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Farmers, Sustainable Agriculture Advocates Welcome Governor's Signing of Climate Change Bills

Farmers and sustainable agriculture advocates hailed Governor Brown's signing today of two bills that will help the state reach its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction goals. Together, the two bills — Assembly Bill 1532, authored by Assembly Speaker John Perez, and Senate Bill 535, authored by Senator Kevin de León — create a public process for determining how cap-and-trade revenue will be spent to reach California's GHG reduction targets.

The California Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN), a coalition of sustainable agriculture organizations and farmer member groups, supported the bills. CalCAN advocates for resources for California agriculture to reduce GHG emissions and support farmers in adapting to climate change.

"Our state's farmers and ranchers are among the most vulnerable to the water scarcity, extreme weather events and new pests and diseases that climate change is bringing," said Renata Brillinger, Executive Director of the California Climate and Agriculture Network. "The Governor took action today to ensure that California agriculture has the needed resources to tackle climate change."

With the California Air Resources Board moving forward with the first auction of cap-and-trade allowances this November, the state will have to determine the best investments of the funds to achieve the GHG emissions reductions that are mandated under the state's Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32). The two bills outline a process for public engagement and clear criteria for investments that will allow for a robust and meaningful discussion from all sectors, including agriculture. Importantly for the state's farmers and ranchers, AB 1532 includes sustainable agriculture activities that reduce GHG emissions as one of the eligible activities for cap-and-trade revenue investment.

"Livestock and crop producers like us are on the front lines of climate change," said Rose Marie Burroughs, Central Valley rancher. "The Governor's actions today can turn our challenges into opportunities by helping farmers address climate change."

Potential GHG emission reductions in agriculture are substantial. With the development of innovative on-farm renewable energy projects, energy and water use efficiency measures, farming practices that reduce fossil fuel inputs and sequester carbon, and the preservation of farmland that limits transportation emissions, agriculture can meaningfully reduce its GHG emissions while providing additional environmental and health benefits. Two advisory committees to the California Air Resources Board found that California agriculture can reduce its emissions by 31 to 57 percent of its total.

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*The California Climate and Agriculture Network is a coalition of sustainable agriculture and farmer member groups working on the nexus of climate change and agriculture policy issues.
More information on the coalition can be found at www.calclimateag.org*