



Item #10-2-4 Action

Land Use & Housing Committee

January 26, 2010

Specialty Crop Grant Application

Issue: SACOG is submitting a grant application conceptual proposal to the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) for the study of specialty crops and the local food system. If the conceptual proposal is accepted, SACOG will be invited to submit a full application.

Recommendation: That the Land Use & Housing Committee recommend that the Board authorize staff to submit an application for the CDFA Specialty Crop Grant program.

Discussion: The CDFA expects that up to \$17 million in block grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will be made available this year to increase the competitiveness of specialty crops by creating or expanding markets and forming partnerships. Specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops. These crops account for 52 percent of U.S. farm gate value according to the USDA and make up much of California's agricultural production.

SACOG's proposal will concentrate on further developing the technical and analytical capacity SACOG is building to study food production and use it to underpin efforts to supply more production into local and other markets. This capacity building will be an effort to "customize" and apply analytical tools to meet local needs. Cost of production data for prototypical small and large farms, that SACOG is using for regional analysis, will be further refined to reflect specific local conditions for growers who are focusing production for local markets, certain ethnic groups, or other market segments. Local consumer demand for food will be updated and used to guide growers toward market opportunities. Aligning local production with local demand will be an important outcome of this process, but this work will help all specialty crop growers in the region. This data and information will be available to not only growers, but other agricultural stakeholders, particularly those that offer production and business training.

Through this grant, SACOG will also enhance its analysis of the processing and distribution infrastructure needs of a local food system. This infrastructure is an important part of connecting producers to consumers. As with production data and analysis, further work is needed to bring regional processing and distribution analysis to a local level. Many growers can expand their product offerings and markets through value-added processing and better aggregation and distribution. Data and analysis from this work will help local growers and businesses determine feasible models for their area.

SACOG's conceptual proposal is under development at the time of the agenda packet mailing, but will be distributed at the committee meeting on February 4, 2010. Conceptual proposals are due on February 1 and acceptance by CDFA will be announced March 25. Staff is seeking approval to submit a full application if the conceptual proposal is accepted. A full grant application will be due by April 26.

Approved by:

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MM:DS:sb

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