CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)
STANDARDIZATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (STDZ)
March 24, 2026 Meeting Minutes
Hybrid Teleconference
4437 South Laspina Street, Tulare, CA 93274

MEMBERS PRESENT
Louis Pandol
Marko Zaninovich – Chair
Garrett Patricio – Vice Chair
Laura Troost
Delia Cioc

MEMBERS ABSENT
None

INTERESTED PARTIES
Tesfaye Jimma – Tulare Co.
Tyler Pereira – Tulare Co.
Amanda Zito – Fresno Co.
Michelle San Soucie – Kern Co.
Nina Zlatkov – Los Angeles Co.
Rudy Valencia – Riverside Co.
Timothy Lewis – Monterey Co.
Jeremy Wagner – San Mateo Co.
Sara Sanchez Barajas – San Bernadino Co.
Monica Winters – San Diego Co.
Jordan Key – San Diego Co.
Delia Cioc – Riverside Co.
Greta Shutler – Alameda Co.
Joseph Andreotti – Imperial Co.
Melissa Lovett – Stanislaus Co.
Kimberly Martin – San Joaquin Co.
Sam Conners – San Bernardino Co.
Yvette Pellman – Merced Co.
Jimmy Hook – Kings Co.

CDFA
Marcee Yount
Andrea Cano
Stacey Hughes
Karrie Batchelor
Danny Lee
Andrea Todd
Leslie Fernandez

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Andrea Cano.

ITEM 2: ROLL CALL/INTRODUCTIONS

Roll was completed by Cano, and a quorum was established. Introductions followed.

ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

ITEM 4: REVIEW OF OCTOBER 21, 2025, MEETING MINUTES

Chair Marko Zaninovich requested a motion to approve the October 21, 2025, Meeting Minutes as presented.

MOTION: Vice chair Garrett Patricio moved to approve the October 21, 2025, Meeting Minutes as presented. Louis Pandol seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 5: COMMITTEE VACANCY AND TERMS REPORT

Cano provided the Committee Vacancy and Terms Report. Current vacancies include: one fresh fruit member, representing oranges, other citrus fruit, or table grapes**,** one other fresh fruit member, four fresh vegetable members, representing broccoli, tomatoes, or lettuce, two other fresh vegetable members, and one other member, representing any commodity not listed, that is subject to standardization assessments. Marko Zaninovich is currently serving his fourth term and will term out August 31, 2026.

Stacey Hughes presented a fact sheet titled “California Standardization Advisory Committee,” which had been requested by the committee at the previous meeting. The document is designed to serve as a resource for current and prospective committee members and to encourage greater industry participation. It outlines the committee’s structure, key functions, examples of its impact on the industry, and several notable accomplishments. Hughes noted that the QR code at the bottom of the fact sheet links to the program’s website, where potential members can access the application and additional information. The committee responded positively and expressed appreciation for the development of the document.

ITEM 6: PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2026/27 COUNTY AGREEMENTS

Hughes presented the Proposed FY 2026/27 County Cooperative Agreements. The total aggregate agreement amount for FY 2026/27 is $850,823, which remains consistent with the previous fiscal year. Minor reallocations were made to three of the agreements: a $9,378 increase to San Diego County, a $10,000 increase to Tulare County, and a $19,378 reduction to Fresno County. Hughes explained that the reduction to Fresno County reflects changes in operational needs, including a decrease in field inspection staff, a decline in acreage for certain crops such as table grapes, and the absence of cherry packing facilities in the county.

Jordan Key provided a presentation on how San Diego County will utilize its newly reallocated funding. With an additional $9,378**,** San Diego County plans to increase quarterly production inspections, expand quarterly swap meet inspections, and reduce long-term enforcement costs by improving compliance.

Tesfaye Jimma also presented Tulare County’s use of its newly reallocated funding. With an additional $10,000, Tulare County plans to address annual deficit costs resulting from cost-of-living adjustments and increasing overhead expenses. The additional funding will also support the enforcement of added standardization activities, including maturity testing on imported table grapes, inspections of packing houses and cold storage facilities, and collaboration with tribal and public health partners when assistance is needed.

ITEM 7: PROPOSED FY 2026/27 PROGRAM BUDGET

Hughes presented the Proposed FY 2026/27 Program Budget. Proposed expenditures include: $942,091 for personal services; $1,069,123 in operating expenses and equipment; and $441,561 for departmental services; bringing the total program cost for FY 2026/27 to $2,452,775. With a projected gas tax credit of $36,170 and cash adjustment debit for statewide costs of $70,233, the total projected program budget is $2,486,838. The projected revenue for FY 2026/27 is $2,365,972.

Discussions from several participants followed regarding controlling costs and working with counties to increase efficiencies and use of current/new technologies. Patricio emphasized the need for the program to demonstrate its value to producers by showing real efficacy, enforcement activity, and measurable results in the field. County representatives explained their efforts in areas such as maturity testing, swap meet monitoring, rural crime coordination, and increased enforcement at ports and wholesale locations, especially regarding imported products like grapes and melons.

Examples highlighted strong inter-county communication and collaboration with the Market Enforcement Branch on produce dealer licensing. Concerns raised included fraud among illegitimate wholesalers, maintaining updated wholesaler lists, and ensuring resources are focused where risk is highest. Counties, especially San Diego and Los Angeles, described ongoing efforts to identify new wholesalers, improve compliance, and trace issues across jurisdictions, reinforcing the program's importance and responsiveness to industry needs.

Chair Marko Zaninovich requested a motion to approve the Proposed FY 2026/27 Program Budget as submitted.

MOTION: Vice chair Garret Patricio moved to approve the Proposed FY 2026/27 Program Budget as submitted. Louis Pandol seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 8: PROGRAM UPDATES

Karrie Batchelor reported that the Department received a petition from the citrus industry to expand Standard Container No. 60, currently used for oranges, to also include grapefruit. The regulatory package is under review and is expected to take eight to nine months. Industry members also recently applied for three experimental container permits for lemons. This experiment increases the height of the standard carton by one inch to improve fruit shape and quality upon arrival. The Citrus Advisory Committee met in Kern County on March 19, 2026 and approved the Citrus program budget.

The cherry industry has decided not to pursue regulatory changes to maturity standards and is instead considering modifications to its existing state marketing order. Their next board meeting is scheduled for April.

The Avocado Inspection Advisory Committee met on March 10, 2026 and approved its budget. Dr. Mary Lu Arpaia provided an extensive presentation on the history of avocado maturity standards and was asked to present cost estimates for additional maturity research at the committee's September meeting.

Riverside County inspected more than 788,000 cartons of Chilean table grapes at the San Pedro Port, noting some container labeling violations but no maturity issues. Los Angeles County inspected over 21,000 cartons of Peruvian grapes and issued one maturity noncompliance, which later passed reinspection in Tulare County. Ventura County's melon inspections at Port Hueneme covered more than 25,000 cartons and resulted in three noncompliance's and five disposal orders.

The Standardization Program launched a resource website through existing training software providing county inspectors access to program information and training materials. Upcoming county training sessions include cherries on April 7th and 8th, melons in May and June, and table grapes in early June.

The meeting concluded with an official resolution recognizing Marko Zaninovich for eight years of service on the Standardization Advisory Committee, signed by CDFA Secretary Karen Ross and Inspection and Compliance Branch Chief Marcee Yount**.**

ITEM 9: NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 20, 2026, and will be a hybrid meeting held at the Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner's Office and via Zoom.

ITEM 10: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:46 a.m. by Chair Marko Zaninovich.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Stacey Hughes, Program Supervisor
Standardization Program