

Farmer & Rancher Climate Leaders Healthy Soils Program Participants

The Healthy Soils Program, administered by the California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA), provides grants to farmers and ranchers who adopt management practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon sequestration in soil and plants.

More info is available on CDFA's website: <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/healthysoils/>

PONCE PRODUCE

Watsonville, Santa Cruz County
Award Amount: \$8,265



“These kinds of projects are important for all California farmers so that we don't deplete the soil and so that it can continue producing into the future.”

-Ruben Ponce

Ruben Ponce has been farming for over 30 years in Santa Cruz County and persevered through a difficult year despite the pandemic and fires of 2020. He currently grows a diversity of fruits and vegetables on four acres in Watsonville, CA including four types of fruit trees, snap peas, lettuce, kale, cilantro, chili peppers, fava beans, various squashes and berries, which he sells at farmers markets in Watsonville and Palo Alto.

Ruben received a Healthy Soils Program grant in 2020 to help pay for three annual applications of cover crops, compost and mulch on two acres. The cover crop consists of oats, legumes and mustard. Ruben has already noticed increased yields and plant vigor from the compost and improved soil tilth as a result of more organic matter from the cover crops. In addition to his grant project, Ruben also planted what is called a conservation cover to protect bare soil and attract beneficial insects and pollinators.

Sacha Lozano of the Santa Cruz County Resources Conservation District provided essential support to Ruben Ponce in applying for this grant program and implementing the project.

CalCAN would like to thank Sacha for connecting us to Ruben Ponce, who is a monolingual Spanish speaker, and for providing Spanish language interpretation during the interview.



CalCAN
CALIFORNIA CLIMATE &
AGRICULTURE NETWORK

The California Climate & Agriculture Network (CalCAN) is a statewide coalition that advances state and federal policy to realize the powerful climate solutions offered by sustainable and organic agriculture.