label by large retailers, the risk of these mobile markets competing with traditional farmers' markets, and the absence of committee input before the bill's passage. While the bill was industry-sponsored by organizations such as Fresh Approach and the Agricultural Institute of Marin, many members emphasized the need for stronger regulation and transparency. Supporters of the legislation highlighted its role in expanding access to fresh food in underserved communities. The committee agreed that the regulations subcommittee should take on this issue and that all members should participate in the upcoming public comment period once draft regulations are released.

Sarah Cardoni updated the committee on Proposition 4, which passed as part of the Climate Bond Act and allocates \$20 million each to permanent certified farmers' markets and certified mobile farmers' markets. These funds will be available in 2026, and are intended to support infrastructure and accessibility, especially in underserved areas. However, there is no funding allocated for enforcement activities, prompting concern from committee members. The urgency of establishing clear regulations in 2025 was emphasized to ensure eligibility for this funding.

Senate Bill 470 was also discussed, which aims to remove the sunset clause from the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, thereby making current teleconferencing options

permanent. The committee supported this change, noting it improves accessibility and reduces travel costs while still allowing for in-person participation if desired.

iii. Database Update

Leidolf provided updates on database improvements. The committee had previously allocated \$100,000 for four system enhancements: updating the design and printing of certificates, standardizing commodity units of measure, correcting dropdown lists, and adding an export data function. The certificate redesign has been completed and implemented. Program staff are still working on finalizing unit standardization with input from county officials, while the remaining priorities will be addressed in sequence. Concerns were raised about whether the remaining \$73,500 will be spent before the fiscal year ends in June, as unspent funds are not currently designated for carryover. The committee agreed to work with staff and subcommittees to stay informed and take action where needed to ensure continued progress.

ITEM 6: PESTICIDE PILOT PROJECT

The committee discussed the conclusion and evaluation of the pesticide screening pilot project, which began in 2020. The program was created as an enforcement tool to verify whether produce sold at certified farmers' markets was of a producer's own production, using pesticide screening to detect inconsistencies. The tests were performed on conventionally grown produce and screened using the same methods as the State Organic Program, but the focus was on application evidence rather than tolerance violations. Ten counties participated in the three-year pilot, with a declining number of tests and budget each year. The outcomes included several enforcement actions, such as civil penalties and suspensions, though one suspension was overturned on appeal.

Several committee members stated that the project was an effective compliance tool, especially useful when other verification methods were unavailable due to seasonality or distance from the farm. The committee debated whether to expand the program statewide. Most agreed on statewide expansion with allocation based on county needs, especially prioritizing larger markets where non-compliance risk is higher. Many committee members expressed support for continuing the program.

MOTION: Cheyenne Erickson moved to expand the Pesticide Pilot Project statewide, under the Direct Marketing Program. Cynthia Ojeda seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 7: FISCAL YEAR 2025/26 PROPOSED BUDGET

Leidolf presented the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025/26 Proposed Budget. Total proposed expenses include: \$741,984 for Personal Services; \$654,235 for Operating Expenses and Equipment; and \$267,696 for Departmental Services, for a total program cost of \$1,663,915, with a Gas Tax credit of \$42,646. The total Proposed Budget for the FY 2025/26 was \$1,621,269 with projected revenue of \$1,518,561.

Key increases were due to salary adjustments and the hiring of a compliance unit manager. County contracts remain stable at \$463,000, with CDFA securing an exemption from state-mandated cuts. The budget includes \$20,000 for pesticide testing

and \$75,000 for database maintenance, down from a prior allocation of \$350,000, much of which remained unspent. It was clarified that unspent funds roll into reserves and are not lost. Members raised concerns about database funding clarity and future allocations. The committee confirmed that unused funds could be reallocated to other program needs if necessary, supporting flexible use based on evolving priorities.

MOTION: Nick Schuller moved to amend the FY 2025/26 Proposed Budget to include a one-time allocation of \$50,000, from the program's reserve to the database line item to ensure completion of the four prioritized functions of the database, if not completed during the FY 2024/25. Cynthia Ojeda seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with Kurt Floren abstaining.

Chair Bramble asked for a motion to approve the FY 2025/26 Proposed Budget as amended.

MOTION: Nick Schuller moved to approve of the FY 2025/26 Proposed Budget as amended. Cheyenne Erickson seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 8: NOTICES TO THE PUBLIC ON FEE INCREASES

Chair Portia Bramble began the discussion on notices to the public on fee increases. Committee members discussed the need for better outreach to stakeholders regarding a proposed quarterly remittance fee increase. Although the legislative proposal was not sponsored during the current cycle, efforts will continue to secure sponsorship for future advancement. The committee emphasized proactive communication, suggesting the use of remittance mailers, colorful inserts, and a new email listserv for broader, paperless updates. There was also interest in exploring text message outreach and collecting contact information via existing agriculture certificate forms to facilitate cost-effective communication. Members also called for greater clarity and transparency about how the current \$2 fee is used, advocating for messaging that better explains the purpose and value of the fee to market operators and vendors.

ITEM 9: DISCUSSION ON QUARTERLY MEETINGS

The committee debated shifting from a biannual to a quarterly meeting schedule. Members agreed that more frequent, shorter meetings would enhance responsiveness and reduce agenda backlog. The group informally agreed to add meetings in March, June, and September, starting with a proposed meeting on June 9, 2025. Online meetings help manage cost concerns, and future meeting durations may be shorter, depending on attendance and workload.

ITEM 10: NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS

The next meeting will be held on Monday, June 9, 2025, and will be held via Zoom. Agenda items will include subcommittee memberships, public outreach regarding fees, an update on the database, a refresher of the committee's mission, and a discussion on the mobile certified farmers' markets.

ITEM 11: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:26 p.m. by Chair Bramble.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jennifer Leidolf, Program Supervisor
Direct Marketing Program