

## Title

### Community Nutrition, Health, and Food Systems CE Area Advisor

#### Siskiyou, Modoc, Lassen Counties

**Description** The Community Nutrition, Health and Food Systems Advisor will implement an innovative extension education and applied problem-solving research program for Siskiyou, Modoc, and Lassen Counties.

The advisor will develop a program based on priority community needs within the broad areas of healthy lifestyles, nutrition, food security, and locally grown food production, preservation, and availability. Of specific interest and importance are the programmatic areas of strengthening the connections between local farmers and consumers by expanding access to affordable nutritious food; improving community health by increasing consumer awareness and understanding about healthy food choices, local food production, and food preservation opportunities; improving water and food security by supporting local production and delivery systems; and helping local food producers overcome regionally significant obstacles such as climate variability and uncertainty.

The advisor will work with and provide a point of connection for county, state, community, NGOs, schools and other organizations to work together toward enhanced community health and resilience. The advisor's applied research program will inform delivery of food, nutrition, and health strategies and assist policy efforts across the area counties with potential throughout California. There is a growing Master Food Preserver program in the area as well as budding farmer's market, farm to school programs, and a local food hub in Modoc County and similar community gardens, direct market producers and community food hubs in neighboring counties that lack locally relevant information and guidance to develop and meet the needs of local communities.

The Intermountain counties have three distinct challenges related to food security: 1) very rural widely dispersed populations that are often economically disadvantaged with very limited and distantly located food sources; 2) a very short growing season that limits production of locally supplied food such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, etc. that are common in other parts of the state; 3) a very small and rural population that does not have access to state nutrition programs such as Cal Fresh, which in turn requires a do-it-yourself approach for local and county-based groups. Combined, these circumstances create significant challenges to existing food security and community health, but for UC ANR they represent an extremely high potential for impactful program delivery in the focal counties. This position will work to support the viability, sustainability, and equity of regional food systems and the associated food security and community health by developing locally relevant and scientifically based programs addressing these challenges.

**Justification** Northeast California is extremely rural with few population designated places and often long stretches of road in between. As the cost of living has increased across California, people have moved to these far corners of the state for access to more affordable housing, wide open spaces, and sometimes a chance at a new life. Along with the wide-open spaces comes vast food deserts (there are five grocery stores in Modoc County), a short growing season (90-120 days), and high food insecurity rates. In 2019, the percentage of the population that was food insecure was 15.6%, 16.2% and 12.3%, in Modoc, Siskiyou, and Lassen Counties respectively, all over the state average of 10.2%. Siskiyou County was second highest and Modoc tenth in the state for food insecurity. There are many opportunities to work with government and non-governmental organizations in this region to conduct a robust research and extension program targeting food insecurity, local food systems, and healthy living. Modoc, Siskiyou and Lassen rank in the top 20 for percent of the population that lives in poverty. (19.1%, 17.1%, 15.8% compared to 12.8% in California overall.)

**Extension and Research** Opportunities abound for research and extension partnerships that link consumers and professionals across multi-sectors with relevant science-based information and promote effective problem solving. The advisor will also join a team of highly motivated UCCE colleagues who are passionate about their work and are dedicated to making a difference within the communities and throughout California. The potential for collaborative projects within the UC ANR system is nearly limitless. For example, building on farm to school programming and

outreach and working with the statewide wide program coordinators for 4-H, Master Food Preserver, and Master Gardener.

**ANR Network** The advisor will be part of the network of UC ANR Nutrition and Health Advisors that provide critical capacity, coordination, and science-based momentum for an accelerated approach to California's health problems. As such, the advisor's work will also connect with other UC ANR advisors, UC Campus-based specialists and faculty, the UC ANR Nutrition Policy Institute and with relevant UC ANR volunteer networks (e.g., UC Master Gardener, UC Master Naturalist, and UC 4-H). Specifically, we have initiated a new Master Food Preserver program based in Modoc and extending throughout the area counties that will provide an excellent avenue for program development and delivery. UC ANR also implements two large state and federal nutrition programs (CalFresh Healthy Living, and EFNEP). These programs offer rich opportunities for programmatic input on top the dedicated local county advisor team that works closely with agriculture and livestock producers and direct marketing strategies. The Advisor will be part of a state-wide Advisory committee providing input on and seeking synergies around these and other Statewide programs.

**Network External to ANR** Modoc Harvest, County Public Health departments, TEACH (Training, employment and community help, INC), food banks, local food producers, Lassen Community College and community groups. There are also opportunities to work with USDA rural development along with local, state, and federal partners.

**Support** There is strong county and community support for this position including sufficient office and storage space, clerical support, a 4WD pickup and an appropriate budget for communication, supplies and travel. Inter-county support is available from both the Siskiyou and Lassen County offices.

**Other Support** There are many state and federal grants available for research and extension in this field. There is also a local NGO in Modoc County, Modoc Harvest, as well as organized food systems groups in Siskiyou and Lassen counties that would support this position. The federal and local first five programs have also expressed interest in supporting outreach and research to families with children under the age of six.

**Location** The CE office in Modoc is the proposed headquarters for the position but it will serve the greater intermountain region especially Siskiyou and Lassen Counties.

**Developed and Proposed by:** Laura Snell, David Lile, and Rob Wilson. Supported by the HFC and Sustainable Food Systems program teams as well as the Master Food Preserver statewide program. The Modoc Board of Supervisors is also supportive of putting this position forward.