

# **Project Scientist in Consumer Behavior and Preferences with the Local Farm and Food Innovation Initiative (F3Local) (Assistant-Associate Rank-Represented)**

## **Position Overview**

**Location Headquarters:** UC Davis, Delarue Lab

The University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) invites applications for a **Project Scientist (Assistant-Associate Rank) with the Local Farm and Food Innovation Initiative (F3 Local)**.

## **Purpose and Clientele:**

The Project Scientist will conduct research on consumer behavior and on safety and process control for development of Cottage Foods products, value-added products, and small-scale food processing technology and will conduct research to meet local needs for small-scale startup food entrepreneurs in the Fresno/Merced region. The Project Scientist will lead research on consumer preferences and purchasing behaviors in value-added and locally sourced foods, focusing on trends like organic, eco-friendly packaging, and plant-based options. Conduct sensory testing to assess food product quality and identify key factors driving consumer choices and support small food producers by applying consumer insights to product development, offering tools for engaging customers, and providing educational resources to promote innovation and market alignment.

## **Major Duties and Responsibilities:**

### ***Research (60%):***

- Lead applied research in consumer preferences and purchasing behaviors in value-added food products and locally-grown produce (e.g., locally sourced, organic, convenience foods). This will include analyzing consumer acceptance of innovations such as new packaging, preservation techniques, or flavor profiles in value-added products and the exploration of emerging trends such as plant-based, organic, fair trade, and eco-friendly packaging, and how they impact consumer preferences and willingness to purchase.
- Conduct sensory research to assess and describe the sensory characteristics of food products and produce, including taste, texture, aroma, and appearance. Develop and implement sensory testing protocols, such as descriptive analysis and consumer preference tests, to evaluate product quality and consumer acceptance. Analyze sensory data to identify key attributes that influence consumer preferences and purchasing decisions.
- Conduct focus groups with diverse consumer segments to gain deeper insights into regional demand and preferences for specific food products.
- Analyze and interpret quantitative and qualitative data to identify market trends, consumer behaviors, and competitive landscapes.
- Conduct comprehensive literature reviews on consumer behavior, value-added products, food marketing strategies, and trends in regional and international food markets.
- Supervise students or technicians on technical aspects of research, including methods development, troubleshooting issues, interpreting results, and planning subsequent experiments.

***Outreach and Extension (25%):***

- Work with small food producers, food entrepreneurs, and micro food businesses to incorporate consumer preferences and sensory data into their product development processes and guide them in using this data to refine existing products and innovate new offerings that meet market demands.
- Offer tools and best practices for conducting surveys in cost-effective ways, ensuring small and micro businesses can regularly engage their customers and refine their offerings based on real consumer data.
- Plan, organize, and participate in programs designed to educate clientele including small farms, food entrepreneurs, processors, community partners, and public agencies to present findings and engage the public in discussions around food choices and preferences.
- Develop extension resources such as brochures, fact sheets, and social media content to communicate research results to a wider audience, including consumers and food producers.
- Collaborate with F3 Local Initiative staff and partners to collect local and regional information and to connect with small-scale value-added food producers.
- Prepare extension publications to disseminate research results. Participate in conferences and workshops.
- May maintain liaison and respond to the needs of various industry organizations, state and federal agencies, and other external groups.

***Professional Competence and Activity (15%):***

- Prepare high-quality written materials including reports, program and project impact statements, blog posts, briefings, executive summaries, and presentations.
- Conduct literature reviews and summarize existing research relevant to projects.
- Prepare peer-reviewed journal articles for publication.
- Contribute to regular project reporting of activities and deliverables.
- Prepare and give presentations at professional meetings, conferences, and stakeholder convenings.
- Participate in appropriate professional/technical societies or groups and other educational and research organizations.
- Participate in activities of committees within UC ANR as appropriate to project activities.

**Reporting Relationship:** The Project Scientist serves under the administrative guidance of the University of California ANR Regional Director, Small Food and Farm Innovation.

## **Qualifications and Skills Required**

**Education:** A minimum of a Ph.D. degree in Consumer Behavior, Food Science, or a closely related field is required at the time of appointment.

**Required Qualifications:**

- Strong background in applied research related to consumer preferences, sensory descriptive analysis, and value-added food products.
- Experience conducting qualitative and quantitative research methods, including surveys, focus groups, sensory tests, and statistical analysis.
- Strong data analysis skills, particularly in consumer behavior or market research.
- Excellent communication skills, both written and verbal, with the ability to present complex findings to diverse audiences.
- Ability to work independently and manage multiple tasks and deadlines.

## Preferred Qualifications:

- Knowledge of value-added food product development, packaging, and preservation techniques, and how they influence consumer purchasing decisions.
- Understanding of challenges faced by small food producers and entrepreneurs in local and regional markets.
- Experience with grant writing and securing research funding.

## Additional Requirements

- Ability to work independently and seek guidance when needed, demonstrated through academic research, professional experience, or a combination.
- Excellent verbal, written, and interpersonal communication skills and presentation skills.
- Ability and means to travel on a flexible schedule as needed, proof of liability and property damage insurance on vehicles used is required. Must possess a valid California Driver's License to drive a County or University vehicle.
- This is not a remote position. The candidate must be available to work onsite. In accordance with [UC ANR Flexible Work Guidelines](#) flexible work agreements are available upon approval by supervisors and periodic re-evaluation.

**Skills Required:** To be successful, a Project Scientist requires skills in the following:

### Technical Competence and Impact

- Interact with collaborating scientists to achieve project objectives.
- Collect and analyze data for agency reporting and journal publications. Participate in extension education and outreach activities.

### Communication

- Demonstrated excellence in written, oral, interpersonal and information technology communication skills and ability to extend information to a variety of audiences including students, staff, faculty, and industry stakeholders.
- Skills to communicate and extend technical information to diverse audiences are required.
- Participation in professional societies and conferences and ability to give presentations at seminars and continuing education functions.

### Collaboration, Teamwork and Flexibility

- Strong problem-solving skills and ability to simultaneously manage multiple projects
- Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively as a team member with others.
- Able to adapt as circumstances warranted.
- Promote diversity, equity and inclusion.

### Lifelong Learning

- Demonstrated commitment to ongoing self-improvement.

## About UC ANR

UC ANR is a division of the University of California (UC) system that bridges the gap between local issues and the expertise of the UC system by providing research-based information, educational programs, and technical expertise to the public in areas such as agriculture, natural resources, nutrition, and youth development. UC ANR is part of a nationwide Cooperative Extension network, which began in the early 20th century to connect

research from land-grant universities with the everyday needs of people in communities across the United States. Today, we collaborate with farmers, ranchers, diverse communities, youth and adult educators, and policymakers to address local and statewide issues related to food systems, water, climate change, and sustainable agriculture through a statewide network of campus-based researchers, county-based Advisors, and community educators. Our mission is to cultivate thriving communities, sustainable agriculture, resilient ecosystems, and economic prosperity in California and globally through equitable generation and sharing of collaborative, science-based solutions. Over 250 UC ANR academics conduct research, extension, and education serving all 58 counties from 70+ locations, including county-based UCCE offices, 13 statewide programs and institutes, and 9 research and extension centers. By working and living among those we serve, UC ANR expands the University of California's reach to engage all people and communities in California, ensuring equal access to the resources UC has to offer. Our vision is that UC ANR will be valued in every California community for meaningful engagement and making a positive difference in people's lives.

### Learn more about

- [UC ANR](#) and [UC ANR Mission Statement](#).
- F3 Local Farm and Food Innovation initiative overview: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HORZJnhejiSn8a9CXPSUUiE5D5RN4lf/view?usp=sharing>
- UC ANR administers [Statewide Programs and Institutes](#) that focus research and extension on solving priority problems that engage ANR academics and UC faculty in integrated teams
- UC ANR [Strategic Initiatives](#) help unify, communicate, and advocate for the work we do.
- UC ANR UC ANR uses seven [Public Value statements](#) to communicate how our work makes a difference to the public.
- UC ANR academics are expected to share and exhibit UC ANR's commitment to UC ANR's [Affirmative Action policy](#)
- UC ANR academics are expected to share and exhibit UC ANR's commitment to [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#)
- The University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources is committed to attracting and retaining a diverse workforce and will honor your experiences, perspectives, and unique identity. We encourage applications from members of historically underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, women, individuals with disabilities, veterans, LGBTQ+ community members, and others who demonstrate the ability to help us create and maintain working and learning environments that are inclusive, equitable and welcoming.

**SALARY:** The beginning salary will be in the Assistant Project Scientist Rank from **Step 1 - \$74,100** to Associate Project Scientist **Step 4 - \$103,900** annually. Rank and Step placement in this series is based on experience. For information regarding the Project Scientist represented series salary scales, please refer to: <https://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/files/2024-25/july-2024-scales/t37-b.pdf>. This is a represented position.

The Project Scientist position is a limited term appointment. The merit cycle is every two years. The performance in the position will be evaluated annually. The position will be extended based on the continued need for the position, performance and availability of funding.

**Benefits:** The University of California offers comprehensive benefits including health insurance, retirement plans, two days per month paid vacation, one day per month paid sick leave, and holidays. For more information, refer to the UC Benefits website at: <https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/compensation-and-benefits/index.html>.

## How to Apply

If interested in this position, please visit: <https://recruit.ucanr.edu/> and choose “applicants” (refer to position #24-04)

**Closing Date:** To assure full consideration, application packets must be received by **December 16, 2024** (open until filled).

## Questions?

Recruitment Questions: Contact Tatiana Avoce – email: [tavoce@ucanr.edu](mailto:tavoce@ucanr.edu)

“Please note that successful applicants are responsible for ensuring work authorization without need of employer sponsorship for the duration of the appointment period.”

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*University of California Cooperative Extension*

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As a University employee, you will be required to comply with all applicable University policies and/or collective bargaining agreements, as may be amended from time to time. Federal, state, or local government directives may impose additional requirements.

The University of California is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, age, protected veteran status or other protected categories covered by the UC nondiscrimination policy.

As of January 1, 2014, ANR is a smoke- and tobacco-free environment in which smoking, the use of smokeless tobacco products, and the use of unregulated nicotine products (e-cigarettes), is strictly prohibited