

## **Viticulture Advisor for Monterey, San Luis Obispo, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties**

**Developed and proposed by:** This proposal was developed by Area Directors Emily Jane Freed (Region 4), Shannon Klisch (Region 5), the Viticulture Program Team, and with input from Strawberry and Caneberry advisor Mark Bolda. External stakeholders who support this position include Monterey County Administrative Officer (CAO) Sonia M. De L Rosa, Monterey County Supervisor Chris Lopez, Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner Juan Hidalgo, and San Luis Obispo County Agricultural Commissioner, Marty Settevendemie.

**Position title:** University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Viticulture Advisor

**Headquarter location and coverage area:** The Viticulture Advisor will be housed at the UCCE Monterey County office in Salinas, and serve San Luis Obispo, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties. The advisor will implement an innovative applied research program to address high priority production issues for the wine grape industry in Monterey County and have an extensive extension and outreach responsibilities in San Luis Obispo, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties.

**Position overview:** The Viticulture Advisor will develop an effective research and extension program to support the wine grape industry on the Central Coast. A minimum of a master's degree in Viticulture (preferred), crop science, soil science, pest management, or a closely related field is required at the time of employment. Desired qualifications include understanding of commercial wine grape production, applied research, and educational programming is expected. Experience building partnerships, creating networks, and collaborating with multidisciplinary teams is also essential. Demonstrated ability to effectively plan projects, manage teams, and implement applied research and outreach programs, including setting measurable goals and objectives. Spanish language skills are desired.

The position will administratively report to the Area Director for Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties, with input from the Area Director for San Luis Obispo County.

**Justification:** The Viticulture Program Team has provided support for this position, ranking this position as their number one priority for the state. Additionally, the Area Directors in Monterey, San Benito, Santa Cruz, and San Luis Obispo Counties have provided their full support for this Viticulture Advisor position.

The proximity of the Pacific Ocean greatly influences the climate of the region providing some of the most unique grape growing conditions in the state. The moderate to warm temperatures and persistent winds provide a constant challenge for growing and maturing wine grapes under a variety of climatic conditions. This four-county area has 76,855 acres of wine grapes (2025) with 755 vineyard and winery operations. The annual economic activity generated by the wine grape industry in this area was \$3.9 billion in 2022.

Currently, there is no Viticulture Advisor serving the whole central coast of California and the huge gap leaves a big challenge but also a great opportunity to serve the wine industry, especially at this critical moment when the wine industry is facing severe economic challenges. Local research and extension are vital to the long-term sustainability of grape growing operations in the region. Clientele for this program include vineyard owners and managers, consultants, pest control advisers, winery grower relations

personnel, and other professionals associated with the wine grape industry. The advisor will also lend expertise to local, state, regional, and federal regulatory agencies in matters affecting wine grape production on the central coast. There are multiple issues that need to be addressed to promote the long-term sustainability of wine grape production in the area. Areas of concern are high labor and fuel costs, endemic and emerging diseases and pests, water management efficiency, and the promotion of sustainable cultural practices.

The Viticulture Advisor will form teams of advisors, specialists, and other academics to develop research and outreach programs to help address many of these issues. This position advances UC ANR's public values by helping Central Coast vineyard managers improve water use efficiency and water supply security amid increasing scarcity, regulation, and economic pressure. Further, by supporting innovative and evidence-based practices to adapt to groundwater limits and climate variability, the advisor will contribute to increased stability, efficiency and profitability of agriculture. The Viticulture Advisor position also supports UC ANR's Strategic Vision 2040 by promoting science-based vineyard practices that sustain productivity while protecting water quality and human and environmental health, and by developing practical approaches for efficient water management under evolving regulations and changing climate.

**Extension:** Outreach methods will include standard extension methods such as newsletter and trade journal articles, extension publications, and organizing and participating in educational training and seminars. In addition, an appropriate mix of contemporary and emerging electronic tools such as online learning, web content, blogs, social media, impact and evaluation tools, along with videos can be utilized by the incumbent. Extensive collaboration internally with other UCCE academics and specialists, and externally with other researchers, government agencies, and private industry is expected. The Viticulture Advisor will serve as a resource in wine grape production to consultants, pest control advisors, agricultural commissioners, government scientists, and regulatory personnel.

**Research:** Research efforts will focus on wine grape production issues. Examples of needed research include: 1. Managing irrigation practices to improve water use efficiency along with the adaption and promotion of CropManage in vineyard systems; 2. Adapting agricultural technology to improve production efficiency in wine grapes; 3. Identifying and evaluating pest management practices to address endemic and evolving pest and disease issues; and 4. Evaluation and promotion of sustainable cultural practices to improve vineyard sustainability. Publication of research results and knowledge is expected to include various UC Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) series, technical sheets, and peer-reviewed journals. Participation and collaboration are expected with UC ANR Program Teams, Specialists, local Advisors, and others within the UC ANR network.

**UC ANR network:** This position will greatly complement the current skill sets and expertise of advisors and specialists on the central coast by bringing knowledge and experience of wine grape production to the UC team. Potential collaborators at the UCCE Monterey office will be the agriculture technology, entomology, plant pathology, water resources and irrigation, vegetable crop and weed science advisors, and the IPM advisor in the San Luis Obispo County office. The advisor will also likely be involved with collaborative projects with the viticulture and enology specialists housed at UC Davis and some of the recently added specialists at UC Santa Cruz and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS) facility in Salinas.

**Network external to UC ANR:** The UCCE team has developed strong collaborations and working relationships with farmers, vintner and grower Associations on the Central Coast, USDA agencies (e.g., ARS, NRCS and FSA), Resource Conservation Districts, County Agricultural Commissioners, California State University at Monterey Bay and San Luis Obispo, Hartnell Community College, local Farm Bureaus, and non-profit organizations. This position will fit seamlessly into the established groups and organizations and will receive support and cooperation from these organizations.

**Support:** As headquarters for this position, UCCE Monterey County will provide office space, administrative support, meeting facilities, phone and internet access, and use of a county vehicle for travel. There are also multiple lab spaces available to support this position in the Monterey County office along with laboratory and field equipment. Start-up support from UC ANR will assist with innovative technology purchases, as well as initial program development. San Luis Obispo, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties will provide office space, meeting facilities, and additional administrative support.

**Other support:** There are many opportunities for the Viticulture Advisor position to be successful through in-kind support from local growers and organizations. It will also be competitive in garnering funds through grower supported research organizations such as the American Vineyard Foundation, California Grape Rootstock Research Foundation, California Grape Rootstock Improvement Commission, and multiple state and federal funding mechanisms such as the California Specialty Crop Block Grants.