



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

September 15, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Hybrid Teleconference

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

REMOTE MEMBERS

PRESENT

Portia Bramble – Chair
Chris Flores
Cynthia Ojeda
April T. Lancaster
Cara Mae Woledge
Ed Williams
Kurt Floren

MEMBERS ABSENT

Nick Schuller
Phillip Rhodes

INTERESTED PARTIES

Nina Zlatkov – Los Angeles Co.
Rudy A. Valencia – Riverside Co.
Doug Hayden – California
Farmers' Market Association
Cody Leeds – Santa Barbara Co.
Daniella Reagan – Napa Co.
Travis Howard – San Francisco
Co.
Jim Murez – Venice Farmers'
Market
Allen Moy – Pacific Coast Farmers'
Market Association
Andrew Naja-Riese – Agricultural
Institute of Marin
Andy Ollove – Fresh Approach
Brijet Myers – Little Italy Mercato
Farmers' Market
Chris DeNijs
Daniel Delgado – Los Angeles Co.
Daniel McChesney-Young
Jaclyn River-Krouse – Santa
Monica Farmers' Market
Joel Felice
Keri Brumfield – Contra Costa Co.
Kimberly Richartz – Los Angeles
Co.
Martin Bourque – Ecology Center
Mikaela Williams – Mariposa Co.
Monica Winters – San Diego Co.
Sommer Woolley – Napa Co.
Veronica Ogunniyi – Napa Co.
Yvette Pellman – Merced Co.

CDFA

Jennifer Leidolf
Kristi Garcia
Jasmine Toledo
Danny Lee
Marcee Yount
Leslie Fernandez
Amar Hariharan
Rene Mendoza
John Pedigo
Elisabet Nguyen
Dominic Hickman

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m. by Chair Portia Bramble. Roll was called, a quorum was established, and self-introductions were made.

ITEM 2: PUBLIC COMMENTS

Martin Bourque, Executive Director of the Ecology Center and representative of the California Alliance of Farmers' Markets, made a comment highlighting several concerns. Bourque discussed the inefficiency of the current paper-based system for load sheets and vendor certificates, which has persisted for over five years; the need for a digital system to improve data management and visibility; and concerns about uneven fee compliance among market operators, suggesting some are not paying their fair share. Bourque also requested annual reporting and data analysis from CDFA on the state of the farmers' market industry.

ITEM 3: REVIEW OF JUNE 9, 2025, MEETING MINUTES

Chair Bramble requested a motion to approve the June 9, 2025, Meeting Minutes as submitted.

MOTION: Kurt Floren moved to approve the June 9, 2025, Meeting Minutes as submitted. Cynthia Ojeda seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 4: VACANCY 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, and Nick Schuller. Phillip Rhodes will be termed out on January 22, 2026. Ed Williams, who served in the position of public member announced resigning from the role, therefore there will be one vacant public member position as of September 16, 2025.

ITEM 5: MOBILE CERTIFIED FARMERS' MARKETS

Guest speakers Andrew Naja-Riese from the Agricultural Institute of Marin and Andy Ollove from Fresh Approach provided historical context, legislative background, and operational insights into the mobile market model.

Committee members Kurt Floren and Ed Williams shared concerns about the integrity and oversight of Mobile Certified Farmers' Markets (MCFMs) and whether MCFMs align with the core principle of direct marketing, citing issues such as the absence of certified producers on mobile units, the potential for sourcing from multiple producers, and the risk of fraudulent practices. Ed Williams emphasized the need for a cost analysis and sufficient funding through registration fees. Direct Marketing Program (Program) staff confirmed that enforcement regulations will be developed following the finalization of the Food and Agriculture Omnibus Bill.

Additional concerns focused on the potential for MCFMs to compete with existing certified farmers' markets. Suggestions included establishing a minimum distance requirement to prevent market overlap and unfair competition. Some attendees

highlighted the need for a centralized electronic tracking system to monitor produce sources and quantities. CDFA acknowledged this and committed to considering it during the regulatory process. It also remains uncertain whether the CFMAC has jurisdiction over MCFMs, which will be reviewed by the Program.

ITEM 6: FUND CONDITION

Program Supervisor Jennifer Leidolf provided an overview of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024/25 Fund Condition. As of June 30, 2025, the beginning fund balance was \$1,019,729. Total revenue was \$1,743,356, with available cash of \$2,763,085. Total expenditure was \$1,295,470. Cash Adjustments were \$97,012, with an ending balance of \$1,370,603.

Martin Bourque requested a more detailed breakdown of expenditures, to be presented at the next committee meeting.

ITEM 7: ENFORCEMENT REPORT

Leidolf presented the Enforcement Report, which included the number of notices of noncompliance and proposed action.

The most frequent violations for notices of noncompliance included the following: 155 for products not listed on Certified Producer Certificates (CPCs); 204 for failure to submit forms and fees; 76 for market managers not ensuring products are listed on CPCs; 60 for market managers not ensuring CPCs are posted; 46 for unapproved and unsealed scale; 86 for CPCs not being in possession; 26 for closed consumer container requirements, and 25 for less frequent violations.

The most frequent notices of proposed action included the following: 20 for unapproved or unsealed scale; 24 for products not listed on CPCs; 18 for CPCs not being in possession; 5 for selling not of own production; 5 for organic registration; 2 for CPCs not being posted; and 6 for less frequent violations.

Committee member Kurt Floren suggested statewide refresher training for market managers and producers to reduce recurring violations. Chair Portia Bramble also highlighted existing training resources from the California Alliance of Farmers Markets and encouraged CDFA support for broader outreach.

ITEM 8: LEGISLATION UPDATES

Leidolf provided the legislation updates. Proposals regarding Certified Farmers' Markets (CFM) fees and spun wool were submitted to the Governor's Office for consideration back in fall 2024 for approval by the Committee on Agriculture to sponsor the legislation. The proposal was not granted at that time. It was resubmitted in August 2025 to the CDFA Legislative Office for reconsideration. Additionally, Assembly Bill 1505, which would extend enforcement authority to MCFMs, is under review. The conversation highlighted the limitations of the current two-dollar vendor fee, which generates approximately \$1.6 million statewide.

Several committee members and attendees emphasized the need for increased funding to support more thorough inspections and enforcement. However, concerns were raised about vendors not perceiving value from the fees they pay, especially in areas with high compliance. Suggestions included improving transparency, reporting enforcement outcomes, and considering fee exemptions or adjustments for disadvantaged communities and new markets.

Branch Chief Marcee Yount clarified that the current legislative proposal is not to raise fees immediately but to establish a mechanism allowing future adjustments through regulation rather than legislation. Yount also explained the different types of inspections conducted, which range from educational visits to targeted enforcement, and noted that recent budget cuts have strained resources.

ITEM 9: MARKET FEE MESSAGING

Leidolf provided a historical overview of the Direct Marketing Program and the evolution of its fee structure. Leidolf emphasized that without a fee increase or structural reform, the program risks becoming insolvent by 2030 if it attempts to restore full staffing levels and county contract support.

A key priority is reforming the market fee structure by pursuing a statutory change to the Food and Agricultural Code, which would allow CDFA, pending approval from the CFMAC, to adjust fees through the rulemaking process, instead of the legislative process. This change would enable the program to respond more effectively to industry growth and evolving challenges while maintaining enforcement levels. Additionally, the program plans to develop a strategic plan that outlines a clear vision for direct marketing and identifies goals and strategies to achieve it. This plan will include evaluating current statutes and regulations to determine whether they should be repealed, amended, or expanded, and will review and update past motions from the CFM Technical Planning Committee to ensure alignment with current industry needs.

Committee members expressed a mix of support and concern regarding proposed changes to the program. There was strong interest in the strategic planning process, with questions raised about how the review of current statutes would be led. CDFA suggested forming a new ad hoc or technical committee to guide that effort. The importance of clear, accessible messaging to the broader industry was emphasized, particularly in the context of potential fee increases. Committee members stressed the need for communication tools that are inclusive to ensure all stakeholders can understand the program's goals and upcoming changes. There was also a shared call for a marketing campaign to build credibility and support, especially among vendors who may feel disconnected from enforcement outcomes.

The committee also discussed the potential for flexible fee models that take into account factors like market size, vendor volume, and community needs. While there was general support for a fee increase, members emphasized the importance of considering exemptions or adjustments for disadvantaged communities and startup markets to ensure fairness and accessibility across the industry.

ITEM 10: SELLING PROCESSED PRODUCTS AT A CERTIFIED FARMERS' MARKET

Leidolf led the discussion on selling processed products at CFMs. The discussion centered on the overlap between CDFA regulations and county health department requirements, which has led to jurisdictional ambiguity. While CDFA permits the sale of processed agricultural products, its regulations do not supersede local health and safety codes, resulting in conflicting interpretations between county agricultural commissioners and health departments.

Concerns were raised about inconsistent permitting practices and their impact on farmers, with calls for clear, consistent messaging and reasonable requirements to prevent discouraging participation. It was also noted that agricultural inspectors are not trained to enforce health codes, reinforcing the need for better inter-agency collaboration. As a result, the committee agreed to refer the issue to the Regulations Subcommittee for further exploration, encouraged the program to clarify where health and agricultural codes overlap in its guidance materials, and supported efforts to promote statewide coordination between CFMs and county health departments to streamline compliance.

ITEM 11: AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CERTIFIED PRODUCER

The committee revisited the 2021 regulatory change that broadened the definition of who may represent a certified producer at a CFM. Previously limited to immediate family members or employees, the updated rule now allows any authorized individual to conduct business on behalf of the producer at a CFM. This shift raised several concerns about the potential for fraud, misrepresentation of products, and a loss of producer control. Some committee members noted that the previous definition was easier to enforce and offered clearer accountability. While the intent behind the change was to support diverse labor arrangements, such as apprenticeships and informal help, there was general agreement that the current definition may be too flexible and could enable abuse in poorly managed markets.

The discussion emphasized the need to strike a balance between flexibility and program integrity, with calls for stronger enforcement tools and clearer definitions. Committee members acknowledged that overly strict rules could unintentionally harm small farms that rely on informal labor. As a result, the committee will refer the issue to the Regulations Subcommittee to review the definition of "authorized representative" and consider clarifying language, explore additional documentation or verification requirements, and encourage members to report any known violations to the program for further investigation.

ITEM 12: CFMAC SUBCOMMITTEES

Committee members began by reviewing and updating the membership of the Regulations and Legislative Subcommittee, as well as electing chairs for each.

i. Regulations Subcommittee Membership

MOTION: Ed Williams moved to add committee member April Lancaster to the Regulations Subcommittee and to continue having committee member Kurt Floren serve as the chair. Cynthia Ojeda seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions. The Regulations Subcommittee will include Kurt Floren, Philip Rhodes, Portia Bramble, April Lancaster, and interested public citizen Doug Hayden.

ii. **Legislative Subcommittee Membership**

MOTION: Ed Williams moved to add committee member April Lancaster to the Legislative Subcommittee and to continue having committee member Portia Bramble serve as the chair. Cynthia Ojeda seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions. The Legislative Subcommittee will include Kurt Floren, Portia Bramble, April Lancaster, Cynthia Ojeda, and interested public citizen Doug Hayden.

iii. **Database Subcommittee Report**

April Lancaster, Database Subcommittee Chair, provided a summary of the most recent Database Subcommittee meeting. Key topics that were discussed included ongoing bugs and functionality issues in the database, prioritization of fixes and request for a timeline from IT, and plans to meet again in October 2025.

Portia Bramble wrote a memo to submit to the CDFA Secretary Karen Ross, outlining the critical need for a functional, responsive database, the industry's frustration with delays and lack of transparency, and a request for leadership attention to resolve persistent issues.

MOTION: Cara Mae Woledge moved to approve the memo presented by Portia Bramble and to submit it in a motion memo to CDFA Secretary, Karen Ross. April Lancaster seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 13: DATABASE UPDATE

Leidolf presented a live demonstration of the CPC database system using a training environment. The walkthrough demonstrated the updated interface, highlighting improvements such as standardized units of measure, the ability to type full commodity names for easier selection, and clearer error messages for outdated data. She also showed how counties can review, edit, and approve applications more efficiently, including printing certificates with customizable copy counts.

Several committee members shared feedback, which included a need to enable draft certificate printing prior to approval, which is currently unavailable but recognized as a high-priority future feature. Furthermore, stakeholders emphasized the importance of developing an export function for certificates to facilitate digital site inspections and broader county participation. Additional requests included allowing electronic signatures, improving unit of measure accuracy, and ensuring email addresses are accessible for communication purposes.

ITEM 14: NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS

The next meeting will be held in January via Zoom. A Doodle poll will be sent to committee members to finalize the date.

Agenda items will include annual reporting on farmers' market data, inefficiency of the current paper-based system for load sheets and vendor certificates, and detailed budget breakdowns from previous years.

ITEM 15: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m. by Chair Bramble.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jennifer Leidolf, Program Supervisor
Direct Marketing Program