

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER/
WEIGHTS & MEASURES**

**STRATEGIC PLAN
2019-2024**

Bold Measures to Cultivate Greatness

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER/WEIGHTS & MEASURES IS . . .

➤ **A leader in providing public safety**

Since its establishment in 1881, our Department has occupied a unique and continuously expansive role in ensuring the health and well-being of residents of Los Angeles County and beyond. The Department's 400 employees oversee a wide range of protective activities that impact the lives of nearly every person every day. The term "public safety" typically inspires thoughts of securing communities from threats of physical violence or assaults, thefts of property, and damaging effects of natural disasters, such as floods, earthquakes, and severe wind events. Yet, the safety of the public is also highly dependent upon prevention of risks to its food sources, its natural environment, its water supply, and the financial security of individual residents and consumers. From abatement of brush and other fire hazards to control of vertebrate pests, from enforcement against unsafe and illegal pesticide use to prevention of invasive agricultural pests and diseases, from assurance of engine fuel qualities to regulation of accurate measurements in all manner of commodity transactions and prevention of fraud in the marketplace, the Department protects the health, safety, food supply, financial wellness, property, and quality of life for all residents and visitors of our county and far beyond on a daily basis.

➤ **A leader in ensuring an equitable marketplace**

The Department is a nationally-recognized leader in enforcement of Weights and Measures laws and regulations, protecting both buyers and sellers from fraud and misrepresentation of commodity quantities at the retail and wholesale levels of commerce. Through education of industry operators regarding legal requirements for weighing/measuring device operation, product packaging and labeling, and transaction value calculations, and through strict enforcement of all applicable laws and regulations, the Department diligently acts as an invisible third party to every transaction in the marketplace. Proactive involvement in regulation of a level playing field for competitors as well as reliable commodity measurement and transaction accuracy for consumers ensures maintenance of an equitable marketplace for all. In sharing its experience and expertise with regional and national standards development organizations, the Department effectively influences development of model laws and regulations that positively affect consumers and business operators nationwide.

➤ **A leader in safeguarding agriculture**

Los Angeles County, being home to the busiest cargo seaport complex in the U.S., one of the largest air cargo complexes in LAX, the largest wholesale produce marketplace in the western U.S., and to over ten million residents with ties to over 140 countries worldwide, presents challenges and circumstances that place the Department in a primary role of protecting the county, the state, and the nation from introductions of pests and diseases that could devastate agriculture. Through diligent pest exclusion inspections of incoming produce and plant material shipments, prompt detection of invasive pests in the environment, in-house identification of insects and diseases found by growers, homeowners, Departmental staff and others, Phytosanitary Certification of outbound shipments of domestic crops, and strict enforcement of applicable quarantine regulations, the Department daily protects agricultural operations at county, state, national and international levels. Coupled with regulation of lawful pesticide use to protect against unsafe use upon consumable agriculture commodities, the Department guards both local, backyard growers and commercial agricultural operators from pests and diseases that threaten the very production and activities that significantly contribute to feeding the nation and world.

➤ **A leader in protecting the environment and human health**

ACWM, through its myriad programs, not only protects crops, livestock, and buyers and sellers in the marketplace, but also prevents serious threats to human health and the environment in which we live. A key endeavor of the pesticide use enforcement program is to ensure against improper and excessive applications of materials that can negatively impact native plant, animal and insect species or contaminate surface waters or groundwater. Preventing introductions of certain exotic insects is key not only to avoiding widespread crop damage, but also establishment of species that can disproportionately compete with, and overtake, native insects, many of which are highly beneficial, such as for pollination of plants or in controlling populations of detrimental species. Regulation of the production of produce represented as “organic” serves to minimize pesticide use while facilitating supplies of fruits and vegetables free from a wide range of chemicals and compounds, and ACWM’s Certified Farmers’ Market program enables thousands of growers to make available farm fresh produce often not otherwise found in many highly urbanized areas. Egg quality inspection ensures, among other things, that eggs in the marketplace are fresh, wholesome, and free from cracked, compromised, or soiled shells, and the Integrated Pest Management program provides guidance to business operators, municipalities, schools, and many others in effective means to manage pests through maintenance and cultural controls before employing pesticidal treatments. These and numerous other ACWM services serve critical roles in protecting the health of residents and the environment all around them.

➤ **A leader in implementing advanced laboratory technologies**

ACWM offers and maintains laboratory and calibration services among the highest quality levels available nationwide:

ACWM’s entomology laboratory provides critical insect identification services to quickly recognize the presence of invasive species which can severely damage or destroy California’s \$54 billion agricultural (crops and livestock) industry as well as native plants, prized and costly landscaping, and backyard fruit grown by more than 70% of county residents. Identification and information services are provided at no cost to residents, schools, pest control operators, nurseries, municipalities and other government entities. Processing over 6,000 pest specimens annually, maintaining a reference collection of 80,000 invertebrates, and employing state-of-the-art microscope and imaging equipment, the laboratory ranks as one of the finest in the state.

ACWM’s plant pathology laboratory provides prompt and accurate identification of exotic plant diseases that can, and routinely do, enter California through nursery stock, soil, produce, and other agricultural shipments from other states and countries. Again, services are provided at no charge to the public, including plant disease and damage diagnosis, plant, fungi, and nematode identification, and landscape consultation. Staff also provides valuable education and training to members of the nursery, arborist, landscape maintenance, and related industries in identifying and addressing such diseases and symptomology in the field, enhancing and facilitating a broad and consistent monitoring of the environment for newly-introduced risks. All is done to protect, through early detection, against introduction and establishment of diseases that can destroy food-producing plants and trees and beautiful vegetation, both native and homeowner-cultivated, that make our county and statewide environment a wonderful place in which to live.

ACWM’s metrology laboratory verifies and maintains standards utilized to guarantee the correct calibration of commercially-used meters and scales to ensure that consumers receive the full value – mass and volume – of the product or service purchased. Utilizing advanced testing and measurement instruments and field standards traceable to national standards through the laboratory’s certification work, ACWM’s routine inspection activities extend from retail and commercial scales and gas station dispensers to taxi and utility meters. Included in the metrology laboratory’s many services are calibration and certification of mass and volumetric standards employed by myriad manufacturers and other business entities to produce products of consistent and precise measurements. The laboratory is awarded and maintains recognition status by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Office of Weights and Measures.

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER / DIRECTOR

I am excited to release the Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures (ACWM) Strategic Plan, “Bold Measures to Cultivate Greatness.” The first formalized Strategic Plan adopted and enacted in our Department’s long history, it has been developed through input and ideas from the entire membership of our highly-valued and knowledgeable ACWM team.

Los Angeles County, with its tremendously rich heritage in agriculture, trade, and development, has changed a great deal over the 138 years since the seeds of our Department were planted in 1881. Once the most productive agricultural county in the entire U.S., L.A. County has evolved into one of the world’s great centers of commerce, residency, and commodity distribution, including massive volumes of importation and export. While continuing to provide very important services and protections to our local agricultural operations, business communities, and residents, ACWM has necessarily assumed key and indispensable roles in protecting all California growers from invasive pests and diseases that can be introduced through our seaport complexes, air cargo operations, ground shipments of produce and nursery stock, and parcel shipments flooding in to more than 10 million residents from all around the world. Similarly, we protect against ravages of stormwater flooding and wildfires through critical pest and vegetation management activities, against human health and environmental damage from unsafe and unlawful pesticide use, and against fraud and unfair business practices in the wholesale and retail marketplace. We can and should be proud of these and our additional wide range of programs and services while always endeavoring to seek means to enhance our operations and leverage our coordination with partners to have even greater positive impacts in even more effective and efficient ways. This Plan sets the course for our Team to do exactly that.

This Plan – OUR Plan – looks, first, to measure, analyze, and develop means to do what we already do with greater effectiveness. Through identifying ways to streamline processes and maximize benefits of technology, we can do even more simply by working in smarter ways. Next, the Plan seeks to capitalize on the partnerships we have, not only with other County, State and federal agencies, but with all our stakeholders and the public we serve. Through collaboration and increased community involvement, we can better focus all available resources to the greatest collective benefit. Perhaps most importantly, our Plan looks internally, striving to grow and harvest the bounty of skills, abilities, and ideas of our most valuable assets, each of you. By attracting, retaining, and investing in the development of outstanding ACWM Team members, we can truly cultivate greatness in our Department and in all that we provide.

Thank you for what you already do and for your invaluable input, thus far, in contributing to the development of our Strategic Plan. This is not a completion, but, rather, a beginning to an exciting new undertaking of measures to move ACWM into even greater roles and contributions to fulfilling our mission. I welcome you to the journey and offer my appreciation, in advance, for your dedication and teamwork in making it a reality.

Sincerely,

Kurt E. Floren

Agricultural Commissioner/
Director of Weights & Measures

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Vision:

ACWM is universally acclaimed for our breakthrough thinking and strategic leadership in integrating protection and enforcement to promote public, marketplace, and environmental safety.

Mission:

As an essential resource and value-added partner, ACWM continuously advances reliability, locally and nationally, in environmental initiatives and marketplace integrity.

Values:

Integrity: We are honest, transparent, and courageous in our decisions, accepting personal and collective responsibility for our actions

Respect: We value each person's viewpoint and contribution to the organization, recognizing diversity of thought as indispensable to our success

Responsive: We take needed action in a timely way, acting quickly and positively to changing circumstances

Creative: We use critical thinking to anticipate challenges, explore opportunities, and take action to prevent negative impacts

Collaborative: We plan and work together across organizational boundaries, drawing upon our collective knowledge and skills to deliver exceptional outcomes

STRATEGIC GOALS

Goal #1: Operational Leadership

The Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights & Measures has received national recognition for the quality of its programs and services. We commit to expanding our practices in each of our areas of responsibility, setting new standards for excellence.

Goal 2: Interconnectedness

The Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights & Measures has actively collaborated on projects with other County departments, State and federal partners, other municipalities, and external communities to leverage our strengths to achieve shared goals. We commit to creating and supporting additional networks that improve marketplace integrity and environmental safety.

Goal 3: Human Resource Solutions

The Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights & Measures has become increasingly challenged by the interplay between changing workforce needs, expanding demands on our services and programs, and the County's human resource policies. We commit to examining our human resource practices and revising, as appropriate, to better align with emergent needs.

STRATEGIC GOALS, STRATEGIES & OBJECTIVES

Goal #1: Operational Leadership

The Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights & Measures has received national recognition for the quality of its programs and services. We commit to expanding our practices in each of our areas of responsibility, setting new standards for excellence.

Strategy 1.1: Measurement & Continuous Improvement: Collect and analyze data on all major programs and services to be used for evaluation and on-going improvement in processes, programs, and service delivery.

Objective 1.1.1: Outcome Standards and Metrics: By 2021, reach stretch goals in 50% of our major programs in the areas of inspections completed, regulatory compliance levels achieved, and budgetary efficiency; by 2024, reach stretch goals in 75% of areas above

Objective 1.1.2: Operational Dashboards: By 2021, develop and implement a monitoring and measurement system that enables designated management to view performance indicators on a daily basis.

Objective 1.1.3: Pilot Programs: By 2023, propose a minimum of two pilot programs for County approval and implementation. By 2024, propose an additional pilot program

Strategy 1.2: Technology Imperative: Identify and implement cost-efficient, new technologies to optimize operations.

Objective 1.2.1: Web-Based Information System: ACWM has over 30 applications which would benefit from migration to web-based systems, making them easily accessible by authorized staff. By 2022, migrate twelve (12) applications to web-based systems, to include Annual Wholesale Produce Dealers License, Structural Fumigation Fee, four PC/Focus applications supporting transition to eCAPS, DR Books, four applications for Weed Abatement Declared Parcels for Weed Abatement/Pest Management Bureau, and both Meters and Scales applications for Weights and Measures. By June 2023, migrate a minimum 8 additional applications and, by June 2024, complete migration of all remaining applications to web-based systems.

Objective 1.2.2: Laboratory Expansion: By 2021, identify and begin implementing technologies that extend the scope of services offered by the three ACWM laboratories.

Objective 1.2.3: Operational Productivity: By 2021, identify a minimum of three programs and/or service activities that can be enhanced for efficiency and productivity through the use of existing technologies. By 2022, develop a field technology plan and begin implementation.

Goal 2: Interconnectedness

The Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights & Measures has actively collaborated on projects with other County departments, other municipalities, and external communities to leverage our strengths to achieve shared goals. We commit to creating and supporting additional networks that improve marketplace integrity and environmental safety.

Strategy 2.1: Outreach & Partnerships: Actively engage current and potential stakeholders to determine the need for additional programs and services for public, market, and environmental safety.

Objective 2.1.1: Inter-organizational Collaboration: By 2022, establish a minimum of three new collaborative projects with other County Departments.

Objective 2.1.2: Information Generation: By 2021, initiate a yearly series of customer focus groups and community listening sessions to identify and take action on identified issues and ways to improve our programs and services.

Objective 2.1.3: Second Language Education: By July 2020, implement an education program in at least two predominately second language consumer groups; by January 2022, assess the impact of these programs and, as appropriate, extend to other second-language consumer groups.

Objective 2.1.4: Consumer Protection Network: By 2021, identify and begin active participation in County and other community groups committed to consumer and environment protection.

Strategy 2.2: Public Awareness: Develop and implement additional educational and communication programs to broaden public and media understanding of our programs & services.

Objective 2.2.1: Community Engagement: By 2021, implement a systematic program to promote ACWM programs and services through city council meetings, neighborhood councils and other civic organizations, and business organizations.

Objective 2.2.2: Social Media: By December 2020, develop a robust social media presence to promote ACWM programs and services.

Goal 3: Human Resource Solutions

The Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights & Measures has become increasingly challenged by the interplay between changing workforce needs, expanding demands on our services and programs, and the County's human resource policies. We commit to examining our human resource practices and revise, as appropriate, to better align with emergent needs.

Strategy 3.1: Workforce Investments: Build and sustain a motivated, high performing workforce.

Objective 3.1.1: Training & Development: By 2020, all new Supervisors must attend the County supervisory leadership program within twelve months of appointment; all current supervisors must attend by the end of 2020. By March 31, 2019, establish a quarterly managers' forum for discussing organizational issues and identifying best practices.

Objective 3.1.2: Mentorship: By July 2020, establish a formal development program, including selection criteria, and recruit mentors; by December 31, 2019, establish an ACWM policy and accompanying procedures through which people in ACWM can request mentoring support.

Objective 3.1.3: Succession Planning: By September 2019 implement a combination internal-external leadership development program to ensure staff readiness to undertake managerial and executive leadership positions.

Objective 3.1.4: Professional Affiliations & Conferences: By June 2020, establish a policy and procedures for employees in good standing to attend professional meetings and conferences as part of ACWM's training and development efforts.

Strategy 3.2: Policies, Procedures, & Practices: Review and identify human resource areas to improve and better meet organizational, service, and employee requirements.

Objective 3.2.1: Recruitment, Hiring, & Retention Plan: By July 2020, establish formal recruitment partnerships with academic institutions/departments and other professional organizations; By 2021, work with DHR to develop a streamlined hiring process that reduces overall hiring time.

Objective 3.2.2: Job Classifications: By December 2019, establish (in conjunction with CEO Classification) a five-year plan to review all job classification; by July 2020, begin the review process.

Strategy 3.3: Communication Networks: Develop and implement an effective communication plan to improve the flow and quality of information throughout the organization.

Objective 3.3.1: Digital Platform: By 2021, establish a secure intranet that allows designated ACWM employees to share general information, conduct chats, review proposed policies and ideas, provide technical and operational directives, etc.