APPENDIX J: PRODUCTION AGRICULTURE DETERMINATION

Introduction

The need for the Agricultural Commissioner's Office to make a determination if an agricultural operation is of an adequate scope and size to be considered "production agriculture" occurs in the context of providing buffer protection, evaluating agricultural subdivisions, lot line adjustments, general plan amendments (zoning), planning area standards, and occasionally with grading permit issues. The need for such a determination has been proposed for the Agriculture and Open Space Element in order to determine the applicability of open space policies to property with agricultural uses.

Lands zoned agriculture, or in a conservation program, or lands currently committed to a sustained productive agriculture practice are eligible for a production agriculture determination. This determination is to be made by the Agricultural Commissioner's Office based upon production agriculture criteria utilized during review of project referrals.

Utilization of criteria: Production agriculture criteria provide for general considerations when making a determination. It should be stressed that each site/operation is unique and some level of professional judgement is necessary when utilizing the criteria and making a determination.

Production Agricultural Criteria

- **Agricultural Use Parcel Size**
  - U.C. Cooperative Extension literature and acreage guidelines.
  - Agricultural preserve program minimum acreage eligibility criteria.
  - Consideration of the type of crop or cropping pattern.
  - Unique site and geographic features.
- **Agricultural Practices**
  - The use of heavy equipment or other substantial power equipment.
  - The use of employees, contract or lease agreements.
  - The use of agriculturally labeled pesticides (i.e., restricted materials permit or operator ID number).

- **Zoning**

  Agriculture (AG), Rural Lands (RL), or Residential Rural (RR) land use categories rather than residential type categories.

- **Natural Resources**

  Availability of resources, such as agriculturally productive soils, irrigation water, climatic conditions, access, size necessary for agricultural production.

- **Marketing**

  The marketing of agricultural products vs. personal use. Marketing outlets include farmers' markets and direct sales from the property.

- **Capital Outlay**

  Consider the extent of capital outlay necessary for the successful establishment of a commercial agricultural operation.

- **Agriculture Preserve or Conservation**

  Land that is enrolled in the agricultural preserve program, a conservation reserve program or designated with an agricultural or open space easement.

Agricultural criteria and application may differ: While certain criteria may apply to all types of agricultural determinations, other criteria may be unique to a specific application. For example, when evaluating an agricultural subdivision, the criteria may focus on the agricultural capability of a parcel to allow for it to be a "stand alone" unit to support a family of four as an agricultural operation. Consequently, when evaluating a buffer adjacent to an existing smaller scale agricultural operation (which may be supplemental to other ag or non-ag business), the criteria may focus on protecting the existing use. Both projects need an agriculture use determination but the criteria may vary considerably.

Mitigation may vary: Mitigation (such as a buffer recommendation) may vary depending on the type of determination. For example, smaller scale agricultural use, such as a ten acre kiwi farm in the RR zone, may have less buffer protection than a "production agriculture" use such as a 600 acre vineyard in the Ag zone.