

# UC CE

# Central Sierra

## Amador County

### Annual Report | 2022 - 2023

The "Golden Counties" of California have terrains as diverse as their populations. The Central Sierra region stretches from the foothills of El Dorado County above the Sacramento Valley, to the mountains of South Lake Tahoe, through the wine country of Amador and Calaveras counties, and the high country of Tuolumne County. The pioneering spirit that drew gold-seekers West still thrives in the mother lode where these counties remain rich in opportunity and prosperous through their people.

The University of California Cooperative Extension of the Central Sierra territory provides science-based information and educational programs to solve local issues in areas of agriculture, natural resources, nutrition, and youth development that improve social, economic, and environmental quality for all residents of Amador County.

We are grateful for the community participation, partnerships, and support of our programs and activities that made 2022-2023 a success. On behalf of our entire team, we are pleased to share our Annual Report with you.



## UCCE Funding

**\$460,002**

University

**\$150,394**

County

**\$510,629**

Advisor-Generated  
Gifts and Grants

**\$19,303**

Raised by Volunteers to  
Support Local Programs



**140**  
volunteers  
donated  
**9,235**  
hours of  
service -- a  
value of  
**\$344,660**



**5,313**  
total  
educational  
interactions  
with the  
public



**7**  
peer-  
reviewed/  
audience-  
requested  
publications



**37**  
academic-led  
workshops,  
field days, and  
classes with  
**507**  
participants



**10**  
news media  
programs/  
mentions



**3,448**  
residents  
reached by  
UC Master  
Gardener  
volunteers



**5**  
new certified  
Environmental  
Stewards



**500**  
youth in  
UC 4-H Youth  
Development  
Program



**307**  
people  
reached by  
CFHL, UC  
direct  
education



# FORESTRY & NATURAL RESOURCES

**Participants discussed, learned, and reviewed practices for forest management.**



*Post-Fire Forest Resilience Workshop participants visit a site that was burned in the 2021 Caldor Fire. Photo by Daylin Wade.*

In 2022, UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Advisors and an Academic Coordinator developed a Post-Fire Forest Resilience educational program for private forest landowners to help them reverse the ecological, economic, environmental, aesthetic, and social impacts of the 2019-2021 wildfires on their properties. The program is funded through USFS State and Private Forestry Region 5 with participants attending educational workshops that are held once a week, for seven weeks on Zoom. Expert speakers attend each session and provide local and regional knowledge on dead tree removal, erosion control, tree planting and cost-share assistance programs. At the end of the seven weeks, there is an in-person field trip to visualize post-fire management practices, strategies, and projects in the fire of concern. Participants can determine what may work or not work, on their own land, as well as network with their local community and agency professionals. The workshop was held four times in the 2022-2023 fiscal year, with 114 registered participants.

## **Improved industry representation and stakeholder collaboration on regional projects**

Protecting natural resources and promoting economic prosperity are complementary to each other and UCCE continued to work toward these goals by bringing together stakeholders in the biomass and forest products sectors. UCCE worked with local industry partners and non-profit organizations on needs assessment and grants to promote locally sourced value-added forest and biomass products.

## **Raised public awareness toward forest biomass-derived products**

Innovative utilization of biomass-derived products plays an important role in increasing community resilience against forest wildfires in a changing climate. UCCE advisors and specialists worked together to ensure knowledge related to biomass energy and forest products reach the Central Sierra communities through published materials, field trips, and seminars. Raising public awareness and knowledge on alternative biomass treatment technologies promotes community engagement and relevant policy changes that support the realization of fuel reduction goals.



*Field trip to a bioenergy facility, co-organized with the UCCE Forest Stewardship Program. Kodama Systems, Inc. demonstrates its remote skidder system.*

## Landowners learned to conduct prescribed fires on their own property

A UCCE Advisor and Community Education Specialist continued to assist landowners to conduct prescribed burns on their lands through the El Dorado Amador Prescribed Burn Association. The goal of the PBA is to help landowners become more comfortable with the use of prescribed fire to manage flammable landscapes. We hosted 13 classroom and field-based workshops and events for landowners reaching 178 people in 2022-23. Since 2018, this totals 46 workshop days/events reaching 1142 people with prescribed fire technical assistance.

We have developed educational materials to help landowners understand the process for planning, implementing, and monitoring a prescribed fire on their own property. These include a permitting guide and a fuel weather monitoring guide specific to Amador County posted on the PBA website at <https://forests.berkeley.edu/el-dorado-amador-prescribed-burn-association>.

Efforts were funded by a grant from Calfire and from the California Department of Conservation (CDC). These funds allowed for hiring the CES as the coordinator to provide technical assistance, and for the purchase of prescribed fire tools including drip torches, jerry cans, hand tools including McCleods, rakes, rogue hoes and personal protective equipment including gloves, eye protection and masks. A 40-gallon tank for mounting on an ATV was also purchased and is available for future burns.

## Forest Stewardship Workshops benefit Amador County landowners

Upon completing the Forest Stewardship Workshop series, two Amador County landowners received a free Registered Professional Forester (RPF) site visit covering 150 acres. The RPF visit typically leads to the development of a forest management plan and implementation of forest management activities, improving overall forest health and resiliency, and reducing the negative effects of wildfire. For one Amador County participant, the workshop and site visit led to an approved EQIP cost share grant for fuels reduction on 53 acres.



PBA Coordinator Kestrel Grevatt shows volunteers how to use a drip torch at the June 24, 2023 burn in Fiddletown, Amador County. Photo by Susie Kocher.



A Fiddletown landowner lights the first broadcast burn on her property, June 24, 2023. Photo by Susie Kocher.



**Cindy X. Chen**

Woody Biomass & Forest Products Advisor



**Susie Kocher**

Forestry & Natural Resources Advisor



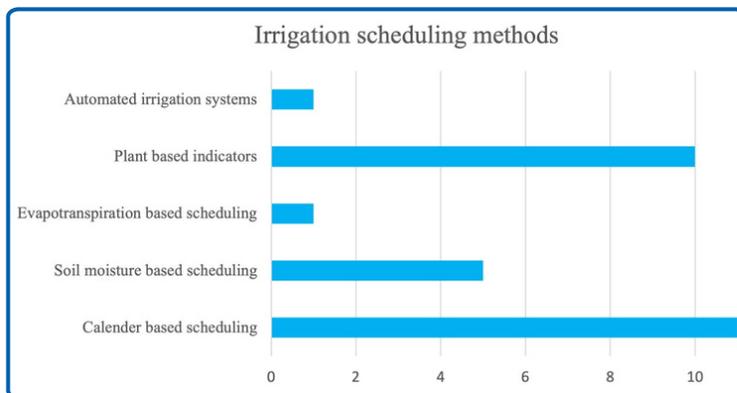
# AGRICULTURE

## Assessments identified needs and priorities of local farmers, guiding research and extension focus

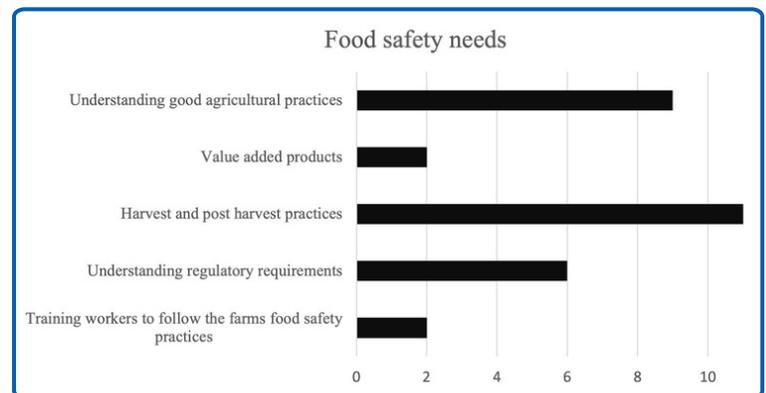
A needs assessment is an important component of program planning, enabling the establishment of priorities based on identified needs. It involves a systematic process to determine measurable gaps between current and desired conditions. Therefore, it is imperative to design programs that specifically target local issues and priorities.

Information derived from these assessments guides extension professionals in focusing their research and extension programs on relevant issues. Needs assessment survey, created by Hardeep Singh, Local Food Systems Advisor in the Central Sierra, aims to address local needs in terms of crop production.

Results of the survey indicated a total of 31 complete responses, with 42% of respondents being low income/beginning farmers, and 29% being women farmers. The respondents comprised an almost equal proportion of conventional and organic farmers, including those practicing organic methods without certification. Survey asked respondents to rate various topics in terms of the need for research and extension. Sustainable food systems/organic agriculture emerged as the top priority, followed by insect pest weed and disease control, technical assistance with grant programs/regulatory compliance, and irrigation management.



Graph 1: Automated irrigation systems and evapotranspiration-based irrigation methods are least utilized by respondents, highlighting the necessity for adopting water-efficient irrigation scheduling methods.



Graph 2: It was found that harvest and post harvest practices including the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) were of most interest to the growers.



**Mackenzie Faith Patton**  
Integrated Pest Management Advisor



**Hardeep Singh**  
Local Food Systems Advisor



## LIVESTOCK

### Development and implementation of Livestock Agriculture Pass program increased wildfire preparedness for ranchers



*Ranchers attend the Livestock Agriculture Pass training program workshop held 4/18/23 in Sutter Creek, Amador County.*

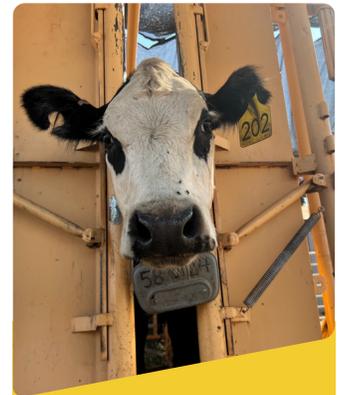
Catastrophic wildfires continue to threaten Californians. In the event of an emergency some commercial livestock producers may decide to shelter their animals in place. According to Kirk Wilbur, vice president of government affairs for California Cattlemen's Association, ranchers have reported challenges accessing their livestock during wildfires in order to provide feed or water, doctor the animals or evacuate them. In 2021, California Assembly Bill AB 1103 established a statewide livestock pass program for producers to access their property to check on livestock during a disaster, paving the way for the development of

protocols for livestock producers to care, feed, water and medicate animals that have sheltered in place in evacuated areas by allowing producers access to restricted or closed areas during an emergency to care for their animals.

The Livestock Pass Program represents a steppingstone in our efforts for wildfire preparedness. These programs support the unique agricultural considerations of the region and adapt to prioritize farmer and rancher needs.

### Participants learned strategies for sustainable grazing management and reduction of wildfire risk

In fall 2021, the Caldor fire burned over 221,000 acres in El Dorado, Amador and Alpine counties. Ranchers lost hundreds of miles of fencing with cost of replacement estimated at \$50,000 per mile. UCCE staff received funding to evaluate the efficacy of virtual fence (VF) technology as a tool for optimizing livestock distribution across the Central Sierra landscape. Livestock are outfitted with GPS collars that communicate with radio towers to create a virtual fence. Over 70 participants attended the VF workshop in Sutter Creek, Amador County to hear from product representative, ranchers, and UCCE researchers.



*A cow at Mt. Echo Ranch is equipped with a virtual fence collar as an alternative to traditional fencing. Photo by Scott Oneto.*



**Scott Oneto**  
Farm Advisor

*"Unfortunately, in recent years we've seen numerous animals needlessly and painfully perish during wildfire incidents."*

-KIRK WILBUR, CALIFORNIA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION



## LIVESTOCK

### Local producers improved food safety with Beef Quality Assurance training and certification

Thirty-two beef producers attended the Beef Quality Assurance Training and Certification course on November 13, 2023 in Jackson, Amador County. Livestock producers from 14 different California Counties attended this training. Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) is a program that provides systematic information to U.S. beef producers, explaining how good husbandry techniques with accepted scientific knowledge can be coupled to raise cattle under optimum management conditions.

During this training, participants learned about the purpose and components of the BQA program, and how to work with cattle using their natural instincts. They also learned about how Biosecurity protects the cattle, the people, and an operation as a whole.



*Dr. Gaby Maier, UCCE Vet Extension Beef Specialist, covers part of the training. Photo by Cesar Jimenez.*

### Proposed USDA meat processing facility will increase access to local food and benefit Central Sierra businesses

In August and November 2023, a survey was developed to understand the needs of Central Sierra livestock (cattle, sheep, goat and pig) producers, and their interest in a new USDA meat processing facility in the region. The survey focused on Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, and Tuolumne counties, but reached 12 different counties, with 164 livestock producers answering the survey.

Survey results show there is high interest for a processing facility in the Central Sierra, and expressed an interest in raising additional species if the project happens. To date, survey results have been presented during two townhall meetings. Future steps include deciding the type of processing facility, size, location, and ownership.

This project will certainly help local livestock producers, but will also benefit local communities via access to food. It would also have an impact on tourism via potential restaurants serving local meats.

*"The lack of local processing availability is keeping us from going deep into direct marketing. I believe [the facility] will greatly help local producers and consumers."*

-CENTRAL SIERRA CATTLE RANCHER

#### Now Recruiting

*Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor*



#### Now Recruiting

*Indigenous Disaster Resilience Advisor*



## UC MASTER FOOD PRESERVERS

### Participants adopted home food safety practices

UC Master Food Preserver Volunteers donated 1,224 hours to the Amador and Calaveras County community in the 2022-23 program year through 52 in person events and activities including public classes, farmers market information booths, youth events and county fairs. Master Food Preserver Volunteers provided education to 1,204 participants.

Improving food safety in our community is our top priority because if food is incorrectly preserved for short-term or long-term storage and causes a foodborne illness, our community members suffer. All public classes taught by UC Master Food Preserver Volunteers includes a food safety section at the beginning of the class and throughout. Many students have become advocates for kitchen cleanliness in our classes, demonstrating that our lessons are being learned and implemented.



*Preserving Meat Class in Amador County 3/19/2023. A full house observed live pressure canning demos with the aide of a sign-language interpreter. Photo by Alicia Bennett.*

### Participants learned techniques to increase food security and reduce food waste

Improving food security in our community involves both increasing the long-term storage possibilities of food and reducing food waste. Community members shared that through UC Master Food Preserver classes, they learned to save money by freezing small quantities of food in regular snack or sandwich bags, and then putting those bags in a large freezer bag. Class participants stated that they learned why properly packing foods for the freezer can prevent freezer burn, making the food look appetizing when removed from the freezer instead of being thrown away.



## UC CALFRESH HEALTHY LIVING

### Participants adopted healthier eating behaviors at home

CalFresh Healthy Living nutrition educators provided direct education lessons to 306 youth and adults over 47 sessions at community sites in Amador County, including ARC of Amador, Operation Care, Amador County Department of Social Services, and local elementary schools.



**Kitty Oppliger**

*Community Health and Nutrition Advisor*



University of California  
Cooperative Extension  
Central Sierra  
Multi-County Partnership  
Amador County

### UCCE Amador Office

12200-B Airport Road | Jackson, CA 95642

**Front Desk Hours:** Monday-Friday, 8am - 5pm  
*Closed for lunch 12-1 daily. Hours subject to change.*

**Phone:** (209) 223-6482

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**Email:** [cacentralsierra@ucanr.edu](mailto:cacentralsierra@ucanr.edu)

**Website:** [cacentralsierra.ucanr.edu](http://cacentralsierra.ucanr.edu)

### County Advisors

Cindy X. Chen, Woody Biomass & Forest Products

Susie Kocher, Forestry & Natural Resources

JoLynn Miller, 4-H Youth Development

Scott Oneto, Farms & Agriculture

Kitty Oppliger, Community Health & Nutrition

Mackenzie Faith Patton, Integrated Pest Management

Hardeep Singh, Local Food Systems

*Now Recruiting*, Livestock & Natural Resources

*Now Recruiting*, Indigenous Disaster Resilience

### 4-H Youth Development Staff

Vera M. Bullard, Region 6 Program Coordinator

Alissa Hardie, Community Education Specialist II

### Academic Staff

Brian J. Allen, Assistant Specialist

Kim Ingram, Forest Stewardship Coordinator

Katie Reidy, Post-Fire Coordinator

### CalFresh Healthy Living-UC Staff

Kathleen Carter, Nutrition Educator

Noah Cooke, Program Supervisor

Mariana Garcia, Program Coordinator

Cailin McLaughlin, Garden Coordinator

Carmela Padilla, Region 5 Community Education Mgr.

### UC Master Food Preservers/Gardeners Staff

Sue Mosbacher, Community Education Supervisor

### Administrative Staff

Bonnie Fraser, Administrative Assistant II

Lindsey Harwood, Fiscal Assistant III

*Visit us online for a complete staff directory with contact information.*

## 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

### Grant-funded projects promoted agricultural career opportunities

Amador County received a portion of grant funds awarded to California 4-H from National 4-H and Corteva to implement a Pollinator Ambassador Project. Teens installed pollinator habitats and taught younger youth about the importance of pollinators to our ecosystems. Teens were also able to attend the national 4-H Ignite conference where they meet other 4-Hers from across the country and learned ways to get involved in science and agriculture. 63% of teens who responded to an evaluation survey said because of this project they are more interested in science and agriculture. 100% say they understand why protecting pollinators and increasing their habitat is important to our food supply. In addition, 88% say they now understand how they can create and protect pollinator habitats. This project got teens interested in advocating for agriculture issues in our world and increased their desire to find jobs related to agriculture.



*Eight Central Sierra youth attend the Ignite 4-H summit in Washington, D.C. to learn about pollinator habitats and develop a service project to implement in their communities. The goal for the next several months is to teach hundreds of local students about pollinators and increase pollinator awareness.*



*4-H Ambassador Lily Himmel of Amador County collaborates with Amador High School in Sutter Creek to design and install a pollinator space on campus. The plan is to use this successful space as a template for other area schools and continue to expand this important project.*



**JoLynn Miller, County Director  
& 4-H Youth Development Advisor**

