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Investing in Food Security and Climate Protection

Posted by [Karen Archipley](#) , September 18, 2013 at 07:15 AM

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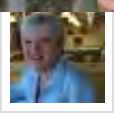
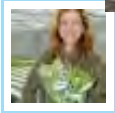
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A report recently released by the California Environmental Protection Agency ("Indicators of Climate Change in California") confirms what many Californians already understand – that the weather is weirder, the water is scarcer and the hot spells are hotter.

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The findings in the CalEPA report are yet another wake-up call, especially for farmers. More intense and frequent heat waves will cause stress for plants, livestock and farm laborers.

Reduced snowpack and earlier spring melts, of what snow there is, will mean less water for irrigation. Rising sea levels (levels at La Jolla, for example, have increased six inches in the last century) will cause saltwater to seep into groundwater and compromise an already diminishing resource.

Maybe the fact that more people are recognizing that the climate is changing explains a recent poll finding that a record number of Californians want state government to take immediate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We believe that Governor Brown wants action too — he has been making lots of public statements about the importance of tackling climate change. Three months ago, he very pointedly said, "[Climate change] is an important challenge, cause and undertaking. We can do

it, but we have to do a lot more than we're doing now." However, to date the Governor has delayed investment in climate change activities as part of California's new cap-and-trade program.

By way of background: The state of California launched a cap-and-trade program this year and started collecting money from quarterly auctions of allowances (i.e., permits to release greenhouse gases) purchased by the state's biggest emitters of greenhouse gases. Last year, the Governor signed a bill into law (AB 1532) that lays out a plan for investing the cap-and-trade money in climate protection activities. We are pleased that sustainable agriculture is on the list of eligible funding categories in the investment plan.

The fourth auction results were announced in late August, and the state now has a total of almost \$400 million to invest in agriculture, energy efficiency, public transportation, forest protection and more. Citing fiscal prudence, Governor Brown is currently putting the first \$500 million in a rainy day fund instead of spending it on climate change solutions.

To us, it seems like the stakes are high for both agriculture and the climate, and there's no time to waste. Former Secretary of State George Schultz said, "If you wait until you're boiling, you may have missed your moment." He sees taking action to curb climate change as a matter of national security, and we agree.

We also see it as a matter of food security. California's farmers and ranchers produce the majority of the country's fruits, vegetables and nuts and more dairy products than any other state, and both consumers and businesses like the Ocean Beach People's Organic Food Coop depend on their long-term viability. New farmers struggling to get started — like the veterans trained and supported by the Veterans Sustainable Agriculture Training program — face great challenges in an uncertain climate future. We must invest in climate-friendly farming practices that mitigate climate change and help farmers adapt.

With sound science, technical assistance and financial incentives, more and more farmers will find ways to reduce their carbon footprint, produce renewable energy, protect our natural resources and use their farms as carbon "sinks" while staying in the business of feeding the world.

— Karen Archipley is co-founder of Archi's Acres and the Veterans Sustainable Agriculture Training program. Nancy Casady is the General Manager of Ocean Beach People's Organic Food Coop and a member of the California State Board of Food and Agriculture.

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