

# Organic growers cheer new law reducing paperwork, fees

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Mary Ocasion, owner of Churn Creek Meadow Organic Farm south of Redding, Calif., operates a booth at a farmers' market Sept. 24 in Redding. She says she hopes a new law will reduce the paperwork for organic growers, which can be excessive compared to what conventional growers must do.

Churn Creek Meadow Organic Farm near Redding.

"It's an amazing amount of paperwork that organic farmers have to do that conventional farmers don't," Ocasion said. "At the beginning of July, I have to file my organic registration form and they need the amount of pounds we produce in the field for each type (of a given crop). They want a lot of detail on everything we grow."

Ocasion said her annual state registration fee is about \$100, above and beyond the \$995 she pays for inspection and certification.

Stone's bill "will simplify the process while retaining all of the protections that were already in place," said Margaret Jensen, co-owner of Good Work Organic Farm in Round Mountain, Calif.

The cost of organic certification can be prohibitive for small farmers, said Laura Burlison of Burlison Fruit Stand in Dairyville, Calif. The farm isn't fully organic because of the expense, though it uses many organic methods, she said.

But while state registration fees can be as much as \$300 for some growers, the bigger issue for producers has been the paperwork, Damewood said.

"What we've done in the legislation is we've streamlined the whole registration process so that it allows accredited certifying agents like CCOF to register or to review registrations on behalf of our clients," she said.

REDDING, Calif. — Organic farmers in California say they are pleased with a new law aimed at reducing the annual paperwork and fees for registering their operations with the state.

The bill by Assemblyman Mark Stone, D-Scotts Valley, passed with nearly unanimous support in the Legislature and will mark the first update to California's 2003 organic law.

Currently the program's registration process requires information that duplicates what producers already report to the USDA, and the program has operated with millions of dollars in excess funds collected as registration fees, notes the California Certified Organic Farmers organization, which certifies organic farms.

"California is the only state that requires an additional step by requiring all certified organic operations in the state to also register with the state," said Kelly Damewood, the Santa Cruz-based organization's policy director. "This requires additional paperwork and fees in addition to certification, so this has been a longstanding concern for organic producers in California."

California had 2,637 certified organic farms with 790,413 acres in 2015, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

The CCOF supported Stone's bill, which will allow USDA-accredited organic certifying agents to submit their clients' registration information directly to the state — a shortcut the CCOF believes will save growers hundreds of hours in paperwork every year.

The bill also reduces state registration fees for small producers and caps the fee schedule for everyone, allowing future reductions as determined by the state agriculture secretary in consultation with an organic products committee, a news release explains.

Damewood and other industry leaders will work with state officials over the next few months to iron out details of the changes.

Any reduction in fees and paperwork would be helpful, said Mary Ocasion, owner of

# New UI economist hits the ground running

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**  
Capital Press



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

Hernan Tejada settles into his new office at the University of Idaho Twin Falls Research and Extension Center on Sept. 9.

Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. He then worked as an engineering analyst and manager at a fish processing company and later at a large forest products company. But he decided he wanted to fur-

ther his business education.

"I was thinking I wanted to be a CEO," he said.

He took up the University of Notre Dame on a scholarship and returned to the U.S. He earned an MBA in 2000 but

had lost interest in the business administration route along the way.

"It involved a lot of cut-throat decisions, many times unethical decisions, and I became very disenchanted," he said.

His time at Notre Dame also involved teaching at a community college, and he found his real vocation — academic research.

"I realized academia was the place for me," he said.

He began looking at programs where he could earn a doctorate in economics and was attracted to North Carolina State University, which had strong quantitative programs. He began his studies there in the mid-2000s and worked as a research assistant.

And he could get away at Christmas for visits to Chile, where he met Luz Maria. The two were married in Chile in 2009.

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