

To: Office of Planning and Research
 PO Box 3044, 1400 Tenth Street, Room 222
 Sacramento, CA 95812-3044
 County Clerk County of _____

From: University of California, Merced
 Physical & Environmental Planning
 5200 North Lake Road
 Merced, CA 95343

**Subject: Filing of Notice of Determination
 in Compliance with Section 21108 or 21152 of the Public Resource Code.**

State Clearinghouse Number: 2018041010
Project Title: Experimental Smart Farm Project-Minor LRDP Amendment
Parties Undertaking Project: University of California, Merced
Project Location: Merced Campus
County: Merced County

Project Description: UC Merced proposes to develop the Experimental Smart Farm (ESF) project in the southeastern portion of the campus in multiple phases. The initial phase planned for development includes approximately 33 acres for agricultural research and planting and approximately 14 acres for facilities and equipment staging area. The first phase of the ESF project would primarily test existing infrastructure and familiarize researchers with the site conditions including soil properties, pests and crop diseases, and groundwater and surface water behavior. Research activities would likely include baseline surveys, in - field soil sampling, installation, and operation of agricultural technology such as soil and weather sensors, and general agricultural operations. At full buildout, access to farm facilities for research would be expanded. Proposed research activities would require development and approval of detailed plans prior to implementation but uses are anticipated to be similar to Phase 1 research activities. The farm is proposed in an area of the campus that is currently used as an irrigated pasture with active cattle grazing. The area for proposed crop plantings has historically been used for row crops such as alfalfa and corn as well.

Future phases and ultimate project buildout would consist of a more permanent, visitor-friendly research farm. The objectives for future phases of work would be to (1) install permanent structures to support ongoing research on site (i.e., restrooms, classrooms and meeting spaces, composting facilities, storage); (2) improve access roads, gates, and parking; and (3) expand agricultural research to the full site acreage.

The project would include the following primary components:

- A central farm facilities area (approximately 14 acres), that would include bathrooms, meeting space(s), tool and equipment storage, water storage tanks, shade structure(s), electrical infrastructure, and limited parking as part of Phase 1 development, with permanent buildings and facilities added over time to support farm operations, research activities, education, and outreach during future phases;
- An approximately 33-acre initial agricultural use area (i.e., Phase 1), including row crops, permanent crops, irrigation lines, reservoirs, monitoring equipment, weather station, and other agricultural infrastructure to facilitate research activities;
- Additional approximately 154 acres of agricultural fields within future agricultural use areas that would be focused on permanent cropping systems (e.g., orchards); and
- Access route improvements along Meyers Gate Road and the Solar Array Road, consisting initially of gravel road surfacing and paved surfacing at project buildout.

The proposed action is for the approval of the proposed minor LRDP Amendment (LRDP Amendment No. 1) to the 2020 LRDP which proposes to amend the language of the 2020 LRDP Campus Building Reserve/Support Land (CBR/SL) and Passive Open Space (POS) land use designations to clarify that agricultural research would be allowed within existing agricultural fields in the CBR/SL and POS land use designations. This will allow Phase 1 to commence.

Dated Received for filing at OPR:

This Notice of Determination is to advise that the University of California Lead Agency has approved the above-described project on November 3, 2022 and has made the following determinations:

For an Addendum to an EIR:

1. October 2022 Addendum to the UC Merced 2020 Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) (SCH# 2018041010) was prepared for this project pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.
2. UC Merced 2020 LRDP SEIR and 2009 LRDP EIS/EIR sufficiently analyzes and addresses potential environmental impacts from the project and the project will not trigger any of the criteria requiring additional CEQA review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15162. The project will not result in new significant impacts or a substantial increase in the severity of the environmental impacts identified in the UC Merced 2020 LRDP SEIR and 2009 LRDP EIS/EIR.
3. Mitigation measures from the UC Merced 2020 LRDP SEIR were made a condition of the approval of the project; no new project-specific mitigation measures are required.
4. The implementation of applicable 2020 LRDP SEIR mitigation measures will be monitored and reported pursuant to the 2020 LRDP SEIR's Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.
5. The previous statement of overriding considerations in the 2020 LRDP SEIR was reaffirmed for this project.
6. Findings were made pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.

This is to confirm that the October 2022 Addendum to the UC Merced 2020 Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) with comments and responses and record of project approval is available to the general public at: University of California, Merced, Physical and Environmental Planning, 655 W. 18th Street, Merced, CA 95340 and <https://planning.ucmerced.edu/ceqa-environmental-documents>.

Please contact Phillip Woods (209) 349-2561 or at pwoods3@ucmerced.edu for any questions.

Signature: _____

Phillip Woods

Title: Director, Physical and Environmental Planning

Date: *November 17, 2022*