UC CE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Agriculture and Natural Resources | UC Cooperative Extension

Climate Smart Newsletter

September 2022

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Climate Smart Agriculture: more relevant now than ever (and UCCE's efforts in building farm resilience)

As California goes through its third year of drought, the amount of fallowed land has increased dramatically in the San Joaquin Valley. SGMA pumping allocations and rising energy costs have only made the situation more challenging for California farmers.

It has to be said: climate change poses a threat to California's agriculture. Therefore, farms need to become more resilient to overcome the new challenges that will arise in the future. **Climate-smart agriculture helps farms become more resilient,** by improving soil health, and reducing water inputs and methane emissions to the atmosphere while increasing crop yields.

In 2019, the University of California Cooperative Extension deployed a team of Community Education Specialists to support growers with the adoption of climate-smart agriculture practices. They also provide technical assistance to farmers and ranchers who want to apply for CDFA climate-smart incentives. These include:

- Healthy Soils Program (HSP)
- State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP)
- Alternative Manure Management Program (AMMP)

These incentives fund different climate-smart practices, from applying compost to improving on-farm irrigation systems. If you are in Kern, Kings, or Tulare counties, you can contact Maria Ridoutt to receive assistance to apply for these grants, her contact information is at the end of this newsletter. For other counties, you can find our statewide cohort by clicking here.

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SWEEP: what you need to know before applying

The SWEEP grant application round is opening soon, and navigating through the application process can be a challenge. These grants provide financial assistance to implement, improve or retrofit irrigation systems to **reduce on-farm irrigation water use and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).**

Early applications are encouraged since grants are awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis. Working with a technical assistance provider can be very helpful for growers who have questions about the application process, project design or implementation of climate-smart practices.

One of the requirements to apply is to have **a pump efficiency test** done on all the pumps that will be part of the SWEEP project. These tests must have been done within the last 2 years. It's recommended that you schedule an appointment as soon as possible, since most companies have a long waitlist to perform pump tests. You can find more information on pump testing companies by clicking here.

Other documents required for a SWEEP application are:

- Energy records (12 consecutive months from the previous calendar year)
- Utility bills
- Fuel receipts
- Field operational logs
- Quotes for projects (required if you want to request funding for solar installation)

A few things to have in mind, the program will prioritize growers that:

- ✓ are located in a low-income community
- ✓ identify as a member of a Socially Disadvantaged group
- ✓ reduce groundwater pumping in a critically overdrafted water basin
- ✓ have attended or are committed to attend irrigation training during the course of the project

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Free webinars on Pump efficiency

Rising energy costs have affected everyone, and farmers are not the exception. In the San Joaquin Valley, growers depend heavily on groundwater pumping to irrigate their fields, and with energy prices increasing every day, pumping costs have become a concern for California's agriculture.

Pumping costs often are higher than they need be for two reasons: more water is pumped than is necessary, and/or the pumping plant operates inefficiently. SWEEP grants fund practices that help with these two issues. Some of these practices are:

- retrofitting or replacing pumps
- installation of variable frequency drives (VFDs)
- conversion of a high-pressure system to a low-pressure system to reduce pumping and energy use
- improved irrigation scheduling to reduce pump operation times

Interested in learning more about pump efficiency? PG&E is hosting 5 webinars focused on pump efficiency on the following dates. To register for the webinars, click on the topic of your interest:

September 22	9 am - 11:30 am	Basic pump efficiency for agriculture
September 29	9 am - 11:30 am	Agricultural Pump Selection and Retrofits for Pumping Efficiency
October 6	1 pm - 3:30 pm	VFDs for Ag Irrigation Applications
October 11	9 am - 11:30 am	What Does Pressure Cost for Irrigation?
November 3	1 pm - 3:30 pm	Offsetting Irrigation Pumping Costs with Solar

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Our Climate Smart Agriculture team is growing!

Our CSA team is excited to introduce two new members to UC Cooperative Extension! **Amber Butland** and **Lizzeth Mendoza** are excited to join our team and provide technical assistance for the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) initiatives.

Amber is based in **Fresno County** and also serves portions of Madera County. She has her B.S. in Education from Otterbein University in Ohio. Amber moved to California in January 2021 with her husband and their two sons. Amber is a California Naturalist and UC Climate Steward, and enjoys hiking, photography, and reading. She is excited to work with growers who are interested in learning more about the sustainable agriculture practices that are supported by the Climate Smart Agriculture program. You can contact her at abutland@ucanr.edu or (559) 241-7545.

Lizzeth is based out of **Glenn County** and will also serve Butte and Tehama counties. She earned her B.S. in Animal Science and has a minor in Agricultural Business from Chico State University. While in college, Lizzeth was a research assistant for UCCE Modoc. During her time there, her articles were published in California Cattleman's Magazine and The Cattle Mag. Lizzeth has also been involved in the feedlot industry learning about feedlot management and dairy reproduction. In her free time, she likes to spend time outdoors hiking and traveling to new places. She is fluent in English and Spanish, and you can contact her at lthmendoza@ucanr.edu or (530) 517-8187.

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