

Cooperative Extension

Background

The Congress of the United States, in an act passed in 1862, granted land to the individual states for establishing colleges. The colleges established are known as land-grant colleges, one of which is the University of California (UC). The federal act known as the Smith-Lever Act, passed May 8, 1914, grants funds to each state to be used to provide the citizens with useful information on agriculture and related subjects. The Smith-Lever Act directs that the funds be administered by land grant colleges. Thus came into existence the Cooperative Extension, as a noncredit, off-campus arm of UC, which has been operating in Riverside County since 1917.

The UC Cooperative Extension provides science-based education and assistance in solving problems related to agriculture, natural resources, food nutrition and community development. All counties in California participate in the Cooperative Extension program.

Support for operation of the Riverside County Cooperative Extension comes from the United States Department of Agriculture, UC, Riverside County, various other California counties, gifts, private grants and research contracts.

Riverside County support is defined by an agreement between the UC Agricultural Extension and Riverside County dated September 19, 1955. In that agreement, the county promised to pay the salaries of not less than seven clerical and stenographic employees and any necessary extra help. In addition, the county is responsible for paying for facilities, maintenance operation and outlay costs of the Agricultural Extension services.

Findings

1. The 1997-98 financial support from Riverside County for personnel salaries is at a level of 4.75 full time employees that is 2.25 full time employees below that specified in the 1955 agreement referenced above.
2. In 1980, the Riverside County Cooperative Extension began the first "Master Gardener Program" which has now been adopted by at least twenty other counties in California. It offers free advice and help to all who ask about gardening or agricultural subjects.
3. In the fiscal year 1997-98, between 500 and 600 adult volunteers are working in diverse activities ranging from operating the master gardeners' hotline to conducting full field research programs.
4. The management of the Cooperative Extension was instrumental in bringing the California Farm Conference to Riverside for the first time in February of 1997.
5. The Cooperative Extension has played a part in getting subtropical fruit cultivation started in California. The mango crop has great potential for future economic return in Riverside County.

Recommendation

Riverside County Board of Supervisors:

Resolve the differences between the current financial support given the Cooperative Extension and that promised to be given in the agreement of 1955.