



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 3/24/2026

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Department of Agriculture/Weights & Measures

Staff Name and Phone Number: Andrew F. Smith, (707) 565-2371

Vote Requirement: 4/5 th

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Consolidated Fee Hearing - FY 2026-27 Fees for the Department of Agriculture/Weights & Measures (First Reading)

Recommended Action:

Adopt a Resolution introducing, reading the title, and waiving further reading of the proposed ordinance establishing and amending fees for services provided by the Department of Agriculture/Weights & Measures for Fiscal Year 2026-27.

Executive Summary:

The County of Sonoma engaged with a consultant, NBS (Consultant) to perform a User Fee Study (Fee Study) in FY 2019-20. The goal of the Fee Study was to present findings regarding maximum allowable cost recovery amounts from the various fee analyses performed as part of the Fee Study and to provide the County with the information needed to update and establish user and regulatory fees for services. The fee increases that resulted from that Fee Study were implemented over a three-year period beginning in FY 2022-23.

In FY 2025-26, the Department implemented an increase to cover the increased salaries and benefits costs and committed to completing an internal fee analysis. To determine FY 2026-27 fees, the Department developed and utilized a method consistent with previous fee studies to calculate costs to provide services. The Department is requesting, on average, a three percent increase in fees for FY 2026-27 to cover the increases as determined by the internal departmental fee analysis. Where the three percent increase does not reach full cost recovery, the Department will implement a phased approach of three percent increases over the next three to five years.

If the proposed ordinance is adopted on April 14, 2026, the new fees will become effective on July 1, 2026.

Discussion:

California cities, counties, and special districts may impose user and regulatory fees for services and activities they provide through provisions set forth in the State Constitution, Article XIII C §1(e)(1)-(3). Under this legal framework, a fee may not exceed the reasonable cost of providing the service or performing the activity. For a fee to qualify as such, it must relate to a service or activity performed at the request of an individual or

entity, or their actions specifically cause the local government agency to perform additional activities.

For FY 2026-27 fees development, the Department utilized a method consistent with previous fee studies to calculate appropriate costs of services. The analysis included a full review of each type of service provided by the Department including all variables informing fees (such as salaries and benefits costs for the staff performing the services, technology costs, and administrative overhead costs). Based on the analysis, the Department is requesting, on average, a three percent increase in fees for FY 2026-27. Where the three percent increase does not reach full cost recovery, the Department will implement a phased approach of fee increases.

The FY 2026-27 proposed rate increases by operational division above current fees are as follows:

Operational Division	FY 25-26 Cost Recovery %	FY 26-27 Proposed Rate Increase %	FY 26-27 Proposed Cost Recovery %
Agriculture	41.6%	3%	44.6%
Land Stewardship	62.1%	3%	65.1%
Weights & Measures	93.5%	3%	96.5%

Agriculture Division

The Agriculture Division acts under the jurisdiction and direction of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), and the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR), and works in cooperation with various federal, state, regional, and local agencies. The Agricultural Commissioner enforces the laws and regulations of the California Food and Agricultural Code, the California Code of Regulations, and local ordinances while serving at the discretion of the County Board of Supervisors and the CDFA Secretary of Agriculture.

Historically, fees in the Agriculture Division have remained below full cost recovery to help support the local agricultural community, and as a result, the General Fund is used to supplement division costs. In turn, the amount of General Fund contributed to the CDFA program activity costs within the Agriculture Division supports the County's Maintenance of Effort (MOE) for unclaimed gas tax revenue and helps leverage additional funding from the CDFA.

The Agricultural services hourly rate decreased by 7% through an internal department fee analysis. However, since these fees were not at full cost recovery, a 3% increase is being requested to continue to achieve cost recovery and to address ongoing cost increases. Fee revenues for Agriculture services (excluding Cannabis and Hemp) comprise approximately 6% of the division's total revenues.

Additionally, the Agriculture Division is requesting a \$45 increase to the technical fees paid for Digital Health Department (DHD) software used for recording hazardous materials projects from \$13 to \$58, an increase of

348%. This significant one-year increase in FY 2026-27 is related to implementation costs for new hazardous materials project management software costs through Department of Emergency Management's contract with Tyler Technologies. Starting in FY 2027-28, DHD technology fees are estimated to be \$24 per site.

The Agriculture Division is also requesting a \$24 increase to the technical fee paid for Accela Automation software used for recording Cannabis and Hemp permit applications. The fee would be raised from \$18 to \$42, which is a 233% increase. This fee increase is related to increased permit management software costs through Permit Sonoma's contract with Accela Subscription Services (Accela) entered into in FY 2024-25. This fee is expected to increase annually for the term of the contract with Accela.

Land Stewardship Division

The Land Stewardship Division administers the Sonoma County Vineyard and Orchard Site Development Ordinance, also known as VESCO, as well as agricultural grading and drainage. Growers planting new vineyards, orchards, or replanting existing vineyards or orchards are required to meet standards within the Sonoma County Code and comply with requirements including best management practices (BMP) as established in the Agricultural Commissioner's BMP Guidelines.

The Land Stewardship services hourly rate increased by 1% through the internal departmental fee analysis. However, since these fees were not at full cost recovery, a 3% increase is being requested to continue to achieve cost recovery and to address ongoing cost increases. Fee revenues for Land Stewardship services comprise approximately 70% of the division's total revenues.

Additionally, the Land Stewardship Division is requesting a \$24 increase to the technical fee paid for Accela Automation software used for recording VESCO permit applications. The fee would be raised from \$18 to \$42, which is a 233% increase. This fee increase is related to increased permit management software costs through Permit Sonoma's contract with Accela Subscription Services (Accela) entered into in FY 2024-25. This fee is expected to increase annually for the term of the contract with Accela.

Weights & Measures Division

The Weights & Measures Division is committed to protecting the economic health of the community by preserving and maintaining confidence in the accuracy of weighing and measuring instruments, product standards, and business practices used in commerce. Through this balanced commitment and timely response to citizen requests, consumers and businesses are assured the means of accurate value comparison and fair competition.

The Automated Point of Sale Fees are for costs for point-of-sale scanner compliance, including inspections and testing for accuracy. This ensures correct charges when a store scans the bar code on a package and the price rings up at the checkout counter. Division staff inspects to ensure the products sold at the correct listed price. Noncompliance with these regulations tends to affect underrepresented communities where small

overcharges can have greater effect. In this way, these fees support the County’s Strategic Plan pillar of Racial Equity and Social Justice.

Device Registration fees in the Weights & Measures Division are set by Business & Professions Code §12240. This code sets out the authority for Weights & Measures staff to test a variety of weighing and measuring devices used in commerce to ensure equity in the marketplace. This includes everything from scales used at a deli counter to taxi meters measuring the distance traveled.

The Weights & Measures hourly rate decreased by 19% through the most recent internal department fee analysis. However, since these fees were not at full cost recovery, a 3% increase is being requested to continue to achieve cost recovery and to address ongoing cost increases. Fee revenues for the Weights & Measures division comprise approximately 92% of the division’s total revenues.

Estimated Revenues and Future Review

The FY 2026-27 estimated additional revenue projected from the proposed 3% fee increase is approximately \$20,633. The Department is approximately 67% self-funded through state grant revenue and costs for services (fees) and receives approximately \$2.97 million in General Fund support. While the overarching goal is to implement fees for services that cover departmental costs, significant consideration has been given to community impacts. Fees that have a great community benefit, in particular Agriculture Division fees and require additional funding support through maintenance of effort by the County General Fund.

The Department plans to conduct an internal evaluation of its fees and cost recovery every three to five years to ensure the fees equate to the estimated cost of providing the service. Efforts are currently underway to examine efficiencies to keep costs for services flat or reduce the costs where warranted.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

04/15/2025 - Adoption of FY 2025-26 Agriculture/Weights & Measures Fees and Staff Hourly Rates

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY25-26 Adopted	FY26-27 Projected	FY27-28 Projected
Budgeted Expenses		\$20,633	
Additional Appropriation Requested			

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Total Expenditures		\$20,633	
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other		\$20,633	
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources		\$20,633	

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

The Department anticipates an additional \$20,633 in revenue as a result of the proposed fee increases in FY 2026-27.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Resolution introducing and waiving further reading of Ordinance
- Attachment 2: Ordinance with Exhibit
- Attachment 3: FY 2026-27 Fee Summary

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board: