

May 20, 2019

The Honorable Toni Atkins, Senate President pro Tem
The Honorable Anthony Rendon, Assembly Speaker
The Honorable Holly J. Mitchell, Chair, Senate Budget Committee
The Honorable Philip C. Ting, Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
The Honorable Bob Wieckowski, Chair, Senate Budget Subcomm. No. 2
The Honorable Richard Bloom, Chair, Assembly Budget Subcomm. No. 3

Dear Senate Pro Tem Atkins, Speaker Rendon, Budget Chairs Mitchell and Ting, and Budget Subcommittee Chairs Wieckowski and Bloom,

We write as farmers, ranchers and community members concerned about climate change and its impacts on agriculture.

We ask you to support investments in the state's Climate Smart Agriculture programs. They provide much-needed funds to conserve water and energy, reduce methane emissions on dairies, and expand our carbon sinks. These programs make resources available to farmers and ranchers to incentivize changes in their management practices and help reduce the initial risks that can come with implementing new agricultural practices. In addition to providing climate benefits, these on-farm projects can also improve air and water quality, increase crop yields and profitability, and improve public health.

We applaud and support Governor Newsom's proposal for \$28 million for the Healthy Soils Program, and ask the legislature to do the same. The Healthy Soils Program provides grants to support innovative farm and ranch practices to reduce GHG emissions and store carbon in agricultural soils, trees and shrubs. Agricultural lands are one of our greatest assets when it comes to drawing down carbon from the atmosphere. Governor Newsom's proposal gets us closer to the five-fold increase in Healthy Soils funding called for in the current draft of the 2030 Natural and Working Lands Climate Change Implementation Plan.

However, funding healthy soils alone is not sufficient for achieving the potential of agriculture to contribute to California's net carbon neutrality goal. We urge you to also advance the following investments:

State Water Efficiency & Enhancement Program (SWEEP): \$40 million

In allocating no funds to SWEEP, Governor Newsom's budget misses an important strategy for not only reducing energy-related GHG emissions but also for better preparing our farms for future droughts. Since 2014, SWEEP has funded more than 600 projects on farms and ranches of all sizes throughout the state to improve irrigation efficiency and install solar-powered pumps, soil moisture monitoring and more. SWEEP funding totaled \$67.5 million, and demand for the program exceeded funding levels by more than double. To get SWEEP projects back on track, the program needs to return to its baseline funding of \$40 million.

Alternative Manure Management Program (AMMP): \$40 million

Governor Newsom’s budget allocates a total of \$35 million for dairy methane reduction strategies, but this budget is shared by dairy digesters and only a fraction will likely be available for AMMP. The program funds improved manure handling and storage on livestock operations with the multiple benefits of reducing potent methane emissions, producing compost and improving rural community health. AMMP is an important component to the state’s Healthy Soils Initiative by turning manure into compost. In the recent 2019 grant cycle, dairy producers applied for over \$52 million in AMMP funding, clearly demonstrating its popularity.

Adaptation Tools for Farmers: \$2 million

Farmers and ranchers are on the frontlines of climate change, which is already disrupting production for many. We need to funding to support adaptation planning tools and trainings for producers to understand how to incorporate the latest climate science in their business and farm management plans. We support funding for this effort (AB 409, Limon) of \$2 million.

Farmers and ranchers stand ready to reduce GHG emissions and help avoid the worst impacts of a changing climate. We ask for your support of these investments in the FY 2019-20 budget that will accelerate the unique and powerful opportunities agriculture has to sink carbon, reduce potent GHG emissions and adapt to a changing climate. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

200 signers from 41 California counties