

COUNTY OF SONOMA
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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VALERIE BROWN
FIRST DISTRICT SUPERVISOR

vbrown@sonoma-county.org

May 4, 2012

David Lewis, Director
University of California Cooperative Extension, Marin
1682 Novato Boulevard, Ste. 150-B
Novato, CA 94947

Re: UCCE North Bay Food Systems Advisor (NBFS) position

Dear David,

I am writing to express my support for the UCCE North Bay Food Systems Advisor (NBFS) position. This important new position would contribute to growing a healthy agricultural infrastructure in the North Bay counties of Marin, Napa, Sonoma, and Mendocino. The assignment area has a \$1.3 billion annual agricultural production value. The largest farming area is Sonoma, which along with the other three counties, is characterized by 5,700 family farms that raise livestock and/or dairy, or grow tree and row crops. These operations are underpinned with off-farm incomes and include small-scale, peri-urban farms close to the Bay Area.

There are several reasons this position would be helpful:

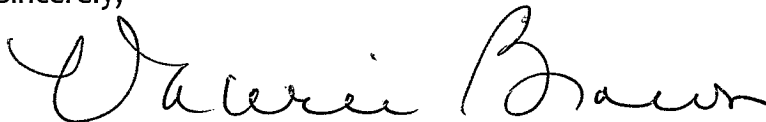
- The advisor would deliver marketing, business, and enterprise transition management (succession/regulatory) extension programs for producers, processors, and related groups.
- The advisor would provide agricultural value chain and regional economic data and analysis to county governments, business councils and leaders, and other organizations to improve and coordinate policies and programs that facilitate production of value-added agricultural products and therein the development of sustainable food systems.

- The advisor would provide information and analysis on the levels and trends in consumer demand for agricultural products to assist retailers and agricultural producers in their decision-making about product market development, processing, and distribution.

In 2011 I, along with Superior Carre Brown from Mendocino County, initiated a North Coast Regional Food Systems Network to encourage the rebuilding of the regional food system. This includes increasing production of food within the region, identifying existing infrastructure and gaps in food infrastructure, and providing greater market access to food producers. There are currently 85 individuals working on this effort from Sonoma, Marin, Lake, Napa and Mendocino counties. Sectors of the community represented include producers (farmers and ranchers), a supervisor from each county, farm bureau leaders, retail food outlets, local government departments, the financial sector, farmers markets, retail food outlets, and underserved communities. USDA Rural Development is currently funding this effort but the funding for our part-time coordinator ends July 2012.

I encourage you to fund the UCCE NBFS position, as they could continue and augment the work of the North Coast Regional Food Systems Network.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Valerie Brown". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Valerie Brown, First District Supervisor
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors