

## **Senate Agricultural Committee Informational Hearing – Navigating Threats to California Agriculture**

### **CDFA's role and authority in Food Safety and Security**

- This issue is at the core of what the Department and its hardworking staff have worked on for over 100 years.
- CDFA's role, to put it simply, is to match the tremendous pace, productivity, and variety of California agriculture with a regulatory structure that both protects and promotes these contributions to the food supply and other avenues of commerce.
- With its nationally recognized scientists, veterinarians, economists, laboratory employees and other administrative and support staff, the Department serves and provides vital programs and services to California's farming families, merchants, and citizens.
- Programs are consistently being reviewed and enhanced to improve critical services including animal health and food safety, pest and disease prevention, and responses to emergencies that threaten domestic and international trade.
- It is important to note that while CDFA plays an important role in maintaining food safety and security, agricultural product imports and exports are inspected by hundreds of entities, including federal, state, county, market, industry and more.
- The food safety system is complex and multilevel and CDFA works closely with out county and federal counterpart, as well as industry 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.

### Organizational Overview & a few Division Highlights

- Currently organized in seven divisions and located at more than 100 offices, labs and other sites throughout the state, the Department's employees work with its federal and county partners in striving to support and advance the success of those that have made California agriculture the recognized leader of food and agricultural products in the world.

- For example:
  - **The Inspection Services Division** performs:
    - inspections of fruits, vegetables and nuts to ensure maturity, grade, size, weight, packaging and labeling meet the consumers' quality expectations;
    - chemical analysis services in support of food and environmental safety;
    - verification audits to ensure good handling and agricultural practices are utilized to contribute to a safe food supply;
    - and inspections ensuring fertilizer, animal feed, and livestock drugs are safe effective, and meet the quality and quantity guaranteed by the manufacturer.
  - **The Animal Health and Food Safety Services Division** is responsible for the safety and security of meat, poultry, and dairy products, along with other foods of animal origins. Among other things, the Division protects the public and animal health through prevention, detection, and eradication of livestock and poultry diseases and dairy contamination incidents.
  - **The Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services Division** is legislatively mandated to protect California from the damage caused by the introduction or spread of harmful plant pests. The Division is responsible for conducting pest prevention and management programs that effectively protect California's agriculture, horticulture, natural resources, and urban environments from invasive plant pests. The Division also protects the public from pests that pose human health threats and protects California's position in the global economy by helping ensure quality agricultural crop production.

#### California's Border Stations:

- Within the purview of our Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services Division are the California's Border Protection Stations, which are the first line of defense in the state's pest exclusion efforts.
- At these stations, vehicles are inspected for commodities infested with invasive species.
- Today there are 16 of these facilities strategically located at all major highway and interstate entrances into the state, to enforce statutory requirements from the California Food and Agricultural Code, Federal and State quarantines, and County enforcement policies.

- Many invasive species are adept hitchhikers, traveling along with produce, plants or vehicles as they are brought or shipped by unsuspecting individuals or companies.
- To reduce the number of pest introductions and subsequent infestations, California maintains a pest prevention system.
- At these stations, personnel monitor and inspect cars, commercial trucks, buses, and recreational vehicles entering the state to ensure no pests of quarantine significance are brought into the state.
- Shipments that cannot be inspected adequately at the Border Protection Stations are sent under quarantine holds to the destination counties for inspection by the County Agricultural Commissioners.
- If pest samples are collected during inspection, the shipment remains on hold until CDFA's Plant Pest Diagnostics Center makes an official determination.
- The shipment may be released if there is an absence of actionable pests. If actionable pests are present, the shipment is destroyed, returned out-of-state, or treated.

Other CDFA Activities on Imported Products include:

- The **State Organic Program** performs random enforcement inspections at border stations to ensure the integrity of products labeled as "Organic" under the USDA National Organic Program enforcement standards.
- CDFA's **Standardization Program** performs inspections of table grapes or other commodities under a state marketing order at the Ports of Entry to ensure imported products meet quality, maturity, size, and labeling requirements.
- The **California Shipping Point (SPI) program** is part of the nationwide fresh fruit and vegetable inspection program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).
- It exists under a cooperative agreement/contract with CDFA and performs inspections at the border in Otay Mesa.
- State employed inspectors are authorized to make inspections based on U.S. grade standards or other written government or private specifications for fresh products.

- Additionally, inspections are performed for imported commodities that fall under a Federal Marketing Order (e.g., onions & avocados), Suspension Agreement (e.g., tomatoes) or federal regulations under the Export Grape and Plum Act (e.g., table grapes).
- This equates to approximately 10% of total agricultural product moving through CA.
- When it comes **to animal and livestock diseases**, successful traceability depends on official identification of livestock and documentation to track movements, including records of livestock shipments crossing through California's border stations, incoming health certificates, and livestock entry permits.
- These sources of movement data are reviewed daily, and **Animal Health Branch** staff investigate livestock shipments that are noncompliant with California's entry requirements.

### Export Activities

- CDFA's activities related to exported products really depends on the product, the Federal Order, the California Code of Regulations, and quarantines.
- For example – for citrus fruit in California - once it is commercially packed it can move throughout the state and out of CA.
- Through **Shipping Point Inspection**, some industry groups require an "outgoing" or "export" inspection as part of the State or Federal Marketing Order. This is typically imposed by the industry group to ensure minimum standards are maintained and low quality product is not shipped out, which could damage the industry's reputation.
- Through CDFA's **Produce Safety Program**, produce farmers in California undergo rigorous food safety inspections under the Food Safety Modernization Act's Produce Safety Rule before sending their product to markets, both foreign and domestic.
- These inspections cover a broad scope of activities on the farm ranging from employee training and hygiene practices to water quality, application of soil amendments, harvest practices, and monitoring of animal activity and surrounding land uses.

- Certification requirements for sanitation and safety of **dairy products** vary significantly depending on the specific foreign country and market.
- The primary federal food safety authority for international engagement is the U.S. FDA. However, for dairy products FDA operates under an MOU with the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service to issue certificates of sanitary origin for purposes of export.
- **CDFA's Milk and Dairy Food Safety Branch (MDFS)** issues licenses and inspects dairy processing facilities statewide. As the inspecting food safety authority, MDFS issues certificates of sanitary origin for California firms to export their dairy products to foreign markets.
- CDFA-MDFS issues approximately 3,000 export certificates to 35 different countries each year. Firms provide these certificates to foreign food safety authorities as an attestation that their companies are licensed and inspected by CDFA and are in good standing regarding compliance with California's applicable food safety laws and regulations.
- These CDFA certificates may also be used to assist USDA-AMS in issuing a federal certificate.