

# WINDOW ON AGRICULTURE

## Office of the Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner

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Marilyn Vernon and Suzanne Ostrom

### WE ARE SETTLED IN

The Agricultural Commissioner and Weights and Measures Offices are now in our new office. Our move was several years in the making. Agricultural Commissioner John Westoby, and members of our staff: Mike Smith, Lisa Correia, Esther Martinez, and Mark Hanson have worked many hours with Jan Hess, Architect's Office, to get us into our new home.

Our last day in the old office was October 31. Over that weekend the moving company moved us from the Ventura Avenue location to the Aviation Boulevard site. Not only did our equipment have to be moved, our phone and computer lines had to be shutdown and reactivated at the new office. Monday, November 3 was our first day in our new office. All our staff had a hand in getting us packed and unpacked. It was no small task, since we had decades worth of supplies, and equipment to go through and pack.

All the moving boxes have now been unpacked, and we have settled in. The office was designed to our specifications. Not only do we have more space, but we have carpet and windows. Our new office is located at 133 Aviation Boulevard, Suite 110, Santa Rosa (Airport Area), south of the Airport Cinemas.



### USDA PROPOSES TO EXEMPT 100 PERCENT ORGANIC ENTITIES FROM MARKETING ORDER PROMOTION ASSESSMENTS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Marketing Service is proposing amendments to 28 fruit and vegetable marketing order programs that authorize market promotion activities. The changes would exempt producers and marketers of solely 100 percent organic products from paying commodity promotion assessments.

The 2002 Farm Bill directed USDA to issue regulations exempting any person who produces and markets solely 100 percent organic products and who does not produce any conventional or non-organic products from paying assessments under a commodity promotion law.

Currently, there are 28 regional marketing order programs that authorize market promotion activities. These include programs for California nectarines; California peaches and pears; Southeaster California grapes; California olives; California potatoes; California almonds; California walnuts; California dates; California raisins; and California dried prunes.

The marketing order program allows for promotion activities designed to assist, improve or promote the marketing, distribution or consumption of the commodities they represent. Some of the programs also authorize market promotion in

### **USDA Proposes to Exempt 100 Percent Organic Entities from Marketing Order Promotion Assessments Continued**

the form of paid advertising. Promotion activities are funded from assessments levied on handlers regulated under the various marketing orders.

Comments are being solicited from interested parties for 30 days and may be sent to the Docket Clerk, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, AMS, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., STOP 0237, Washington D.C. 20250 0237; fax (202) 720-8938; or e-mail to [moab.docketclerk@usda.gov](mailto:moab.docketclerk@usda.gov). Review the proposed role at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/todaynews.htm>

The Farm Bill amendment also covers 16 national research and promotion programs for blueberries, beef, cotton, dairy, eggs, fluid milk, Hass avocados, honey, lamb, mushrooms, peanuts, popcorn, pork, potatoes, soybeans, and watermelons. A separate proposed rule will be issued addressing the organic exemption under these national research and promotion programs.

### **2003 CERTIFIED PRIVATE APPLICATOR WORKSHOP**

The Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner's Office held the annual Certified Private Applicator Workshop on December 4, 2003 at the Veteran's Memorial Building in Santa Rosa. Over 400 growers attended the workshop.

The workshop provided private and commercial applicators 2 hours of continuing education. Chief Deputy Agricultural Commissioner Lisa Correia and Deputy Agricultural Commissioner Stefan Parnay were in charge of the event.

We would like to thank the Sonoma County Grape Growers Association for providing the refreshments for this year's meeting.

Several topics were covered. Agricultural Commissioner John Westoby gave a year-end review. Biologist Sue Ostrom gave a pesticide laws and regulations update. Senior Biologist Bruce McArthur discussed weed management. Mike Wall from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District discussed burn permit requirements. Biologist Jim Raisner from our office along with Farm Advisors Dr. Lucia Varela and Rhonda Smith from the UC Extension Office discussed the Vine Mealybug. Polo Moreno, Environmental Research Scientist with the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, gave an update on Endangered Species. We would like to thank our guest speakers.

We would like to thank all the growers who attended, and hope that you left the meeting with some helpful information.

