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February 21, 2013

New CalCAN Report: California Must Protect Farmland on Urban Edges to Meet Climate Protection Goals

Released at the [CalCAN Climate and Agriculture Summit](#) on February 21st, a new report says that California's farmland is at risk from traditional pressures like urban sprawl and new ones including large-scale solar energy projects and oil and gas exploration. Despite mounting evidence showing the climate change benefits of protecting farmland and curbing greenhouse gas emissions related to transportation and energy use, California farmland is under threat of being paved over.

[Triple Harvest: Farmland Conservation for Climate Protection, Smart Growth and Food Security](#) describes the many essential services provided by California farmland and current development threats. It outlines policy recommendations for protecting agricultural lands to ensure their climate, food security and other benefits.

"California's existing farmland protection policy tools are outdated and underfunded," reported CalCAN's Policy Director Jeanne Merrill at the summit. "They must be strengthened, especially at the boundaries of our cities where farms can provide the greatest



benefit to avoiding greenhouse gas emissions.”

As California aims to reach its mandate of reducing emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, both smart growth planning and urban edge farmland protection will be crucial. For example, [a 2012 study](#) by UC Davis researchers found that in Yolo County, urban development generates 70 times more greenhouse gas emissions than irrigated cropland.

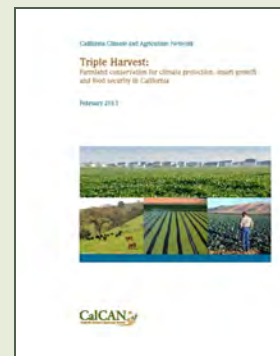
Triple Harvest summarizes the following pressures on farmland:

- California has lost an average of 50,000 acres of farmland each year for the past 30 years. New development pressures put farmland in the state at additional risk of development.
- Instead of accommodating larger populations with smart growth, infill development, public transit and greenbelt protection, cities and counties have permitted suburban and ex-urban sprawl and the fragmentation of farmland. A 2013 [American Farmland Trust report](#) found that 61 percent of all development in the San Joaquin Valley is taking place on high quality farmland, mostly along the Highway 99 corridor.
- As of January 2012, 45 large scale-solar projects were approved to cover about 17,570 acres the San Joaquin Valley’s most productive farming and grazing land, and an additional 59 were under consideration.
- The state’s new “fracking” boom means oil and gas companies are purchasing subsurface mineral rights of farms, putting agricultural land and water at risk.

The report’s recommendations include:

1. Clarify mitigation requirements for loss of farmland under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
2. Develop farmland mitigation requirements based on cumulative impacts of infrastructure projects, including the impact on future greenhouse gas emissions.
3. Direct a portion of AB 32 cap-and-trade revenues to farmland conservation, targeting the creation of easements on farmland most at risk of development

Click [here](#) to download a copy of Triple Harvest.



Workshops on Cap-and-Trade Revenue Investment Plan



The California Air Resources Board is holding three workshops to gather public input on how to best invest funds generated by the

state's new cap-and-trade program. Written comments are also invited by March 8th.

CalCAN and our allies will be at the hearings to continue making the case for investing some funds in sustainable agriculture to realize the potential for California farmers and ranchers reduce greenhouse gas emissions and/or sequester carbon. Investments in research, technical assistance, on-farm incentives and farmland protection programs are all a necessary part of the state's climate change response, and can have additional benefits such as improving air and water quality, supporting rural economies and preparing agriculture for adapting to climate change.

The hearing schedule is as follows:

Feb. 19, 5:00 – 8:00pm (Fresno)

Feb. 25, 3:00 – 6:00pm (Sacramento)

Feb. 27, 4:00 – 7:00pm (Los Angeles)

Click [here](#) to see the complete announcement from ARB on the workshops, and background on the cap-and-trade investment plan.

Crop Insurance for a Changing Climate

Guest blog by Adam Kotin, Bay Area Program Associate for Hazon

After more than a year's work crafting a new five-year Farm Bill, Congress decided to once again put off the hard decisions.

Instead, as part of the last-minute 'fiscal cliff' deal, it authorized a 9-month extension of the 2008 farm bill. This extension eschews reform and lacks vital funding for conservation, research, energy, specialty crop and organic programs.

Congress did, however, preserve piles of funding for a major aspect of the farmer 'safety net': subsidized crop insurance.

[Read more...](#)

Online Cover Cropping Resources

Cover crops are one of the most effective ways to improve soil health, reduce off-farm inputs and protect natural resources. USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program has assembled a collection of educational materials developed out of decades of SARE-funded cover crop research.

Topics include:

- Selection and management
- Economics
- Establishment
- Rotations
- No-till
- Water and pest management
- Soil and fertility management



Click [here](#) to access this valuable resource.

California Leopold Conservation Award Call for Nominations

The Leopold Conservation Award has issued its call for nominations for the 2013 California Leopold Conservation Award. The award recognizes private landowners' commitment to environmental stewardship and land management. It underscores the fact that many ranchers, farmers and other private landowners are on the front lines of conservation and should be recognized for protecting the environment.

Finalists will be selected in part based on their commitment to responsible and sustainable land management, the overall health of their land, implementation of innovative practices and dedication to community outreach and leadership. The California Leopold Conservation Award judging panel will evaluate properties in two categories: (1) Nurseries & Crops, and (2) Livestock.

Click [here](#) for more information and a nomination form.

Click [here](#) for information about past winners and finalists.

Climate-Smart Agriculture: Global Science Conference

March 20-22
Davis, CA

At the 2011 Global Science Conference on Climate-Smart Agriculture in Wageningen, participants took stock of global science and best practices concerning climate smart agriculture worldwide. Participants agreed on a broad agenda for action for science and policy to strengthen food security, adaptation and mitigation (Wageningen Declaration). The 2013 Conference agenda builds on that consensus focusing on three main themes: farm and food systems, landscape and regional issues, and the integrative and transformative institutional and policy aspects that will bridge across scales to link science and practice to ensure food security, poverty alleviation and multiple ecosystem services.

Click [here](#) for more information.

Job Announcements

Agriculture and Climate Specialist

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) is looking for an agriculture and climate specialist based in Minneapolis to help lead and contribute to their growing work related to climate, renewable energy and agriculture. IATP works at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems, locally and globally.

Click [here](#) for more information.

Executive Director, Berkeley Sustainable Food Systems Institute

Applications Due: No later than Friday, March 1, 2013

The Berkeley Sustainable Food Systems Institute is an exciting new program that connects the College of Natural Resources (CNR), the Graduate School of Journalism (J-School), Berkeley Law (Boalt) and the Goldman School of Public Policy (GSPP). These partners are forming an interdisciplinary/cross-campus institute that will conduct research and develop policy recommendations and public outreach campaigns designed to transform the current US and global food system to one that is sustainable and affordable for future generations, here and abroad.

The Institute is in the early stages of development, with start-up funding from a small group of individual and foundation donors who are committed to the project long term. The Executive Director will have the opportunity to shape the direction of the Institute, in collaboration with a governing Executive Committee.

Click [here](#) for more information.