



OFFICE OF THE
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER
SEALER OF WEIGHTS & MEASURES

Lisa D. Herbert
Agricultural Commissioner
Sealer of Weights & Measures

January 28, 2025

Subject: Continuation of the Interim Urgency Ordinance on Industrial Hemp Cultivation

Dear Members of the Sutter County Board of Supervisors,

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of the continuation of the Interim Urgency Ordinance imposing a Temporary Moratorium on the cultivation of industrial hemp within the unincorporated areas of Sutter County.

As the Agricultural Commissioner of Sutter County, I urge you to deliberate carefully on the broader impacts of this significant decision. Our office administers a variety of mandated programs that face heightened risks due to ongoing support for industrial hemp cultivation—a program that has proven to be a public nuisance, negatively affecting public health, safety, and welfare, while also posing severe fiscal challenges. Personally, I have received a death threat from an individual associated with the hemp industry, highlighting the critical nature of this issue.

Sutter County's fiscal crisis further intensifies the need for careful stewardship of resources. My office has endured substantial budget reductions. In Fiscal Year 2023-24, we sustained a cut of \$166,463 from our \$3.2 million budget. The adopted budget for Fiscal Year 2024-25 reflects an additional reduction of \$361,841, bringing the total recent cuts to \$528,304. Moreover, a hiring freeze has been placed on two key positions within our department: one Agricultural and Standards Biologist and one Secretary. These reductions limit our capacity to fulfill mandated obligations.

The financial burden of the industrial hemp program cannot be ignored. From Fiscal Years 2018-19 through 2023-24, the program has accumulated a \$415,827 shortfall—excluding the ongoing deficit since July 1, 2024. This program's operation directly conflicts with your stated Board goal to:

"Operate County government in a fiscally and managerially responsible manner to ensure Sutter County remains a viable and sustainable community to live, work, recreate, and raise a family."

Additionally, it contradicts the Sutter County Industrial Hemp Cultivation and Processing Ordinance, which mandates that:

"It is the intent that the County shall be reimbursed for all time, services, and materials required to implement, administer, and enforce State Law and this Chapter associated with cultivation and processing of hemp."

Despite our earnest efforts over the past six years, industrial hemp cultivation remains an unsteady venture nationwide, with underdeveloped markets undermining its viability as a significant crop. Some might argue that the program aligns with your Board's goal to:

"Protect, support, and enhance Sutter County's rich agricultural base."

However, harvested acreage data tells a different story. Industrial hemp contributes a negligible fraction of total farmland.

Year	Harvested Acres	% of farmland**
2019	411	0.11
2020	320.91	0.09
2021	4.91	0.00
2022	48.5	0.01
2023	68.5	0.02
2024	228.85*	0.06

(*Includes double cropping)

(**Data calculated from Sutter County General Plan Technical Document)

This minimal contribution does not account for additional impacts on other departments, including the Sheriff's Office, Development Services, County Administrative Office, and County Counsel.

In conclusion, I respectfully request that the interim moratorium on industrial hemp cultivation remain in place until the County's budget stabilizes and sustainable markets for hemp products are established. Should you choose to permit hemp cultivation, I urge you to direct staff to swiftly revise the current ordinance to mitigate public nuisances and address the negative impacts on public health, safety, and welfare.

Additionally, I ask that you prioritize reinstating the frozen positions within our department and prevent further budget cuts for Fiscal Year 2025-26.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to Sutter County's fiscal health and public welfare.

Sincerely,



Lisa D. Herbert
Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer