

Examples of County Agricultural Commissioner roles and responsibilities

About this Resource

This document is intended to be a resource for California communities and County Agricultural Commissioner (CAC) staff as one of a variety of tools (see the Department of Pesticide Regulation's [Resource Hub for Local Engagement](#)) produced by a collaborative, diverse group of both community and CAC partners to improve and enhance communication and engagement across the state.

This resource provides a brief summary and list of examples for community members interested in learning more about the roles and responsibilities of CAC offices and staff.

What do CACs do?



The mission of County Agricultural Commissioners (CACs) is to **promote and protect agriculture** – including both growers and farmworkers – **and protect people and the environment**. California is the only state in the nation with an Agricultural Commissioner system. Each California county has an appointed Agricultural Commissioner, and this provides a unique way to quickly engage with growers and community members in addressing issues of concerns locally.



CACs work closely with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) to **enforce agricultural state laws and regulations at the local level**. For example, CACS are in charge of “making sure pesticide regulations are being followed, invasive plants and pests are kept out of the state... and compiling the county’s annual crop report.”* Each County Agricultural Commissioner is licensed by CDFA and appointed by their respective county’s Board of Supervisors.



California’s pesticide regulatory approach is based on a strong scientific foundation. DPR’s mission is to **protect public health and the environment** by regulating pesticide sales and use, and by fostering reduced-risk pest management. DPR evaluates and registers pesticides before they’re allowed to be used in California, monitors health and environmental impacts of pesticides, tests for pesticide residues on fresh fruits and vegetables, and determines safe pesticide workplace practices. DPR's staff also provide training, coordination, technical, and legal support to CACs and their staff.



The size and diversity of California’s agriculture require a more complex partnership between state and local agencies. California stands apart from all other states by having CACs and their staffs (together, about 500 inspectors and biologists) carry out most pesticide field enforcement, **allowing for many more inspections and a faster start to investigations**.

* **Source:** Aguilar, Vivienne. "Stanislaus County swaps previous agricultural commissioner and sealer with San Joaquin's." *The Modesto Bee*, 20 Mar. 2023, www.modbee.com/news/business/agriculture/article273185705.html. Accessed 13 April 2023.

CACs and their staff are responsible for dozens of services that vary per county. **Examples of their main roles include:**

Pest prevention, pest management, and pesticide use enforcement

CAC offices are responsible to:

- Prevent the introduction or spread of new, exotic, and destructive pests in California.
- Protect California from current and new insect, disease, weed and vertebrate pests.
- Ensure the safe use of pesticides through training, outreach, inspections, and investigations.

A few examples:



Do you want to report a potential pesticide exposure problem? Contact your CAC office as soon as possible so that they can investigate and make sure pesticides are being used properly and safely.



How do CACs protect field workers? They conduct many unannounced inspections to ensure that pesticide laws and regulations are being followed that protect field worker safety and environmental health.



How do CACs detect destructive pests? They sample imported produce at airports and post offices, inspect beehives for pest infestations, and check incoming shipments for insects. These help CACs identify destructive pests and prevent them from spreading into our gardens and local environments.

Consumer Protections

CAC offices are responsible to:

- Protect consumers and ensure they receive the advertised price (for example, at supermarkets and gas stations).
- Investigate complaints including price accuracy, short weight and measure, deceptive packaging, fuel contamination and more.
- Protect consumers by sampling fuel quality, inspecting labeling of petroleum products, and service station advertising.

A few examples:



How do you know that you're getting the full amount of gas that you're paying for at the gas station? CACs inspect all gas pumps for accuracy; you can look for their circular seal the next time you visit a gas station.



How do you know that you're getting the full amount that you're paying for at the supermarket? CACs test all commercial scales and scan price tags to make sure they are accurate. If you have a concern with your receipt and the supermarket has not resolved it, please report this to your CAC office.



How do you know that your gas sub-meter is accurate? If you don't pay your gas bill directly to a utility company, CACs test your gas sub-meter. This includes homes in mobile home parks, RV parks, and shared apartment complexes.

Other Services

- **Food quality control:** Regulate organic growers, certified producers, farmers' markets, and egg handlers to ensure compliance.
- **Quantity control:** Inspect packaged commodities to ensure accuracy with labeling and stated weight, which includes test purchases.
- **Nursery regulation:** Ensure that all nursery stock produced or sold in California meets strict quality standards.

Note: This is not a full list of every CAC role or responsibility. Some California counties have special tasks, programs, and services that their CAC performs. Reach out to your local County Agricultural Commissioner's office for a full list of tasks and responsibilities in your county. Visit cacasa.org/county/ to find out who your CAC is and how to contact them.