

Urban Agriculture /Food Systems Advisor/ County Director—Alameda and Contra Costa Counties

DESCRIPTION: The CE Advisor/County Director in Urban Agriculture will provide leadership to the overall operations of Cooperative Extension in both counties. The successful candidate will work to lead and expand agriculture as an integral part of urban growth and population change. S/he will address critical urban issues of sprawl, vacant city lots, and public desire for safe local food, food insecurity and community livability. This position requires a background in social sciences, with applied research expertise in food and agriculture with particular emphasis in urban food systems and policies that influence equitable access to safe and nutritious food. The ability to build partnership, work with multidisciplinary teams to address the social, economic, and environmental and economic challenges of urban agriculture and food systems is important. A Master's Degree in sociology, geography, urban/regional planning, urban ecology, community nutrition, public health or other related fields are required. Fieldwork experience is required in urban development, community-based research and expertise working in interdisciplinary settings.

Urban agriculture incorporates many aspects of the food system: growing, processing, and distributing food and other products through sustainable food cultivation and animal husbandry in and around the cities. Community economic development, farmers' markets, direct marketing, community-supported agriculture, food wholesaling are important aspects of the urban economy and require expertise. Urban farming can provide access to fresh and affordable food for those with limited access. Marketing opportunities in farm to school, farm to institutions, farm to fork may open up new markets for regional producers. Agriculture within the context of urbanization brings challenges to the urban communities who have to deal with regulations, policies, political pressure and agronomic challenges. The wealth of knowledge associated with agriculture can be put to valuable use in helping meet the challenge of urbanization. The successful candidate has the potential to lead urban agriculture and regional agriculture systems research and extension using the unique resources available in the Division.

JUSTIFICATION: This position is urgently needed to fill the vacancy left by the retirement of Alameda and Contra Costa County Directors. The County Director role is of vital importance to these two counties to provide leadership to the overall operations of Cooperative Extension in both counties, maintain effective communication within UC ANR and county government, secure adequate county Extension budgets and maintain communication and teamwork with the staff. In response to increasing interest in food production, climate changes, high rates of food-related health conditions, and food insecurity has led to an interest in urban agriculture and sustainable food environments. The CD/ academic advisor will bring new knowledge and solutions to complex urban food systems and support the ANR strategic initiatives, Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) and Healthy Families and Communities (HFC). There is an opportunity to improve and expand the production, processing and distribution of food in urban settings, expand existing connections with urban stakeholders and increase funding streams from foundations, grants, USDA, EPA, CDC, NIH, and HHS. In February 2012 more than 40 UCCE specialist and advisors rated urban agriculture as a priority. This position will place UCCE on the cutting edge of the scientific research to lead the urban agriculture and food system movement in California.

EXTENSION: Urban agriculture has significant economic, environmental and health impact. The future of agricultural land is increasingly becoming a regional priority, with the higher interest for local food production, urban food systems, and community health and welfare. The advisor will collaborate with urban, regional agencies, government officials, city planners, public health agencies, community

groups, and non-governmental organizations working in food justice to facilitate local food production and overcome barriers. S/he will also work to create local food farming businesses and value-added food ventures. Extension work will focus on small scale and local food production systems, food safety and access, public policy issues, land use planning and management, economic development, open space conservation, utilization of urban agroecosystems, and food insecurity. The advisor will share expertise and offer educational training and materials, social media, and other innovative delivery methods to diverse group of urban food producers and providers, community groups, public agencies, and non-governmental organizations with an interest and role in urban food production in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.

RESEARCH: Research will focus in two areas: (1) Urban Agriculture and Planning: Some potential research questions may address plant adaptability and production, urban soil contamination and remediation, revitalization of urban land for agriculture as part of city planning, food hubs, marketing, entrepreneurial farming and gardens, food safety, waste management. 2) Food Justice and Community Food Security: Research may focus on the social implications of regional food systems from production to consumption and impact on diet-related chronic diseases and obesity. For example, a focus may be on alternative food system reforms that will improve food access to economically challenged communities. It is anticipated the advisor may publish in California Agriculture, Journal of Urban Health, Environmental Planning and Agriculture and Human Values, American Journal of Public Health, Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior.

ANR CONTINUUM: Growing numbers of advisors, specialists, and statewide program academicians are already working in this area, as the interest for urban agriculture and food systems becomes a regional priority. The Community and Food Security Workgroup include a very diverse group of academicians including small farm advisors, economists, community development advisors, sociologists, nutrition advisors and specialists. The advisor will be able to draw expertise from the UC Berkeley College of Natural Resources, Environmental Science and Policy Management, Agriculture and Resource Economics, Center for Health and Weight and other UC Berkeley Departments, which include City/Urban Planning, Public Health and the Geography Department Urban Food Project. At the UC Davis Campus, the advisor will work with the Community Development and Design Department, Nutrition Department, and Agriculture and Resource Economics Department. Some academicians already working in this field includes: Christy Getz (UCB Environmental Science and Policy Management), Miguel Altieri, Claire Kremen, Nancy Peluso, and Alastair Iles (UCB Environmental Science and Policy Management). Shermain Hardesty (Small Farm Program), Ryan Galt and David Campbell (UCD Human and Community Development). This advisor will also be able to work with UC ANR's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SAREP) and Agricultural Sustainability Institute (ASIS) to incorporate urban agricultural as an integral part of urban communities, building regional markets, urban farming, and urban waste and reduction. S/he may also collaborate with Tom Tomich, and Gail Feenstra (SAREP), Daniel Summers, Julian Alston, Stephen Vosti (ASI). Several UCCE Nutrition Advisors and specialists are conducting Farm to School, Food Systems, and Agritourism research. This advisor may also support the work of advisors Lucrecia Farfan-Ramirez (Alameda County) Marisa Neelon (Contra Costa County), Susan Algert (San Francisco/Santa Clara/San Mateo Counties), Ellie Rilla (Marin County). Rachel Surls (Los Angeles) among others. S/he may collaborate with small farm advisors, Aziz Baameur, Richard Molinar, Ramiro Lobo, and Manuel Jimenez.

Non- NR UCB resources include the Berkeley Institute of the Environment, Center for Population Health and Sustainability, Institute of Urban and Regional Development, Center for Community Innovation.

SUPPORT: The advisor will be centrally located in a geographic area of Alameda/Costa Cluster. General support for program operation will be drawn from Alameda and Contra Costa county contributions and direct support from the UC ANR.

OTHER SUPPORT: Additional support may be obtained from entities such as the Kellogg Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, California Endowment, Bechtel, San Francisco Foundation, East Bay Community Foundation, Marcus Foster Foundation, Columbia Foundation, Heller Foundation, and USDA's Community Food Projects Competitive Grants, Farmer Market Promotion Program and AFRI Food Security Grants all have initiatives that support food system project in urban areas.

LOCATION: This position will be based in a central location of Alameda/Contra Costa, facilitating linkages with faculty at UC Berkeley and UC Davis and potential new specialist hires in food systems being proposed during this cycle. It will serve Alameda/Contra Costa and will be a resource to the rest of the Bay Area counties. The Bay Area is the hub in Northern California driving the urban agriculture and food system movement in urban cities. UC is poised to create a cluster of excellence related to this work.

Prepared by LFR May 2012.
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