

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

DEPT: Chief Executive Office

BOARD AGENDA # B-11

Urgent Routine

AGENDA DATE September 1, 2009

CEO Concurs with Recommendation YES NO
(Information Attached)

4/5 Vote Required YES NO

SUBJECT:

Approval to Accept the Third Annual Report on A Strong Agricultural Economy/Heritage Board Priority Team Goals and Performance Measures

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Accept the Third Annual Report on A Strong Agricultural Economy/Heritage Board Priority Team Goals and Performance Measures.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The stated Board priorities identify seven core areas: a safe community, a healthy community, a strong local economy, effective partnerships, a strong agricultural heritage and economy, a well planned infrastructure system, and the efficient delivery of public services. These priorities guide all fiscal planning and budgetary preparation. The Board priorities impact the focus and priority of work and influence our fiscal approach, providing an important framework for continued process improvements and the strategic use of limited resources.

BOARD ACTION AS FOLLOWS:

No. 2009-602

On motion of Supervisor Chiesa, Seconded by Supervisor Grover

and approved by the following vote,

Ayes: Supervisors: O'Brien, Chiesa, Grover, and Chairman DeMartini

Noes: Supervisors: None

Excused or Absent: Supervisors: Monteith

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 Third Annual Report on A Strong Agricultural Economy/Heritage Board
Priority Team Goals and Performance Measures

DISCUSSION:

Background

Stanislaus County has adopted the vision "to be the Best County in America". To assist in achieving that vision, in 2005 the County Board of Supervisors defined seven priority areas of focus for Stanislaus County. These seven Board priorities serve as the foundation for operational and strategic planning for the organization. To ensure implementation, each Board priority has a team of department heads and representatives that work together to develop goals, measures and expected outcomes for that priority. Each team is responsible for monitoring results and reporting those results annually to the Board of Supervisors. This agenda item represents the third annual report on actual outcomes achieved for Fiscal Year 2008-2009 for A Strong Agricultural Economy/Heritage priority.

Overview

Agriculture plays a vital role in the economy and heritage of Stanislaus County. The Board of Supervisors adopted this priority to support and protect this important resource. The members of this priority team include the Agricultural Commissioner's Office, Cooperative Extension, and Planning and Community Development. For Fiscal Year 2008-2009, the priority team recommended three goals: 1) Support and promote agricultural products, education, technology and innovation; 2) Protect agricultural resources; and 3) Manage threats to agriculture.

In order to support and promote agricultural products, the priority team ensured that research and educational programs emphasized economic improvements that increase production, lower costs, and assist in improving the environment; supported local, informal agricultural education opportunities and utilized electronic media to improve communication and educational opportunities for the community; improved the use of technology in agricultural programs to streamline regulatory processes; and improved staff training and education programs.

To protect agricultural resources, the priority team continued to align the County's General Plan to encourage protection of agricultural resources. A comprehensive update of the General Plan is expected to be initiated by the end of 2009.

Under the *Manage threats to agriculture* goal, the Priority team implemented and exercised an All Agricultural Hazards Emergency Response Plan. Two targeted exercises were successfully conducted to test the capabilities of the Response Plan. Water management - quality, quantity and run-off; air quality management; pesticide management; and pest management were all areas of focus this fiscal year.

Approval to Accept the Third Annual Report on A Strong Agricultural Economy/Heritage Board
Priority Team Goals and Performance Measures

Conclusion

While there have been many successes, the priority team has also identified several lessons learned and opportunities for improvement. While Cooperative Extension research continues to work closely with growers, only a few progressive growers have adopted new technologies quickly and industry-wide acceptance may take several years before adoption can be readily determined. Many research projects are ongoing; data collection and analysis will take several years before the total impacts of the research can be determined. The specific Agricultural Buffer requirements as adopted in the General Plan do not appear to fully achieve the desired results and the guidelines need to be modified to more accurately reflect real life conditions. The Farmland Mitigation Guidelines will also need to be revised based upon the outcome of current litigation.

Exhibit A outlines the outcomes that this priority team expected to achieve in Fiscal Year 2008-2009 and the actual outcomes achieved. Exhibit A also provides a discussion of Lessons Learned over the past year for each measure.

POLICY ISSUE:

The Board of Supervisors' priorities establish the future direction for Stanislaus County. Approval of the recommended goals and proposed outcomes for each priority provide a focused direction for County departments and staff in support of the Board of Supervisors' directives.

STAFFING IMPACT:

The work required implementing the goals and measures associated with the Board priorities will be absorbed by existing staff.



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

Ensure that research and education programs emphasize economic improvement (i.e. increase production, lower costs of production) and environmental improvement (i.e. air, water, natural resources and food safety).

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009	ACTUAL OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009
Identify new or current industry problems and collected baseline information;	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 problems and projects include: Issues related to integrated pest management (IPM): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing tomato variety improvement; • Powdery mildew, late blight diseases in processing tomatoes; • Yellowstar thistle and medusahead (invasive weed species) invasion of rangelands; Issues related to cultural practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting groundwater quality while irrigating forage crops with dairy lagoon water;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of labor inputs in thinning of stonefruit tree crops; • Preventing pistillate flower abscission in 'Serr' walnut variety; • Water quality impacts and livestock management practices on irrigated pastures; • Air quality issues/impacts in annual forage crop production; <p>Issues related to agricultural labor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality control problems in field packing of crops and in packing sheds; • Established bilingual Agricultural Labor Management Website that has two to five thousand hits a day, for a total of over 5.5 million hits to date;
<p>Ensure that all research programs contain economic and environmental components that address the following (if applicable):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Potential economic impacts of programs and cost/benefit analysis; b) Integrated Pest Management plan; c) Reduced risk pesticide; d) Disease resistance in crops; e) Food safety; 	<p>Applied research projects developed in all crop areas addressed economic and environmental improvement components. Test plots established in cooperation with growers/cooperators. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Germplasm trials in walnuts; • Research on chemical fruit thinning in apricots to reduce labor inputs; • Evaluation of alternative rootstocks for almonds and peaches; • Integration of tree spacing, pruning and rootstock selection for efficient almond production; • Evaluation of alternative planting patterns to improve pollination and yields in almond orchards; <p>Many research projects are ongoing; data collection and analysis will take several years before the total impacts of the research can be determined.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research on mechanical blossom and fruit thinning of peach trees to reduce labor inputs • Research on commercial, bloom-applied plant growth regulator and foliar nutrient materials to increase almond nut set and yield; • Variety trials to select improved processing tomato variety lines; • Conservation tillage projects (3 total); • Research on efficacy of reduced-risk pesticides in vegetable crop production; • Livestock grazing, human pathogens and water quality; • Collaboration in the National Air Emissions Monitoring Study; • Ongoing monitoring of groundwater quality under dairies to improve manure nutrient management practices; •

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of recordkeeping tools for manure nutrient management;
Conduct at least two education programs to educate growers on best management programs resulting from the research programs; and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tri-County Walnut Meeting - annual meeting • IPM Breakfast Meetings (7 total); • Oakdale Livestock Forum (annual meeting); • Annual Cling Peach Day (annual meeting); • NSJ Valley Almond Day (annual meeting); • In-Field Peach Workshop; • Mid-Season Processing Tomato Field Day (annual meeting); • Active participation in the California Dairy Quality Assurance Program; and
Collect information regarding industry acceptance and/or adoption of completed projects (new technology or improved cultural practice) and establish five year utilization targets for each project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IR-4 Program (minor crop registrations) - research contributed to several additional use registrations; • Bilingual Agricultural Labor Management Website has two to five thousand hits a day, for a total of over 5.5 million hits to date.

MEASURE 2

Support local informal agricultural education opportunities and utilize electronic media to improve community and customer communication and education

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009	ACTUAL OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009
Develop Cooperative Extension and Agricultural Commissioner databases of newsletter subscribers;	Cooperative Extension database developed and being used to notify subscribers of current newsletters and news releases;
Develop and implement a Cooperative Extension and Agricultural Commissioner customer survey with baseline data for 2008; and	Cooperative Extension implemented and is using a customer service survey; surveys distributed at meetings. Surveys specific to the Agricultural Commissioner's office were used during the calendar year of 2008. Sixty-seven responses were received. At the beginning of 2009, the CEO's office developed a new survey format and asked our Department to use the County-wide survey form. The Ag Department is still developing a mechanism to distribute and receive these survey forms. Results will be compiled and analyzed on a fiscal year basis; and
Redesign Agricultural Commissioner's website to create a professional, user friendly and interactive site.	The Agricultural Commissioner's website continues to be reviewed and updated to assure information is current and available. The Ag Department staff also is continually reviewing ideas to make the website more user friendly. A "frequently asked question" section has been added to the Department's website.

MEASURE 3

Improve use of technology in agricultural programs

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009	ACTUAL OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009
Expand the use of electronic notebooks for field staff;	Inspectors can now access export certification requirements from the field via the internet. Field staff can view Hazardous Material Permit information on their notebooks along with their actual location on the GIS agricultural commodity layers;
Create current GIS agricultural commodity layers for Stanislaus County;	The Department has developed a current GIS agricultural commodity layer. Because of work load, software, and process issues, it takes several months to complete updates to the layer. However, the Department is testing software that would make updates to the commodity layer in near real time;
Utilize GIS and GPS technology to graphically represent decontamination sites used in agricultural emergencies; and	GPS technology was used to develop maps that display carwash locations that would be utilized to decontaminate vehicles during an animal disease outbreak; and
Identify list of hard copy records to be converted to electronic format and convert 5% of these records (example; restricted material permits).	A list of records to convert to electronic format was developed and 5% of the records were converted. By December of 2009 it is expected that 50% of these records will be converted.

MEASURE 4

Improve staff training and education programs

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009	ACTUAL OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009
Formalize training track that includes the identification and mitigation of pests, diseases and other threats to agriculture.	Staff involved in the identification and mitigation of pests, diseases and other threats to agriculture now have a weekly training meeting where experts on various subject are brought in to discuss the appropriate issues. Staff also attends CDFA and DPR training on these subjects when they are available and accessible. These outside training classes attended by individual staff members are recorded and documented on a department database.

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.

GOAL 2

Protect agriculture resources

MEASURE

Continue to align the County's General Plan to encourage protection of agricultural resources

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009	ACTUAL OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009
Implement provisions in newly adopted Ag Element;	Currently implementing Agricultural Buffer Guidelines and other provisions in the Agricultural Element. Implementation of Farmland mitigation procedures delayed until resolution of lawsuit;
Monitor effectiveness of newly adopted Ag Element; and	Applicants have presented numerous different alternative buffer measures to the Agricultural Advisory Board and all approved projects requiring buffers include some form of agricultural buffer. Effectiveness of Farmland Mitigation Program is limited due to a lawsuit; and
Work with cities to develop guidelines for agricultural buffers and community separators.	The Department Co-Sponsored an Agricultural Mitigation Seminar in 2009 and has coordinated through the Planning Directors Association. Further development and coordination is required.

Lessons Learned: The specific Agricultural Buffer requirements as adopted in the General Plan do not appear to fully achieve the desired results and alternatives are often sought. These guidelines should be modified to more accurately reflect on-the-ground realities. The Farmland Mitigation Guidelines will need to be revised based on the result of current litigation.

GOAL 3

Manage threats to agriculture

MEASURE 1

Implement and exercise All Agricultural Hazards Emergency Response Plan

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009	ACTUAL OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009
Conduct targeted exercises to verify aspects of the All Agricultural Hazards Emergency Response Plan; and	Two targeted exercises were successfully conducted in Fiscal Year 2008-2009. An exercise in October of 2008 was conducted to test the capability of using Global Positioning Systems to collect field data during an animal disease outbreak. In April of 2009, an Avian Influenza table top exercise was conducted with key County stakeholders. Both exercises tested the capabilities of the All Hazards Food and Agricultural Response Plan; and
Conduct workshops with Stanislaus County departments to familiarize department personnel	County departments participated in the April 2009 Avian Influenza table top exercise that was

with the All Agricultural Hazards Emergency Response Plan as a component of the Stanislaus County Emergency Operations Plan.	designed to test the All Hazards Food and Agricultural Response Plan.
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MEASURE 2

Water Management (quality, quantity and run-off)

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009	ACTUAL OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009
Use new technologies, help dairy industry meet the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board water quality regulations (General Order Waste Discharge Requirements);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of research to develop techniques for successfully applying dairy lagoon water to cropland in ways that maintain yields while minimizing adverse impacts to groundwater; • Active participation in the California Dairy Quality Assurance Program; • Improvement of recordkeeping tools for nutrient management; • Ongoing monitoring of groundwater quality under dairies to improve manure nutrient management practices;
Participate in the Dairy Quality Assurance program to educate dairy operators in new water quality regulations;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two farm advisors actively participated in the California Dairy Quality Assurance Program;
Actively partner with water coalitions to promote best management practices to prevent pesticides from entering the waters of the state;	The Ag Commissioners office has played an active roll in both the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition and the Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition. Staff has attended both general and executive Coalition meetings to provide input and comments on best management practices. The Ag Commissioner's office helped develop and distribute a Best Management Practices (BMP) handbook for the San Joaquin Valley. The handbook is in a three ring binder format so updates can be easily added to the document. The BMP handbook was distributed by the Coalitions in two slightly different editions, one for the East San Joaquin areas and one for the Westside areas. The Ag Commissioner's office is committed to continuing to be an active partner in the water coalitions and to support the development and implementation of best management practice to protect the waters of the state;
Conduct agricultural pesticide container recycling events in three locations to promote environmental sound disposal practices; and	For the first time in many years three agricultural pesticide container recycling events were conducted with overwhelming participation for the agriculture community. The events were held in Modesto, Westley and Riverbank in order to give growers throughout the County an opportunity to participate in the pesticide container recycling events;

<p>Work with the Ag Advisory Board to develop recommendations for use of tertiary treated water in agriculture.</p>	<p>Ag Advisory Board subcommittee studied the issue; a formal presentation on the feasibility of tertiary treated water for agricultural use made to the Board of Supervisors on March 31, 2009; the report was approved by the Board; and</p> <p>The Ag Commissioner served on the Ag Advisory Board's Tertiary Wastewater Subcommittee that was formed to research the use of tertiary treated water and develop recommendations for its use in Stanislaus County. The subcommittee held several meetings reviewing material from various agencies and organizations involving the use of tertiary waste water. Subcommittee members made a trip to the Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency's Water Recycling Facility to observe current technology of recycling waste water using tertiary techniques. The results and recommendations of the subcommittee were presented to, and approved by, the Ag Advisory Board. The Ag Advisory Board then made a presentation to the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors on March 31, 2009 which included the recommendation "that the use of tertiary treated water for crops grown in Stanislaus County has possible significance, provided, that sound science is factored in when evaluating its feasibility. Also, significant resources should be provided for outreach into the community regarding the safety of tertiary treated wastewater as irrigation water so that the agricultural industry is protected."</p>
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MEASURE 3

Air Quality Management

<p>EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009</p>	<p>ACTUAL OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009</p>
<p>Extend information to orchard growers for alternatives to methyl bromide fumigation;</p>	<p>In-field workshops held to demonstrate effectiveness of alternative rootstocks for almonds and peaches;</p> <p>Through the Department's continuing education program, information to growers for alternatives to methyl bromide fumigations was extended. New pesticide application methods using alternative fumigants were evaluated in the County;</p>
<p>Initiate conservation tillage research project; and</p>	<p>Three conservation tillage projects initiated; and</p>
<p>Require management practices in application of fumigants that will reduce emissions by 20% and track methods used.</p>	<p>The Department participated in a regional goal of reducing VOC emissions from pesticides by restricting fumigant application methods during the critical months that have historically shown high VOC emissions in the central valley.</p>

MEASURE 4

Pesticide Management

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009	ACTUAL OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009
Establish research projects in both annual and perennial crops that show effectiveness of reduced risk pesticides; and	Research on efficacy of reduced-risk pesticides conducted in leafy vegetables and tomatoes; and
Develop strategies to reduce noncompliance with increased pesticide regulations.	How to reduce non-compliances is discussed with the agricultural industry during Continuing Education classes. Compliance inspections (no enforcement is administered) are offered to farmers as a training tool. The Department used a new inspection/investigation tracking database to provide information on which laws are most violated.

MEASURE 5

Pest Management

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009	ACTUAL OUTCOMES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009
Continue Integrated Pest Management (IPM) research projects in annual and perennial crops; and	Tree crops IPM research: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clonally propagated walnut rootstocks for improved vigor and greater tolerance to root and crown rot;• Evaluation of alternative rootstocks for almonds and peaches (four field trials);• Research on the causes of lower limb death of almond trees;• Research on control of ceratocystis canker of almonds using fungicides and a bark penetrant;• Research on powdery mildew and late blight control in tomatoes - new fungicides with anti-resistance components that contribute to more effective IPM programs;• Research on beet armyworm control in tomatoes and table beets; and
Extend IPM strategies in both annual and perennial crops at four annual meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrated pest management education through semi-monthly IPM breakfast meetings (7 total)• IPM strategies discussed at three annual meetings (almonds, peaches, walnuts);• IPM discussed at in-field workshops in almonds and peaches;• Maintained 24-hour accessible telephone pest management hotline.

Lessons Learned:

- Increasingly stringent air and water quality regulations for agriculture will increase the demand for air/water quality research in the coming years. Therefore, applied research and extension education related to air and water quality will continue to be a necessary component of Cooperative Extension programs throughout the foreseeable future. IPM research and education will also continue to be a high priority, 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 important.
- Many research projects are ongoing, with data collected and analyzed over a period of several years. Total impacts often cannot be determined for several years.