**MEMO**

DATE: August 3, 2020

TO: Residents of Ventura County

FROM: Ed Williams, Agricultural Commissioner

SUBJECT: Unsolicited Seeds from China

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The United States Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS) is working closely with the Department of Homeland Security’s Customs and Border Protection (CBP), other federal agencies, and State departments of agriculture to investigate reports of suspicious, unsolicited packages of seeds that appear to be coming from China. At this time, APHIS does not have any evidence that this is something other than a “brushing scam” where sellers send unsolicited items to unsuspecting consumers and then post false reviews to boost sales. Based on preliminary analysis of the seed samples received by APHIS on July 17, 2020, the unsolicited seed packets appear to be a mix of horticultural and weed species.

To ensure the unsolicited seeds do not present a threat to U.S. agriculture, APHIS will collect and test as many samples as possible to determine potential pathogenicity of the seeds. APHIS asks California County Agricultural Commissioner’s (CAC) offices to follow guidelines for collecting packages and information from individuals who received unsolicited seed shipments and submitting samples to APHIS botanists for taxonomic identification.

For further information, please contact Ellen Kragh of the Quarantine Program at (805) 388- 4222 ext. 7119 or email at Ellen.Kragh@ventura.org .

We thank you for your cooperation in this effort.