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April 17, 2013

Cap-and-Trade Update: Make your voice heard!

The Governor and the legislature are taking up the issue of how to invest proceeds from the cap-and-trade program to further the state's goals of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. The debate is heating up over what will be included in California's cap-and-trade investment plan and what will be eligible for funding in the next three budget years.

Yesterday, a [draft investment plan](#) was released, and we are pleased to say that many of CalCAN's sustainable agriculture funding priorities are included: farmland conservation easements, energy efficiency and renewable energy, on-farm practices that reduce GHGs.

The inclusion of sustainable agriculture in the plan is due in no small part to your letters, calls and engagement with CalCAN to deliver the message about the importance of funding these activities as part of California's response to climate change.

More specificity about funding levels and specific programs will come during the budget process over the next several weeks. We will be asking for your continued help in making the case to legislators about

the value of investments in sustainable agricultural solutions to climate change.

**Submit your comments to the
California Air Resources Board today!**

The Air Resources Board is accepting written input on the investment plan until April 24th. It's easy to do — just [click here](#) and enter your name and contact information and your message. Here is a sample message:

I am pleased that sustainable agriculture practices are included in the draft cap-and-trade investment plan. Investments in the state's existing land resources programs will provide climate and other environmental and health benefits. Additional investments in research, technical assistance and incentives will encourage farming practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, sequester carbon and help growers adapt to climate change. I also support investments in farmland protection, particularly if prioritizing farmland that supports smart growth.

**Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act
Re-Introduced in Congress**

Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Representative Chellie Pingree of Maine introduced their [Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Act of 2013](#) (S. 679 and H.R. 1414) on April 9th.



The bill was previously introduced in 2011 and parts of the bill were included in the five-year farm bills that were worked on, but not finalized, in the Senate and House last year. The new version of the bill is aimed at inclusion in the five-year farm bills the Senate and House will develop again this year.

The Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Act addresses seven different titles of the Farm Bill, including proposals that address crop insurance, credit, nutrition, rural development, research and extension, horticulture, and livestock. The bill addresses food production, aggregation, processing, marketing, and distribution and aims to reduce barriers that limit growth in local and regional farm and food markets.

For an investment of just over \$100 million a year in farm bill dollars, the Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Act can help a growing sector of the food system flourish. This investment is small in overall farm bill terms — roughly one-tenth of one percent of total farm bill spending — but big in its power to deliver real, lasting, and market-based benefits to farmers, consumers, and communities.

Read more from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition [here](#).

Building Soil & Biodiversity for Climate Change Resilience

CalCAN workshop for RCD, NRCS and Extension staff

The workshop will focus on two strategies for increasing vineyard resilience to climate change impacts — soil building and enhancing biodiversity. The emphasis will be on providing information and resources to agency staff to better equip them to support growers with tools for preparing for expected climate impacts, and to share experiences and methods for adapting to climate change on Northern California vineyards and farms.

Date: Thursday May 16th, 2013

Location: Preston Vineyards, Healdsburg

Cost: Free, lunch provided

Invited participants: Staff of RCDs, NRCS and Coop Extension

Speakers (partial list):

- Alan Flint, USGS — Expected climate change impacts on Northern California vineyards
- Morgan Doran, UC Extension – Vines and ovines
- Lou Preston, Preston Vineyards — Biodiversification of vineyard operations
- Renata Brillinger, CalCAN — Overview of climate policy initiatives



To register by May 8th, email renata@calclimateag.org.

Farming for Success in the 21st Century

CalCAN has produced a new four-part series of fact sheets providing practical information on enhancing the resilience of California farms to climate change. The topics covered are:

- Soil Building
- Water stewardship
- Biodiversity
- Resources for Resilience Strategies

These fact sheets are now available on the [CalCAN website](#).

Biochar Field Trial in San Mateo

The [San Mateo County Resource Conservation District](#) (RCD) is playing a lead role in a field trial at a Brussels sprouts farm to monitor the effects of biochar application on soil health, nutrient retention and crop yield.

The study will also analyze the cost-benefit to the farmer and identify barriers to biochar use in the region. Data is being collected for three growing seasons (the project is entering its second year).



Biochar is produced by heating organic biomass under low-oxygen conditions, producing a charcoal that preserves much of the original carbon in the parent material. The physical and chemical characteristics of biochar vary considerably depending on the production conditions and feedstock. Because of this variability, combined with variations in agricultural systems, research on the benefits of biochar for soil building, crop yield and carbon sequestration vary widely. Biochar applied to agricultural systems has been shown to have the potential to:

- Decrease the nitrous oxide flux from soils to the atmosphere (reduction of greenhouse gas)
- Increase nutrient holding capacity and decrease nutrient leaching
- Increase the water-holding capacity of sandy soils and increase the infiltration rate of water through clay soils
- Decrease the need for chemical nutrient input over time

The San Mateo project is a demonstration of biochar use in agricultural applications in the specific local climatic and soil conditions of coastal San Mateo County and will evaluate its economic feasibility in this region.

Funding Opportunities

Congress Provides Funding for Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

One of the nation's most innovative working lands farm conservation initiatives has received a financial reprieve, thanks to the Continuing Resolution signed recently by President Barack Obama. The Continuing Resolution removes previous cuts to CSP, which is administered by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

Probably sometime in May, the USDA will start enrolling approximately 12 million acres of agricultural land in the program this year, an amount that will bring the program to a grand total of 62 million acres by year's end. Interested farmers and ranchers can apply at any time

and should check with their local NRCS office for further information.

CSP is a nationwide working lands conservation program that rewards farmers and ranchers for the environmental benefits they produce. CSP offers technical and financial assistance to farmers and ranchers for adopting and maintaining high standards of resource conservation and environmental stewardship. Assistance is provided for actively managing and improving existing conservation systems and for implementing new conservation activities on land in agricultural production.

The enrollment process is competitive, based on conservation and environmental benefits. Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, rangeland, non-industrial private forest lands, and agricultural land under tribal jurisdiction. Applicants must demonstrate they have effective control over these lands to be eligible, either through ownership or reasonably secure leases.

Producers wanting more detailed information can refer to [NSAC's Farmers' Guide to the Conservation Stewardship Program](#).

Conservation Funding for Organic Producers

California has \$3.5 million available in funding for the USDA Environmental Quality Incentives program (EQIP) for 2013 for organic and transitioning farmers. Organic producers can receive up to \$20,000 per year or \$80,000 over six years through the special EQIP funding available only for organic producers and those transitioning to organic. The assistance targets over two dozen core conservation practices, including conservation crop rotation, cover crops, nutrient management, pest management, prescribed grazing and more.

Assistance is available for applying and applications are taken at all 55 NRCS offices throughout California. There is no deadline, however funds are limited. Click [here](#) for more information.

Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) - Call for Proposals

Western SARE has posted four calls for proposals:

- Research and Education
- Farmer/Rancher
- Professional Development Program
- Professional + Producer
- Graduate Student Research & Education

Click [here](#) for more information.

Rural Energy for America Program (REAP)

REAP is designed to help agricultural producers and rural small businesses reduce energy costs and consumption and help meet the nation's critical energy needs. The program funds grants and grant-and-loan combinations for renewable-energy systems and energy-

efficiency improvements, as well as grants for renewable-energy system feasibility studies.

Applications are due by April 30, 2013. Click [here](#) for more details.

Events & Jobs

2013 Symposium on Food Systems & Public Health: Challenges and Change Lead to Innovative Solutions

May 15 - 17, 2013 • Riverside, CA

The symposium is designed to bring together professionals for panel discussions and informative presentations including federal, state, and local regulatory agencies as well as industry, environmental health specialists, food producers, academia, nutritionists, public health professionals, and agriculture experts.

For more information: www.CaliforniaFood.org

Increasing Profit, Production, and Performance for a Sustainable Ranch Operation

Friday, May 10, 2013

Paicines Ranch • 13388 Airline Hwy, Paicines, CA

This workshop is offered in cooperation with Holistic Management International. There will be presentations on biological monitoring, CA perennial grasses in ranching, and water system development, but there will also be much time spent on the land in small groups and conversation. This is a great opportunity to spend time on the ranch with land stewards and interested folks learning from each other.

While the presentations are oriented towards California land stewards, anyone interested in ranching in California is welcome to attend and should find the day interesting and educational. It is a chance to learn, share, and connect with both the holistic management community and the broader land management community.

Click [here](#) for more information or to register.

Jobs

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) is hiring two positions based in Washington, DC. NSAC is the leading advocacy organization for federal policy that supports sustainable agriculture and food systems.

Policy Associate, Marketing, Food Systems, and Rural Development — This position will help to develop and implement policy and strategy focused on marketing, food systems, and rural development, especially as these relate to increasing farm income, creating economic development opportunities, and redeveloping local and regional agriculture. They will advocate before the US Congress and executive branch agencies.

Policy Associate, Conservation and Farm Programs — This position will help to develop and implement policy and strategy focused on agricultural conservation, especially working lands programs, and on farm program reform, especially crop insurance programs. The Policy Associate will advocate before the US Congress and executive branch agencies, particularly the US Department of Agriculture. The Policy Associate will staff and help lead NSAC's Conservation, Energy & Environment Issue Committee, and will also have assignments within NSAC's Farming Opportunities and Fair Competition Committee.

Click [here](#) for more information.

University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources is accepting applications until May 5 for a North Bay Food Systems Advisor. The Area Food Systems Advisor will deliver needed information and analysis to a diverse clientele related to food systems including agricultural producers, retailers, community service organizations, and policy and decision makers with the goal of building and coordinating sustainable food system partnerships.

Click [here](#) for more information.

California FarmLink has two positions open.

Finance and Operations Manager based in Santa Cruz with drive and enthusiasm to maintain and upgrade systems consistent with a growing non-profit loan portfolio and technical assistance program. The position will develop new loan operations systems; implement new loan management software; manage loan files and inquiries from borrowers; assist with portfolio risk management, investor relations and investment of undeployed loan funds.

Controller level candidate with both finance/accounting and operations experience in the non-profit/small business arena who is willing to learn loan operations activities. Job responsibilities include managing operating and loan fund accounting, payables, receivables, and funder invoicing; implementing improved operational systems and financial controls.

To learn more about California FarmLink or request more information: <http://www.californiafarmlink.org/>