

Attachment 7:

To: California Strategic Growth Council and Members of the Public

From: California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross

Reporting Period: August 2020 – April 2021

Staff Lead: Update on Racial Equity Resolution Implementation

History/Background

The mission of the California Department of Food and Agriculture is to serve the citizens of California by promoting and protecting a safe, healthy food supply, and enhancing local and global agricultural trade, through efficient management, innovation and sound science, with a commitment to environmental stewardship.

The Farmer Equity Act (AB 1348) was passed in the fall of 2017. This legislation was created to increase support and access to resources and information for the growing number of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers throughout California. Socially disadvantaged groups have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. Socially disadvantaged groups, as defined in AB 1348, are African Americans, Native Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanic, Latino/a, Asian Americans and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islander groups. Other historically underserved groups of farmers include urban farmers, veteran farmers, women farmers and LGBTQ farmers. Since 2018, CDFA has worked with the farmer equity advisor to create new programs, policies , communications and strategies for addressing racial equity, both within the agency as well as with our agricultural stakeholders.

Highlights

- CDFA is participating in the CCORE Learning Cohort, and is in the process of creating a racial equity action plan (REAP) to guide programs, policies and
- The CDFA CCORE team presented its first introductory training for CDFA leadership and Division Directors in January 2021, incorporating concepts learned during CCORE, and offering resources and opportunities for leadership to engage and share information about CCORE throughout their divisions.
- The CDFA CCORE team is leading a year-long Racial Equity Speaker forum, with invited speakers covering topics related to racial equity in agriculture, history of California agriculture and tools/resources on racial equity. Additionally, the CDFA CCORE group will lead an employee independent study group on racial inequity in CA agriculture.
- In response to the murder of George Floyd and subsequent racial justice protests, CDFA published a Racial Equity statement with the input of all CDFA staff in June 2020.
- One requirement of AB 1348, the Farmer Equity Act, was to publish a Farmer Equity Report for California Legislature. CDFA published this report in June 2020. The report outlines challenges facing socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, and recommendations for how CDFA should address those challenges.
- TO further realize the recommendations within the Farmer Equity report, and in response to the growing need to serve and include the voices and guidance of underserved farmers and



ranchers through economic recovery related to COVID-19, the Farmer Equity Office has created two Ad-hoc advisory committees: one comprised of socially disadvantaged farmers/ranchers, and one comprised of organizations who serve small-scale and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

- CDFA's EEO office maintains an active role and participation in the CDFA CCORE team, and as a result of employee interest, has created the first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee in January 2021, as an opportunity for CDFA employees to engage and guide aspects of DEI within CDFA. This group will have an active role in the REAP.
- CDFA's climate smart agriculture programs continue to prioritize funding for socially disadvantaged applicants as well as applications from disadvantaged communities.
- Board/Commission Index site March 2021: Farmer Equity Report outlined need for transparency and access for public members interested in joining boards/commissions, this site provides all information on one page for interested public members to apply to join a board or commission.
- CDFA has submitted a proposal to include a new economic relief and recovery grant program under the Farmer Equity Office. This program will fund technical assistance for small-scale and socially disadvantaged producers to apply for economic relief funds and support for the UCCE Small Farm Advisor Program
- Mandatory Training for all employees – CDFA's EEO office has expanded their training options to include implicit bias training and an employee engagement portal with racial equity educational resources available for staff members 2021
- CDFA grant analyst hired to assist with making SCBG more accessible to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers January 2021.

Next Steps

- CDFA CCORE staff will ensure that "equity" is included in all aspects of the new strategic plan, as well as guide the formation of the REAP by the end of 2021.
- CDFA will support and build opportunities for interagency collaboration in the areas of: land tenure, farmworker issues, climate resiliency and support for underserved producers.
- CDFA will expand and build upon recommendations contained within the Farmer Equity report, and align those efforts with lessons learned with the CCORE cohort.

