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September 23, 2013

### California Farmers Get Renewable Energy Boost

On Sept. 19th, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) cleared the way for new rules that will make it easier for California farmers, school districts, businesses and others making use of the state's Net Energy Metering (NEM) program to produce renewable energy. The CPUC Commissioners directed the public utilities to put in place procedures that allow NEM customers to aggregate electric meters on their property and use excess clean energy generated at one meter to be credited against other meters.

Farmers and ranchers typically have multiple meters on their property. Current California law prohibits the power generated from an on-site renewable facility to be counted against other meters. Consequently, farmers would have to install a separate facility for each meter, which is extremely inefficient and cost prohibitive, limiting their ability to cost-effectively generate renewable energy.

The change came about because of the 2012 passage of a bill, [Senate Bill 594](#), authored by Senator Lois Wolk (D-Davis). The California Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN), a coalition of sustainable agriculture organizations, supported the bill.

[Read more...](#)

## The CalCAN Team Grows!

We are excited to welcome two new members to the CalCAN staff!

In October, **Adam Kotin** will begin in a new full time staff position as Policy Associate, working closely with CalCAN's Policy Director Jeanne Merrill. We are pleased to have him join the CalCAN team after he served in 2011 as a CalCAN policy intern while completing his master's degree in Environmental Studies from Brown University. He has a background in sustainable agriculture and environmental studies, with a focus on climate change and development issues. Prior to joining CalCAN, he worked as a Senior Program Associate for Hazon, developing and implementing programs to enhance community-scale sustainability. He has also worked as a Consultant and Research Analyst for the United Nations Development Program, as well as at numerous other Bay Area environmental non-profits in research and communications roles.



**Dru Marion** is also joining CalCAN as a Communications Intern for the Fall of 2013. Dru recently graduated from Wesleyan University with a B.A. in Philosophy and a certificate in Environmental Studies, and is brand new to the Bay Area. She has a passion for sustainable agriculture and has volunteered in urban community gardens, worked on an organic farm in upstate New York, helped maintain and develop the on-campus farm at Wesleyan, and taught underprivileged New York City teenagers about the importance of farming and gardening at a residential camp.

## Solar Project Provokes Questions

*The following opinion piece was published in the [Hollister Free Lance](#). Posted with permission of the author, Kim Williams, who raises Heritage Breed pastured pigs on her family's farm and is also the Instructional Aide at the one-room school in Panoche Valley.*

At the end of June, a controversial industrial solar project slated for development in Panoche Valley was cleared to move ahead by the 6th District Court of Appeals. The project and the court decision raise important questions not only for San Benito County but also for California at large.



The 399 MW project, which includes a substation, will be sited on almost 5,000 acres of prime agricultural rangeland adjacent to a thriving community of small-scale sustainable farmers.

[Read more...](#)

## Farmer Perceptions of Climate Change: A Path Forward

A recent [UC Davis survey](#) of Yolo County farmers finds that perceptions of environmental regulations can influence how they view climate change. The majority of farmers surveyed (54%) said that climate change is occurring. But for those skeptical of climate change, the UC Davis researchers found that perceptions of past environmental programs matters.

Those who had negative experiences with past policies, such as pesticide use reporting, rice straw burning ban, water quality and diesel engine regulations, were more likely to express skepticism about climate change.

Despite past negative experiences, a near majority of farmers surveyed (48%) said they would participate in a government incentive programs on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

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## Farm Bill Update

*The following blog is reposted from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, of which CalCAN is a member.*

With the House having [passed a farm bill nutrition title](#) last week, there is renewed hope that there may yet be a new five-year farm bill this year. There are multiple steps before getting to a final bill, and a number of impacts because of the delayed process in the House. Top among the impacts is that a number of programs will come to a screeching halt on October 1.

NSAC strongly supports the House and Senate getting together quickly to try to work out the details of a final, comprehensive new farm bill. In the absence of details about the final bill, we cannot, of course, at this point say we will ultimately support passage of a new, final bill. As we have said for months, between the House- and Senate-passed measures, the raw ingredients exist for a decent final bill and for a terrible final bill. But clearly there is no way to get to a decent and supportable final bill without starting the process, and on that score and that score only, the House action this week was a good thing.

There are also, we should note, still more hurdles before a House-Senate conference can begin. Chief among them is an agreement or vote on some type of parliamentary maneuver next week on the House floor to re-join the [farm-only farm bill](#) and the [nutrition-only farm bill](#) into a single bill to take to conference. Given the multitude of

procedural hurdles the farm bill has faced in the last two years, we take nothing for granted anymore. But hopefully the remarriage of the nutrition bill into the farm bill goes off without a hitch. The re-joined bill would then be sent to the Senate, where the House language would be struck and replaced with the Senate language, the Senate would reappoint its conferees, and then the bill would be sent back to the House. Then the House would appoint its conferees. So, if everything goes smoothly, the conference could then start by sometime in early October.

We hope a conference begins as quickly as possible. But one thing that is clear is that it will not start, and certainly will not end, before the current farm bill extension expires on September 30. The point of this post is to review what farm bill expiration this year means in the near term.

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## CDFA Releases New Ecosystems Services Database

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) recently released an [Ecosystem Services Database](#). The database was developed to help the department discuss the multiple benefits provided by California agriculture and to provide growers, ranchers, and stakeholders with information about ecosystem services.



CDFA developed the database by identifying nearly 400 farms and ranches from websites and other sources, including several produced by CalCAN and [available on our website](#), and indicating what ecosystems services they provide. The database can be queried by key word, county, crop type, and type of ecosystem service. An interactive map allows users to view where the services are taking place. Growers can add their own operation to the site by filling out a simple online questionnaire.

“California’s working farms and ranches are an important part of our natural landscape,” said CDFA Secretary Karen Ross. “The commitment to ecosystem services demonstrates clearly that beyond the productivity of fields and pastures, resource management decisions by farmers and ranchers provide us with wildlife and pollinator habitat, contribute to clean water and air, provide recreational and tourism connections, and much more.”

## Supporting CalCAN

Here are some ways you can make a difference by supporting our work:

- [Make a donation to CalCAN](#). We rely on tax-deductable gifts — no amount is too small.
- Check out [our blog](#) with lots of reflections on climate change and agriculture.
- Friend us on [Facebook](#).
- Follow us on [Twitter](#).
- [Tell-a-Friend](#). Forward this email to introduce us to your colleagues, family and friends.

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