

Agricultural Commissioners

During California's period of rapid expansion at the end of the nineteenth century, settlers brought not only their families, but also brought with them trees and vines for planting, some of which were infested with insect and disease pests. This created so many problems for the state's farmers that in 1881 the California Legislature provided counties with the authority to establish local Boards of Horticultural Commissioners in an effort to protect the state's burgeoning tree and vine industries from these new pests. In 1920, with the development of the State Department of Agriculture, the legislature brought the several County Horticultural Commissioners and their deputies under the direction of the Director of Agriculture.

State law now requires every county to have an agricultural commissioner who is appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Each County Agricultural Commissioner (CAC) must manage a regulatory agency serving under the program direction of the California Secretary of Agriculture and the Director of the California Department of Pesticide Regulation.

Since the inception of the horticultural commissioner system, not only the name has changed, but the duties and responsibilities have as well. During the course of the past 120 years, this system has become more complex, yet remains flexible enough to address local issues. Recognizing that working collaboratively with other county agricultural commissioners was critical in addressing regional problems, the Association of Agricultural Commissioners was established in 1922. In 1988 the association combined with the California Association of Weights and Measures Officials to establish the present California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association.

Responsibilities and Duties

Each agricultural commissioner is charged with the protection and promotion of California's agriculture, the protection of the environment as well as protection of the public's health and safety. These goals are accomplished through the management of programs designed to achieve our mission through public outreach and numerous enforcement tools.

Pest Exclusion

This program provides the first line of defense for California agriculture. Inspections provide protection from introduction of insect and disease pests that may be introduced into the state through the movement of plants and plant products as well as other items through normal channels of trade. The establishment of these new pests may adversely affect our natural environment as well as negatively impact the State's economy. Last year over 750,000 inspections were performed resulting in over 9,000 rejections and several hundred pest discoveries. This program also involves inspections of plant material being delivered to other states and countries and the issuance of certificates documenting compliance with their entry requirements.

Pest Detection

This program provides the second line of defense against exotic pests through the early detection of new introductions before they become widely established. Traps are placed in primarily urban areas to detect such insect pests as Mediterranean and Mexican fruit flies, Gypsy Moth, Japanese Beetle, and a host of other targeted pest species. Through early detection the likelihood of these pests becoming established in the state is lessened and the cost and environmental impact of eradication is minimized.

Pest Eradication

Pest eradication programs are often conducted following the discovery of an introduced pest species. Often these projects are partially or completely under the jurisdiction of the California State Department of Food and Agriculture. However, the CAC is often involved as the liaison to local government. In some cases, the CAC has a more active role as is the case in enforcing host free periods for Pink Bollworm, a serious pest of cotton, or in the eradication of Red Imported Fire Ant in Southern California.

Pest Management

The CAC is charged with the responsibility of managing nuisance pests of agriculture and human health. Many of these pests are recently introduced species that have become established despite the best efforts of the commissioners to keep them out. An example would be the Glassy-winged Sharpshooter that is under intensive control efforts in several southern counties while eradication efforts continue in counties further north. Others are common pests such as ground squirrels, voles, gophers and noxious invasive weeds that can be serious pests of agriculture and urban areas alike.

The CAC also conducts programs to establish and distribute biological controls for troublesome pests. Examples of this activity date back to the earliest efforts to control cottony cushion scale in citrus through the distribution of the vernal ladybird beetle. More recently, there have been successful efforts to distribute tiny wasps to control Ash White Fly, and continuing efforts to control Yellow Star Thistle, puncture vine and lerp psyllid through the distribution of bio-control agents.

Pesticide Use Enforcement

This is a complex program that covers far more than its name implies. This program was developed to provide for the proper, safe, and efficient use of pesticides essential for production of food and fiber and for protection of the public health and safety. It also protects the environment from potentially harmful pesticides by prohibiting, regulating or ensuring proper stewardship of pesticides. An important component of the program focuses on agricultural and pest control workers, ensuring safe working conditions, use of proper protective equipment and training for employees who work with or around pesticides. Other components of the program include pesticide use reporting, incident investigations, outreach activities promoting best management practices, and monitoring applications in the field.

Seed Certification

Inspections are performed at the retail and wholesale establishments that sell seeds. Samples are drawn for germination and purity testing. Labeling is inspected for compliance with state requirements. Through this program, certification services are also performed for growers and processors, in cooperation with the California Crop Improvement Association.

Nursery Inspection

Through this program the CAC inspect the growing, propagation, production and sale of nursery stock to assure cleanliness from pests, true variety and vigorous-healthy plants for sale to the consumer.

Fruits, Nuts, and Vegetable Standardization

This program ensures compliance with California's minimum standards regarding quality and marketing of all produce commercially grown and/or

marketed in the state. Direct Marketing regulation and Organic law enforcement are part of a program that provides for local protection to growers, marketers and consumers.

Egg Inspection

Retailers and packers of eggs in the State are inspected to enforce state and federal health, quality, and grade standards.

Apiary Inspection

A program that emphasizes the registration and site location of honeybee colonies in the county. At the request of beekeepers or growers, the CAC inspects colonies for strength and health to ensure effective pollination.

Crop Statistics

As required by the California Food and Agricultural Code, the CAC compiles and records information in the annual crop report regarding the gross production and value of the county's commodities. Various research institutions, schools, banks, agencies and businesses use this valuable information to the benefit of the local economy. Also, disasters to agriculture are surveyed and the information collected is used by other agencies offering disaster relief. Statistics promote and protect the continued production and prosperity of agriculture in California.

The gross value of County Agricultural Production for California in 2000 was \$30,257,113,000.



Land in Farms :
27,800,000
Acres

California has 89,000 farms which grow over 350 different crops.

County Agricultural Commissioner



" To Promote and Protect "

California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association

Protection and Service Since 1881

www.cacasa.org