

Ag practices focus of Wolk bill dealing with climate change

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The Senate Environmental Quality Committee voted Monday to approve the Agriculture Climate Benefits Act, to help the state's farmers and ranchers cope with the state's changing climate and recognize the critical role agriculture can play in reducing greenhouse emissions.

"California agriculture contributes \$35 billion annually to California's economy, and supplies more than half of the country's fruit and vegetables," stated Sen. Lois Wolk, D-Davis. "Senate Bill 237 helps the state's farmers and ranchers, the people who fuel this fast-growing sector of our economy, cope with a changing climate.

"The bill also recognizes that agriculture can play an important role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

In a state where water is already scarce, climate change scenarios predict that water supplies will become increasingly constrained -- conditions that, in addition to warming temperatures, threaten to shift the kinds of crops that can be grown in California.

"California agriculture is uniquely vulnerable to climate change," said Jeanne Merrill, policy director with the California Climate and Agriculture Network. "SB 237 recognizes that agriculture can both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate, and that the state must make these issues a priority."

In fact, 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.

As California implements AB 32, the California

Global Warming Solutions Act, new funds will become available to support GHG emissions reductions and help the state adapt to climate change.

SB 237 defines the eligible uses of funds designated to the agriculture sector from implementation of the state's climate change law, including:

- n Research and demonstration projects to examine the farming practices and systems that reduce GHG emissions, sequester atmospheric carbon and help farmers adapt to climate change.

- n Technical assistance for producers that translates research findings into real opportunities for California agriculture to provide climate benefits.

- n Incentives for farmers and ranchers to overcome barriers to climate-friendly agricultural practices.



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