



CALIFORNIA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

Climate change event offers tips for row crop farmers

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With concerns about climate change grabbing headlines, experts gathered in Fresno to point out the important role California agriculture, particularly row crop farmers, can play in helping reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve the environment.

The day-long conference in mid-December at California State University, Fresno featured experts from both university systems, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the Air Resources Board and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as well as agricultural sector representatives.

Presentations covered various aspects of implementing Assembly Bill 32, the 2006 California Global Warming Solutions Act, and focused on opportunities for agriculture to potentially generate revenue from coming changes and maintain long-term profitability.

Essentially the far-reaching act aims to set guidelines and procedures for reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels. Program presenters said specific details are still being worked out, but probably will include some financial incentives, along with regulatory mandates, that will affect agriculture.

They stressed the importance of California farmers and ranchers understanding the evolving regulations and the emerging technologies with an eye to spotting opportunities and constraints for their own operations.

The event was jointly sponsored by Sustainable Conservation, the California Farm Bureau Federation, California Agricultural Technology Institute, California Cotton Ginners and Growers Associations and the USDA.

"It's important for farmers to understand the far-reaching implications of the new law, as well as the benefits of selling carbon credits and adopting new technologies in this innovative field," said CFBF President Doug Mosebar.

Symposium presenters said specific opportunities for row crop growers include carbon sequestration, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, more efficient nitrogen use and preventing harmful emissions in the first place.

CFBF Environmental Affairs Director Cynthia Cory, who serves on the AB 32 Economic and Technology Advancement Advisory Committee and was a symposium speaker, said, "When we talk about 'cap and trade,' the buying and selling of carbon credits, it might be done through signing contracts for a period of time that stipulate doing certain things.

"For example, if a utility like PG&E needed to buy carbon credits, they could go to a row-crop farmer who would agree by contract to use certain protocols for the contract period.

"Obviously a lot of work would have to go into setting up something like this, but these are the kinds of things we're thinking about.

"We all know that making changes in farming practices, in fertilizer use, for example, isn't done lightly," Cory said. "But, in some cases an efficiency that leads to emissions reduction can be made, sometimes not. But if a farmer can--and if it can be quantified--then that may be an offset opportunity for selling carbon

credits."

Although much more research is needed, she said protocols will have to be developed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and it will need to take place on many fronts, including air, water, soil, vegetation and livestock management.

"Clearly, we need to tap into all of the things that are going on nationally and internationally to make sure we're up to speed on the latest developments," Cory said. "We need to get some government dollars coming into California for climate change technology research. And, we need to understand the opportunities and how they can be applied on the farm, otherwise changes will be implemented without our input. I fully expect the efforts to address climate change in California will be followed in a year or so with a national climate change policy.

"We need to be involved in this process at the state and national levels so that we understand the technology and opportunities, and we don't waste time trying to catch up or reinventing the wheel," Cory said.

More information may be found online at www.climatechange.ca.gov.

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