



**For Immediate Release
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**New Report: California Must Protect Farmland on Urban Edges
to Meet Climate Protection Goals**

50,000 acres a year being paved over; new policy tools needed

A new report by the California Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN) says that California's farmland is at risk from traditional pressures like urban sprawl and new ones including large-scale solar energy projects and oil and gas exploration. Despite mounting evidence showing the climate change benefits of protecting farmland and curbing greenhouse gas emissions related to transportation and energy use, California farmland is under threat of being paved over.

Triple Harvest: Farmland Conservation for Climate Protection, Smart Growth and Food Security describes the many essential services provided by California farmland and current development threats. It outlines policy recommendations for protecting agricultural lands to ensure their climate, food security and other benefits. The report is being released in conjunction with CalCAN's annual [Climate Change and Agriculture Summit](#), held at UC Davis on February 20-21. The report is embargoed until Feb. 19. For a copy of the report or press passes to the "Farming for the Future" Farm Tour or Summit, please contact Penelope Whitney at 415-397-5000 x 313 or Penelope@resource-media.org

"California's existing farmland protection policy tools are outdated and underfunded," said Renata Brillinger, CalCAN Executive Director. "They must be strengthened, especially at the boundaries of our cities where farms can provide the greatest benefit to avoiding greenhouse gas emissions."

As California aims to reach its mandate of reducing emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, both smart growth planning and urban edge farmland protection will be crucial. For example, a [2012 study by UC Davis](#) researchers found that in Yolo County, urban development generates 70 times more greenhouse gas emissions than irrigated cropland.

Triple Harvest summarizes the following pressures on farmland:

- California has lost an average of 50,000 acres of farmland each year for the past 30 years. New development pressures put farmland in the state at additional risk of development.
- Instead of accommodating larger populations with smart growth, infill development, public transit and greenbelt protection, cities and counties have permitted suburban and ex-urban sprawl and the fragmentation of farmland. A 2013 American Farmland Trust [report](#) found that 61 percent of all development in the San Joaquin Valley is taking place on high quality farmland, mostly along the Highway 99 corridor.
- As of January 2012, 45 large scale-solar projects were approved to cover about 17,570 acres the San Joaquin Valley's most productive farming and grazing land, and an additional 59 were under consideration.

- The state's new "fracking" boom means oil and gas companies are purchasing subsurface mineral rights of farms, putting agricultural land and water at risk.

The report's policy recommendations include:

1. Clarify mitigation requirements for loss of farmland under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
2. Develop farmland mitigation requirements based on cumulative impacts of infrastructure projects, including the impact on future greenhouse gas emissions.
3. Direct a portion of AB 32 cap-and-trade revenues to farmland conservation, targeting the creation of easements on farmland most at risk of development

On February 21st, the *Farming for the Future: California Climate & Agriculture Summit* will feature the latest on climate change impacts on California agriculture and the policy, science and practical tools needed to support farmers and ranchers in addressing climate change. In addition, a February 20th tour of three research and commercial farms will highlight practices that conserve water, sequester carbon and protect yields in a hotter, drier California. Sustainable agriculture can provide climate solutions by reducing agriculture's greenhouse gas emissions, sequestering carbon in soils and plants and buffering against climate impacts by conserving natural resources.

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