

Area UCCE Dairy Advisor - Tulare and Kern Counties

Position Description:

Recommend one FTE dairy farm advisor position focused on research and educational needs to ensure the sustainability of dairies and dairy allied industries in Tulare and Kern Counties. Program emphasis will include environmental stewardship, quality assurance, animal welfare, food safety and efficiency of dairy production systems. The program will address management in a holistic and integrated approach that will consider economic viability and preservation of natural resources (air, water quality, energy). An advanced degree (minimum of MS) related to dairy science is required. A BS in dairy/animal science with an MS in an appropriate and applicable discipline is preferred. Supporting units are Tulare (headquarters) and Kern County.

Justification: Historically, Tulare and neighboring Kings have each had a FTE dairy advisor. Kern has not had a FTE dairy advisor since 1980. Recently, the Tulare position became vacant. The Kings position is held by an advisor nearing retirement. UCCE must maintain a level of presence in this highly productive dairy region. Tulare and Kern counties are the number 1 and 5 counties for milk production in California. Kings County is number 3. Together, Tulare and Kern account for nearly 40% of the milk and cows, and 25% of the dairies in the state. If Kings County is included, the tri-county area is responsible for half of all the milk produced in California, which represents more than 10% of total US milk production. Kings County may be considered as a future assignment for this position. Characteristics of the dairies and their unique issues drive UCCE research and education programs, by identifying and addressing industry and local specific problems. Dairies in this region are large and getting larger - Kern County herds average more than 3000 cows per herd, the largest in the state. This trend accelerated in the past year and will continue. Profitability is an immediate critical issue as dairies struggle to survive in the current poor economy. Nitrate in groundwater linked to dairy manure and air quality impacts linked to dairy feeds are serious environmental issues that have led to development of Waste Discharge Requirements and air emissions permitting by state regulatory agencies in recent years. Animal and public health are critical issues. After discovery of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy in a cow from Tulare County (April 2012), other emerging foreign animal diseases (foot and mouth disease for example) can have devastating consequences and implications for food safety and animal welfare in this highly concentrated dairy region. Food Safety, ensuring that a wholesome product is offered to consumers is a critical issue for the industry and the consuming public. Concerns include bulk milk tank quality and reduction of antibiotic use and residue. The opportunity to contribute to the resolution of these issues is great, and the addition of a dairy advisor in this key production area must be integrated into the existing ANR infrastructure for extension efforts to be successful. It would be a lost opportunity for ANR to not have a programmatic presence in the heart of California's dairy production.

Extension: The candidate will work with UCCE advisors, UC VMTRC staff and others in the development and delivery of educational programs for producers, allied industry, agencies and the public. This is to include providing written materials, demonstrations,

workshops and seminars regarding dairy issues. The candidate will also collaborate with California Dairy Quality Assurance Program staff to deliver CDQA programs locally. Conventional extension methods including newsletters, articles in dairy trade magazines, presentations at producer meetings and individual on-farm instruction have historically been utilized for outreach. More recently, the prospects for broadening communication with clientele groups utilizing web based and social media tools have greatly increased, and these opportunities should be more fully developed.

Research: The candidate will conduct applied research in collaboration with specialists, advisors, dairy industry, allied industry and agencies. The applied research program will focus on development of the knowledge base needed to integrate environmental regulation with economically viable management alternatives that will minimize undesirable impacts of confined dairy production on land, air, water, and food resources. Publication outlets will include UCCE newsletters, trade magazines, social media, California Agriculture, as well as scientific outlets such as Journal of Dairy Science, Journal of Animal Science, and Journal of Environmental Quality.

ANR Continuum: There are promising opportunities for the UCCE dairy farm advisor to network with UCCE specialists, veterinarians and other academics at the UC Vet Med Teaching and Research Center in Tulare. The California Food Animal Health System Lab and USDA (both also housed at the UC VMTRC) are also valuable resources. Campus based UCCE specialists and UC departmental faculty with research interests in dairy (especially the nitrates in groundwater projects) will be eager to collaborate with the UCCE dairy advisor. Also of great value is the ability for the UCCE dairy advisor to bridge the gap between academia and on the ground application through knowledge, experience and connections gained from living and working in the local dairy communities. There is an effective collaborative group of Specialist, Advisors, and Department Faculty to support this advisor in the critical program areas.

Support: The candidate will be housed in the Tulare County UCCE office which has sufficient funding for dedicated clerical, information technology, , and ag technician support. A, vehicle, lab space, and general office support are also available. Service to Kern County may require a cross-county agreement; however the Kern County UCCE director is supportive of this position.

Other support: The critical issues that this position will be addressing will be in the ANR Initiative priorities and will be highly competitive for ANR funding. Other agency funding is anticipated for work in nitrate loading and air quality.

Location: Tulare County is the number one dairy county in California, and the proximity to Kern County (number 5 Dairy County) makes it reasonably feasible to serve that industry group also. The dairy infrastructure is in place to make the position successful. As of June 1, 2012, there will be only one dairy advisor for the entire south San Joaquin Valley, the largest milk shed in the nation with some of the most critical issues in the nation, to be addressed by ANR.

