PACIFIC COAST FARMERS' MARKET ASSOCIATION

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PCFMA FARMERS MARKET LEADERSHIP TEAM

PCFMA is excited to welcome new staff members stepping into leadership positions to guide PCFMA's farmers markets.

Elisabeth Garon, Director of Operations

Brooke Souza, Regional Manager

Cheyenne Erickson, Regional Manager

Jason Rodriguez, Regional Manager

ELISABETH GARON

Hey there! My name is Elisabeth Garon, but I typically go by Lis (sounds like Liz). I was recently promoted to Director of Operations in place of Ben Palazzolo, who has decided to pursue other career priorities. Ben was my supervisor for eight years, and I am going to miss his guidance as I transition into this new role.

For those of you who don't know me, I began working at PCFMA as a Market Manager in 2015 where my primary markets were Vallejo on Saturdays, Belmont on Sundays, and the Concord Thursday evening market. A little less than a year later, I was promoted to Operations Coordinator where my responsibilities shifted to developing the online producer application and creating processes within PCFMA to aid Market Managers with adding new producers to their markets. While serving as a Coordinator, I was given the privilege of managing the Danville Market on Saturdays, which soon became my favorite day of the week to work. The more time I spent working on my market, the better I was able to help other managers with their markets.

After five years of being an Operations Coordinator, a Regional Manager position opened, and I knew I was ready to develop my skills further. In 2020 I became a Regional Manager overseeing the Contra Costa and Solano County markets where I established relationships with local officials and market stakeholders to ensure that markets were operated successfully. As a Regional Manager, I was able to identify areas that I thought I could have a positive impact on within PCFMA and the markets I oversaw. During my time as a Regional Manager, my main objective was to support Market Managers so they could operate markets to their full potential.

In 2022, I moved out of the farmers' market world and joined the Alameda Food Bank as their Warehouse Manager. At Alameda Food Bank I was able to use the many skills I gained during my time at PCFMA to ensure thousands of families had access to an ample food supply. My time at the food bank revealed to me that although I am passionate about food systems and food security, the farmers' market world has and always will hold a special place in my life. It was with this realization that I jumped at the opportunity when approached by PCFMA leadership regarding a new position that would be opening.

Upon my return to PCFMA, I have been able to look at our organization, markets, and relationships with fresh eyes. Farmers' markets are often perceived as a carefree event emanating joy, but this is also our producers' livelihood and can be a lifeline for communities with limited food access. Balancing the importance of the work that is being accomplished at our markets each day is a fine line and can't be understated, but this work also wouldn't be accomplished without hundreds of relationships. Each day that PCFMA Market Mangers head out into the communities where we operate markets, they interact not only with the producers present but also with hundreds of customers, representatives from the cities that we operate in, and more.

These relationships are the lifeblood of PCFMA and essential to the success of our markets. Relationships are the groundwork for building community, and what is a farmers' market if not a community? I am committed to continuing the hard work of building relationships with all who interact with PCFMA and our markets while working to ensure we can offer the best markets to the communities we operate in and offer producers ample opportunity to sell their products. This new role will be filled with learning opportunities, and I am thrilled to have a dedicated and passionate team to work with in meeting these goals. I look forward to meeting the challenges that lie ahead and executing the best farmers' markets across the Bay Area!

BROOKE SOUZA

Brooke Souza is a farmers market enthusiast with over ten years of hands-on experience in the industry, from setting up stalls as a vendor to managing vendors as a Market Manager. A UC Davis alumna with a double major in Communications and Sociology, she's all about cultivating meaningful relationships with farmers, customers, and staff alike through effective communication. Now, as a Regional Manager at PCFMA, Brooke is excited to lead her team, empowering them to reach their goals. With her passion for markets and a knack for bringing people together, she's ready to rock the world of fresh produce and community building like never before. Brooke will oversee PCFMA's farmers' markets in its South Bay Region, including Santa Clara and part of southern Alameda County.

CHEYENNE ERICKSON

Cheyenne Erickson's agricultural journey began in her youth on her family's small farm in Northern California, nurturing her love for farming by raising animals through 4-H and FFA. During summers, she sold peaches at farmers' markets alongside her grandparents, fostering her strong ties to the farming community. Cheyenne earned her bachelor's degree in Agriculture Communications from Texas A&M University. Following her studies, she relocated to the Bay Area, where she managed farmers' markets for over three years. Currently, she serves as the President of the Contra Costa County Farm Bureau and volunteers as the coach for the Brentwood FFA Floral team. Cheyenne will be leading PCFMA's North Bay Region which includes farmers' markets in Solano and Contra Costa counties.

JASON RODRIGUEZ

Jason Rodriguez was born and raised in San Jose, and is deeply committed to California's agricultural past, present, and future. He began working at farmer's markets and on vineyards as a teenager, leading him to receive a B.A. in Environmental Studies with a focus in Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems from UC Santa Cruz. Since then he has built a strong foundation in agricultural work, ranging from labor to management, and from advocacy to regulation. He joined PCFMA in early 2020 and has been managing markets from San Jose to San Francisco ever since. As a Regional Manager, he is excited for the opportunity to support PCFMA's market managers and vendors and to continue PCFMA's history of bridging urban and rural communities in the Bay Area and beyond. Jason leads PCFMA's farmers' markets in San Mateo and San Francisco counties.