

## AB 2482 (Stone): SWEEP

### Summary

AB 1086 puts the existing State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP) in statute and makes five improvements to the program's implementation based on feedback from farmers, technical assistance providers, and irrigation experts.

### Background

California's 70,000 farms are critical to the state's rural economies and 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.<sup>i</sup>

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 yields, reduced nitrate contamination of groundwater, 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.<sup>ii</sup> SWEEP has granted \$72 million to over 725 projects across 37 counties.

In a [2018 Policy Brief on SWEEP](#),<sup>iii</sup> the California Climate and Agriculture Network identified a number of opportunities to improve the program based on analysis of SWEEP program data and interviews with SWEEP grant recipients, application reviewers, technical assistance providers, and many UC and CSU irrigation experts and educators.

### What this bill does

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

1. Prioritizes financial assistance for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (SDFRs) and small and mid-scale farms.<sup>iv</sup>
2. Gives CDFA flexibility to consider and prioritize new project types with co-benefits like groundwater recharge, improved water quality, and on-farm water storage.
3. Gives CDFA the authority to pursue innovative joint projects with the Department of Water Resources and irrigation districts.
4. Uses existing technical assistance funds to provide the hands-on, culturally-competent training many farmers and farmworkers need to effectively operate and reap the benefits of new irrigation systems and technologies.
5. Convenes an ad hoc technical advisory committee to update SWEEP's guidelines, calculators, application, and scoring criteria to incorporate the improvements above and to improve participation in historically underrepresented groups and regions.

## **Support**

California Climate & Agriculture Network  
(Sponsor)  
Agriculture & Land Based Training Association  
Cachuma Resource Conservation District  
California Association of Resource Conservation  
Districts  
California Institute for Rural Studies  
California Farm Link  
California Land Stewardship Institute  
Center for Regenerative Agriculture  
Center for Land Based Learning  
Center for Urban Education about Sustainable  
Agriculture  
Colusa County Resources Conservation District  
Community Alliance with Family Farmers  
Community Environmental Council  
Ecological Farming Association  
Mission Resource Conservation District  
National Center for Appropriate Technology  
Napa County Resource Conservation District  
Occidental Arts & Ecology Center  
Patagonia  
Peninsula Open Space Trust  
Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz  
County  
Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority  
Sequoia Riverlands Trust  
The Farmers Guild  
Upper Salinas – Las Tablas Resource Conservation  
District  
Vineyard Team

## **For More Information**

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

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

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<sup>iii</sup> Ibid

<sup>iv</sup> According to the 2012 Ag Census, 90% of California farms have less than 500 acres.