

2023 CDFA California Underserved and Small Producer (CUSP) Grant Program
Summary of Public Comments received on draft RFA- December 2022

COMMENTS ON DIRECT FARMER GRANTS GUIDELINES & ELIGIBILITY		
Topic	Comment/ Question	CDFA Response
<p>Expand the list of covered expenses under the CUSP Direct Farmer Grant Program for Producers.</p>	<p>Drilling of new wells/well repair as a covered expense: A comment was submitted asking for the drilling of new wells to be added to the list of CUSP drought related expenses. One of the reasons stated that there has been “significant need from small farmers to drill new wells and we (the organization) have heard from well drillers that oftentimes it is more efficient to drill a new well rather than lower an existing well. We would greatly appreciate it if this were an eligible activity for grant funding in future rounds.”</p> <p>This comment was submitted by CAFF -----</p> <p>Disaster Relief Coverage: A comment was sent asking CDFA to consider expanding the CUSP Direct Farmer Grant Program to cover other disaster relief conditions (fire, freeze, etc.) and not only drought-specific expenses The reason stated was “with climate change we will most likely see farmers suffering from many different disasters and we would like to be able to support them, no matter the cause.”</p> <p>This comment was submitted by CCOF -----</p>	<p>The next round of CUSP direct relief will allow producers to use the relief grant funds to augment wells or drill a new well if it is the sole source of water for the operation. To be eligible, an applicant must provide written verification from a Groundwater Sustainability Agency managing the basin or area of the basin where the well is located or proposed to be located approving the action, per Executive Order N-7-22.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>The focus of the CUSP program will continue to focus solely on drought relief. There are additional programs at the State and Federal level to cover disaster relief. CUSP TA providers will still be able to work with producers to apply for the State and Federal disaster relief programs as they are made available.</p> <p>-----</p>

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	<p>Dry Farming: A comment was submitted suggesting dry farming resources for producers be included in the covered expenses under the CUSP Direct Farmer Grant Program.</p> <p>This comment was submitted by CAFF</p>	<p>Currently dry farming support and resources are not an element of the CUSP Direct Farmer Grant Program’s covered expenses, as this is an emergency drought relief grant program, and not intended to support farmers to expand practices or develop new farming methods. There are other direct grant programs at CDFA that support water conservation, including the HSP, SWEEP, WETA and other OEFI programs. See www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants However, CUSP TA grantees could provide dry farming techniques as a part of their drought relief TA activities.</p>
CUSP Direct Farmer Grant eligibility & award amounts	<p>Change the CUSP Direct Farmer Grant Program eligibility from one grant award per producer regardless of amount, within a 12-month period, to a \$20,000 cap in a 12-month period.</p> <p>A comment was received suggesting CDFA to change the CUSP Program’s eligibility guidelines for Direct Farmer Grants to a \$20,000 cap of CUSP funding in a 12-month period, instead of the current established rule of one award for the same period. Removing the one grant limit in a 12-month period will avoid “unfairly penalizing producers for applying during an earlier round.”</p> <p>This comment was submitted by CAFF A similar comment was submitted by UCANR</p>	<p>CDFA will change the CUSP Direct Farmer Grant eligibility guidelines to a \$20,000 award maximum in a 12-month period. This change <u>will be effective for ALL rounds of funding that open after January 31st, 2023</u>. Organizations are still required to submit verification requests to CDFA to check for eligibility prior to awarding funds.</p>

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	<p>Award amount standardization: A comment was submitted saying: “Farmers who applied for and received an economic relief grant of \$2,500 or a drought relief grant of \$5,000 are disqualified from further grant funding for 12 months, yet they were not informed of this process when they applied for the first grant. With multiple organizations providing grants for different amounts as they determine best, it is confusing for farmers to know their full range of options.”</p> <p>This comment was made by UCANR</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Increase the CUSP Direct Farmer Grant award amount. A comment was received suggesting CDFA to consider increasing the \$20,000 award ceiling limit for grantees. The reason stated was “we feel this amount is too low for us (organization) to be able to provide meaningful support to some folks (i.e.: dairy). Many have expressed that they need anywhere from \$100,000-\$150,000 to pull through this crisis.”</p> <p>This comment was submitted by CCOF.</p>	<p>-----</p> <p>All organizations managing CUSP Direct Farmer Grants will be asked to offer award amount tiers of \$2,500, \$5,000, \$10,000 or \$20,000 depending on need and expense specified. If a producer has previously received a CUSP grant within 12-months, the total combined award amount should not exceed \$20,000.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Given the number of resources available and the intention to serve as many small-scale, historically underserved producers as possible through the CUSP Direct Farmer Grant funds, CDFA does not anticipate funding larger grant amounts at this time. There are additional USDA and State resources available to address financial and economic impacts of the drought.</p>

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Applicant verification	<p>CUSP Direct Farmer Grant Recipient Database: A question was received asking CDFA if there can be a master list of producers that have previously been awarded CUSP funding, so organizations managing CUSP direct farmer grants can know if a producer is not eligible to apply. A database that includes information like last name, county, acres, crops, zip, and last 4 of phone number is suggested.</p> <p>This comment was submitted by CAFF</p>	<p>CDFA currently maintains a confidential and anonymous database of all CUSP funded recipients for direct farmer grants and is able to verify eligibility. Keeping this database at CDFA ensures confidentiality across organizations and a central mechanism for ensuring producer information is kept confidential.</p>
COMMENTS ON TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE		
Additional Technical Assistance	<p>Drought-specific training for TA providers: A comment regarding additional training needed for TA providers on well assessment & water pump expertise to adequately measure damage, determine efficiency, and sounding of wells. This comment suggests the training could be provided by UCCE.</p> <p>This comment was submitted by CAFF</p>	<p>This type of specialized training for TA providers is contained within CDFA’s WETA grant program as an allowable activity. However, UCCE will also be offering such trainings for CUSP TA grantees to ensure they are equipped to be able to assist producers with assessment of their wells.</p> <p>CDFA WETA: CDFA - OEFI - Water Efficiency Technical Assistance Program</p>