

# Agricultural Commissioner's Office

## Agricultural Division

### FUNCTIONAL REPORT



## TO PROMOTE AND PROTECT

## Agriculture, Public, Environment

Cathy V. Neville  
Agricultural Commissioner  
Sealer of Weights and Measures  
Director of Animal Care & Control

133 Aviation Boulevard, Suite 110  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403-1077

Phone: (707) 565-2371  
Fax: (707) 565-3850

[www.sonoma-county.org/agcomm/](http://www.sonoma-county.org/agcomm/)

The County Agricultural Commissioner's Office is a regulatory agency acting under the jurisdiction and direction of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (CDPR), and works in cooperation with various federal, state, regional, and local agencies. The Agricultural Commissioner enforces the laws and regulations of the California Food and Agriculture Code and the California Code of Regulations while serving at the discretion of the County Board of Supervisors and CDFA Secretary of Agriculture. The Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner's Office employs a full-time staff of twenty-five with the main office in Santa Rosa and two satellite offices in Sonoma and Petaluma.

### FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

The primary goal and purpose of County Agricultural Commissioners statewide is "To Promote And To Protect" agriculture and to protect the public's health, safety, and welfare. Agriculture is one of the main industries in Sonoma County and it provides a very significant base to the county's economy. The department accomplishes the promotion and protection of agriculture through educational outreach and enforcement.

#### Agricultural Statistics:

The California Food and Agricultural Code mandates that each county compile a crop and livestock report annually. This publication reports the production, acreage and value of the crops and livestock grown in the county. The crop report is a valuable tool for reporting agencies, growers, economists, lending agencies and many other people and organizations concerned with agriculture. The farmers, ranchers, nurserymen, and CDFA supply all of the information for this report. The annual acreage survey and crop report are both compiled to illustrate the types of crops grown and more importantly these reports display the trends in agriculture.



#### Air Pollution:

The Agricultural Commissioner's Office acts as a consultant for Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD). We have the authority to issue a burning permit allowing a grower to burn agricultural materials where disease or pests are a problem and must be abated by burning.

#### Apiary Inspection:



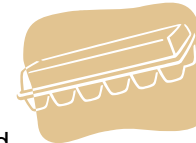
The purpose of apiary inspection and registration has been to hinder the spread of certain diseases and pests that are economic threats to bees. These include American Foul Brood, Acarine Mite and Varroa Mite. Currently, the objective is also to prevent the introduction of the Africanized Honey Bee into domestic colonies.

#### Bio-Control:

The Agricultural Commissioner's Office works with CDFA to develop the use of effective biological controls for use on troublesome plant pests. Biological control organisms have been placed throughout the county to help in the control of: Puncture Vine, Yellow Starthistle, Gorse, Ash White Fly and Scotch Broom.

#### Egg Quality Control:

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



#### Environmental Review Committee (ERC):

This committee, which the Board of Supervisors established, consists of six members including one from the Agricultural Commissioner's Office. The committee determines, based on their initial study, whether or not a county project may affect the environment. ERC directs the lead department to prepare a negative declaration, an expanded initial study or an Environmental Impact Report in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). As a committee member, the Agricultural Commissioner's Office reviews these projects to determine any significant impacts on agricultural lands.

#### Fruits, Nuts and Vegetable Standardization:



This function ensures compliance with California's minimum standards regarding quality and marketing of all produce commercially grown and/or marketed in the state, thereby protecting consumers and industry from substandard products. Locally grown apples are annually tested for maturity and grade standards.

#### Hazardous Materials Program:

In 1993, the Board of Supervisors designated this department to inspect all agricultural facilities for compliance with hazardous materials and hazardous waste laws and regulations. Our office along with Sonoma County Emergency Services is a Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA). Sonoma County Emergency Services is the lead agency of the CUPA.

#### Nursery and Seed Inspection:

Through this program Agricultural Commissioner's Office inspects plants at wholesale nurseries and the nursery's operations to assure cleanliness from pests, accurate labeling, and that vigorous, healthy plants are offered for sale to the consumer. Our staff aids the nurseryman with advice and recommendations for a proper pest control program. Seed is inspected at wholesale and retail sales locations, insuring that seed lots are labeled correctly and accurately as to their kind, germination, and compliance with state regulations.



#### Organic Program:

The National Organic Program (NOP) was enacted in 2002 to implement the Organic Foods Production Act (the Act). Congress passed the Act to establish national standards to govern the marketing of organically produced products.

The Act requires organic industries with annual gross sales over \$5,000.00 to be certified organic. The California Organic Products Act of 2003 requires registration of all organic producers, handlers, and processors and incorporates the national standards. This office inspects and registers all Sonoma County producers and handlers of organic commodities to assure compliance with the Federal and State organic laws.

### **Pest Detection:**

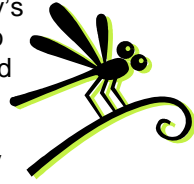
This is a proactive program to detect exotic pests before they become established within the county. Traps are monitored throughout the county for the presence of exotic pests of agriculture and natural resources, such as Mediterranean Fruit Fly, Oriental Fruit Fly, Melon Fruit Fly, Gypsy Moth and Japanese Beetle. These insect pests have an enormous host range and are difficult and costly to manage once established. Through early detection, this program is protecting more than agriculture as it also helps in reducing the need for pesticide applications. Sonoma County has a year round survey program to detect any uncommon plant disease, insect, animal, nematode or weed that may be detrimental to agriculture, ornamental plantings and native flora. To protect our valuable grape industry, we also deploy and inspect traps for Glassy-winged Sharp Shooter.

### **Pest Eradication:**

This department is mandated to eradicate certain exotic pests. The location of the first find of Whitestem distaff thistle in the Western Hemisphere was in Sonoma County. This broadleaf weed has been eradicated. Tulip tree scale, a serious pest on tulip trees, deciduous magnolia and walnut, has also been eradicated from the county. Iberian star thistle has been reduced to a small fraction of its original numbers. Hydrilla, a serious pest of waterways was found in and eradicated from Spring Lake in 1985.

### **Pest Exclusion:**

This program provides the first line of defense against the introduction of exotic insect and disease pests into Sonoma County. The establishment of new pests can adversely impact agriculture, the environment, and our local economy. Inspection of incoming plants and plant products for pests and compliance with plant quarantines occurs at the various parcel distribution centers, nurseries, landscape planting sites, parks, and grain mills located throughout the county. This program also facilitates the movement of Sonoma County's plants and plant products to other counties, states, and countries, through inspections and certifications, which document compliance with entry requirements at destination.



### **Pest Management:**

The Agricultural Commissioner is charged with the responsibility of managing nuisance pests of agriculture and human health. By order of the Board of Supervisors, toxic rodent baits are available and sold at cost. We are involved in efforts to control the spread of weed pests, such as star thistles and distaff thistle.

### **Pesticide Use Enforcement:**

The function of this program is to oversee, monitor and evaluate the use, records, storage and sales of pesticides as required in the California Food and Agricultural Code, the California Code of Regulations, and the Business and Professions Code. In carrying out these functions, the department protects the food, feed and fiber sources, the environment and people, including the public and agricultural workers. A grower must obtain the proper permit or operator identification number from this department before pesticides are applied for commercial or agricultural use. One function of this program is recording data on agricultural pesticide use. This information is obtained from the Pesticide Use Reports, submitted by growers and other applicators.

Other functions of this program include incident and illness investigations, as well as field and headquarter inspections. Department staff provides education to the community and growers concerning safe pesticide application practices. We provide and participate in classes for continuing education hours needed by pesticide applicators to keep their applicators license(s) valid. This all provides protection to the consumer, worker, grower and environment, by helping to make Sonoma County and California agricultural commodities among the safest in the world.

### **Predatory Animal Control (Wildlife Services):**

The Predatory Animal Control Program in Sonoma County is a cooperative effort, which includes Wildlife Services, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), and the Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner's Office. Wildlife Services supervises this cooperative program. The Predatory Animal Control Program's role is to help alleviate problems that are created when wildlife causes damage to agriculture, urban, and/or natural resources, or presents a threat to public health or safety. This program also can be utilized to protect many kinds of wildlife including endangered and threatened species from predators.



### **Project Review and Advisory Committee (PRAC):**

This committee, which the Board of Supervisors established, consists of seven members including one from the Agricultural Commissioner's Office. PRAC reviews and recommends conditions for all subdivisions. The Agricultural Commissioner's Office is responsible for recommending conditions for projects in order to mitigate for impacts on agricultural land uses.

### **Sonoma County Farmers' Markets:**

The Sonoma County Farmers' Markets were established to provide consumers the opportunity to buy raw agricultural products directly from farmers and provide farmers an ability to sell their products directly to consumers. The Agricultural Commissioner's Office inspects certified producer's growing sites and farmers' markets to preserve the integrity of the direct marketing program.



### **Vineyard and Orchard Erosion and Sediment Control:**



This division administers the Sonoma County Grading, Drainage and Vineyard and Orchard Site Development Ordinance adopted by the Board of Supervisors in December 2008.

This ordinance replaced the Vineyard Erosion and Sediment and Control Ordinance (VESCO) that was previously passed in June 1999. Growers are required to notify our office when they plan to plant or replace a vineyard or orchard, and are required to utilize recognized conservation practices, best management practices and provide for riparian setbacks to protect the environment and watersheds of the county.

### **Satellite Offices:**

#### **Petaluma Office**

11 English St  
707 762-3059

#### **Hours:**

Tuesdays & Thursdays  
10:00 am to 11:30 am

#### **Sonoma Office**

19722 8<sup>th</sup> Street East  
707 938-5215

#### **Hours:**

Tuesdays & Thursdays  
1:30 pm to 2:30 pm