

Date of Hearing: January 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 52 (Aguiar-Curry) – As Amended January 8, 2026

Policy Committee: Agriculture

Vote: 7 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill authorizes the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to establish the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Producer Advisory Committee and the Small-Scale Producer Advisory Committee.

Specifically, this bill, among other things:

- 1) Authorizes the secretary of CDFA to establish the BIPOC Producer Advisory Committee and a Small-Scale Producer Advisory Committee to advise the secretary and CDFA with respect to their responsibilities under the Farmer Equity Act of 2017.
- 2) Authorizes the advisory committees to advise the secretary on programs, policies, education, outreach, technical assistance, and general needs for small-scale producers, medium-scale producers, and socially disadvantaged producers in California.
- 3) Provides that the members of the advisory committees shall be small-scale or medium-scale socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers.
- 4) Provides that all members of the advisory committees shall be reimbursed for actual and necessary travel expenses incurred in the performance of their duties while on official business of the advisory committees.
- 5) Provides that the meetings of the advisory committees shall be open and public in accordance with the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, as specified.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) CDFA estimates its annual cost to reimburse advisory committee members for travel expenses to be approximately \$10,000 (General Fund). CDFA notes that advisory committee members were historically reimbursed for their travel expenses. However, due to recent budget cuts, the department eliminated most of its travel funds available for committee expenses – and both committees have been meeting primarily virtually as a result.
- 2) Ongoing cost pressure, in the tens of thousands of dollars but potentially in excess of \$150,000 annually (General Fund), in staffing costs to facilitate the work of the advisory committees. To date, CDFA’s Farm Equity Advisor (see background for more information) and one analyst dedicate a portion of their time to support both committees.

As part of the Governor's proposed budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year, CDFA is requesting approximately \$25 million ongoing (General Fund) for 10 permanent positions for the California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program. One of these positions is a small farm business and regulatory liaison, who, among other responsibilities, will co-facilitate the small-scale producer advisory committee, as well as be the point of contact for issues pertaining to small-scale farming and ranching operations in the state.

Regardless, because the primary purpose of the bill is to establish an advisory committee, the bill is a candidate for the committee's suspense file, consistent with the committee's rules.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

In 2017, I authored the Farmer Equity Act to ensure that socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers were included in the development and enforcement of food and agricultural policy that affects them. The California BIPOC Producer and Small-Scale Producer Advisory Committees have been key to the implementation of this bill by providing a forum for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to offer feedback on CDFA's programs and policies. This bill formally codifies these committees to ensure these voices continue to be heard.

2) **Background.** AB 1348 (Aguiar-Curry), Chapter 620, Statutes of 2017, established the Farmer Equity Act of 2017. AB 1348, among other things, requires CDFA to ensure the inclusion of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of food and agriculture laws, regulations, policies, and programs. The legislation also established a position within CDFA's executive office to support this work; accordingly, CDFA hired a Farm Equity Advisor in 2018. AB 149 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 106, Statutes of 2025, required CDFA, in consultation with the BIPOC Producer Advisory Committee and the Small-Scale Producer Advisory Committee, to establish the Regional Farmer Equipment and Cooperative Resources Assistance Pilot Program. While CDFA has established both committees, the author's office contends the committees are not officially established in statute, "meaning they could be dissolved if there were any changes in administration." This bill seeks to establish the committees in statute "so that they can continue to advise CDFA based on their needs and lived experiences."

According to CDFA, the BIPOC Producer Advisory Committee is comprised of 12 self-identified BIPOC individuals (based on specified criteria) and meets on a quarterly basis in accordance with the Bagley Keene Act for Open Meetings. The Small-Scale Producer Advisory Committee is comprised of 10 members (based on specified criteria) and meets on a quarterly basis. Current members serve four-year terms.

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