



Photo: A Torres



November 2025

# Santa Barbara County Quarter 1 Report 2025-26

Prepared for

Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner &  
Board of Supervisors

Our local mission:  
UCCE in Santa Barbara County  
improves the lives of local  
residents by working with  
growers, families, volunteers,  
and partners to advance science-  
based solutions in agriculture,  
natural ecosystems, community  
health, and youth development.



Photo: O Daugovich

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## EFFORTS & OUTCOMES FROM 2024

# At a glance

\$738K

Value of volunteer service hours

5,284

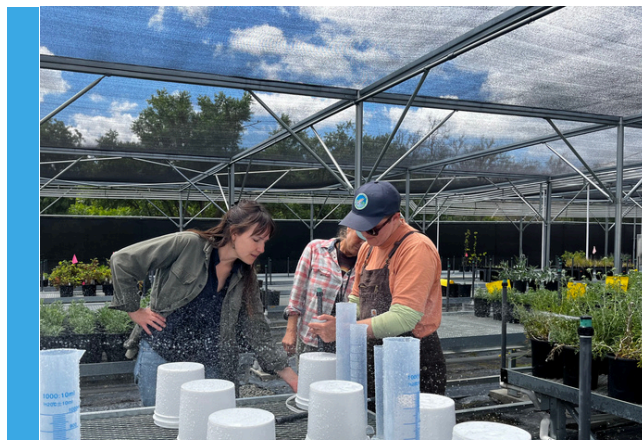
Community education participants

2,088

Growers, land managers, and agency partners at  
Advisor-led workshops & trainings

1,660

Youth across 11 county 4-H clubs



Irrigation training. Photo: E Volk

## 2024 Impacts:



Increased  
productivity,  
efficiency, and  
profitability of  
agriculture  
and working  
landscapes



Improved  
water quality,  
water use  
efficiency, and  
soil health



Improved  
food and  
nutrition  
security and  
food safety



Increased civic  
engagement  
and readiness  
for post-  
secondary  
education and  
careers



## BACKGROUND

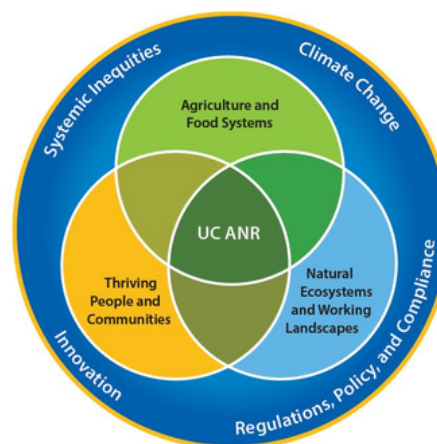
# UC in Collaboration with Local Counties

Partnering with Santa Barbara County since 1927

The University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) and Santa Barbara County have been partnering for close to a century to provide educational programs to county residents in agriculture, home economics, and youth development.

UCCE is part of the UC division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR), a statewide network of researchers and educators. In 2024, UC ANR published our 2040 Strategic Vision, a blueprint to guide our work, structure, and resource allocation to stay relevant to the challenges and opportunities across a diverse and vibrant state.

UCCE advisors, research support staff, community educators, and local volunteers work in teams to develop and extend practical, trusted, and science-based information in Santa Barbara County. We also leverage the expertise of campus researchers across the UC system and collaborate with local, state, and federal agencies to strengthen our education and outreach efforts. While much of our funding comes from state and federal sources, we depend on cooperative support from the County of Santa Barbara to fund operational costs and expenses for doing business in the County. This partnership ensures UC resources are expended in, relevant to, and beneficial for Santa Barbara County.



UCANR priorities



UCCE is part of a statewide network of researchers and educators - UC ANR.

# Agriculture and Food Systems Programs

Applied research and education in:

- Implementing safe, effective, and economical pest management
- Optimizing fertilizer application
- Improving water use efficiency
- Testing new varieties for economic and ecological resilience

Program	Clientele	Funding	Advisor
Integrated Pest Management	Growers, Pest Control Advisers	UC, grants	Chris Greer, Ph.D.
Soils, Water & Subtropicals	Growers, Pest Control Advisers	UC, grants	Ben Faber, Ph.D.
Production Horticulture	Growers, Pest Control Advisers, Public	UC, grants	Emma Volk, M.S.
Organic Agriculture-Education & Mentorship	Certified organic, transitioning, or aspiring organic producers	Grants	Maria De Lourdes Orozco Ramirez, M.S.
Small Farms	Growers	Grants	Staff: Claire Tuohey-Mote

# Natural Ecosystems & Working Landscapes Programs

Applied research and education in:

- Improving land management decisions
- Improved community and food system disaster resilience

Program	Clientele	Funding	Advisor
Disaster Resiliency Planning and Policy	TBD - new position	UC	Lilian Thaoxaochay, M.A.
Natural Resources & Watershed	Rangeland managers, Agencies	UC	Royce Larsen, Ph.D.
UC Environmental Stewards	Volunteers, Public	UC, grants	Managed by statewide program and local partners

# Community Education & Youth Development Programs

Applied research and education in:

- Youth leadership, civic engagement, college & career readiness
- Home gardening, irrigation, and pest management
- Healthy eating, food and nutrition security, physical activity

Program	Clientele	Funding	Advisor
Community Health & Wellness	Social service & Youth development professionals	UC, Grants	Katherine Soule, Ph.D.
4-H Youth Development	Youth, Youth-development professionals	UC, County, Donors	Staff: Ella Mitchell, Ana Torres Advisor in recruitment
UC Master Gardeners	Volunteers, Public	UC, County, Donors	Staff: Cindy Morales Advisor: E Volk
CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE	Low-income communities	Grants	Academic: Melissa Guillen, M.S. Staff: R Vargas, M Costa, A Marrs, K Hong, M Rorabough, M Diaz, I Fahselt, K Jayakody
UC Master Food Preservers	Volunteers, Public	UC, County, Donors	Advisor: K Soule Staff: Henry Main

## QUARTER 1 2025/26 HIGHLIGHTING CURRENT PROJECTS & OUTCOMES



### Developing youth leaders in health and nutrition

Highlights from the CalFresh Healthy Living program

By M Guillen, M Costa, C Hildebrand

4-H Student Nutrition Advisory Council club members at the CalFresh Healthy Living Culinary Academy  
Photo: A Torres

The CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE program delivers nutrition education, youth engagement, and policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change programming. Through partnerships with schools, community organizations, and local agencies, the program reaches over 3000 youth, families, and community members annually to promote healthy eating, active living, and youth leadership.

4-H SNAC Clubs, Teens Love Cooking, and school garden leadership projects empower students to build nutrition knowledge, develop leadership skills, and influence peers. At Hapgood Elementary in Lompoc, students took on garden leadership roles by cultivating and harvesting produce, teaching, and hosting “Garden Tour Fridays.” Their efforts have not only strengthened peer-to-peer learning and confidence but also attracted recognition from community leaders and policymakers, culminating in an award presented by Congressman Greg Hart and Senator Monique Limon honoring the program’s impact on student leadership and community engagement.

[After participating in the family nutrition education] “We have thought about ways to eat healthier; we are trying to eat more vegetables and involve our children in helping us chop fruits and vegetables or mix ingredients and even use the stove. Thank you very much for the resources you gave us.

Parent Education Participant

Youth pre-post evaluations (n=223) showed:

- 40% increase in fruit consumption
- 49% increase in physical activity
- 47% decrease in sugary beverage intake

Retrospective youth leader surveys showed increases in leadership skills & public speaking.

*These effort support ANR’s Public Value of promoting healthy people and communities.*





Luna UCR Avocado looks a lot like Hass.  
Photo: M L Arapaia

*“This recognition of ‘Luna UCR’ attests to the over 100 years of plant exploration, selection, and vision of UC’s avocado researchers,” - Mary Lu Arpaia, UC Cooperative Extension horticulturist based at UC Riverside and Luna UCR co-inventor*



Digger bee, avocado pollinator  
Photo: B Faber

## Supporting local agricultural productivity, efficiency, and profitability



UCCE Advisor Ben Faber celebrated 35 years of service to UC in May

After decades of research, UC scientists have developed a new variety of avocado, the Luna UCR, selected by TIME magazine as one of 2023's best inventions. The Luna has a nutty flavor and smooth texture and is attractive to growers due to its small tree size, good for denser planting and minimal pruning, and B flower type that complements the Hass. UCCE Subtropical Crops Advisor, Ben Faber, conducts local avocado and citrus trials and field days to test and demonstrate how new varieties perform locally.

Dr. Faber currently has ongoing and collaborative trials for citrus, avocado, and other subtropicals related to salinity and disease tolerance, high density planting, pollination, irrigation, leafroller management, fruitfly and Argentine Ant control, and many others. In addition, he provides regular workshops and field days for growers and pest control advisers on avocado pruning, irrigation, root rot, pollination, pest management, citrus diseases, and cover crops.

# UC Cooperative Extension in Santa Barbara County

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Integrated Pest Management Advisor, Chris Greer, planting a lettuce trial

Photo: S Klisch



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<https://ucanr.edu/county/santa-barbara-county>