



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

**September 18, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

**Hybrid Teleconference**

**9240 South Riverbend Avenue, Parlier, CA 93648**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Matthew Grieshop – Chair  
Mark Squire  
Ben Diesl  
Phillip LaRocca  
Lena Brook  
Jamie Carr

**REMOTE MEMBERS  
PRESENT**

Erin Raser  
Jeff Chean  
Maroka Kawamura  
Wendy Reynolds – California  
Department of Public Health  
(CDPH)  
Kenny Likitprakong  
Christopher Little

**INTERESTED PARTIES**

Houston Wilson – University of  
California Organic Agriculture  
Institute (UC OAI)  
Lexi Wilson – UC OAI  
Addison Peterson – California  
Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)  
Rebekah Weber - CCOF  
Joji Muramoto – UC Santa Cruz  
Alexa Schieferecke – Marin County  
Daniel Delgado – Los Angeles (LA)  
County  
Kimberly Richartz – LA County  
Nina Zlatkov – LA County  
Mike Needham – CDPH  
Thu Dinh – CDPH  
June Nakagawa – CDPH  
Nick Woodrum – CDPH

**CDFA**

Marcee Yount  
Danny Lee  
Jefferson Scott  
Andrea Cano  
Scott Renteria  
Pamela Rodriguez  
Sarah Cardoni  
Kristi Garcia  
Leslie Fernandez  
Mayze Fowler-  
Riggs  
Steve Patton  
Yvette Pellman

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

David Will  
Blake Alexandre  
Amanda Felder – Vice Chair  
Leslie Myrick

**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 May 8, 2024 MEETING MINUTES**

Chair Grieshop requested a motion to approve the May 8, 2024, Meeting Minutes as presented.

**MOTION:** Mark Squire moved to approve the May 8, 2024, Meeting Minutes as presented. Phillip LaRocca seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with Lena Brook abstaining.

#### **ITEM 4: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATES**

Wendy Reynolds provided the CDPH Organic Program updates. From January through August 12, 2024, there were 1,582 renewal licenses and 474 new licenses issued for organic processors. Reynolds noted a slight increase in new applications believed to be due to strengthened enforcement, fewer late submissions, and CDPH transitioning to electronic notifications. Reynolds also reviewed the Organic Complaint Summary for Fiscal Year 2023/24 (FY), detailing cases involving uncertified or unregistered operations, pesticides, and unresolved issues often referred to the CDFA.

Thu Dinh presented the CDPH Organic Program's budget and revenue information. For FY 2023/24, projected expenditures for total salaries and benefits were \$540,508. Total direct costs were \$171,010. Total indirect costs were \$225,168, bringing the total program cost to \$936,686. Total revenue is projected at \$1,245,622.

#### **ITEM 5: STATE ORGANIC PROGRAM (SOP) UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA CONTRACT UPDATES**

Houston Wilson, UC OAI Director, gave an update on the UC OAI contract. Several key positions were filled, including outreach, mentorship, research, and technical training coordinators, with the goal of increasing operational efficiency.

Wilson stated the contract's first objective is to analyze organic acreage and practices in California, with an emphasis on aligning county data with state production trends. Delays in summarizing organic practices due to staffing issues and external commitments are being resolved.

The California Organic Agriculture Knowledge Network (Cal OAK Network) has been launched, focusing on resource facilitation and stakeholder engagement, including the development of an online resource database and in-person networking events like resource fairs. Recent field events have concentrated on organic soil testing and dairy practices, with upcoming technology fairs and workshops tailored to regional agricultural needs.

Plans for a network of organic demonstration farms are also underway to showcase best practices and support grower collaboration. Digital outreach initiatives are also available, including video content and written resources to enhance educational efforts and public awareness. Stakeholders have expressed a preference for multiple focused regional meetings rather than a single large conference.

Joji Muramoto, Associate Professor of Cooperative Extension at UC Santa Cruz, presented research highlights that included an analysis of organic strawberries. This analysis critiqued a study suggesting higher carbon footprints due to flawed assumptions about manure use, nitrogen mineralization studies focused on nitrogen released from crop residues in strawberries, artichokes, and Brussels sprouts. Other

research initiatives included no-till trials, evaluating compost applications and weed suppression in small-scale organic farming systems, and collaborative trials studying nematode management and soil health enhancements in organic systems.

## **ITEM 6: PROGRAM UPDATES**

### **i. Vacancies and Terms**

Garcia provided the Vacancies and Terms Report. There were three member vacancies, which were: one technical representative, one consumer representative, and one county agricultural commissioner representative. Additionally, there were 14 alternate vacancies, which were: six producers; two processors; one retail representative; one environmental representative; two technical representatives; one consumer representative; and one accredited certifier representative.

### **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 and 491 new operations registered with the SOP. Of these 491 new operations, 294 were producers, 215 were handlers, and 15 were processors. The total number of registrants for 2023 was 4,086. Of the 4,086 registrants, 3,370 were producers, 1,094 were handlers, and 159 were processors. Cano noted that the number of operation types may not match the number of operations, since operations may fall under more than one type.

### **iii. Cost Share Update**

Cano provided an update on the Cost Share Program. In FY 2022/23, 1,435 Cost Share applications were approved. Of these approved applications 1,164 applications were from producers and 667 applications were from handlers and processors. Cano noted that the number of operation types may not match the number of total applications approved because operations may fall under more than one type of operation.

### **iv. Fund Condition Update**

Scott Renteria provided the SOP Fund Condition update for FY 2023/24. The beginning fund balance was \$2,169,868. Total revenue was \$1,976,420, and available cash was \$4,146,288. Total expenditures were \$2,297,919, cash adjustments were \$143,092, with an ending balance of \$1,705,277.

### **v. Compliance and Enforcement/Appeals Summary**

Renteria provided the Compliance and Enforcement/Appeals Summary for FY 2023/24. There were 130 total complaints of which 94 were investigated by the SOP (CDFA or County Agricultural Commissioner staff); 17 were referred to Accredited Certifying Agents; 17 were referred to CDPH; two were referred to the National Organic Program; and one was referred to the Organic Input Materials Program.

There were 1,654 total inspections of which 1,006 were conducted at farmers' markets; 234 at production sites; 90 at handling facilities; nine at processing facilities; 308 at retailers; and seven at locations not within the above categories.

A total of 388 samples were collected, of which 371 were surveillance and 17 were investigative. Of the 371 surveillance samples, 13 contained residues above EPA tolerance levels and 18 contained residues below EPA tolerance levels. Of the 17 investigative samples, one sample tested above EPA tolerance levels.

A total of 11 appeals were received, of which nine have been closed and two remain active.

vi. Complaint Activity Report

Renteria provided the Complaint Activity Report. For FY 2023/24, a total of 50 open complaints were active, of which 23 were open for more than 120 days; 17 were open between 90 and 120 days; seven were open between 60 and 90 days; and three were open between 30 and 60 days. An additional 80 complaints have been closed.

vii. Complaint Summary Log

Renteria presented the Complaint Summary Log, detailing complaints and investigations that were assigned and closed for FY 2023/24.

viii. 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 2023/24, there were 371 surveillance samples: 76 at farmers' markets; 89 at production sites; two at a handling facilities; 201 at retail wholesale facilities; and three at locations not within the above categories. Of the 31 surveillance samples with residues detected: seven were at farmers' markets; seven were at production sites; and 17 were at retail or wholesale facilities.

## **ITEM 7: REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE**

The Committee was informed that their motion to submit a recommendation letter to the CDFA Secretary, requesting an enforceable definition of regenerative agriculture, and for the definition to include that the product must be certified organic was submitted and acknowledged by Secretary Karen Ross.

There was a discussion regarding concerns about the definition of "Regenerative Agriculture". Committee Members stressed that the state should include the requirement of being certified organic to be labeled as "Regenerative Agriculture". Members expressed concern that consumers may perceive "Regenerative Agriculture" as superior to "Organic Agriculture", along with the potential competition organic farmers may face from conventional farmers being able to use a "Regenerative Agriculture" label for marketing purposes.

Committee Members requested that the discussion on "Regenerative Agriculture" continue at the next COPAC meeting and suggested inviting members from the CDFA Regenerative Agriculture Work Group, and Rebeka Weber, Policy Director of the CCOF, to attend and partake in the discussion.

### **ITEM 8: DEFINITION OF EXEMPT OPERATIONS/EXEMPTIONS FOR RETAILERS**

Renteria led the discussion clarifying what qualifies a retailer as exempt from organic certification. Renteria explained that a retailer is exempt if all processing occurs onsite and the product does not leave the location. Furthermore, certification is required if the product is processed in one facility and transported to another.

Concerns were raised regarding the lack of robust regulations for prepared food establishments, such as restaurants, compared to other sectors of the organic market. Committee Members suggested including county health inspectors in monitoring organic claims during routine inspections. Danny Lee emphasized that while restaurants and certain retailers may be exempt from organic registration and certification, these operations must still comply with organic regulations. Lee also stated that complaints submitted by the public and industry are the best mechanisms for identifying noncompliance in prepared food establishments and retailers.

**Motion:** Mark Squire moved to request a report from the CDPH outlining opportunities where COPAC can provide guidance or educational materials that will help CDPH frontline inspectors identify potential fraud at retailers and restaurants. Chair Matthew Grieshop seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with Jamie Carr abstaining. Kenny Likitprakong and Erin Raser left the meeting before this motion was presented.

### **ITEM 9: NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS**

The next meeting will be held at the EcoFarm Conference in Asilomar, on January 23, 2025.

Agenda items will include an update on the State's definition of regenerative agriculture and information on the California Department of Pesticide Regulation's Sustainable Pest Management program.

### **ITEM 10: ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:46 p.m. by Chair Grieshop.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Danny Lee, Supervising Special Investigator  
State Organic Program