

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF STANISLAUS  
ACTION AGENDA SUMMARY

DEPT: Chief Executive Office

BOARD AGENDA # B-14

Urgent

Routine



CEO Concurs with Recommendation YES  NO

(Information Attached)

AGENDA DATE July 29, 2008

4/5 Vote Required YES  NO

SUBJECT:

Approval to Accept the Second Annual Report on Strong Agricultural Economy/Heritage Goals and Performance Measures

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Accept the Second Annual Report on Strong Agricultural Economy/Heritage Goals and Performance Measures.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this item.

BOARD ACTION AS FOLLOWS:

No. 2008-565

On motion of Supervisor DeMartini, Seconded by Supervisor Grover  
and approved by the following vote,

Ayes: Supervisors: O'Brien, Grover, Monteith, DeMartini and Chairman Mayfield

Noes: Supervisors: None

Excused or Absent: Supervisors: None

Abstaining: Supervisor: None

1)  Approved as recommended

2)  Denied

3)  Approved as amended

4)  Other:

MOTION:

ATTEST:

CHRISTINE FERRARO TALLMAN, Clerk

File No.

## Approval to Accept the Second Annual Report on Strong Agricultural Economy/Heritage Goals and Performance Measures

### DISCUSSION:

#### Background

The Board of Supervisors adopted new priorities for Stanislaus County in April 2005. Department Heads were assigned to teams responsible for developing goals and performance measures to successfully support the priorities. The teams identified measures of success for one year, five years and ten years. The annual measures included the implementation steps to initiate the work required by the goals. The Board of Supervisors adopted the goals and performance measures in October 2005 and directed the priority teams to present an annual report on their performance. This report represents the second annual report of goals and performance measures for the Strong Agricultural Economy/Heritage.

#### Overview

The Board of Supervisors adopted this priority to support and protect the County's agricultural economy and heritage. The members of the Strong Agriculture Economy/Heritage priority team include Agricultural Commissioner Gary Caseri, Interim Director of Planning and Community Development Kirk Ford, and Director of Cooperative Extension Ed Perry. Additional goal team members include Assistant Agricultural Commissioner Milton O'Haire and Senior Planner Angela Freitas.

The team recommended the following three goals: 1) Support and promote agricultural products, education, technology and innovation; 2) Protect agricultural resources; and 3) Manage threats to agriculture. Exhibit A outlines the outcomes that the Strong Agricultural Economy/Heritage priority team expected to achieve in Fiscal Year 2007-2008 and the actual outcomes achieved. Exhibit A also provides a discussion of Lessons Learned over the past year for each measure.

To support and promote agricultural products, education, technology and innovation, the priority team emphasized economic and environmental quality improvement in applied research and education programs. The team also utilized electronic media to communicate information through newsletters and web sites and supported local agricultural education opportunities through outreach events and development of internships. To protect agricultural resources, the priority team initiated the process of revising the Agricultural Element of the Stanislaus County General Plan in preparation for approval by the Board of Supervisors. To manage threats to agriculture, the priority team chose to improve the use of technology in agricultural inspections/monitoring programs involving pesticide use, implement and exercise agricultural response plans, and establish a staff training and certification program to improve mitigation of pests, diseases, and other threats to agriculture.

#### Conclusion

During Fiscal Year 2007-2008, the Strong Agricultural Economy/Heritage priority team accomplished several of their objectives. Applied research and education projects identified current agricultural industry problems and related economic information. Projects were designed,

## Approval to Accept the Second Annual Report on Strong Agricultural Economy/Heritage Goals and Performance Measures

test plots established and data collected. Results focused on new technology, integrated pest management and/or improved cultural practices. Improvements in department web sites and the development of a database of electronic newsletters and subscribers improved customer access to information. Educational programs on best management practices were conducted for the agricultural community and a survey tool was implemented for use at these trainings.

The Agricultural Element, which incorporated suggestions from agricultural industry stakeholders and the community, was approved by the Board of Supervisors in December of 2007. The Board also approved an agricultural lands mitigation program, uniform rules for Williamson Act contracts, guidelines for agricultural buggers, and a revised General Agricultural District zone.

Geographical Information System (GIS) map layers were completed for the pesticide permitting system program as well as for other significant locations and waterways. In the case of an emergency, locations can be quickly added to give a unique perspective to the incident. The electronic pesticide use field inspection project has been fully implemented and improvements are continuous. An initial "agricultural response" exercise was conducted with future exercises planned which focus on agricultural industry segments. Staff training was coordinated with a variety of government agencies which focused on increasing staff knowledge and certification.

While there have been many successes, the priority team has also identified several Lessons Learned and opportunities for improvement. Full acceptance and/or adoption of new agricultural technologies by the entire agriculture industry may take longer than 2-3 years and it will take time to assess adoption. Staffing and management changes and budget constraints can affect projects and plan implementation. If local government is to effectively protect agricultural resources, there must be an awareness of the continuous changes in issues and trends impacting agriculture. While the importance of agriculture to our local economy is unquestioned, the factors needed to maintain the agricultural resources are diverse and ever changing. For GIS mapping, it became evident that if information is already contained in another agency database, it is simpler to acquire it, rather than having to recreate data. Also, varying mapping data sources require standardizing components such as map symbols, projection scale and map sizing in order to fully integrate information to deal with an agricultural emergency.

### POLICY ISSUE:

The report on the goals and performance measures for Strong Agricultural Economy/Heritage provides the Board of Supervisors with a progress report on the efforts to support the Board commitment to agriculture.

### STAFFING IMPACT:

There are no staffing impacts associated with this item.



**GOALS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

**BOARD PRIORITY**

The Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors is committed to providing excellent community services and we charge the organization to effectively manage public resources, encourage innovation and continuously improve business efficiencies.

In collaboration with public and private partnerships we strive for:

**A strong agricultural economy/heritage**

**PRIORITY TEAM**

Agricultural Commissioner  
 Cooperative Extension  
 Planning

**GOAL 1**

**Support and promote agricultural products, education, technology and innovation**

**MEASURE 1**

Emphasize economic improvement (i.e., increase production, lower costs of production) in applied research and education programs

<b>EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008</b>	<b>Actual Outcomes through July 2008</b>
<p>Identify current industry problems and collect baseline information on economics related to the problem;</p>	<p>Current industry problems that might be solved by applied research in each Advisor's program area identified. Economic information related to problems collected. Examples of researchable problems include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pest and disease management issues                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• walnuts - pistillate flower abscission in 'Serr' variety</li> <li>• almonds - effects of bloom-applied fungicides on production</li> <li>• livestock and natural resources - medusahead (invasive weed species) invasion of rangelands; water quality impacts and livestock management practices on irrigated pastures</li> <li>• vegetable crops - powdery mildew, late blight in processing tomatoes; improved processing tomato varieties</li> </ul> </li> <li>issues related to cultural practices                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dairy - refining lagoon water application rates in forage crop production</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>issues related to agricultural labor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• agricultural labor management - effects of piece rate pay on worker performance;</li> </ul>
<p>Design research and educational activities to address the problem; and</p>	<p>Applied research projects designed to address critical agriculture industry problems. Test plots established in cooperation with growers/cooperators. Data from test plots collected during the season and at harvest. Information from research extended to the industry at educational events. Examples of projects from which data was collected include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• walnuts - use of ReTain PGR to minimize effects of pistillate flower abscission</li> <li>• almonds - bloom-applied fungicide trials</li> <li>• livestock and natural resources - medusahead management trials, water quality in irrigated pasture trials</li> <li>• vegetables - powdery mildew, late blight trials; processing tomato variety trials</li> <li>• dairy - software developed to aid in determining rates for lagoon water application</li> <li>• agricultural labor management - piece rate pay design, negotiated performance appraisals; and</li> </ul>
<p>Collect information regarding industry acceptance and/or adoption of completed projects (new technology or improved cultural practice).</p>	<p>Information on industry adoption:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• walnuts - new statistics on adoption of Surround to control sunburn</li> <li>• almonds - statistics on acceptance of orchard replant strategies</li> <li>• dairy - statistics on lagoon water management practices in place</li> <li>• vegetables - grower/processor adoption of new varieties based on trial results</li> <li>• livestock and natural resources - new information on water quality/human pathogens/livestock grazing (irrigated pastures)</li> <li>• agricultural labor management-information effects of incentive pay research; agricultural labor publications produced: books - "Agricultural Labor Management: Cultivating Personnel Productivity," "Dairy Incentive Pay."</li> </ul>

**LESSONS LEARNED:**

While a few progressive growers may adopt new technologies rapidly, acceptance and/or adoption of new technologies by an entire industry may not occur in only 2 - 3 years. Several years may be required before adoption can be reliably determined.



**MEASURE 2**

Utilize electronic media to communicate information to customers

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008	Actual Outcomes through July 2008
<p>Redesign Agricultural Commissioner's website to create a professional, user friendly, interactive site; interactive features may include forums, "ask an inspector" or opportunities to interact with staff;</p>	<p>The Agricultural Commissioner's website took on a new look with the County-wide redesign. Further redesign of the website has been evaluated to reduce redundancy. Obsolete information has been removed and replaced with more useful and current information. Staff is currently being trained to implement interactive features and take Department control over site content;</p>
<p>Develop a Cooperative Extension database of newsletter subscribers; and</p>	<p>Database of E-newsletters developed; Number of subscribers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• total for all newsletters - 2,631               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People in Ag</li> <li>AG-Hrnet forum +newsletter</li> <li>Agrolaboral</li> <li>Dairy News</li> <li>Horticulture News</li> <li>Livestock Lines</li> <li>The Scoop</li> <li>Stanislaus Forage Farmer</li> <li>Veg Views</li> <li>Walnut News</li> <li>4-H Forecast</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cooperative Extension website-receives average of 2300 hits per day</li> <li>• Agricultural Labor Management website-combined English and Spanish labor management websites receive an average of 2,700 hits per day; and</li> </ul>
<p>Develop and implement a Cooperative Extension customer survey with baseline data for 2008.</p>	<p>The Cooperative Extension customer survey has not been completed.</p>

**LESSONS LEARNED:**

Staffing changes affect the Agricultural Commissioners Office's ability to implement desired website enhancements under the current timeline. Additional time is needed to train new staff for hands-on website modifications.

**MEASURE 3**

Make environmental quality improvements (air, water, and other natural resources) and food safety components in applied research and education programs.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008	Actual Outcomes through July 2008
<p>Integrate environmental quality improvement components (IPM, reduced risk pesticides, evaluation of insect and disease resistant varieties, etc.) and food safety into applied research; and</p>	<p>Applied research projects developed in all crop areas addressed Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and related technologies. Test plots established in cooperation with growers/cooperators. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• germplasm trials in walnuts</li> <li>• orchard replant management, new rootstock evaluation trials for almonds, peaches, grapes</li> <li>• processing tomato variety trials</li> <li>• water quality impacts and livestock management practices on irrigated pastures</li> <li>• livestock grazing, human pathogens and water quality</li> <li>• dairy lagoon water management, and groundwater quality and;</li> </ul>
<p>Conduct regular educational programs that educate growers on best management practices that have an impact on environmental improvement and food safety.</p>	<p>Educational programs conducted that included information on best management practices include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NSJ Valley Almond Day</li> <li>• Cling Peach Day</li> <li>• Tri-County Walnut Meeting</li> <li>• IPM Breakfast Meetings (bi-monthly)</li> <li>• Livestock Forum</li> <li>• Processing Tomato Field Day</li> <li>• Parks Forum</li> <li>• participation in Dairy Quality Assurance Program</li> <li>• regular newsletters</li> <li>• department website (links to IPM information).</li> </ul>

**LESSONS LEARNED:**

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) research and education will continue to be a necessary component of Cooperative Extension programs throughout the foreseeable future, as pest and disease problems constantly threaten agriculture. Best management practices that focus on environmental protection and improvement, as well as food safety, will also remain a high priority.

**MEASURE 4**

Support local informal agriculture education opportunities

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008	Actual Outcomes through July 2008
<p>Partner with California State University, Stanislaus (CSUS) and Modesto Junior College to provide formal internship opportunities to examine new ideas and save money utilizing student talents;</p>	<p>Cooperative Extension partnered with CSUS to provide summer employment for Agricultural Studies Program student intern (June 2008 - September 2008). Agricultural Commissioner's Office contacted CSUS Agricultural Department Chair regarding unpaid internship opportunity for</p>

	students. Project description for development of a Department herbarium and insect collection has been drafted;
Utilize survey tool for measuring results of Cooperative Extension's educational programs; and	Survey tool developed and used at the following educational meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-Season Processing Tomato Field Day</li> <li>• Oakdale Livestock Forum</li> <li>• Tri-County Walnut Meeting</li> <li>• IPM Breakfast Meetings (several)</li> <li>• Parks Forum</li> <li>• Annual Cling Peach Day</li> <li>• NSJ Valley Almond Day; and</li> </ul>
Develop baseline data for Cooperative Extension customer expectations of educational programs/meetings and increase baseline satisfaction levels by 5%.	Survey responses to be used in establishing baseline satisfaction level.

**LESSONS LEARNED:**

Budget constraints have affected the Agricultural Commissioners Office's ability to recruit for a paid internship. Therefore the Department will focus on unpaid internships, which may be less attractive to students. Timing affects internship viability as the beginning of the fall or spring semester would be more appropriate to recruit, as opposed to the summer.

**GOAL 2**

**Protect agriculture resources**

**MEASURE**

Update Agriculture Element of the General Plan

<b>EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008</b>	<b>Actual Outcomes through July 2008</b>
Develop an agricultural lands mitigation program;	Farmland Mitigation Program Guidelines adopted by Board of Supervisors on December 18, 2007;
Revise Uniform Rules for Williamson Act Contracts;	Revisions adopted by Board of Supervisors on December 18, 2007;
Develop guidelines for agricultural buffers;	Buffer and Setback Guidelines adopted by Board of Supervisors on December 18, 2007;
Revise A-2 (General Agriculture District) zone; and	Revised ordinance adopted by Board of Supervisors on December 18, 2007; and
Present Agricultural Element for adoption.	Presented and adopted by Board of Supervisors on December 18, 2007.



**LESSON LEARNED:**

If local government is to effectively protect agricultural resources there must be an awareness of the continuous changes in issues and trends impacting agriculture. The importance of agriculture to the local economy is unquestioned, but the factors needed to maintain agricultural resources are diverse and ever changing.

**GOAL 3**

**Manage threats to agriculture**

**MEASURE 1**

Improve use of technology in agricultural inspections/monitoring program

<b>EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008</b>	<b>Actual Outcomes through July 2008</b>
Develop and implement GPS/GIS integration to aid in agricultural Incident Management; and	GIS layers have been developed and staff is in the process of development and updating. Some of the new layers completed show livestock scale locations and weights and measures device locations and waterways. Pesticide permittees are shown on the mapping system and sensitive sites such as schools and hospitals are being added. A pest detection layer has been started showing grid mapping. In the case of an agricultural emergency, GPS points can be quickly added to give a unique perspective depending on the incident, whether it is an insect find, cattle or poultry disease, or a pesticide incident. The mapping system now integrates GPS points, an aerial photo layer, County map layer and Department specific layers and;
Fully implement the Electronic Pesticide Use Field Inspection project to improve turnaround time for the inspection process and required record keeping.	The Electronic Pesticide Use Field Inspection project has been fully implemented although improvements continue to be made. All pesticide inspections are now completed using computer software and printers during the actual inspection. Inspectors produce more accurate, uniform and professional looking inspection reports in the field.

**LESSONS LEARNED:**

Staffing changes can affect the training and implementation of GIS/GPS mapping systems. Also, if information is already contained in another agency database can be acquired, it is a simpler process than having to hand-create the information (for example: pesticide-sensitive sites such as schools and hospitals have to be hand-created in the mapping system).

We need a more formal process for suggesting software changes for Electronic Pesticide Use Field Inspection. With the new system, inspection history and laws and regulations are now accessible to inspectors in the field. Corrections to inspection reports are easier to make. The overall inspection time has been decreased, reducing time spent at a particular location.

## MEASURE 2

Implement and exercise All Agricultural Hazards Emergency Response Plan

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008	Actual Outcomes through July 2008
All Agricultural Hazards Emergency Response Plan is exercised through the workshop and issues/problems encountered are addressed.	Conducted initial "Agricultural Response" exercise with Poultry Industry, Office of Emergency Services (OES) and Strategic Business Technology (SBT) aimed at testing mapping data capabilities necessary in identifying & locating poultry populations in the event of a disease outbreak such as Avian Influenza or Exotic Newcastle Disease.

### LESSONS LEARNED:

Varying mapping data sources requires standardizing components such as map symbols, projection scale and map sizing in order to fully integrate information necessary to properly identify extent and locale of populations involved in a disease outbreak. The most important lesson is how mapping data capabilities cross jurisdictional or county boundaries not otherwise recognized by disease pathogens therefore necessitating coordination with neighboring jurisdictions and counties.

## MEASURE 3

Establish staff training program to improve understanding of threats to agriculture

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008	Actual Outcomes through July 2008
Staff knowledge regarding the Environmental Impact report Functional Equivalency, the investigation process and procedures and the inspection process and procedures will be improved.	Staff training was coordinated with the California Dept of Food and Agriculture, the California Dept of Pesticide Regulation, California Dept of Fish and Game, and CAL-EPA to include the following training: Investigation Report Writing, Quarantine Pests, Pesticide/Wildlife Incident Response Plan, Structural Pesticide Inspection, Pesticide Illness Investigation and Sampling Techniques, and Interaction of Government Agencies in Environmental Actions. The Department's pesticide inspection staff attended all pertinent training as did the quarantine inspection staff. With a better trained staff, over 900 inspections have now been completed for 2007-2008, an improvement over 2006-2007.

### LESSONS LEARNED:

A change in program management affected the assessment of training needs, however the required training was accomplished. Staff training positively affects staff competency and efficiency.