

Viticulture Farm Advisor – Tulare, Kings and Kern Counties

Position Description:

This position will cover viticulture with an emphasis on water/soil management, in the tri-county area that includes Tulare, Kings and Kern Counties. The viticulture component will support the diverse grape industries in these three counties which includes significant acreages of table, raisin and wine grape production. The candidate must have a graduate degree in viticulture, horticulture, soils or water management, or a closely related field, with demonstrated expertise in water/soil management. The Advisor will be based in either Tulare or Kern county depending upon support.

****Justification:**

This position directly addresses the *Healthy Food Systems* and *Healthy Environments* priorities outlined in the ANR Strategic Vision. This position will focus on improving vineyard production practices in the southern San Joaquin Valley, with a special emphasis on the regionally critical topics of water use efficiency, water quality, and sustainable soil management practices. With coverage of multiple counties, this position will offer vineyard industry support to the three counties which together have over 139,000 acres of table, raisin and wine grapes, with a farm gate value of over \$1.2 billion (2010). No viticulture Advisors currently serve either Kern or Tulare Counties, which rank as the number 1 and 2 counties for table grape production in the state.

Extension:

Key extension activities will include articles in a variety of media, presentations at extension and industry meetings, and personal consultations with individual clientele. The clientele served will include commercial grape growers (table, raisin, and wine grapes) in Tulare, Kings and Kern Counties. Additional educational outreach of irrigation management information will be provided using similar methods, in cooperation with the other CE, AES and campus faculty working in southern San Joaquin Valley grape production.

Research:

Opportunities for applied research are very broad given the diverse grape production systems that are found in the three counties that will be served by this advisor:

Table grapes

Cultural practices for new and existing cultivars, including trellis design, canopy and fruit management, cultivar and rootstock evaluation, crop load measurements and post harvest evaluations.

Wine grapes

Cultural practices for wine grape cultivars that improve wine quality and grower economic returns; trellis design, canopy and fruit management; increased applications of mechanization.

Raisin grapes

Development of dried-on-the-vine and continuous tray raisin production systems including trellis designs, canopy and fruit management, cultivar and rootstock evaluation, and increased applications of mechanization.

Water/soil management

Irrigation strategies that promote production and quality while reducing overall water usage; adaptation of tools/methods to improve irrigation management decisions; practices to minimize water quality impacts, such as improved fertilizer management; management of salinity for maintaining long-term productivity; soil management strategies.

ANR continuum:

This position fills two critical needs in the current CE and AES coverage in the state, namely support for the economically important grape industry in Tulare, Kings and Kern Counties, and coverage of the increasingly important water and soil management issues facing all grape growers in the southern San Joaquin Valley. The position has opportunities to collaborate with the existing Viticulture Advisors in Fresno County and a specialist located at the Kearney Ag Center, Parlier CA and UC campus academics. The position will be also able to collaborate closely with USDA and CSU staff and researchers.

Support:

The position will be housed in either the Kern or Tulare County UCCE offices; the location will depend upon the support available to the Advisor from the office. These counties offer above-average support including modern well-equipped offices, meeting facilities, laboratory facilities, storage areas, workshop facilities, an assigned vehicle, and secretarial and agricultural technician support. The level of support is expected to exceed the average Farm Advisor support, and will serve to increase the productivity and relevance of the position.

Other support:

Program support funding is available from the grape industry that includes grants from the California Table Grape Commission, American Vineyard Foundation, California Raisin Marketing Board and various state and federal sources such as the California Department of Food and Agriculture Specialty Crops grants and California Department of Water Resources grants.

Location:

The tri-county area to be served by this advisor is a very diverse grape growing region, and has the majority of California's table grapes. The programmatic support for vineyard water/soil management is critical in all three counties. The Advisor and will also be able to assist other Advisors in the San Joaquin Valley on water/soil issues, and thus can achieve broad regional benefits to other crop systems as well.