

**Position Title:** Horticulture and Specialty Crops Advisor, Humboldt and Del Norte Counties

**Position: (1)** The advisor is responsible for the assessment, development, implementation, and evaluation of educational and research programs for all commercial horticultural crops in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties (vegetables, fruits, and ornamentals). The advisor will develop applied research projects that meet the needs of producers and will produce significant impacts to North Coast's food systems, sustainability, innovation, and competitiveness.

**(2)** A graduate degree in plant science, horticulture, agronomy, crop science or related field is required. Familiarity with multiple cropping systems, organic farming practices, integrated pest management, plant pathology, and direct market farming is highly desirable. Excellent written and verbal communication skills are necessary along with a sound working knowledge of field research, statistical design, and analysis. Ability to work with clientele across a wide range of socio-economic classes and ethnicities is essential.

**(3)** This position will oversee the Master Gardener Program in Humboldt and Del Norte and may affiliate with the Vegetable Crops Program Team (PT) and Environmental Horticulture PT, State Master Gardener Program, and the Small Farm Workgroup, among others. This position is critical and widely supported by these PTs and WGs because there is extremely limited agricultural expertise in the North Coast, with no personnel from Humboldt State University or community colleges in the area, no pest control advisors, no crop consultants, or CE farm advisors within a 3-hour (to Humboldt) to a 5-hour (to Del Norte) drive of this region.

**Justification:** Humboldt and Del Norte Counties have numerous vegetable, fruit, and ornamental growers, including 150 certified organic producers (22% of the regional agricultural production). These farmers grow a variety of crops sold at farmers' markets, roadside stands, community-supported agricultural programs, grocers, and restaurants. These entrepreneurs are the backbone of local food production, which supports agricultural businesses, provides rural family incomes, sustains economic diversity, and enhances regional quality of life. The North Coast hosts a nationally important bulb and lily industry. Del Norte County produces 95% of the nation's Easter lily bulbs. The region's young producers, along with socially disadvantaged and underserved Hispanic, Native American, and Hmong agricultural entrepreneurs, seek extension support.

By filling this position, ANR will support several critical issues with high likelihood for local and regional impact. This position will provide research and education support to 1) diversified farming systems, 2) food security, and 3) farm stability. The ANR Strategic Vision (2025) outlines ANR's need to support *Enhancing Competitive, Sustainable Food Systems*, where the economic viability of agriculture depends on our ability to adapt to climate change, population growth, water and land availability, technological change, and fluctuating markets. Furthermore, tackling food security and farm stability in low income, geographically remote areas is essential and supports the ANR condition changes of *community health and wellness* along with *emerging food economies and markets* and *food security*. The advisor will work with local farmers, the North Coast Growers' Association, the Community Alliance of Family Farmers, the Humboldt Food Policy Council, and others to assist producers and consumers in supporting local and regional food systems and meet the growing demand for access to local food.

**Extension:** The focus of this position will be to provide research-based educational programs to farmers, consumers, decision-makers, and other stakeholders involved in agriculture and food

systems in support of environmentally sustainable and economically sound communities. The advisor will assist producers with regional farming challenges such as developing diversified farming programs; water quality compliance; soil health; soil carbon; organic pest management; enterprise and market analysis; succession planning; beginning farmer programs; direct marketing; labor laws; farmland preservation; and community food security. The advisor will supervise the Master Gardener programs and utilize these volunteers to assist in the dissemination of information to the public. There is strong interest by numerous local Native American tribes around food security, crop production, community gardens, and youth development extension programming. Leadership opportunities serving Native American communities in California, and nationally, continue to expand and highlight the potential for growth of this program at a state level.

**Research:** There are numerous opportunities for collaborative research that addresses the North Coast's unique coastal climates and highly productive soils, which are well suited for small scale producers, and niche marketing. There are research needs into emerging specialty crops (e.g. cold hardy citrus, quinoa, grape varieties, etc.), organic production systems, new varieties for existing crops, and pest management issues. The region's large-scale floriculture and lily bulb producers seek localized research to help manage nematode and fungal disease challenges. Local tribal communities have also identified traditional foods and food sovereignty as research priorities.

**ANR Network:** The advisor will collaborate with ANR specialists and farm advisors, campus-based colleagues (e.g. Loren Oki, Don Merhaut, Becky Westerdahl, Jennifer Sowerwine, Christy Getz, Keith Taylor, Jeff Mitchell, Richard Evans, Steve Fennimore, and new hires in vegetable crops and plant pathology). The position could also complement a network of future hires and collaboratively address a range of horticulture, IPM, specialty crop, and small farm issues, especially with a focus in coastal agriculture systems where ANR has limited expertise.

**Network External to ANR:** The advisor will work closely with a variety of stakeholders and partnerships exist with the North Coast Growers Association; Humboldt and Del Norte Farm Bureaus; the Yurok, Hoopa and Karuk tribes; NRCS, Small Business Development Corporation, and the Hoopa Resource Conservation District.

**Support:** Support for this position, including office space, travel, communication (telephone, internet), clerical support, and office supplies are provided in existing budgets from both counties.

**Other support:** Grants funds from CA Department of Food and Agriculture Specialty Crops program, USDA Rural Development, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, Organic Research Foundation, WSARE, and private foundations can lend additional financial support.

**Location:** The advisor will be housed in the UCCE Humboldt office in Eureka, CA. The Humboldt and Del Norte CE unit has historically had horticultural experience and there is a significant gap created by the 2017 retirement of the Plant Sciences advisor. The new advisor would complement the livestock expertise of Jeff Stackhouse and forestry experience of Yana Valachovic along with the youth and nutrition expertise of Dorina Espinoza. Ukiah is the closest CE office with specialty crop expertise and the travel distance is too far for program delivery from that office.

**Developed and proposed by:** Yana Valachovic, UCCE Humboldt-Del Norte County Director, North Coast Growers Association, Community Alliance with Family Farmers, and Humboldt and Del Norte Farm Bureaus.