



## News from the California Climate & Agriculture Network

February 21, 2014




### Announcing the Sustainable Farmland Strategy Act

Today, Assembly Agriculture Chair Susan Talamantes Eggman introduced the Sustainable Farmland Strategy Act (AB 1961). The bill recognizes the significance of the state's farmland resources by requiring counties to complete a Sustainable Farmland Strategy.

"The Sustainable Farmland Strategy Act acknowledges that our agricultural land in California is a finite resource that is critical

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CalCAN is a coalition of organic and sustainable agriculture organizations that advances policies to provide resources for climate-friendly farming

for our economy and our food security,” said Assemblymember Susan Talamantes Eggman. “This bill highlights the need to discuss at the local level how we can maintain our agricultural land for generations to come.”

The bill requires that counties with significant farmland resources inventory their agriculturally zoned land, describe their goals and policies to retain farmland and mitigate for its loss and compile that information on the county website. Counties with less than four percent of their land base in agriculture are not required to complete a Sustainable Farmland Strategy.

“We cannot continue to lose farmland at the rate we’re going,” said Jean Okuye, Merced County farmer and President of the Merced Chapter of the California Farm Bureau Federation. “I welcome the opportunity this bill creates at the local level to discuss how our county can support our farmers and keep a thriving agriculture on the land.”

AB 1961 is co-sponsored by CalCAN, the Community Alliance with Family Farmers and American Farmland Trust.

For more information, click [here](#).

To show your support for AB 1961, fax or mail a letter of support to Assemblymember Eggman's office. A sample letter can be found [here](#).



## Meter Aggregation Rules Approved by CPUC

We are pleased to report on a victory in the renewable energy arena after more than two years of effort on the part of CalCAN, other agriculture organizations and the solar industry. As of Feb. 21st, many of California's farms, schools and businesses can now officially benefit from new rules approved by the California Public

practices.

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Utilities Commission (CPUC) which allows for the aggregation of renewable energy generation under the Net Energy Metering (NEM) program. These rules were implemented at the direction of [Senate Bill 594](#), passed in 2012 and authored by Senator Lois Wolk. They currently only apply to PG&E customers; approval for customers of other electric utilities is expected to follow soon.

This change has a very practical effect for growers who are NEM customers or might want to be. NEM allows producers of renewable energy (such as solar, wind or bioenergy produced on farms) to be credited for the energy they produce, making the installation of clean energy systems economically viable.

[Read more...](#)

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## CalCAN is Hiring

CalCAN is seeking a half-time Development & Communications Associate based in Sebastopol, CA. The Associate works closely with CalCAN's Executive Director to support and enhance CalCAN's fundraising, communications and administrative functions.

For more information, please see the CalCAN website: <http://calclimateag.org/calcan-is-hiring/>



## Drought Roundup

*CalCAN and our coalition partner CAFF produced a three-part blog series about the drought's impact on agriculture.*

**Drought Underscores the Need for Adaptation Planning**

Growers across California are among the first to feel the effects of the worst drought the state has seen in almost four decades. Mandated cutbacks in water distributions, along with depletions in available surface water and groundwater, are forcing farmers to dig deeper into their pockets while making tough decisions about crop planting and livestock management.

[Read more...](#)

### **A History of Drought: Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future**

On January 31st, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced that no water would be delivered this year from the State Water Project to its twenty-nine public water agency customers — a first in the Project's 54-year history. These deliveries help supply water to 25 million Californians and roughly 750,000 acres of irrigated farmland. DWR also announced that allocations to Sacramento Valley agricultural districts would be cut in half.

[Read more...](#)

### **Agricultural Water Stewardship for Drought Preparedness**

As we are all very much aware, California is now faced with an historic drought. Among other things, this means that farmers and ranchers will have limited access to surface water for irrigation, and many growers will not be able to sufficiently and sustainably substitute groundwater. To better prepare for water shortages like this one, growers can adopt on-farm 'water stewardship' practices to optimize agricultural production, achieve economic savings, and boost ecological and human health benefits.

[Read more...](#)



## **Drought Relief Resources**

There has been a flurry of state and federal response to

California's drought, including disaster relief, water conservation funding and educational resources. Here is a recap:

On Feb. 19th, [Governor Brown announced plans](#) to spend about \$680 million on drought alleviation, including \$40 million on water efficiency projects that save energy and \$50 million for emergency housing and food for people impacted by fallowed farm land.

On Feb. 14th, President Obama announced the allocation of \$100 million in livestock disaster relief for California growers, adding to previous funds pledged by the USDA.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture will be holding informational sessions on drought resources for farmers, ranchers and farmworkers in several locations throughout the state in the coming weeks. These sessions will provide information on a variety of state and federal government programs designed to assist farmers with water conservation, crop insurance, and other on-farm management tools. Information on farmworker assistance programs will also be available.

Upcoming application deadlines for federal programs include crop insurance programs offered by the USDA's Risk Management Agency (Feb. 28th); non-insured crop insurance offered by the USDA's Farm Service Agency (March 1st); and water conservation enhancements offered by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (March 3rd). These programs offer a variety on-farm assistance including cover crops and tree pruning as well as market-based risk management tools.

For more information, see:

<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/drought/>

[www.usda.gov/drought](http://www.usda.gov/drought)

[www.ccof.org/drought-resources](http://www.ccof.org/drought-resources)

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## **Grazing Sheep and Growing Soil: Debby Zygielbaum at Robert Sinskey Vineyards**

Debby Zygielbaum, farm manager of almost 200 acres of land at Robert Sinskey Vineyards (RSV) in Napa, CA, operates on the philosophy that the quality of a wine has as much to do with the winegrowing as it does the winemaking. And growing good wine, according to Debby, is fundamentally rooted in growing good soil. RSV's use of sheep to graze vineyard floors is one way that they achieve this goal.

[Read more...](#)

## **USDA Secretary Vilsack Announces Regional Climate Hubs**

*Modified from a USDA press release issued Feb. 5, 2014*

On Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the creation of the first-ever Regional Hubs for Risk Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change at seven locations around the country. "Climate Hubs" will address increasing risks such as fires, invasive pests, devastating floods, and crippling droughts on a regional basis. Hubs will aim to translate science and research into information for farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners on ways to adapt and adjust their resource management.

"For generations, America's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners have innovated and adapted to challenges. Today, they face a new and more complex threat in the form of a changing and shifting climate, which impacts both our nation's forests and our farmers' bottom lines," said Vilsack. "USDA's Climate Hubs are part of our broad commitment to

developing the next generation of climate solutions, so that our agricultural leaders have the modern technologies and tools they need to adapt and succeed in the face of a changing climate."

The Climate Hubs will build on the capacity within USDA to deliver science-based knowledge and practical information to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners to support decision-making related to climate change across the country. California is included in a Southwest hub based in New Mexico. There will also be a Sub Hub to support the Southwest hub, located in Davis, which will focus on specialty crops and Southwest forests.

For more information, see: [www.usda.gov/climatechange](http://www.usda.gov/climatechange).

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## CalCAN Workshops

**From Science to Storytelling:  
Effective Communication for Policy Change  
March 24, 1:00 - 4:00pm • UC Davis**

Conveying the results of your scientific research to legislators and government agencies can help influence policy – but only if you communicate effectively! If you are motivated in part by applying your research to environmental and social issues such as climate change, this workshop will give you some useful concepts and tools. Using discussion, role plays, expert advice from media consultants and individual exercises, we will explore the challenges of translating your scientific findings to policymakers and advocates, and will offer some tools for improving your communications skills. We will focus on simplifying your messages and honing your presentations.

The workshop is open to university and college faculty and staff working on climate change and agriculture. Registered

participants may also invite one graduate student.

For more information and to register, click [here](#).

### **Farming for Success in the 21st Century: Webinar Series for Agriculture Conservation Professionals**

This three-part webinar series is geared to agricultural conservation professionals such as RCD, Extension and NRCS staff. Each session will provide an overview of expected climate impacts such as increased water scarcity, warming temperatures and unpredictable and extreme weather events, and tools for enhancing on-farm resilience and adaptation to changing climate conditions. Participants can attend any or all in the series. Each webinar will focus on one of the following strategies:

- Increasing Biodiversity
- Water Stewardship
- Soil Building

For more information and to register, please click [here](#).

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## **USDA Accepts Grant Applications for Conservation Innovation Efforts**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is accepting applications for competitive grants to develop and accelerate conservation approaches and technologies on private agricultural and forest lands.

The grant program enables NRCS to work with public and private partners to accelerate technology development and adopt promising approaches to address natural resource concerns. Funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the grants are awarded through a competitive process. At least 50 percent of the total cost of grant projects must come from non-federal matching funds, including cash and in-kind contributions provided by the grant recipient.

Priority will be given to applications that relate to nutrient management, energy conservation, soil health, air quality, climate change, wildlife, economics, sociology, environmental markets, food safety, historically underserved groups, or assessments of past CIG projects.

For more on this grant opportunity, see:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/index.html>



## Jobs & Events

### **CalPoly San Luis Obispo Assistant/Associate Professor of Sustainable and Organic Agriculture, Horticulture and Plant Science Department**

Full-time academic year, tenure-track assistant or associate professor to teach courses including crop science, organic and sustainable plant production, and vegetable and/or fruit production. The successful candidate will have the opportunity to further develop the curriculum in sustainable/organic plant production practices and food safety, and is expected to participate in scholarly activities and to develop industry partnerships as part of her/his professional development.

For more information, see [www.calpolyjobs.org](http://www.calpolyjobs.org) requisition #103147

### **Farming Journalism Fellowship**

The UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism is offering eight \$10,000 postgraduate Food and Farming Journalism Fellowships. Aimed at early and mid career journalists, the Fellowship presents an opportunity to report ambitious long form stories on the full range of subjects under the rubric of food systems: agricultural and nutritional policy, the food industry, food science, technology and culture, rural and urban farming, agriculture and the environment (including climate change), global trade and supply chains, consolidation and securitization of the food system and public health as it relates to food and farming.

For more information, see:

<http://journalism.berkeley.edu/projects/foodfellows/>

### **Farming the Urban Edge March 5, 2014 Anaheim, California**

Join former California Secretary of Agriculture AG Kawamura at The Great Park, tour historic Highland Springs Resort, and hear about biological controls for Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP) from leading researcher, Dr. Raju Pandey.

This tour organized by CCOF explores the opportunities and challenges of organic farming at the urban edge and ends with a delicious organic tasting reception with healthy foods prepared by Chef Frank Caputo of Cancer Treatment Centers of America. Before the tour, CCOF will hold its annual meeting with keynote Rachel Surls of LA Cooperative Extension.

For more information and to register, click [here](#).