

Meet the Department of Pesticide Regulation's (DPR) Sustainable Pest Management Advisory Committee (SPM Committee) Members.

On April 2, DPR's Director appointed eighteen members to serve on the department's new SPM Committee. Committee members reflect the geographic and professional diversity of California's pest management community, with expertise spanning agricultural, urban, and natural space integrated pest management (IPM) to public health, environmental science, food supply chains, and community advocacy. They join the committee from across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, including academia, industry, cooperative extension, and environmental justice organizations.

Members:

1. CDFA seat: **Kevi Mace, Ph.D.** is a Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor at the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). She supervises the Office of Pesticide Consultation and Analysis (OPCA), which conducts research on the potential economic and pest management impacts of proposed regulation and coordinates multiple grant programs. Kevi served as CDFA's technical advisor to the Sustainable Pest Management Roadmap Work Group and remains active in coordinating CDFA's rollout of the Roadmap. She sits on the UC IPM Program Advisory Committee and the California Invasive Council Advisory Committee and supervises CDFA's representatives to the Pest Management Advisory Committee and the Pesticide Registration and Evaluation Committee.
2. UC ANR seat: **Jim Farrar, Ph.D.** is the Director of the University of California Integrated Pest Management Program (UC IPM). UC IPM focuses on practical IPM solutions to address important pest issues in agriculture, communities, and natural areas in California. Previously, Jim was director of the Western IPM Center and prior to that he was a professor of plant pathology in the Department of Plant Science at California State University, Fresno. Jim's research at Fresno State primarily focused on fungal diseases of vegetable crops. He completed a Master's degree at University of California-Davis and a doctorate at University of Wisconsin.
3. **Jo Ann Baumgartner** is Executive Director of Wild Farm Alliance, a national nonprofit advancing biodiversity conservation on farms to support sustainable pest management and resilient agricultural systems. She brings more than 45 years of agricultural experience, including 12 years as an organic farmer, and holds a B.S. in Soil and Water Science from the University of California, Davis and an M.S. in Environmental Studies from San José State University. Jo Ann has led development of practical resources that help farmers integrate habitat for beneficial insects and birds, reduce pesticide risks, and meet organic biodiversity requirements. She has guided national outreach through workshops, field days, and educational publications, and helped develop tools connecting pest management with ecological stewardship.

4. **Lena Brook** is Deputy Director at Fullwell, a San Francisco Bay Area-based policy advocacy organization where she leads campaigns to expand values-aligned food procurement at public institutions and strengthen the food assistance safety net. Prior to joining Fullwell, she served as Director of Food Campaigns at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), where she led federal, state, and market-based initiatives to support agricultural practices that protect public health and ecosystems while improving access to healthy food. Lena currently serves as Environmental Representative on the California Organic Products Advisory Committee (COPAC) and is board chair of Camp Tawonga. She holds a Master's Degree in Environmental Studies from the Yale School of the Environment and a BA in Anthropology from UC Berkeley.
5. **Jennifer Clarke** is the Executive Director of the California Leafy Greens Research Board. She has a background in regulatory affairs, pest management, food safety, and agricultural leadership. With experience across multiple areas of California agriculture, she works closely with growers, shippers, researchers, and industry partners to support practical, applied research and advance solutions that address industry priorities.
6. **Laura Krueger** is a Board Certified Entomologist specializing in urban pest management and mosquito and vector control operations. Laura serves as a Vector Ecologist with the Orange County Mosquito and Vector Control District where she manages surveillance and control programs for mosquitoes, fleas, flies, rats, and fire ants. She is a licensed Pest Control Adviser, Qualified Applicator, and fully certified Vector Control Technician. She received a Master of Public Health from Yale University and a Biology of Science degree from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
7. **Michael Mellano, Ph.D.** is a third generation cut flower farmer and former CEO, Chairman of the Board, and Vice President of Production for Mellano & Company. Mellano & Company was founded in 1925 and farms over 400 acres in San Diego County. Michael is the Chair of the UC ANR President's Advisory Commission and acts as the UC representative to the Council for Agricultural Research, Extension & Teaching under the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities in Washington DC; Board Member for American Grown Flowers & Foliage Farmers; Chair of the Kee Kitayama Research Foundation; and Past President of the San Diego County Farm Bureau. In addition, he has served on the advisory board for the USDA Floriculture Research Initiative. Michael received his BS in Plant Science and Ph.D. in Plant Pathology from University of California, Riverside in 1988.
8. **Cuong "Jimmy" Nguyen, Ph.D.** is a food scientist and UC Agricultural and Natural Resources (UC ANR) Advisor specializing in sustainable pest management, food safety, and organic production. He holds a Ph.D. in Food Science from the University of California, Davis, along with graduate training from Tokyo University of Agriculture. In his current role, Cuong develops and implements alternative pest and contamination management strategies for California's low desert region, with a

strong emphasis on organic farming systems. His research focuses on biosolarization and other sustainable treatment approaches for growers transitioning away from conventional inputs. He also leads extension programs supporting underrepresented farming communities, including tribal lands, in navigating evolving regulatory frameworks.

9. **Mahmood Nikbakhtzadeh, Ph.D.** is an Assistant Professor of Environmental Health Science and Program Coordinator at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). At CSUSB, he directs the Vector Behavior and Mosquito Research Laboratories, where his research explores ecological, biological, and behavioral strategies to reduce vector populations and disease risk. A trained Medical Entomologist and Chemical Ecologist with over 20 years of experience, his work increasingly emphasizes sustainable, non-chemical and integrated pest management approaches. He earned a Ph.D. in Chemical Ecology from Universität Bayreuth (Germany) and completed postdoctoral training at The Ohio State University. Mahmood has served as a scientist at UC Davis and as a vector biologist for the State of Vermont.
10. **Daniel Palla** is an organic pistachio farmer. His family has farmed in Kern County since 1913. Daniel uses sheep for weed control, maintains year-round cover crops, and avoids broad-spectrum pesticides. He holds Fruit and Crop Science degrees from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, and is a PCA, QAL, CCA, and TSP. Additionally, he has volunteered with Spray Safe for over a decade to promote responsible pesticide use.
11. **Renee Pinel** is the President/CEO of Western Plant Health Association (WPH) and brings 35 years of experience and holistic knowledge in pest management, plant and soil health, and human and environmental health related issues. Through her work with WPH, Renee has gained expertise in agricultural supply chain issues, factors that impact decisions on sustainable product sourcing, and alternative product adoption. As a representative of farm groups and the pesticide industry, Renee has extensive direct experience in participating in meetings and discussions ranging from serving on Statewide CalEPA Environmental Justice Advisory Committees and regional regulatory agency advisory committees, to participation in local community meetings.
12. **David Poplin** serves as CEO of CDS Services Inc. dba Legion Pest Management, overseeing more than 69 federal government contracts. Since 2014, he has consulted for the Los Angeles Unified School District as a pest expert and IPM consultant as well as having served as a subject matter expert for litigation matters. David holds California State licenses with the Structural Pest Control Board as Operator Branches 2 & 3 and DPR QAL A & B and earned his Associate Certified Entomologist (ACE) designation from the Entomological Society of America in 2013. In 2026, he was honored with the prestigious NPMA David Cooksey PestVet of the Year Award, recognizing his outstanding contributions to the pest management industry.

13. **Margaret Reeves** is a senior scientist at Pesticide Action Network (PAN) (now Pesticide Action and Agroecology Network), working in California and at the federal level to promote agroecology and the implementation of sustainable, climate-friendly agricultural practices and policies with an emphasis on ecological pest management. Margaret served as PAN's representative on the Board of Directors for the Equitable Food Initiative (2010-2024).
14. **Maggie Rodriguez** currently serves as Director of Global Regulatory and Government Affairs for Pro Farm Group, based in Davis, California. As a UC Davis Aggie, she has a background in Environmental Toxicology and over 17 years of experience working with biological crop protection products. She brings deep expertise in biopesticide registration, toxicology strategy, and global regulatory policy across North America, Latin America, and EMEA.
15. **Jason Saling** is a veteran viticulturist with more than 30 years experience in California winegrowing. Jason currently serves as Viticulturist at Aperture Cellars, where he is responsible for managing estate vineyards, winegrowing, and cultivating lasting partnerships to ensure the highest quality fruit. Previously, as Manager of Grower Relations at Rodney Strong Vineyards, Jason coached and promoted the adoption of sustainable pest management practices among a diverse community of growers. Previously, for more than a decade at Lynmar Estate, he optimized vineyard operations by assembling and training a team dedicated to sustainability, and led resource preservation strategies. Jason serves as President of the Sonoma County Vineyard Technical Group and as a director with the National Grape Research Alliance. He is deeply involved in grower education, regulatory collaboration, and directs Sustainable Pest Management Ambassador training for Sonoma County Fundacion de la Voz de la Viñedos.
16. **Mayra Sanchez, Ph.D.** is the Associate Director of Californians for Pesticide Reform (CPR), a statewide coalition of more than 200 organizations and networks dedicated to fostering more just and sustainable food systems by reducing the use of conventional, oil-based pesticides and promoting more agroecological practices. She approaches her work through an environmental justice lens, centering the perspectives of farmworkers and agricultural communities most impacted by pesticide exposure. Mayra brings insights from her research examining how agricultural communities draw from scientific knowledge and lived experience to understand the impacts of pesticide exposure and advocate for stronger protections.
17. **Paul R. Squires** has been a licensed pest control adviser for 32 years, now living in Yuba City. He was born in Lodi, CA and attended Chico State University, acquiring a B.S. degree in Agricultural Business. He started his career in agriculture in 1994 as a crop adviser. Establishing his own business as an independent PCA/consultant/farmer in 2002, he has expanded Squires Ag. Consulting, providing testimony services as a third-party expert witness and farm manager. Paul is the general manager of a 4000-acre ranch in Durham, CA (Gorrill Ranch) that grows rice,

walnuts, almonds, and pecans. He is a graduate of Class 37 of the California Ag. Leadership program and has served as a director on several boards including a water district, rice marketing group, Natomas Basin Conservancy, and local advisory committee for Farm Credit West for nine years.

18. **Andrew Sutherland, Ph.D.** is an extension entomologist employed as the University of California's Urban Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Advisor for the San Francisco Bay Area. Andrew serves pest management professionals by conducting applied research and delivering evidence-based education, aiming to develop new IPM strategies or to adapt and implement existing IPM strategies. Andrew's broad training and experience in IPM systems has been informed by graduate studies in entomology (Ph.D.: UC Davis, 2009), professional certification (BCE: Urban and Industrial Entomology & Plant-Related Entomology, 2012), state licensure (Qualified Applicators License: California Department of Pesticide Regulation, 2012), and 14 years working with pest control operators on collaborative applied field research projects.