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AB 1086: State Water Efficiency & Enhancement Program Fact Sheet

Summary

AB 1086 puts the existing State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP) in statute and makes some improvements to the program's implementation based on feedback from SWEEP stakeholders and irrigation experts.

Background

California's 77,000 farms are critical to the state's agricultural and rural economies as well as the state's water stewardship.

In response to the drought crisis in 2014, the state created SWEEP to support on-farm irrigation management projects that improve water use efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The record-breaking drought has subsided, but the risks of drought remain and are predicted to increase for the state as temperatures rise. Climate science predicts that California will experience a 50 percent increase in severe droughts by 2100.ⁱ

The California Department of Agriculture (CDFA) administers SWEEP, which provides incentives grants to farmers to transition to more water- and energy-efficient irrigation systems while achieving multiple co-benefits, including: reduced energy and water costs, increased production, reduced nitrate contamination of water, improved air quality, and enhanced resiliency to droughts.

SWEEP has been a highly successful and popular program, with applications outnumbering awards by a nearly 3-to-1 ratio.ⁱⁱ SWEEP has granted \$62.8 million to over 600 projects across 33 counties. Of those projects, 3-in-5 are located in critically

overdrafted groundwater basins and 1-in-3 are located in Disadvantaged Communities.ⁱⁱⁱ

In a [2018 Policy Brief on SWEEP](#),^{iv} the California Climate and Agriculture Network identified a number of opportunities to improve the program based on interviews with SWEEP application reviewers and program technical assistance (TA) providers as well as analysis of program data.

What this bill does

AB 1086 puts SWEEP in statute and makes improvements recommended by SWEEP stakeholders and irrigation experts, including:

- Prioritizes SWEEP grants for small and mid-scale farms of less than 500 acres and socially disadvantaged farmers & ranchers (SDFRs).^v
- Funds necessary educational trainings for irrigation operators to maximize their irrigation and nutrient management efficiency.
- Funds integrated groundwater sustainability and water- and energy-efficiency pilot projects with irrigation districts and groundwater sustainability agencies.
- Sets up an advisory committee of stakeholders and experts to help the program improve participation by SDFRs and farms in Southern California, evaluate the inclusion of other practices into the program like dual-irrigation systems and on-farm water storage, and improve the program's application process and quantification methodology.

Support

California Climate & Agriculture Network –
Sponsors
University of California Student Association –
Sponsors
Community Alliance with Family Farmers
The Farmers Guild

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ⁱ Pathak, T., et. al. 2018. Climate change trends and impacts on California agriculture: A detailed review. *Agronomy*, (3)25.

ⁱⁱ Shobe, B., Merrill, J., 2018. Climate Smart: Saving Water and Energy on California Farms. Available at:
<http://calclimateag.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/SWEEP-Policy-Brief-CalCAN-9-11-18.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid

^{iv} Ibid

^v According to the 2012 Ag Census, 90% of California farms have less than 500 acres.