

DEPARTMENT OF

AGRICULTURE, WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Promoting and protecting agriculture, environmental quality, and ensuring equity in the marketplace.

March 17, 2015

Stacy K. Carlsen
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER
DIRECTOR OF WEIGHTS AND
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SUBJECT: REQUEST TO RECOGNIZE ORGANIC FARMERS AND THEIR INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION TO THE COUNTY, AND CELEBRATE THE MARIN ORGANIC CERTIFIED AGRICULTURE (MOCA) PROGRAM AND THE VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS IT PROVIDES TO INDUSTRY, THE COMMUNITY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Dear Supervisors:

RECOMMENDATION: Review the effectiveness and benefits of the Marin Organic Certified Agriculture (MOCA) program, evaluate key services, and review the economic contributions provided by organic farmers.

SUMMARY: Agriculture is recognized as one of five Targeted Industries by our County's Economic Commission for benefits derived from this valuable business sector. MOCA has demonstrated implementation of goals established within the County's Strategic Plan (Innovation, Collaboration, Service Excellence, Sustainable Future, and Excellent Public Services) facilitating organic farm activity. Organic certification has contributed to the long-term economic viability of agriculture and to the protection of natural resources in Marin County, which are of immeasurable value to its residents and visitors. There continues to be an ongoing demand for MOCA organic certification services.

The MOCA program is the department's largest program and currently certifies fifty-three (53) operations for crops, livestock, and processed products, representing over 36,000 certified organic acres with a gross value of approximately \$39 million. All commercial vegetable producers and about three quarters of Marin dairies are certified organic. Marin County is one of only three agricultural departments in California that offers voluntary organic certification services (the other two counties are Monterey and Yolo). The total gross value of all Marin organic products certified by all USDA National Organic Program Accredited Certified Agencies, including all MOCA operations, is over \$93 million.

On October 3, 2000, the Marin County Board of Supervisors established by ordinance (Chapter 23.20 of the Marin County Code) voluntary organic certification services for local organic producers, spearheaded by the Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures. This program is known as the Marin Organic Certified Agriculture (MOCA) program.

The County Agricultural Commissioner conducts this certification program (MOCA) pursuant to USDA National Organic Program CFR Section 205 and California's Food and Agricultural Code Section 46014.1(c), and charges fees to recover the county's

reasonable direct costs of the program. Producer fees for MOCA services offset total program costs by about fourteen percent (14%), while approximately forty percent (40%) of the programs net county costs are reimbursed by the State of California through Unrefunded Gas Tax (UGT). Fee revenues and reimbursements for FY 2013-14 totaled approximately \$368,000 with total expenditures reaching about \$684,000 for organic certification services. Expenditures include all direct and indirect costs such as salaries/benefits, administrative staff costs, reaccreditation audit services by USDA's National Organic Program (NOP), intradepartmental charges to support the program, and related overhead.

Marin County is privileged to have so many innovative, creative, and well-known ranchers and agricultural producers working Marin County lands. These ranchers and farmers use approved organic inputs and strategies on a daily basis which bolsters biodiversity, pollinators, birds/fishery habitat, and protects endangered species and other sensitive sites. The MOCA program exists because of these ranchers and agricultural producers, and the willingness of the Board of Supervisors to approve an environmentally minded organic certification program which supports local agriculture and helps protect Marin's ecology.

Most of our certified farmers' markets are sustained by our organic farms, which provide consumers a direct healthy food connection from farm to plate.

Certified organic products originate from sustainable agricultural practices that positively affect the very way we live, down to the microscopic organisms in the soil, and help protect the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the soil we depend on to grow our food into the future. Buying certified organic products goes far beyond the immediate benefits of the product itself; it is a way of living, it is life sustaining, and it's working in harmony with nature and the delicate web of life. We have a responsibility as a County organization to support continued efforts to make organic products more readily available to all of our residents so they can enjoy their benefits and support local and sustainable agriculture.

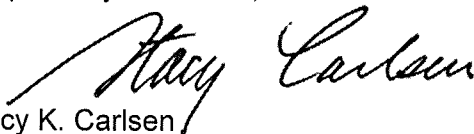
There is a constant demand for MOCA organic certification services from existing non-MOCA organic farmers, including certification requests from new farmers.

FISCAL IMPACT: N/A

ALTERNATIVE TO RECOMMENDED ACTION: N/A

REVIEWED BY:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> County Administrator	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
	<input type="checkbox"/> Department of Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
	<input type="checkbox"/> County Counsel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
	<input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A

Respectfully submitted,



Stacy K. Carlsen
Agricultural Commissioner
Director of Weights and Measures

Attachment