



Defining Regenerative Agriculture

For State Policies and Programs

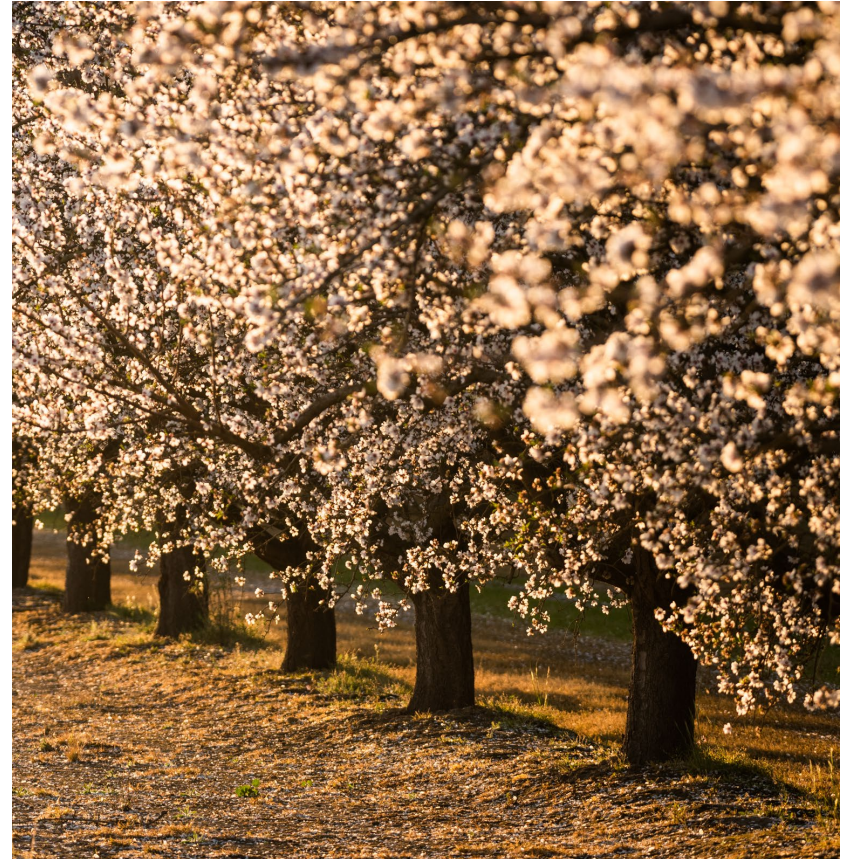
February 22, 2024 Listening Session

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Meeting Agenda

1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions
2. Regenerative Agriculture Definition Process Overview
 - Project Background
 - Process and Timeline Overview
 - Opportunities for Public Input
3. Recap of Public Listening Session and Regenerative Agriculture Work Group Themes and Input
4. Public Comment/Q&A
5. Adjourn



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Staff Introductions

- Virginia Jameson, Deputy Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)
- Sam Magill, Senior Facilitator/Mediator, Sacramento State University

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Motivation:

- Roots in *Ag Vision for the Next Decade* that started in 2021
 - Foster Climate-Smart, Resilient and Regenerative Food Systems
- Interest in “Regenerative Agriculture” continues to grow
 - legislation, funding focus in government programs, and policies
- A need for a science-based criterion to help inform a designation or recognition of the term regenerative
- State Board of Food and Agriculture is best positioned as an advisory body to the Governor and Secretary to complete a public process for a definition for state policies and programs



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Approach:

- Understanding of the diversity of opinions, the evolving marketplace and the priority of equity and inclusion – focusing on public input, transparency and engagement.
- Five Public Listening Sessions (Virtual)
- Establishment of a Regenerative Agriculture Work Group to consider public input, the Environmental Farming Act Science Advisory Panel (EFA SAP) Framework and make a draft recommendation to the State Board for consideration.

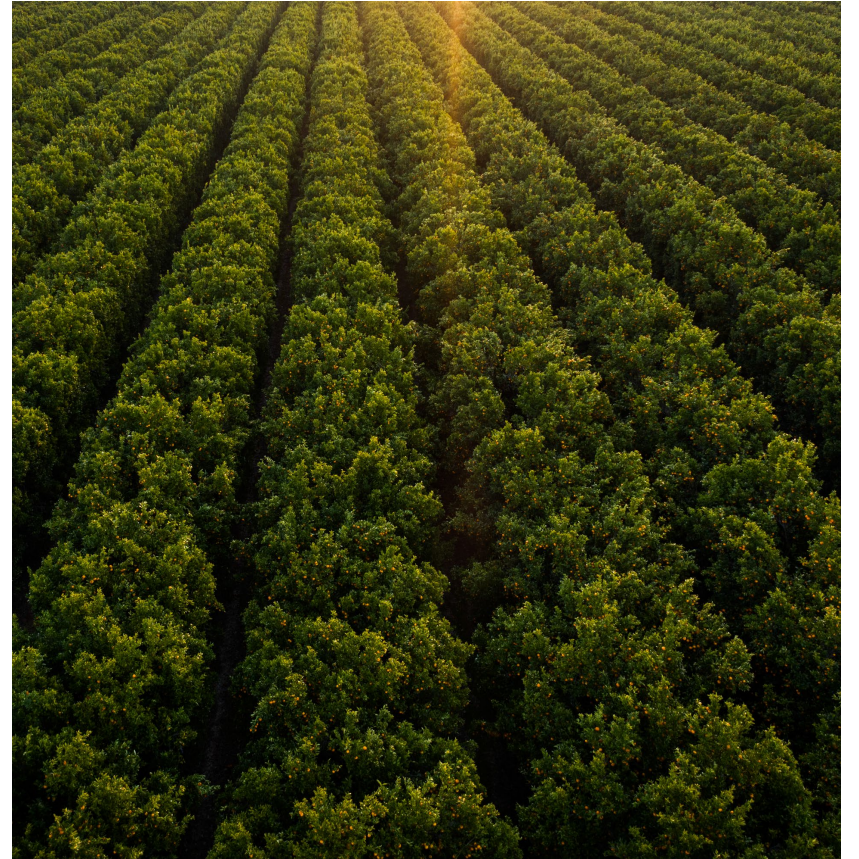


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Timeline:

- EFA SAP Framework Recommendation (Completed 2023)
- Public Listening Sessions (Dec 2023 – May 2024) – 5 Sessions
- Task Force Meetings (2024) – 3 Meetings
- Board Recommendation to CDFA (2024)



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Recap of December 6th Public Listening Session Input

- 303 participants
- Key themes from comments:
 - Developing a “broader” vs “narrower” definition of regenerative agriculture.
 - Defining the “starting point”: existing organic standards vs. conventional as baseline. Multiple comments supporting both starting points.
 - Providing a definition that highlights the challenges of transitioning from conventional agriculture to regenerative is important. Conventional growers need to be “brought along.”
 - Greenwashing (i.e., making false or misleading claims about the environmental benefits of a product or service) must be avoided!



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Recap of December 6th Listening Session (cont.)

- Other comments:
 - Human health for farmworkers, DACs in agricultural regions, and other potentially disadvantaged populations should be included in the definition.
 - Indigenous voices should be included in the definition.
 - Conventional growers may be hesitant to adopt organic standards as a baseline for regenerative agriculture.
 - The cost to growers to transition to regenerative may be substantial. Transitioning to regenerative may require BOTH financial incentives and regulatory compliance.
 - Education to show some regenerative practices (reduced tillage, etc.) can actually reduce cost will be useful.



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Recap of January 11th Public Listening Session Input

- 130 participants
- Common Comments/Themes:
 - Differing opinions on using organic as a baseline for regenerative agriculture definition.
 - Several commenters believe Regenerative Organic Agriculture for the definition is a starting point; others felt organic as a requirement could dissuade conventional growers from joining OR that a definition using organic could “dilute” existing organic certification requirements.
 - Several individuals felt the definition should explicitly recognize the importance of building soil health and biodiversity



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Recap of January 11th Listening Session (cont)

- Several commenters stressed the importance of a certification to accompany the definition, and suggested no certification would result in greenwashing.
- One individual said any certification must be scientifically justifiable.
- Multiple participants supported the concept of a “tiered” certification system for regenerative agriculture products.
- Multiple participants stressed the need for an inclusionary “big tent” definition to encourage participation (including BIPOC, indigenous voices, disadvantaged communities, and conventional growers among others).
- One commenter warned that too narrow of a definition could stifle agricultural innovation in the future.



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Recap of January 31 Work Group Meeting

- Work Group established by CDFA
- 13-member panel to provide expert input on the regenerative agriculture definition*
- Met for the first time on January 31, 2024
- Discussion focused on “principles” which must be addressed in the regenerative agriculture definition
- Subsequent meetings will expand on themes to generate a working definition.
- After iteration through Work Group and public input, a draft definition will be provided to the Board for its consideration and adoption in 2024 (date TBD)

- *May be expanded based on input received in listening sessions and Work Group meetings



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Recap of January 31 Work Group meeting (cont)

- Principles developed by the Work Group included:
 - Regenerative Agriculture should be rooted in the concept of farming in harmony with nature.
 - Soil health is a critical component of regenerative agriculture, including building/increasing organic matter, and protecting/building soil biodiversity.
- The definition should address the following issues:
 - Reducing/eliminating desertification; rehydrating the soil
 - Carbon cycling
 - Human health, including for farmworkers and surrounding communities
 - Avoid contradicting other, existing state programs
 - Incorporate indigenous practices and incorporate a variety of inclusive practices
 - Note that a plurality of practices will lead to success (i.e., no “one size fits all” approach)
 - Greenwashing must be avoided!



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Public Comment

- What “themes” or "principles" identified by the Work Group resonate with you? What’s missing?
- What ideas do you have to help generate a definition for regenerative agriculture?



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Public Comment & Information (Updates)

- Public Comment Email: RegenerativeAg@cdfa.ca.gov
- Website: www.cdfa.ca.gov/RegenerativeAg/

