



**Item #16-2-3  
Consent**

**SACOG Board of Directors**

February 11, 2016

**Approve Specialty Crop Block Grant Application**

**Issue:** SACOG staff is seeking approval to submit a proposal to the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) for the 2016 Specialty Crop Block Grant program.

**Recommendation:** The Land Use & Natural Resources Committee recommends that the SACOG Board authorize staff to submit a full application for the CDFA Specialty Crop Block Grant program.

**Committee Action/Discussion:** The CDFA expects that up to \$19 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 staff is considering a proposal to develop production studies for specialty crops that are prime candidates for expansion in the Sacramento Valley. While the UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE) regularly conducts research on production costs, those studies are limited mainly to crops grown at a large scale in a given region. Since the diversity of specialty crops grown in the Sacramento Valley is limited, there are few UCCE studies available to help farmers, bankers, agricultural commissioners, economic development staff, planners, etc. understand the potential to diversify cropping patterns to take advantage of new market opportunities.

Staff submitted a concept proposal to CDFA, which was due on December 4, 2015. CDFA will announce invitations for full grant proposals in February and applications will be due on March 20, 2016. Staff is seeking approval to submit a full application if the conceptual proposal is accepted. If successful, work on the project would start January 2017. The project process and outcomes are consistent with SACOG's Strategic Plan as they meet: Goal 1, by providing new and much needed data and tools for information-based decision making; Goal 2, by pioneering cutting-edge data and modeling to maximizing strategic influence and Goal 3, by convening stakeholders to help design and disseminate the tools, which help promote a sustainable future for the region.

Approved by:

Mike McKeever  
Chief Executive Officer

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Key Staff: Kacey Lizon, Planning Manager, (916) 340-6265  
David Shabazian, Rural-Urban Connections Strategy Manager, (916) 340-6231