

2026 UC ANR Cooperative Extension Position Template (Specialist)

Developed and proposed by: UCB Agricultural & Resource Economics, Agroecology, Organic, and Regenerative Systems PT, Labor and Workforce Development PT, Hopland REC, and UCB ESPM. Representatives from all parties contributed to the initial position idea; Ellen Bruno (ARE), Ali Hill (LWD PT), Sonja Brodt (ORS PT), and Tim Bowles (ESPM) contributed to proposal writing. 19 external stakeholders support this position (details below).

Position title: *Economics of Sustainable Agriculture - UCCE Specialist*

Headquarter location and coverage area: The position will have statewide coverage because the need for their analyses spans all counties; they will be housed in UC Berkeley's Department of Agricultural & Resource Economics (ARE) where they will benefit from collaborations with a vibrant community of agricultural economists.

Position overview, briefly describe: A specialist with a background in agricultural and resource economics would conduct a research and extension program with statewide coverage and national and international relevance, addressing the three pillars of sustainability: Planet, People, and Profits. This individual is expected to have completed a PhD in economics, agricultural and resource economics, or a closely related field by the start date. They will be fully integrated into the ARE Department at UC Berkeley and expected to collaborate with other UCB and UC faculty, as well as UC CE Specialists and Advisors. Merit and promotion will be handled through the department.

Justification: This individual's research and extension program will assess the effectiveness of policies that support sustainable agriculture, long-term land stewardship, and socially equitable agricultural businesses (including the provision of safe, well-paying job opportunities). Their work will evaluate the incentives and disincentives to adopting sustainable agricultural practices and systems, and their economic, environmental, and social impacts. Together, this work will inform policy in California and nationwide that will improve the sustainability and vitality of agriculture, supporting rural communities and our natural resources alike.

a) **Needs:** First, policymakers need research on the effectiveness of past, ongoing, and potential future policies to support sustainable agriculture and long-term land stewardship. California's Climate Scoping Plan relies on the adoption of organic agriculture and selected practices to reduce GHG and store soil C to meet state climate goals, yet organic acreage has declined in recent years. A UC Organic Agriculture Institute (OAI) needs assessment showed that systemic economic reasons are as important as production-related reasons. An understanding of state incentives and private economic incentives is essential for achieving CA's climate goals.

Second, an external stakeholder survey demonstrated a strong need for this position: 19 stakeholders, including representatives from CA Climate Agriculture Network (CalCAN), CA Farm Bureau, Community Alliance with Family Farms (CAFF), Ag Innovations, and multiple Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), all support this position, would like to see it funded, and say this position is "very important" to their organizations. Their support emphasizes the need for research and extension on the economic incentives for, and the economic, environmental, and social impacts

of, adopting organic or regenerative agricultural systems. For example, Catherine Van Dyke with CAFF said “CAFF works with many state programs, and would really benefit from work that accurately demonstrates how sustainable agriculture contributes to economic impacts for individual farm businesses and regional economies.”

Finally, this position ranked as the top priority for both the AORS and the LWD PTs. The AORS PT notes a strong need for a UC economist to replace Karen Klonsky and Brittney Goodrich.

b) **Outcomes/Impact:** This position touches on many of the ANR condition changes. This person’s work will support *people* through improved living and working conditions; it will support the *planet* through improved land stewardship, increased ecological sustainability of agriculture and soil health, increased carbon sequestration; it will support *prosperity* through increased efficiency and profitability of agriculture and improved workforce development. In 20 years, success and impact will mean fulfilling external stakeholders’ needs related to the economic evaluation and adoption of sustainable agricultural practices in California’s cropping systems. It will lead to an agricultural landscape in California that is both more sustainable and more viable in the long-run.

c) **Reference** [UC ANR’s Strategic Vision 2040](#). One of UC ANR’s key goals with respect to strengthening food systems is to “Promote sustainable and innovative agricultural practices and inputs to enhance resiliency and productivity in farming and ranching operations while promoting human health and environmental sustainability.” Protecting our natural and working landscapes also involves “management strategies that promote sustainable land stewardship.” This position directly addresses these goals.

Extension: This Specialist will develop extension programming to help policymakers, producers, and other community members understand the potential implications of policies designed to support sustainable agriculture and to understand the economic, environmental, and social impacts of adopting sustainable agricultural practices. The Specialist will collaborate with UC ANR Advisors throughout the UCCE network to conduct research and disseminate research results. Extension work could take the form of writing policy briefs in collaboration with the UC ANR Policy Institute, Berkeley Food Institute, or Organic Agriculture Institute; giving presentations at workshops, conferences, and industry meetings; and/or developing decision-support tools. This Specialist’s extension work could involve collaborating on cost and return studies for organic and regenerative cropping systems and comparing them with those for conventional crops.

Research: This individual would evaluate the incentives and trade-offs associated with organic and regenerative production and study policies that support sustainable agriculture and long-term land stewardship, especially their implications for farm profitability and the California workforce. This position could involve studying the political economy of sustainable agriculture and land stewardship, the role of carbon offset markets, values-based public procurement programs, or the impacts of agricultural practices on ecosystems, rural economic development, and community health. This could include research on the interactions between ecosystems and economics that occur when management changes affect ecosystem services. Their work would benefit the people of the state by simultaneously addressing challenges related to environmental sustainability, rural labor, food

security, and the well-being of rural communities. Potential publication outlets include economics journals such as the *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* or the *Journal of the Association of Environmental & Resource Economists*, and ANR publications like *California Agriculture*.

UC ANR network: a) This position was ranked #1 for the AORS PT in part because a prior regenerative agriculture needs assessment identified economics as the top need for clientele. It called for quantifying benefits, assessing tradeoffs, and conducting long-run economic modeling. This Specialist's work will nicely complement the work of the new UCSC Extension Specialist in small farms economics by addressing similar topics of economic and environmental sustainability, but for operations of various sizes and with different labor needs.

b) Several relatively new positions that participate in the AORS PT, including the Regenerative Agriculture Advisor in Mariposa/Merced, Regenerative Agriculture Specialist at UCM, Agroecology Specialist and Small Farms Economics Specialist at UCSC, two Organic Specialists, the Organic Agriculture Institute, UC SAREP, and numerous other Advisors around the state who are working with organic and diversified small-scale farmers will collaborate closely with this position. Colleagues in these positions lack the needed economic expertise to address often-asked questions from clientele about the long-term economic viability of diversified, organic and regenerative farming systems, for which the current suite of UCD single-crop cost studies are inadequate. With collaboration from these colleagues this Specialist will be able to establish a systematic program of work on the short- and long-term benefits and trade-offs of more complex sustainable farming systems, to replace the more limited and piecemeal approach some of these colleagues have tried to take in the absence of such a Specialist. A more systematic research program will assist clientele in prioritizing the most appropriate pathways to sustainable and regenerative systems.

c) The specialist will provide expertise in economics relevant to sustainable agricultural practices and policies that are lacking in the UC ANR Network. This Specialist could support and continue Cost & Return Studies, particularly for organic and regeneratively produced crops. This Specialist would also bring understanding of the trade-offs and interplay among economic, environmental, and workforce well-being, which are pivotal to long-run business success.

Network external to UC ANR: The Specialist will interact with government agencies (e.g., USDA, CDFA), non-profits, community organizations, and commodity groups (e.g., RCDs, CA Certified Organic Farmers, Almond Board of CA), and institutions of higher education.

Support: The UCB ARE Department will provide office space and administrative support. The Specialist will benefit from being part of the Giannini Foundation of Agricultural Economics and from other UCB resources, such as the Savio computing cluster, Geospatial Innovation Facility, Berkeley Food Institute, Center for Data Science and the Environment, and D-Lab.

Other support: The Specialist will be competitive in securing federal and state funding (e.g., NSF, USDA, EPA, CDFA), support from agricultural foundations (e.g., Giannini Foundation, Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, Organic Farming Research Foundation), and private companies (e.g., PepsiCo, Clif Bar). The Specialist will also compete for research funds available from UC ANR and UCB.