

February 28, 2024

Subject: Approve California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force Member

Reporting Period: December 2023 - February 2024

Staff Lead: Camille Frazier, Agricultural Land Equity Program Lead, SGC

Recommended Action

SGC staff recommend that Council appoint the nominee recommended by the Agricultural Land Equity team, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)’s Farmer Equity Advisor, and Governor’s Office of Tribal Affairs staff—Darlene Franco—to serve on the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force.

Summary

Per the enabling legislation, the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force (Task Force) shall consist of up to 13 members, including up to three Native and tribal liaisons. SGC staff are recommending Darlene Franco to fill an open native and tribal liaison seat on the Task Force that was vacated in October 2023. Following a review of nominations received during an open nomination period that concluded on January 31, SGC staff, CDFA’s Farmer Equity Advisor, and the Governor’s Office of Tribal Affairs staff recommend Darlene Franco to serve on the Task Force.

Background

The California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force (Task Force) was established in the 2022 California Budget to develop recommendations to equitably increase access to agricultural land for food production and traditional tribal agricultural uses. On or before January 1, 2026, the Task Force shall submit a report to the Legislature and Governor that includes policy recommendations on addressing the agricultural land equity crisis.

Per the Budget, the Task Force shall consist of a regionally diverse group of individuals of up to 13 members to be appointed by the Strategic Growth Council in consultation with the CDFA Farm Equity Advisor and the California Truth and Healing Council. The task force shall consist of three Native and tribal liaisons, a land trust representative, individuals with expertise in issues affecting socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers, an individual with expertise in agricultural land acquisition and finance, State Board of Food and Agriculture member, a farmworker representative, a beginning farmer, the CDFA Farm Equity Advisor, and an individual from the CDFA BIPOC Farmer Advisory Committee.

Following the Task Force’s first meeting in October 2023, Cheyenne Stone stepped down from her role as a Native and tribal liaison on the Task Force. To fill the vacated seat, SGC staff distributed a call for nominations and managed an open nomination period that ran from December 6, 2023 through January 31, 2024. In early February, SGC staff reviewed nominations with the CDFA Farmer Equity Advisor and Governor’s Office of Tribal Affairs staff. The reviewers

recommend that Darlene Franco be appointed to the Task Force to fill the vacant Native and tribal liaison position.

Darlene has worked all her life in Native communities, including directing statewide Native language revitalization programs, coaching Native youth sports teams, leading health and wellness cultural programs, providing cultural curriculum development, and teaching and practicing her Tribe's culture and running ceremonies for her people. She is a member of the Wukchumni Tribe, whose ancestral homelands are located near what is today known as Visalia in Tulare County. Darlene's expansive knowledge and lifelong commitment to California's tribal communities are invaluable contributions to the Task Force.

Next Steps

The California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force held its second meeting on February 16, 2024. The Task Force approved the bylaws and charter and discussed the key topics and questions that members will consider moving forward. The next meeting is scheduled for May 9, 2024.

Council Recommendation

Should the Council agree with Staff's recommendation, the following motion language is suggested:

"I move that the Council pass the consent calendar."

Attachments

Attachment A: Bio – Darlene Franco

