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# Agriculture as a Net Sink of Greenhouse Gases: Proposals to Invest Cap-and-Trade Revenues

Posted by Vanguard Administrator (http://www.davisvanguard.org/author/vanguard-administrator/) Date: April 03, 2015 in: Breaking News (http://www.davisvanguard.org/category/breaking-news/), Environment (http://www.davisvanguard.org/category/state-of-california/environment-state-of-california/), Food Issues (http://www.davisvanguard.org/category/state-of-california/food-issues-state-of-california/), State of California (http://www.davisvanguard.org/category/state-of-california/) (2) Comments



By Leanna Sweha

Governor Brown's FY 2015-16 budget proposal calls for new actions to further reduce greenhouse gas pollutants (GHG) by 2030, including actions to enhance California's agricultural lands "to be net carbon sinks, rather than sources, of GHG emissions..."

At last week's California Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN) Summit (http://calclimateag.org/blog/), held at UC Davis, CalCAN released a "Blueprint (http://calclimateag.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Blueprint-2015-Full-FINAL.pdf) for a California Program on Agriculture and Climate" that will "catalyze farm and ranch practices that mitigate

climate change." CalCAN also announced that the elements of the Blueprint would be amended into SB367 (http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\_id=201520160SB367), a bill authored by Senator Lois Wolk.

The CalCAN Blueprint proposes to invest cap-and-trade revenues in agriculture "to achieve meaningful reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and increased carbon sequestration in soils and woody plants, while supporting multiple co-benefits to farmers, the environment, the economy, and public health."

Soil, as well as plants and microorganisms in the soil, remove carbon from the atmosphere through a process called "carbon sequestration." Improving soil, nutrient and crop management practices can increase carbon sequestration. Bio-digesters (http://www.takepart.com/article/2015/01/16/amazing-animal-puts-food-your-plate-and-powers-your-home), which transform animal waste into methane and other biogases, reduce emissions from animal agriculture while supplying renewable energy.

Managing farms and rangelands to reduce emissions and increase carbon sequestration is popularly known as "carbon farming." The goal of carbon farming is to manage working lands so that carbon sequestration exceeds carbon and other GHGs released to the atmosphere – the "net sink" concept.

SB 367 would expand the Environmental Farming Program in the State Department of Food and Agriculture to include "technical, educational, and financial assistance to agricultural producers that provide multiple environmental and health benefits, including, but not limited to, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, increased carbon storage in soils and woody biomass, improved air and water quality, enhanced wildlife habitat, and improved local health outcomes."

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The bill would designate the current [Scientific Advisory Panel](#) (<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/EnvironmentalStewardship/Cannella.html>) on Environmental Farming as the entity responsible for advising on the components and design of the program.

The bill does not appropriate any money. However, the implication is that funding will come from cap-and-trade auction revenues, which are held in the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund.

Sixty percent of proceeds in the Fund are already dedicated, either by statute or because of the agreements made in the FY [2014-15 budget](#) (<http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/2014-15/pdf/Enacted/BudgetSummary/CapandTradeExpenditurePlan.pdf>) negotiations. 25 percent will go to high speed rail. 35 percent will go to public transit, affordable housing and sustainable communities programs. So, funding for the SB367 program, if signed into law, would have to come from the remaining 40 percent, which is allocated through the annual budget process.






There were \$872 million in cap-and-trade auction proceeds allocated in the FY 2014-15 state budget. \$30 million went to agricultural projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. \$6.5 million went to agricultural land preservation as a component of integrated land use and transportation projects in the sustainable communities program. CalCAN and its partners were instrumental in convincing lawmakers to include these funds  budget.

The FY [2015-16 budget](#) (<http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/2015-16/pdf/BudgetSummary/EnvironmentalProtection.pdf>) proposes to allocate \$1 billion from cap-and-trade revenues, under the same funding structure as the FY 2014-15 budget. CalCAN believes much more investment in agriculture is needed to achieve the state's climate goals.

SB367 will be heard in the Senate Agriculture Committee on April 7.

*Leanna M Sweha, JD, has been a resident of Davis for 20 years. As a young molecular biologist in a USDA lab working to engineer Roundup-resistant corn, she grew interested in sustainable agriculture. Fascinated with the legal and policy issues of agricultural genetics, she became an attorney specializing in agricultural and natural resources law. She has worked for the California Resources Agency and the UC Davis Office of Research.*

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