



## News from the California Climate & Agriculture Network

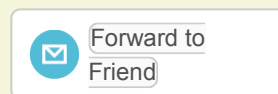
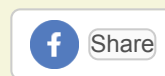
*June 17, 2015*

### Cap-and-Trade Budget: Decisions Delayed

California lawmakers have put off their decision on how to spend over \$2 billion in cap-and-trade revenues, leaving it unclear what climate change investments in agriculture we will see in the coming fiscal year.

We were hoping to see the [June 16th budget package](#), agreed upon by the Governor and Legislative leaders, allocate funds for farmland conservation and climate-friendly management practices consistent with Senator Lois Wolk's [SB 367: The Agriculture Climate Benefits Act](#).

Instead, it could be months before the cap-and-trade budget package sees Governor Brown's signature – potentially as late



as September.

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### USDA Invests \$21 Million in Water Conservation

Last month, the USDA [announced](#) its plan to invest an additional \$21 million of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds to support on-farm water conservation efforts in severely drought-stricken areas. Administered by the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), [EQIP](#) supports on-farm conservation improvements through financial cost-sharing and technical assistance to growers.

The new investment will direct EQIP funds to eight states experiencing exceptional or extreme [drought](#) conditions, including California. NRCS will use the funds to promote conservation practices that help farmers cope with drought, such as improving irrigation efficiency, implementing prescribed grazing, and building soil health through cover crops and reduced tillage.

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CalCAN is a coalition of organic and sustainable agriculture organizations that advances policies to provide resources for climate-friendly farming practices.

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### **Farmer Climate Leader: John Diener**

In the water-scarce Westlands District of the San Joaquin Valley, John Diener carries on a family tradition of farming in the Central Valley that began in 1929. He began farming Red Rock Ranch in 1980 in Five Points, just south of Fresno. He grows a variety of crops on over 4,000 acres including almonds, grapes, wheat, alfalfa, corn, peas, tomatoes, spinach, and sugar beets.

Farmers on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley face particular environmental challenges, including water scarcity and high levels of naturally occurring selenium and other salts in the soils that diminish the productivity of the farmland. The saline drainage water cannot be discharged into streams and rivers because it presents a danger to wildlife and the ecosystem. John Diener has approached these challenges with an innovative spirit, combining what he calls an “Integrated On-Farm Drainage Management” system with center pivot sprinkler irrigation and conservation tillage. This combination of practices allowed John to reduce his irrigation water use by 20%, and thus reduce the energy needed to pump water and the associated greenhouse gas emissions.

[Read more...](#)

### **A Call for Farmland Conservation**

Between 1984 and 2010, California lost an average of over 50,000 acres of agricultural land annually. Reducing that agricultural land conversion by 40%, or 20,000 acres per year, would avoid 1.2 million metric tons of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. That’s equivalent to taking 240,000 cars off the road and reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled by 2.9 billion miles annually.

Fortunately, a program funded by California’s cap-and-trade system is tackling the problem of farmland conversion head-on. [The Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program](#) (SALC) received a \$5 million allocation in last year’s budget. Those funds will be awarded to local government planning grants and agricultural conservation easements that

reduce urban sprawl and cut GHGs.

But a coalition of thirty-one land trusts, agricultural groups and environmental organizations say \$5 million is not nearly enough considering [the scale of this challenge](#). The coalition, led by CalCAN, has [submitted a letter](#) to legislators calling for more robust investments in the SALC program.

We highlight that demand for the program has far exceeded the current funding level this year, with over \$45 million in requests.

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### **KQED: Climate Change and Cherries**

CalCAN's Renata Brillinger served as a resource for this KQED story, *Warmer Winter Nights Mean Smaller Cherry Crop*, which aired June 12. Journalist Lisa Morehouse visited Fairhaven Orchards in Santa Clara Valley to learn more about the relationship between winter temperatures and cherry quality.

Declining winter chill hours have disrupted cherry production throughout the state, with California production down 60% last year. Bill Coates, a longtime San Benito County farm advisor, says "there definitely has been a change in the climate, and it's going to impact tree crops greatly."

Listen to the show [here](#).

### **Funding & Award Nominations**

#### **Water-Energy Efficiency Grants from CDFA**

**Deadline: June 29, 2015**

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is opening a new round of water-energy efficiency grants. The State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEET) has

already funded 154 on-farm projects with an initial \$9.5 million allocation last year, and now has another \$10 million available.

Under SWEEP, growers can receive financial assistance to install water distribution systems that save water and reduce greenhouse gases. Up to \$150,000 per operation can be used to fund a broad range of irrigation-related projects such as pump improvements, equipment to facilitate water saving measures and other quantifiable water distribution and greenhouse gas reduction management practices.

For more information and to apply, go to:

[www.cdfa.ca.gov/go/SWEEP](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/go/SWEEP). For examples of successful projects, view the list of previous recipients by clicking [here](#). Prospective applicants may contact CDFA's Grants Office at [grants@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:grants@cdfa.ca.gov) with general program questions.

### **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Pre-proposals due July 8**

\$235 million is now available through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), a new Farm Bill program that empowers local communities to work with multiple partners, farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to design solutions that work best for them. This will be the second round of projects funded through RCPP.

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack commented on the program: "This initiative allows local partners the opportunity to design and invest in conservation projects specifically tailored for their communities. These public-private partnerships...keep our land and water clean, and promote tremendous economic growth in agriculture, construction, tourism, and other industries."

Learn more [here](#).

### **Leopold Conservation Award: Nominations Now Open**

#### **Applications Accepted through July 10**

Sand County Foundation proudly presents its Leopold Conservation Award to a private landowner who exemplifies the spirit of a land ethic — an individual or a family committed to enhancing the natural resources that are in their care.

In California, Sand County Foundation presents the Leopold Conservation Award in partnership with Sustainable Conservation and the California Farm Bureau Federation. The Awards recognize extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation, inspire other landowners through



their example, and help the general public understand the vital role private landowners can and do play in conservation success.

Last year's Leopold award winner was [Full Belly Farm](#), an organic CSA operation in the Capay Valley, co-owned by Judith Redmond, a CalCAN Farmer Advisor.

Learn more [here](#).

**2015 Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Awards Program (GEELA)  
Applications Accepted through July 24**

GEELA is California's highest environmental honor. The program recognizes individuals, organizations, and businesses that have demonstrated exceptional leadership and made notable, voluntary contributions in conserving California's precious resources, protecting and enhancing our environment, building public-private partnerships and strengthening the State's economy.

Award categories include:

- Environmental Education
- Ecosystem and Land Use Stewardship
- Climate Change
- Zero Emission Vehicle Dealers
- Sustainable Practices, Communities, or Facilities
- Waste Reduction

Learn more [here](#).

## Events

**Water Efficiency Workshop**

**Tuesday, June 30, 2:30 – 5:00 pm**

**Silver Mountain Vineyards, Santa Cruz**

Join the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) for an irrigation and water efficiency workshop at [Silver Mountain Vineyards](#) near Summit Road in the Santa Cruz Mountains. We will be discussing various approaches to farm management and water conservation. Please contact [dave@caff.org](mailto:dave@caff.org) with questions.

**Biochar Soil Management Workshop**

**Saturday, July 25, 10am – 2pm**

**Swallow Valley Farm, Valley Ford**

Biochar is a specialized form of charcoal made at relatively high temperatures in the absence of oxygen (in a process termed "pyrolysis"). Combined with compost or similar

inoculant, biochar has been demonstrated to improve soil health, retain soil moisture, increase crop yields, and sequester carbon. [This workshop and demonstration](#) will show the actual trials occurring at a local farm and provide the opportunity to learn how biochar may be used to improve yield and efficiency.

The workshop is free and open to the public. For more information, please contact: William Hart, Project Manager at Gold Ridge RCD: [william@goldridgercd.org](mailto:william@goldridgercd.org) or 707-823-5244.

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