

# Challenges of Santa Clara County Agricultural Producers and Where the RCD Could Assist

Presented to the Board of Directors, Guadalupe – Coyote Resource Conservation District

By:

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September 6, 2022

# Current State of Play

- 2022 Crop Report highlights ecosystem benefits of agriculture: *soil health, clean water, air, wildlife habitat, etc. Published this week: Hot off the press. Available online, see link in chat.*
- JOBS! Ag industry accounts for an estimated 8,100 local jobs, generating more than \$830M\* to the local economy.



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# Current State of Play, cont'd.

- Cultural Benefits: Youth & leadership development, history, sense of place, food production, environmental stewardship, etc. ....
- Benefits are there, but it is still important to note:

*It's very hard to farm in California.*

*What are the most significant challenges?*



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# Challenges Facing Growers

- Weather: drought, potential flooding, wildfire, extreme heat
- Water\* allocations and storage: *How do we capture the rain that falls? Protect current groundwater reserves?*
- Crop plantings/ rotations affected by drought, markets
- Rangelands affected by drought as well: Destocking of cattle herds, habitat restoration efforts slowed
- Affordable housing for Labor
- Wildfire for rangelands: Need for management for grazing and prescribed fires



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# How Can the RCD Assist?

- COLLABORATION with other agencies: *SCC, UCCE, Farm Bureau, SCC cities, environmental groups, Open Space Authority, Cattlemen Assoc., etc.*
- LEVERAGE your strong relationships with ag community
- COORDINATE with federal and state agencies (USDA, FSA, NRCS, etc.); help farmers and ranchers understand the many forms of aid available and navigate the bureaucracy
- Review and Implement the Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan



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## Navigating Bureaucracy to Access Help for Growers

- FEDERAL: EQIP (NRCS), Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Funds\*: *\$44B available for climate-smart ag!*
- STATE: SWEEP, HSP, California Conservation Ag\*\* Programs: *\$338M available for climate-smart ag programs.*
- LOCAL: Santa Clara County Agricultural Resilience Incentives grants



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## Technical assistance for Climate Smart Management Practices:

- *Prescribed grazing*
- *Compost application*
- *Water & Habitat: Stock Ponds*
- *No till*
- *Irrigation upgrades & review*
- *Water delivery system upgrades*
- *Crop selection*



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## Advocacy

- Beginning Farmers and Ranchers need assistance with a unique set of challenges\*
- ALL growers need an agriculture-friendly business environment.
- RCDs could advocate for streamlining regulations, simplifying pesticide use reporting, Workers' Comp, OSHA, housing policy, meat processing facilities and ag-friendly land use policies
- Santa Clara County Ag Advisory Committee – concept being explored; new voices being sought for input



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# Stock Pond Development and Maintenance

- Support and manage permitting process for stock ponds- Voluntary Local Program with CDFW
- These ponds are valuable habitat to red legged frogs and tiger salamanders
- This is an area where RCD can bridge rural and urban communities, environmentalists & ranchers



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## Labor

- Lack of enough labor
- Cost of labor has greatly increased
- Cost of living in Santa Clara – inordinately high
- \$20 hour is basically the minimum rate per hour
- Housing for labor/families



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## SB 1383 Compliance

*How can the RCD help farmers/ranchers collect, store & distribute food waste/ compost?*

Farmer and ranchers need to become receivers of compost

- Cities create green/food waste
- Cities must turn this waste into usable compost
- Facilities will generate compost
- Needs to be delivered to land applications or feed
- The timing, application and cost of the compost is an issue

Organic issues – quality is an issue



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# *Questions & Answers*

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