

## **Position Title: Area Viticulture Advisor for San Joaquin County**

**Position Description:** The advisor would be primarily responsible for developing a research and extension education program to address high priority production issues in wine and table grapes in San Joaquin County, including pest, disease and water management. The position also includes problem solving and program delivery responsibilities for cane berries and blue berries, but major program emphases would be on wine grape production. San Joaquin County is the statewide and national leader in wine grape production acreage. Sub-regional planning discussions have identified possible near-term retirements and realignments that could eventuate in this position becoming a regional viticulture advisor in the Northern San Joaquin Valley. A minimum of a Master's degree in viticulture, crop science, soil science, pest management, or a closely related field is required.

**Justification:** The proposed viticulture advisor would represent the largest wine grape producing area in California and the nation. San Joaquin County is home to 105,000 acres of wine grapes (20% of California's production), 1,000 acres of table grapes, and 3,000 acres of blueberries and caneberries. These commodities are produced on over 750 diversified, mostly family-owned farms, supporting 85 local wineries and staff. The five largest wineries in California have vineyards in San Joaquin County. The advisor would also serve an allied pest management industry of more than 100 pest control advisors, a large and important secondary clientele group. Wine grape acreage continues to expand via replacement of older vineyards and conversion of annual crops and rangeland to vineyards. Entry-level growers require an intensive educational effort on basic viticulture and pest management practices while experienced growers need information on new technologies to remain competitive. All producers face mounting pressures from increased regulatory and environmental compliance requirements as well as cost-competitiveness in an increasingly global marketplace.

The advisor in this position will address the ANR strategic initiatives Sustainable Food Systems; Water Quality, Quantity, and Security; and Endemic and Invasive Pests and Diseases. High priority issues include increasing vineyard production efficiency while reducing the environmental footprints of fertilization, irrigation and pest management practices. The likelihood of producing significant impacts is high as this position is ranked as critical by the wine grape industry. The responsibilities described above are currently covered by one San Joaquin County advisor (Paul Verdegaal retiring June 2017). Pomology and viticulture advisors and county directors in the Northern San Joaquin Valley, together with the pomology & viticulture program team leaders, have developed a long term plan for coverage. This proposed position is a vital component of that plan.

**Extension:** The advisor will provide research-based information produced in local field trials and by UC personnel in other counties and UC campuses. This information will be disseminated through in-class workshops, field meetings, newsletters, commodity and popular press media outlets, telephone calls, farm visits, and various on-line and social media tools. San Joaquin County has a mixture of small acreage, part-time and medium acreage full-time growers. Extension efforts will need to cover basic information for new, small acreage growers as well as cutting edge information for more experienced, large acreage and sophisticated growers. Extension methods will need to be diverse and sensitive to the mixed learning styles and information resourcing preferences of a multi-generational audience. Annual extension opportunities will include *Lodi Grape Day*, *Lodi Farm Safety Day*, and the annual meetings of both the Lodi Winegrape Commission and the Lodi District Grape Growers Association. This

Northern San Joaquin Valley viticulture position would nicely compliment the recent hiring of viticulture advisors in the southern San Joaquin Valley and the wine grape viticulture specialist in the Department of Viticulture and Enology at UC Davis.

**Research:** There are many critical research needs in the wine grape industry, including: variety and rootstock evaluations, nutrient management, and cultural practices for producing high quality wine grapes with less environmental impact, precision agriculture, and increased mechanization reducing the need for hand labor (harvest, pruning, and leafing). Invasive species regularly threaten the grape industry, and the development of selective and integrated new approaches for managing endemic and invasive pests will be critically important. Long term wine grape variety and rootstock trials are already in place that would allow the advisor to have immediate projects and support. Water conservation in vineyards will be an increasingly important topic in drought starved California. Results of research projects will be published in commodity board reports, county newsletters and websites, trade journals, ANR publications, *California Agriculture*, and other scientific journals such as *American Journal of Enology and Viticulture*, *HortScience* and *HortTechnology*.

**ANR Network:** This position will play a key role in ANR leadership for the wine grape industry, working closely with UC specialists and faculty through the viticulture program team and initiative groups. The proximity of San Joaquin County to the UC Davis, UC Merced, and UC Berkeley campuses has provided numerous past opportunities for collaborative research and extension activities with ANR and AES scientists at these locations. CE Specialists Kaan Kurtural and Matthew Fidelibus are familiar with San Joaquin County. An Area-wide IPM advisor, Jhalendra Rijal, is available to collaborate on pest management research.

**Network and Industry Support:** It is expected that the San Joaquin County advisor will collaborate with and be a resource to other advisors with viticulture assignments. The advisor will serve as a key liaison to the Lodi District Grape Growers Association and the Lodi Winegrape Commission, both of which can be expected to support the advisor's research and extension activities. Research grant sources include the American Vineyard Foundation, USDA-NIFA, California Department of Food and Agriculture, California Department of Pesticide Regulation, the California Fertilizer Research & Extension Program (FREP), and other federal and local government granting agencies. Grant funds are also available through the agricultural chemical industry.

**Location and Support:** This position will be housed in San Joaquin County. The Robert Cabral Agriculture Center has excellent facilities, private office space, laboratory facilities, a vehicle with generous travel support, clerical support, field technician support, telephone and internet access, and a large equipment storage warehouse. The Center also has state-of-the-art meeting facilities that can accommodate small and large groups. The San Joaquin County office enjoys strong support from the County Board of Supervisors and the office is well funded.

**Developed and proposed by:** This position proposal was developed by Paul Verdegaal (retiring advisor) and Brent Holtz (CD), with input from, Mark Battany (viticulture program team leader), Roger Duncan (pomology program team leader), Larry Bettiga and Rhonda Smith (viticulture advisors), and Northern San Joaquin Valley advisors and county directors. This viticulture advisor position is a key component of providing regional viticulture coverage and expertise to the Northern San Joaquin Valley. The research directors of the Lodi District Grape Growers Association and the Lodi Winegrape Commission provided input on this proposal and support it.