

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – September 1, 2016

Sweeping Climate Legislation Will Help Grow Crops and Local Economies

State lawmakers pass historic bills to continue fight against climate change

SACRAMENTO – Farmers and ranchers throughout California commend the legislature for its recent actions on climate change. The passage of key climate bills, alongside the appropriation of more than \$65 million for climate-smart agriculture programs, will provide needed resources for farmers and ranchers to address a changing climate.

“Farmers have a lot at stake in a changing climate as our extreme drought reminds us,” said Tom Willey at T&D Willey Farms in Madera. “We experience the impacts of climate change on our farm every day. I commend the California legislature for continuing down the path of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and investing in the continued success of California agriculture.

Legislators passed a suite of budget bills (SB 830, SB 859, AB 1613 and AB 1629) which include \$65 million for programs that provide resources for growers to lower greenhouse gas emissions, store carbon in soils and offer multiple benefits to agricultural producers and the environment. The budget allocation includes \$7.5 million for the new Healthy Soils Program; \$7.5 million for the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program; and \$50 million for the Dairy Methane Program. Also funded separately with a continuous appropriation is the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program, a farmland conservation and climate change program.

Since 2014, \$130 million in state funding has financed more than 400 projects that improve on-farm water use efficiency, conserve agricultural land at risk of development, and reduce dairy methane emissions. These programs are among the first in the country to recognize that agriculture offers significant climate solutions.

“Many farmers really want to reduce water use and greenhouse gas emissions, but we need programs like these to adopt new practices,” said Judith Redmond, co-owner of a diverse organic farm in Guinda. “These programs will surely end up being good for everyone in the community.”

Among the funded programs is the newly created Healthy Soils Program, which will reward growers who employ multi-benefit practices that treat their farms and ranches as carbon sinks. SB 859 sets program parameters and updates the Environmental Farming Act of 1995, which guides the Department of Food and Agriculture’s work on these issues. The leadership of Senator Lois Wolk (D – Davis), who authored multiple bills over the years to establish a state climate change and agriculture program, including SB 1350 (2016) and SB 367 (2015), was critical in the establishment of the Healthy Soils Program.

With the passage of SB 32 and AB 197 last week, the legislature re-affirmed the state’s commitment to reducing emissions through 2030 and sent a clear message to California’s 76,000 farms and ranches that their help is needed in the fight against climate change.

“The legislature’s action can help us pull carbon out of the air and reduce the impacts of climate change,” said Greg Rawlings at Jacobs Farm/Del Cabo Inc. in Pescadero. “Our farm’s livelihood and California’s ability to continue to be a leader in world food production is threatened if we don’t act now on climate change.”

“We work with farmers and ranchers who demand action on climate change,” said Jeanne Merrill, Policy Director with the California Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN), a coalition of sustainable and organic agriculture organizations. “The Governor and the Legislature’s actions this week will further empower farmers and ranchers to develop needed solutions to the climate crisis.”

For more on the climate smart agriculture programs, see: www.calclimateag.org

* * * * *