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Extreme Weather: Knowledge is Power for California's Farmers

SACRAMENTO, Calif. - California has seen its fair share of extreme weather conditions this year, and experts say climate change pretty much guarantees there's more to come. On Dec. 15, Gov. Jerry Brown is hosting [a climate change conference](#) to address the impact of global warming, especially for the state's farmers and ranchers.

When it comes to relying on the weather, says Walnut grower Craig McNamara of Solano County, information is the key to a producer's survival. He says that's why farmers need to be proactive.

"These are the things that will help us develop a new breed of fruits and vegetables that can withstand changes in climate. These are all dollars that will be well spent today to help us, in the future, deal with extreme weather conditions."

Since California has the biggest agriculture industry of any state and the fifth largest in the world, notes McNamara, it's a huge industry with an even larger reliance on weather conditions and long-term climate trends.

McNamara, who is also president of the State Board of Food and Agriculture, says whether it's too wet or too dry, extreme weather brings many challenges. One is the introduction of invasive species, such as the Mediterranean fruit fly.

"When you get extreme weather, for example warming, we don't have the freezing that kills off some of the larvae and over-wintering of invasive species. So, that can have a very significant impact."

Much of the weather and climate information that will guide leaders and growers in their short-term and long-term decision-making comes from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. NOAA's recently released winter outlook laid out predictions for 2012 that included continued dryness in the southern United States and a wet winter in the Pacific Northwest.

Information about the Governor's Conference on Extreme Climate Risks and California's Future is online at www.gov.ca.gov/ecrcf.php.

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