



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

April 1, 2020

Ms. Kristi Armstrong
California Department of Food and Agriculture
CalCannabis Cultivation Licensing Division
P.O. Box 942871
Sacramento, CA 94271

Transmittal Via E-mail: CDFA.CalCannabis_Appellations@cdfa.ca.gov

RE: Cannabis Appellations Program, 45-Day Rulemaking Comments

Dear Ms. Armstrong:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I am pleased to respond to the notice of proposed rulemaking action on the Cannabis Appellations Program. RCRC is an association of thirty-seven rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from those member counties.

RCRC has long envisioned both a County of Origin appellations program and an Appellations of Origin program to advance the legal cannabis market and promote rural agriculture. A robust appellations system will ward off commoditization of cannabis and thus provide a vibrant economy for growers, manufacturers, and distributors and provide the tax revenue voters intended for youth programs, environmental cleanup, and public safety through the passage of Proposition 64 (2016). Further, California once again could lead the nation, and perhaps the international market, on implementing a legitimate, scalable appellations program.

We greatly appreciate the work of the California Department of Food and Agriculture on this issue, especially the work of the CalCannabis staff, to convene seven working group meetings with a breadth of stakeholders including local government organizations, cannabis growers from across all regions of the state, and specialized consultants to provide expertise and feedback during the informal rulemaking period. This kind of collaborative process is instrumental to develop an effective appellations system and we appreciate the dialogue of both CalCannabis staff and the various participants to promote a greater understanding and shared vision for California cannabis.

1215 K Street, Suite 1650, Sacramento, CA 95814 | www.rcrcnet.org | 916.447.4806 | Fax: 916.448.3154

In general, we agree with the Initial Statement of Reasons (ISOR) conclusions that CalCannabis conducted a thorough examination of two existing appellation of origin systems, both of which are insufficient models in their entirety for a Cannabis Appellations Program. The subsequent Cannabis Appellations Program as proposed in this rulemaking is a thoughtful, appropriate alternative to the appellation systems used in other industries.

The draft regulations provide uniform implementation of both the County of Origin and Appellation of Origin systems. Perhaps most importantly, as currently structured, the County of Origin designation maintains broad, inclusivity for cannabis growers and products, while the Appellations of Origin program is appropriately designed to be more exclusive and specialized for licensees.

Many marketing orders or agreements ranging from asparagus to wine grapes, including their respective councils and commissions, are clearly established and guided by the California Food and Agricultural Code.¹ While no such formal enforcement has been established for Cannabis Appellations via its enabling statute, we encourage CalCannabis to consider broadening the scope of the Review Panel beyond the duties of reviewing the initial petition. For instance, we urge CalCannabis to consider other matters of importance for conferring with an independent panel, such as dispute or conflict resolutions that will inevitably rise in a burgeoning industry. While the proposed regulations pose various enforcement violations and fines for operations and recordkeeping, there is very little discussion in the text of the regulations on the enforcement process.

Again, we appreciate the work and productive collaboration of CalCannabis throughout the informal rulemaking period by conducting extensive stakeholder outreach and collaboration. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,



Leigh Kammerich
Regulatory Affairs Specialist

¹ Division 21 and 22 of the California Food and Agricultural Code.