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Assembly Committee Hears the Case for Cap-and-Trade Investments in Agriculture

Sacramento, CA — Yesterday, the California legislature held a joint hearing of the Assembly Select Committee on Sustainable and Organic Agriculture and the Assembly Select Committee on Agriculture and the Environment focused on how California agriculture can help the state meet AB 32 goals.

Expert panelists at the hearing included Edie Chang, California Air Resources Board; Amrith Gunasekara, California Department of Food and Agriculture; Jeanne Merrill, California Climate and Agriculture Network; Vicky Dawley, Tehama rancher and Resource Conservation District manager; Dr. Louise Jackson, UC Davis; and, John Gamper, California Farm Bureau.

The panelists made a strong case for investing a portion of cap-and-trade revenue in agriculture. Vicky Dawley summed it up, speaking from her experience as a rancher and environmentalist, roles she sees as compatible. When speaking about realizing the potential in agriculture for reducing GHG emissions and getting clean air and water co-benefits, she said, “It’s going to take partnerships. We need more research and we need technical assistance, which is currently at an all-time low. And we need cost supports for farmers to implement beneficial practices.”

Several speakers emphasized the importance of using cap-and-trade investment funds for agricultural practices that provide many benefits to California communities. CalCAN’s Jeanne Merrill said, “Allowance revenue should target farming practices that reduce GHG emissions while providing environmental and health co-benefits.” Louise Jackson at UC Davis maintained that we should invest in “climate-friendly management that improves overall productivity on farms.” Finally, Edie Chang from ARB summarized her remarks by saying “We have the potential to address adaptation strategies for agriculture as well as reduce GHG emissions.”

The Department of Finance in conjunction with the California Air Resources Board is responsible for developing the first three year cap-and-trade investment plans to meet the objectives of the state’s climate change law, AB 32. They recently released a [draft investment plan](#) that includes recommendations for funding agricultural solutions to greenhouse gas emission reductions and carbon sequestration, including farmland conservation, agriculture energy use efficiency and renewable energy. The final plan is due with the May revision of the Governor’s budget.

At the end of the hearing, Assemblymember Levine agreed with the panelists by saying “Clearly, funding through cap-and-trade is necessary” for incentivizing GHG reductions in agriculture.

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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. <http://www.calclimateag.org>