



California Climate & Agriculture Newsletter

August 4, 2011

Assembly Select Committee's First Sustainable & Organic Agriculture Hearing

The Assembly Select Committee on Sustainable & Organic Agriculture held its first hearing in July in Sacramento to a full house of observers and committee members. California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross and Craig McNamara, Chairman of the State Board of Food and Agriculture, addressed the committee. Chairwoman Mariko Yamada (D-Davis) gave an enthusiastic endorsement of the value of organic and sustainable agriculture to California and noted that the hearing was the first in a series.

CalCAN's Policy Director, Jeanne Merrill, provided public comment, and organized a number of other representatives to speak, including our partners from the Community Alliance with Family Farmers, California Certified Organic Farmers, Dixon Ridge Farms, Full Belly Farm, National Center for Appropriate Technology, and others. The main purpose of this first hearing was to provide an overview of issues facing sustainable and organic farming. Among those raised was the vulnerability of California agriculture to increased temperatures and reduced water availability and the climate change benefits of sustainable and organic farming practices. Other issues raised included protecting the ability of farmers to promote biodiversity on their farms while addressing food safety concerns; promoting farmland protection in the face of the end of state funding for the Williamson Act subvention payments; and regulatory challenges for farmers interested in on-farm conservation practices.

You can watch two-hour hearing online at <http://www.calchannel.com/channel/viewvideo/2854>

Alternatives to Cap-and-Trade

On August 24th, the Air Resources Board is hosting a public hearing to consider alternatives to the cap-and-trade program it has been developing as one strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as part of the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. The hearing starts at 9:00am at the Byron Sher Auditorium, 1001 I St. in Sacramento, CA.

TomKat Ranch Showcases Climate Benefits of Sustainable Ranching

On July 29th about 45 people gathered on a foggy morning in Pescadero for a CalCAN field day hosted by TomKat Ranch, producers of grassfed beef. The field day highlighted the environmental and economic benefits of managed intensive grazing. Participants heard from scientists, experts from the

National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an ecologist from the Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO), and ranch staff about the environmental benefits of intensive rotational grazing.

Nathan Sayre from the Geography Department at UC Berkeley reported on a review of research indicating that sustainable rangeland management practices in wet regions (more than 20 inches of rain annually) can assist with storing carbon in soils. Richard King from the NRCS described the multiple environmental and economic benefits of using intensively managed rotational grazing, including improved grass yield, increased water absorption and retention, improved cattle health and increased profitability. Jim Howard, also with NRCS, stressed the multiple ecosystems services provided by rangelands, and stressed the importance of developing a management plan with specific goals. Carlie Henneman, who manages a PRBO field station based at TomKat, described the ranch's species monitoring and management plan. Finally, Renata Brillinger from CalCAN gave an overview of the role of the coalition's efforts addressing the role of sustainable agriculture in climate policy.

The group was led on a tour by ranch managers Jeremiah Stent and Mike Giannini who discussed the benefits of intensive rotational grazing for grass production, species diversity, wildlife habitat, water retention, erosion control and health of the cattle and soil. The group got to see the enthusiasm of the cattle when a lush new section of pasture was opened up for them.

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### **More Conservation Funds Available to California Farmers**

Rep. Dennis Cardoza (CA-18) and Rep. Jim Costa (CA-20) recently announced the availability of an additional \$9.5 million in funding through the 2008 Farm Bill's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The funds go to California farmers seeking to make on farm improvements that will help air quality, water quality or conserve water. The recent federal arguments over the debt ceiling and budget cuts have failed to distinguish between good spending and bad spending.

At CalCAN, we are pleased to see these funds released in part because they are examples of wise public investments. Dollars spent on farm conservation programs have multiple benefits-protecting ecosystems services, increasing on-farm biodiversity and resilience to climate change, in some cases enhancing carbon sequestration, supporting innovative farmers doing environmental stewardship, and supporting rural economies.

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Lessons Learned from California's Most Recent Drought

One thing can be said for certain about the 2007-2009 drought in California: it sure got a lot of attention. Both its natural severity and the complex set of political, economic, and social disputes yielded a drama of epic proportions that got people talking around the state and across the country. But now that the dust has settled, the time has come to figure out what it all really meant, and how to prepare for when it happens again. Not surprisingly, the recent drought has enlivened the ages-old debate on water management in the state.

Two reports released in June, one from the Pacific Institute and one from the California Roundtable on Water and Food Supply, offer valuable insights and recommendations on how to reduce vulnerability

and increase resiliency in the event of future droughts.

Warmer temperatures may threaten California vineyards

Excerpted from a story in the LA Times on July 6, 2011

The following article on a recently published study by Stanford University researchers underscores the need for resources to support California agriculture's adaptation to climate change. Investments in varieties adapted to more heat, diversification of crop types, modified trellising techniques and other creative responses will help protect an industry that provides jobs and contributes to the state's economy. In the next 30 years, high-value vineyards in California could shrink by 50% because of global warming, according to a Stanford University study released last week. Scientists applied scenarios from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in a computer model and found that Napa and Santa Barbara counties could experience 10 more very hot days - 95 degrees or higher - during the growing season. As a result, the amount of grape-growing land is projected to decline over the next three decades, the authors wrote.

Openings on Organic & Farmers' Market Advisory Committees

The California Department of Food and Agriculture is announcing 18 vacancies on two advisory committees - the California Organic Products Advisory Committee and the Certified Farmers' Market Advisory Committee.

The California Organic Products Advisory Committee advises the CDFA secretary on current issues related to organic food production and makes recommendations on all matters pertaining to the California Organic Program. Vacancies include: one consumer representative, one alternate technical representative, one alternate retail representative, one alternate processor representative, and three alternate producer representatives. For more information on the California Organic Program and committee vacancies, please contact Brian Cote at (916) 445-2180.

The Certified Farmers' Market Advisory Committee advises the CDFA secretary on regulations, enforcement, and administration policies and procedures related to the direct marketing of agricultural products at certified farmers' markets. Vacancies include: eight alternate certified producers, one alternated certified farmers' market manager, and two alternate direct marketing representatives. All producer members must be active in the direct sale and marketing of agricultural products at certified farmers' markets. For more information on the Certified Farmers' Market Program and committee vacancies, please contact Susan Shelton at (916) 445-2180.