

AB 409

Agricultural Climate Adaptation Tools

Assemblymember
Monique Limón
37TH DISTRICT



THIS BILL

Assembly Bill 409 would establish a competitive grant program to develop climate adaptation planning tools and trainings for agricultural producers.

The bill would require the Strategic Growth Council to make available, upon appropriation, up to \$2,000,000 to fund the grant program.

BACKGROUND

The 77,000 farms and ranches in the State of California are uniquely vulnerable to the impacts of a changing climate, including increased frequency of extreme weather events, constrained water resources, new pest and disease pressures, and reduced winter chill hours.

The State and University of California (UC) have made significant investments in research to better understand agriculture's unique vulnerabilities and adaptation strategies to a changing climate. Not enough has been done to translate climate risks to the farm level and assist farmers in adapting to climate change.

In 2018, CalCAN conducted a series of 12 focus groups across 9 regions of the state with 60 farmers, ranchers, technical assistance (TA) providers, and other agricultural professionals. Farmer and rancher participants often expressed uncertainty about where to find locally-relevant and science-based information on climate risks and the type of information that would help them make adaptive management decisions.

To assess relevant climate risks and adaptation strategies and integrate them into their business planning and decision-making, farmers and ranchers need science-based, farm-level planning tools and trained TA providers to work with them. This is especially true for small and moderately scaled, and of disadvantaged farmers and ranchers who do not have equal access to technical assistance and, on average, have fewer resources to adapt to climate change.

TA providers and agricultural organizations also need training in climate risk management. According to a 2017 survey of 144 UC Agriculture and Natural Resources staff, 88% of respondents believe it is important to incorporate climate change information into farm extension programs, but only 43% actually do.¹ Respondents had a low level of confidence in their ability to incorporate climate change in their extension programming, citing a lack of access to climate information. They also expressed interest in education on technical tools and information resources, as well as training in climate science communication.

PURPOSE

AB 409 would establish a competitive grant program to achieve three objectives:

1. Develop science-based, farm-level agricultural adaptation planning tools.
2. Pilot the tools in three regions – the Central Valley, Central Coast, and Desert Region – with

¹ Grantham T, Kearns F, Kocher S, Roche L, Pathak T. 2017. Building climate change resilience in California through UC Cooperative Extension. Calif Agr 71(4):197-200. <https://doi.org/10.3733/ca.2017a0045>.

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local farmers, ranchers, TA providers, and ag organizations.

3. Facilitate trainings for TA providers and ag organizations on how to use the tools and effectively communicate about climate adaptation.

Eligible applicants include Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), the University of California, California state universities, United States Department of Agriculture researchers, and qualified nonprofit organizations.

Priority will be given to joint applications that take a collaborative and inclusive approach that includes the following:

1. Participation in the development of the planning tools by farmers, ranchers, TA providers, county agricultural commissioners, and agricultural industry organizations, such as commodity groups.
2. Incorporation in the tools of the unique needs of small and moderately scaled farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, and female farmers and ranchers.

The Strategic Growth council would provide guidance in the development of the program, but may designate a state agency or department (e.g. CDFA or DOC) to administer the program, similar to how the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program is currently set up.

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SUPPORT

California Climate & Agriculture Network (Sponsor)
Agriculture & Land-Based Training Association
American Farmland Trust
California FarmLink
California Food & Farming Network
California Land Stewardship Institute
California Winegrape Growers
California Certified Organic Farmers
Center for Land-Based Learning
Center for Food Safety
Community Alliance with Family Farmers
Community Environmental Council
Ecological Farming Association
Kiss the Ground
Occidental Arts & Ecology Center
Pacific Forest Trust
Pesticide Action Network
Public Health Institute
Rangeland Conservation Coalition
Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County
Roots of Change
Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority
Sequoia Riverlands Trust
Sustainable Agriculture Education
Vineyard Team
Wild Farm Alliance
Wild Willow Farm & Education Center
Wine Institute

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