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Farmers and Conservation Leaders Call for Support to Tackle Climate Change

SACRAMENTO — Farmers and resource conservation leaders gathered from across the state today to discuss the challenges facing California agriculture under climate change, and the resources needed to address them.

Organized by the California Climate & Agriculture Network (CalCAN) and the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD), the event highlighted the need for investments in agricultural research, grower technical assistance and financial incentives to support agricultural solutions to climate change.

“Farmers and ranchers have a lot to offer when it comes to climate change solutions,” said Jeanne Merrill, Policy Director with CalCAN. “But unless we re-invest in our agricultural resources, including technical assistance for growers, farm-based solutions to climate change will be stymied.”

Farmers discussed the advantages of sustainable agricultural practices, which can be part of the climate solution through carbon sequestration in soils, trees, and shrubs, on-farm renewable energy, and reduced methane and nitrous oxide emissions. They called for building upon Governor Brown’s budget proposal, which includes cap-and-trade revenue investments in agriculture.

In discussions with legislators, the group also discussed the important role of Resource Conservation Districts (RCD) in agricultural conservation. California’s 98 RCDs implement vital on-the-ground conservation efforts, providing invaluable support to local communities through practical, hands-on projects.

“Resource Conservation Districts are extremely effective at implementing local conservation that helps promote statewide objectives like clean water and clean air,” said Karen Buhr, CARCD Executive Director. “We are asking for modest funding to ensure RCDs can continue to achieve results and support farmers in achieving their conservation goals.”

The group of farmers and conservation leaders also expressed strong support today for Assembly Bill 1961 (Eggman), the Sustainable Farmland Strategy Act. The bill would improve county-level planning for farmland conservation. Farmland conservation is central to addressing climate change in California; an acre of urban land emits 70 times more greenhouse gas emissions than an acre of farmland. However, the state loses about 30,000 acres of farmland every year. AB 1961 recently moved out the Assembly Local Government Committee and was heard today in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.