



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)
CALIFORNIA ORGANIC PRODUCTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (COPAC)**

May 8, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Hybrid Teleconference

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

MEMBERS PRESENT

Matthew Grieshop – Chair
Amanda Felder – Vice Chair
Wendy Reynolds
Mark Squire
Phillip LaRocca
Blake Alexandre

**REMOTE MEMBERS
PRESENT**

Ben Diesl
Jamie Carr
Leslie Myrick
Maroka Kawamura
Jeff Chean
Joe Deviney
Kenny Likitprakong
Lena Brook

MEMBERS ABSENT

Erin Raser
Christopher Little

INTERESTED PARTIES

Houston Wilson – University of
California (UC) Organic Agriculture
Institute (OAI)
Krista Marshall – UC OAI
Jane Sooby – California Certified
Organic Farmers (CCOF)
Rebekah Weber – CCOF
Thu Dinh – California Department
of Public Health (CDPH)
Nick Woodrum – CDPH
Ameer Atrash – Ventura Co.
Cody Leeds – Santa Barbara Co.
Daniel Delgado – Los Angeles Co.
Greta Shutler – Alameda Co.
Joji Muramoto – UC Santa Cruz
Josie Quevedo – Primus Auditing
Ops
Kimberly Richartz – Los Angeles
Co.
Laura Ramage – San Luis Obispo
Co.
Mark Lipson – CCOF
Monica Winters – San Diego Co.
Rudy Valencia – Riverside Co.
Yvette Pellman – Monterey Co.
June Nakagawa – CDPH

CDFA

Marcee Yount
Danny Lee
Jefferson Scott
Andrea Cano
Scott Renteria
Pamela Rodriguez
Kristi Garcia
Julie Lee
Leslie Fernandez

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chair Matthew Grieshop. Roll was called by Kristi Garcia, and a quorum was established.

ITEM 2: PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

ITEM 3: REVIEW OF JANUARY 23, 2025, MEETING MINUTES

Chair Grieshop requested a motion to approve the January 23, 2025, Meeting Minutes as presented.

MOTION: Blake Alexandre moved to approve the January 23, 2025, Meeting Minutes as presented. Vice Chair Amanda Felder seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 4: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATES

Wendy Reynolds provided the CDPH Organic Program update. For organic complaints received for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024/25, 12 remain open. Four complaints remain open from FY 2023/24. For 2024, there were 3,128 licenses issued for organic processors of which 727 were new and 2,401 were renewals.

Thu Dinh presented the CDPH Organic Program's budget information. For FY 2024/25, total projected salaries and benefits are \$548,615. Total direct costs are \$121,456. Total indirect costs are \$310,567, bringing the total projected program cost to \$980,639.

ITEM 5: UPDATE ON STATE ORGANIC PROGRAM AND UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA CONTRACT DELIVERABLES

Houston Wilson, UC Organic Agriculture Institute (OAI) Director, gave an update on the UC OAI contract deliverables. Wilson reported that nine field days are scheduled for 2025, covering various counties and topics such as organic citrus, organic soil health management, and organic food safety. There are plans for regional conferences, with the first tentatively scheduled for September in San Diego, with plans for additional conferences in other regions. Online resources are also being developed with some currently live, which include an organic resource map, multiple educational videos, and written materials developed to support organic farming and soil health. UC OAI is also working on providing technical support for organic system plans and working on utilizing the Farmer Educator Network to coordinate technical assistance providers. UC OAI is also developing a mentorship program that would connect new organic growers with experienced mentors. Ongoing projects also include a summary of organic acreage.

Dr. Joji Muramoto, Associate Professor at the Cooperative Extension at UC Santa Cruz, presented research highlights that included two peer-reviewed publications on integrating aquaculture with organic farming and anaerobic soil disinfestation; ongoing projects on no-till farming, nitrogen mineralization, use of almond shells to reduce nitrate leaching, and enhancing fusarium suppression; and the development of handouts and videos on anaerobic soil disinfestation, and participation in various workshops and conferences.

ITEM 6: STATE ORGANIC PROGRAM (SOP) FUND CONDITION

Danny Lee provided the SOP Fund Condition update. Lee stated that as of March 31, 2025, the beginning fund balance for FY 2024/25 was \$1,720,798. Total revenue was \$1,332,783, and available cash was \$3,053,581. Total expenditures were \$1,692,681, cash adjustments were \$149,546, with an ending balance of \$1,211,354.

ITEM 7: FY 2025/26 PROPOSED BUDGET

Lee presented the FY 2025/26 Proposed Budget. Projected revenue is \$2,020,294 with a total proposed budget of \$3,006,894 that includes \$1,126,052 for personal services; \$1,344,425 for operating expenses and equipment; \$506,098 for departmental expenses; a pro rata cash adjustment of \$75,319; and a gas tax credit of \$45,000.

There was a brief discussion on possible cost-saving measures, including a reduction in the number of in-person meetings and introducing credit card fees for registrants. Currently, the SOP absorbs the cost of credit card service charges accrued through online registrations, but due to budget constraints, this cost may have to be paid by registrants. Marcee Yount also discussed the possibility of increasing registration fees in late 2026 or early 2027; however, raising fees would require a legislative change. As such, a thorough discussion and recommendation from the COPAC would be affirmed and an increase of the registration fees would only be considered once all other cost-savings measures had been exhausted.

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

MOTION: Blake Alexandre moved to approve the Fiscal Year 2025/26 Proposed Budget as presented. Mark Squire seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 8: SOP UPDATES

i. Vacancies and Terms

Kristi Garcia provided the Vacancies and Terms report. Current vacancies include: one consumer representative; one technical representative; six producer alternates; two processor alternates; one consumer representative alternate; one accredited certifier representative alternate; one retail representative alternate; one environmental representative alternate; and two technical representative alternates.

ii. Revenue from Registration/New Registrations

Andrea Cano presented information on organic registration fees collected by month and year. For FY 2023/24, \$1,930,498 in registration fees were collected. For FY 2024/25 as of April 15, 2025, \$1,333,241 in registration fees have been collected. A total of 424 new operations registered with the SOP in the 2024 calendar year; of these 245 are producers, 185 are handlers, and 14 are processors. The total number of registrants for 2024 was 4,193 registrants; of these 3,336 are producers, 252 are handlers, and 156 are processors.

iii. Compliance and Enforcement/Appeals Summary

Scott Renteria provided the Compliance and Enforcement/Appeals Summary. For FY 2024/25 as of April 15, 2025, there were 106 total complaints of which 79 were investigated by SOP or County Agricultural Commissioners (CAC) staff; ten were referred to Accredited Certifying Agents (ACA); 15 were referred to CDPH; and two were referred to the National Organic Program (NOP).

There were 1,103 total inspections: 694 of these were conducted at farmers' markets; 144 were conducted at production sites; 63 at handling facilities; nine at processing facilities; 188 at retailers; and five at locations not within the above categories.

A total of 273 samples were collected, of which 262 were surveillance and 11 were investigative. Of the 262 surveillance samples, 13 contained residues above tolerance levels and 12 contained residues below tolerance levels. Of the 11 investigative samples, three samples tested above tolerance levels and two tested below tolerance levels.

iv. Compliant Activity Report

Renteria provided the Complaint Activity Report. For FY 2024/25 through April 15, 2025, a total of 54 open complaints were active, in which 14 were open for more than 120 days; seven were open for between 90 and 120 days; three were open for between 60 and 90 days; 14 were open for between 30 and 60 days; and 16 were open for less than 30 days. An additional 52 complaints had been closed.

v. Complaint Summary Log

Renteria presented the Complaint Summary Log, detailing complaints and investigations that were assigned and closed for FY 2024/25 through April 15, 2025.

vi. Surveillance Sampling Summary Updates

Renteria provided the Surveillance Sampling Summary updates, detailing the results of samples collected by the SOP during routine and investigative efforts. For FY 2024/25 as of April 15, 2025, there were 262 surveillance samples: 52 at farmers' markets; 68 at production sites; and 142 at retail wholesale facilities. Of the 25 samples with residues detected: eight were at farmers' markets; two at production sites; and 15 at retail wholesale facilities.

vii. Cost Share Update

Cano provided an update on the Cost Share Program. In FY 2023/24, there was a total of 1,701 total approved applications and a total reimbursement amount of \$1,800,276.19. Federal Cost Share funding for 2025 was not included in the recent Farm Bill. SOP staff are waiting for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency to provide an update on whether there will be any Federal Cost Share funds for 2025.

Yount gave an update on the motion made by committee member, Lena Brook, at the January 23, 2025 meeting, to submit a recommendation to Secretary Karen Ross requesting that the Secretary write a letter of support expressing the CDFA's endorsement of the federal Cost Share Program and its reinstatement; and to request a budget change proposal that would allocate \$2 million to support a California Cost Share Program in the event the federal program is not reinstated. Yount reported that Secretary Karen Ross received the motion memo, but due to the mandated two-year budget cuts from the Governor's office, the CDFA does not have the funding to support this request, and the CDFA cannot put forward a budget change proposal. Furthermore, a letter of support is still being considered, but will not be sent until USDA Secretary

Brooke Rollins makes a statement on any potential reorganization or downsizing of the USDA.

Vice Chair, Amanda Felder, requested information about the impact of Cost Share Program on California stakeholders to advocate funding in the upcoming Farm Bill, in Washington, D.C.

ITEM 9: ENFORCEMENT EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE

Committee member, Mark Squire, led the discussion on the Enforcement Education Subcommittee and presented a draft letter to the California Conference of Local Health Officers. The subcommittee will meet before the next full COPAC meeting to create a formal presentation and discuss how to engage with regional health departments to address enforcement and education issues.

ITEM 10: NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 25, 2025, in San Diego County. Committee members requested inviting representatives from the California Air Resources Board (CARB), the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), the Organic Transitions Program, and other relevant agencies. Committee member, Philip LaRocca requested extending an invitation to Jessie Beckett Parr at CCOF. Committee member, Joe Deviney, requested an agenda item regarding tracking how many organic producers are dropping out on the national level.

ITEM 11: ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted by:

Danny Lee, Supervising Special Investigator
State Organic Program