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**March 24, 2011**

## TAKE ACTION!

### Call Your State Senator - Support the Agriculture Climate Benefits Act!

Please call your State Senator today! On April 4<sup>th</sup>, the Agriculture Climate Benefits Act (Senate Bill 237) will go up for a committee vote in the California State Senate. SB 237 will assure that future revenue generated by the state's climate change law designated to agriculture will be spent on climate-friendly sustainable agriculture practices.

**Make your voice heard and support sustainable agricultural solutions to climate change.**

Please call your State Senator today.

#### It's easy to call:

Go to <http://www.legislature.ca.gov/port-zipsearch.html> and type in your zip code. Call the Sacramento office number of your State Senator. Ask to speak to the staff person who handles agriculture issues.

The message is simple. "I am a constituent of Senator \_\_\_\_\_ and I am calling to ask him/her to support SB 237, the Agriculture Climate Benefits Act. SB 237 will support California agriculture in addressing climate change. Agriculture is uniquely vulnerable to climate change. Future funds from AB 32 should support sustainable agricultural responses to both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate."

#### Report your call:

Please let us know you called. Drop us a line to:

[jmerrill@calclimateag.org](mailto:jmerrill@calclimateag.org)

**Background:**

In a state where water is already scarce, climate change scenarios predict that water supplies will become increasingly constrained. Warming temperatures also threaten to shift the kinds of crops that can be grown in the state. Statewide, the impact of climate change on California agriculture could hamper food and fiber production in the decades to come.

At the same time, agriculture can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Research funded by the California Energy Commission suggests that some agricultural practices not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but may also sequester atmospheric carbon in the soil.

California is proceeding in implementing its climate change law, AB 32, which requires California to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. Through implementation of the law, new funds will become available to support greenhouse gas emissions reductions and help the state adapt to climate change.

The Agriculture Climate Benefits Act, SB 237, authored by State Senator Lois Wolk, recognizes the need for agricultural solutions to climate change. SB 237 defines the eligible uses of funds designated to California's agriculture sector from implementation of the state's climate change law, including:

1. Research and demonstration to examine the farming practices and systems that reduce GHG emissions, sequester atmospheric carbon and adapt to climate change.
2. Technical assistance for producers that communicates research findings into real opportunities for California agriculture to provide voluntary GHG reductions and adaptation activities.
3. Incentives for farmers and ranchers to overcome barriers to agricultural practices that mitigate and adapt to climate change while providing environmental and health co-benefits, including improved air and water quality, enhanced wildlife habitat and water conservation.

Funds will be administered with input from an Advisory Committee comprised of agricultural producers, researchers and non-profit organizations with expertise in agriculture and climate

change issues.

For more information, go to: [www.calclimateag.org](http://www.calclimateag.org)

## **Legislative Spotlight: Renewable Energy Equity Act (SB 489)**

The California Climate and Agriculture Network is working with Dixon Ridge Farms and Senator Lois Wolk to support SB 489, the Renewable Energy Equity Act.

SB 489 proposes to open California's Net Energy Metering (NEM) Program to all eligible forms of renewable energy. This will allow agricultural businesses to do three things::

1. More easily and economically convert agricultural waste into clean renewable energy;
2. Help reduce the need for new power plants and transmission infrastructure;
3. Save money on their power bills.

Expanding the program will also help the state reach both its greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals and also its renewable energy goals.

### **Background**

California is seeking to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, with over a quarter of those reductions coming from the energy sector, and has adopted a 33% Renewable Portfolio Standard goal. However, while renewable energy has grown, it has not kept pace with the overall increase in energy demand in California from 1997 through 2009.

To help spur renewable energy production the state has adopted several programs; however, significant obstacles continue to block the development of new community-scale, decentralized renewable power production. Specifically, limitations within California's NEM program are preventing cost-effective, clean renewable power from connecting to the grid.

The current NEM program is only open to wind or solar power generators. Only those generators can take advantage of the program's streamlined approach to getting renewable energy on line quickly. Connecting all other forms of clean renewable

energy to the electric grid requires going through the longer, more arduous, and very expensive Feed-In-Tariff process. It also prohibits combining different types of renewable power.

For smaller energy producers, the costs incurred by this longer process often outweigh the benefits of the renewable power generation. For example, Dixon Ridge Farms, an organic walnut operation, has not been able to connect its innovative bioenergy project, fueled by walnuts shells, to the grid. SB 489 proposes to allow all small-scale eligible renewable energy producers to participate in the NEM program, offering them a cost-effective way to save money, more easily connect to the grid and produce clean power. Making this easier for farmers and others will help California reach its energy and environmental goals.

For information, contact Jeanne Merrill:  
[jmerrill@calclimateag.org](mailto:jmerrill@calclimateag.org)

**There are only a handful  
of spaces left at the  
Climate & Agriculture Summit -  
Last chance to register!**



**March 31, 2011**

**UC Davis Conference Center**

**8:00am - 5:30pm, followed by a wine & cheese reception**

This Summit will explore some of the latest developments in science and on-farm practices that show promise for reducing agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and sequestering carbon, with an emphasis on organic and sustainable agriculture solutions.

**Registration Information:**

The [CalCAN website](#) has more information, including a program and speaker list, and a link to register on line.

Farmers & Ranchers.....\$35  
Extension, RCD, NRCS staff.....\$35  
General Registration .....\$85

Registration fees include a light breakfast, an organic lunch, and the wine and cheese reception.

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