

December 21, 2023

Incentive Corner

Due to current budget uncertainties, CDFA is pausing the current [SWEEP](#) Direct-to-Producer solicitation- look for an update in early 2024. Block grants however may be available in your area- see [this list](#). Eligible system components of SWEEP include (among others) soil moisture monitoring, drip systems, switching to low pressure irrigation systems, pump retrofits, variable frequency drives and installation of renewable energy to reduce on-farm water use and energy.

Unless also impacted by the budget, the Healthy Soils Program (HSP) Direct-to-Producer grants are expected to open on Jan. 22- the application is already available [here](#). Block grants may be available in your area- see [this list](#). Covered practices include cover cropping, no-till, reduced-till, mulching, compost application, and conservation plantings

ABC has made it easier for growers to access incentive opportunities, with a redesigned, more user friendly [Almonds.com/Incentives](#) webpage. Listen to the AgNet West Radio feature on the redesign to learn about the changes made to the page and how the functionality makes it easier for growers to find the information they need. [LISTEN NOW](#)

For questions about incentives, contact roseman@almondboard.com.

TAC'23 Incentive Zone

For the second year in a row, the Almond Board organized a Grower Support and Incentive Zone ([IZone](#)), to facilitate interaction between growers and helpful organizations and programs. Several organizations in the IZone have received block grants for CDFA's SWEEP, HSP, and Conservation Ag Planning (CAP) designed to facilitate financial assistance to California agricultural operations through regional block grant administrators. These include Resource Conservation Districts in both the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys, along with Pollinator Alliance and American Farmland Trust.

Support organizations included Mobile Irrigation Labs, which provide free irrigation evaluations in multiple languages. Other organizations such as Pollinator Partnership have also received funding through

NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), which they pass-through to growers.

Grower Breakfast: Understanding Funding Opportunities

Information and opportunities provided in the IZone were supplemented at The Grower Breakfast Wednesday morning, with presentations by experts on NRCS, San Joaquin Air District, CDFA and other programs. Topics covered included the difference between direct and block grant models, whether program funding can be "stacked" with funding from another program, how to get support for groundwater recharge, and what future funding will be available. See the slide deck from the Grower Breakfast [here](#).

CURES Grant to Fund NOW Mating Disruption

CDFA [announced](#) the award of \$490,000 in funding to the Coalition for Urban/Rural Environmental Stewardship (CURES) to support a three-year project promoting and incentivizing the use of pheromone mating disruption (MD) near impaired waterways in the eastern San Joaquin Valley. This project will build on work ABC and UCCE has done through a separate DPR grant to develop the [agneighbors](#) online tool (passcode: *nowmd*), and expand use of MD among neighboring small farmers and fields.

Under the grant, CURES will provide MD to participating growers, which has been shown in UCCE [research](#) to reduce NOW damage by almost 80% in blocks of 100 acres or more. The goal of the grant is to improve water quality by reducing the presence of certain insecticides in adjacent waterways, through expanded use of MD.

Pollinator Partnership Grants

Separately, Pollinator Partnership has received an NRCS RCPP grant, which will also provide funding to almond growers interested in implementing MD. This grant will also prioritize adoption of other pollinator friendly practices, such as cover crops and hedgerows. Growers interested in learning about the RCPP program or other grant opportunities to install pollinator habitat are encouraged to sign up [here](#).

Disaster Aid + New 2025 Crop Insurance Option

USDA will provide more than \$3 billion to commodity and specialty crop producers impacted by natural disaster events in 2022. Producers interested in learning more should visit their local FSA office, which can be located on [farmers.gov](#). Eligible impacted producers can apply for financial assistance through

the Emergency Relief Program (ERP) 2022. ERP 2022 covers losses to crops, trees, bushes and vines due to qualifying, calendar year 2022 natural disaster events including wildfires, hurricanes, floods, wind storms, excessive heat, tornadoes, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture, qualifying drought and related conditions.

The Federal Crop Insurance Corporation Board of Directors approved the Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) expansion to almonds, following an expansion request and a letter of support provided by the Almond Alliance. The ECO is an elective, area-based policy endorsement that is designed to provide additional coverage over a grower’s existing Multi-Peril Crop Insurance Policy. By electing the ECO endorsement, producers can purchase banded coverage percentage above that of their underlying policy. As an area-based plan, producers will receive an indemnity when their final county average yield falls below their expected average yield, which will be based on their coverage level election. ECO payments are determined solely by county wide averages. The ECO will be available for purchase through the federal crop insurance program beginning with the 2025 crop year.

DPR Public Prior Notification Rule

DPR is collecting input on a regulation to provide notifications publicly of planned pesticide applications. Comments are due January 12. As proposed, planned uses of restricted use pesticides (RUP) would be made public on DPR’s website. The data to be publicly released prior to application builds on data already required to be provided to the County Ag Commissioner’s (CAC) Office, as part of the permits and Notices of Intent (NOI) to obtain permission to use a RUP. Environmental Justice groups have been wanting prior notification of applications for years.

Growers/PCAs would need to submit the NOI with some additional information (see below) via CALAgPermits to the CAC at least 24 hours prior to the time of the planned application, or 48 hours if planning to use a soil fumigant. Information that would become be made public includes:

- (1) County number;
- (2) Date and time the intended application is to commence;
- (3) Base, meridian, township, range, and section of the areas to be treated;
- (4) Pesticide product registration number(s);

- (5) Method of application; and
- (6) Approximate acres or other units to be treated.

This is the outcome of several pilots of prior notification programs throughout the state. Based on public comments, DPR may make changes to the proposed regulation, and the new requirements will likely take effect sometime after the middle of 2024.

TAC Pesticide Regulatory Session

A session at TAC focused on how local and international regulatory issues are affecting pesticide use in almonds. Dr. Karen Morrison, Chief Deputy Director, DPR, addressed various regulatory changes taking effect in California or coming up in 2024 including new rules for applications of Telone, new rules for the use of neonicotinoids, and review of alternatives to fumigants (pre-plant and post-harvest).

In response to a question about the January 1, 2024 deadline for meeting new licensing categories and new licensing requirements for PCAs and pesticide applicators, DPR issued a note that CACs will have leeway to enforce the new licensing requirements for pre-plant and post-harvest fumigators for 3 months (contact gludwig@almondboard.com for details).

Alinne Oliviera from Bryant Christie, Inc. reminded growers that as international MRLs keep changing, they should talk to their handler re: key export markets, and to check the Global MRL database for current MRLs. Ian Darling, Sales Manager for Monte Vista Farming Company, highlighted how MRLs issues have affected their growing and post-harvest pest management, as well as how buyers may ask questions or have their own standards for pest management and pesticide use.

Upcoming Events:

Jan 10 ABC Nutrient Summit ([link](#))

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Document # 2023GTRA0026

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