

Sustainable Conservation Launches Climate Change Program For California Agriculture

Goldman Fund and Morgan Family Foundation Provide Three-Year Grants

With support from the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund and the Morgan Family Foundation, Sustainable Conservation has launched a new Climate Change Agricultural Initiative. As California agriculture accounts for approximately 10% of the state's greenhouse gas emissions, Sustainable Conservation will partner with key agricultural stakeholders to help California achieve its greenhouse gas targets and reduce global warming while tapping new economic opportunities.

Farmers can benefit economically from their ability to (1) store carbon

in the soil; (2) directly reduce or prevent greenhouse gas emissions; and (3) produce renewable energy. Economic benefits can come from selling the value of avoided emissions or offsets in new carbon markets that are emerging.

"There is significant untapped potential for California farmers to help California meet its greenhouse gas targets which were set out in AB 32," said Ashley Boren, Executive Director of Sustainable Conservation. "Sustainable Conservation will be partnering with the dairy industry, row-crop farmers and other agriculture sectors to identify and leverage opportunities that are economically and environmentally beneficial."

Sustainable Conservation's initiative will:

- Advance farming methods that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and trap carbon;
- Support the development of a market-based carbon offset program tailored specifically for California agriculture; and
- Support the development of renewable energy and fuels, produced sustainably from agricultural waste and crops.

For example, the organization will seed innovative technologies and practices with farmers to demonstrate the environmental and economic benefits and inspire widespread adoption.

"What works in the Midwest won't necessarily work here," said Allen Dusault, Director of Sustainable Agriculture at Sustainable Conservation. "Now is the time to define which specific farming practices, renewable energy production and fuel strategies and other techniques can be implemented successfully and sustainably in California to achieve meaningful reductions in greenhouse gases."

In 2006, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed the California Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32) which establishes a comprehensive program of regulatory and market mechanisms to achieve real, quantifiable, cost-effective reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in California. The law commits California to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 2000 levels by 2010

(11% below business as usual), to 1990 levels by 2020, and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.

"Implementing AB 32 is likely to involve both incentives and regulatory mandates to some sectors of California's economy, including agriculture," Dusault said. "The law, in conjunction with other initiatives, will likely provide agriculture with new opportunities for revenue generation. Sustainable Conservation will be working to find the best ways to tap those opportunities and help farmers implement them."

"Our financial support for Sustainable Conservation will enable the agricultural industry to improve its economic health while contributing to the environment's health," said Amy Lyons, Executive Director for the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, in describing the foundation's three-year, \$600,000 grant to support the new Climate Change Agricultural Initiative.

California is the largest agricultural economy in the U.S. and the 12th largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the world. Growing and harvesting crops, raising livestock, and producing other agricultural products account for approximately 10% of the state's emissions. The three most common types of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions are carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. Carbon dioxide is the most prevalent and therefore has the greatest impact, but pound for pound, methane has more global warming potency – 21 times more powerful than carbon dioxide – and nitrous oxide is more than 300 times more powerful than carbon dioxide.

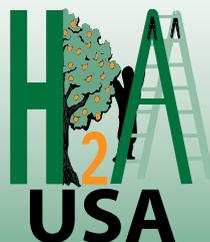
Agriculture's carbon dioxide emissions come from farm tractors, trucks and other vehicles, as well as from the soil — particularly during tillage or other operations that expose soil to oxidation. Agriculture accounts for 30% of the approximately 29 million metric tons of methane emitted from U.S. human-related activities (as of 1998), primarily from livestock management. Agriculture accounts for 71% of U.S. nitrous oxide emissions, primarily from the application of commercial and animal-based fertilizers.

For more information visit Sustainable Conservation's website www.suscon.org.

They will be posting the new booklet which was produced for the conference, entitled "California Agriculture and Climate Change: Challenges and Opportunities for Profitability." There will be new material added soon and throughout the year. ■

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