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Legislature & Governor Invest in Sustainable Agricultural Solutions: Final cap-and-trade budget deal includes climate-friendly farming

Sacramento, CA — After months of speculation and debate, Governor Brown and California's legislature have agreed on how to allocate a total of \$872 million in cap-and-trade auction proceeds as part of the state's FY 2014-15 budget package. The agreement also includes continuous appropriations and eligible funding categories beyond this current budget.

While most of the money goes to high-speed rail, clean transportation and Sustainable Communities Strategies, farmers and sustainable agriculture advocates are pleased that some of the funds will be invested in climate-friendly agricultural practices and farmland conservation that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon storage in soils, trees and other woody biomass.

"It is encouraging to see that the Governor and legislators recognize that agriculture can play a part in addressing California's climate crisis," said Rich Rominger, a Yolo County farmer and former Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture under the first Brown administration. "It is important that agriculture is included from the start in the state's investments in climate change solutions."

The budget includes over \$30 million for agricultural projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Of that, \$15 million will support agricultural energy and operational efficiency projects. \$10 million will fund agricultural water use efficiency projects at the farm level, approved in this year's drought package. Of the \$130 million that will go to implementing regional Sustainable Communities Strategies, \$6.5 million will go towards agricultural land preservation as a component of integrated land use and transportation projects.

"Many farmers and ranchers want to do their part to protect the environment and climate, whether it's conserving energy and water, reducing our carbon footprint or producing renewable energy," said Julie Morris of Morris Grassfed Beef in San Benito County. "With funding for research, technical assistance and financial incentives, it will be easier."

Under the deal struck, high-speed rail, transit, and Sustainable Communities Strategies will receive 60 percent of the future funds in on-going, continuous appropriations. The remaining 40 percent of the funds, which could reach billions of dollars in future years, will be allocated annually as part of the regular budget process.

"These initial investments in agricultural solutions to climate change will support innovative farmers and ranchers in addressing one of the biggest threats to California agriculture," said Jeanne Merrill, Policy Director of the California Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN). "Over time, we look forward to larger investments in sustainable agriculture and farmland conservation to achieve powerful and unique climate solutions on our farms and ranches. Such investments will provide multiple benefits to our economy, food security and environment."

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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.