

CDFA Values the California Certified Crop Adviser Program

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The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is responsible for protecting and promoting California agriculture by facilitating the production and delivery of safe food and fiber. CDFA provides valuable services to California's producers, merchants and citizens, while striving to achieve a thriving 21st Century agricultural sector working in harmony across all aspects of the economy. Creating partnerships with stakeholders is one way of ensuring a sustainable crop production system.

An example of this is the Fertilizer Research and Education Program (FREP). Through this program, CDFA promotes the environmentally safe and agronomically sound use and handling of fertilizing materials.

Each year, the FREP announces a request for proposals for research and education grant projects that aim to facilitate improving farming practices to mitigate potential environmental effects from the use of fertilizing materials.

Since 1990, FREP has identified and prioritized nitrate-sensitive agriculture producing areas across the state for research and education. In partnership with agricultural commodity groups, producers, local governments and university researchers, FREP facilitates voluntary nitrate management programs in high-priority areas, such as the Tulare Lake Basin and Salinas Valley. FREP continues to focus resources on key research areas, for example, targeted at plant uptake relationships and nutrient loading to groundwater. Additionally, FREP continues to fund research identifying nitrate-reducing farming practices and how best to apply these practices as demonstration projects.

Environmentally sustainable crop production systems require skilled farmers, managers and advisors who are knowledgeable about fertilizers and maintain an adaptive outlook to the emerging regulatory environment. With funding assistance from FREP, the California Certified Crop Adviser Program (CCA) continually promotes the judicious use and application of fertilizers among farmers, farm employees, fertilizer applicators, service companies and other allied industry professionals.



The CCA program plays a critical role as agricultural practices demand continuous evaluation, due to increased and emerging regulatory activities focusing on agricultural operations. It is essential that new and creative methods are utilized to sustain 21st Century agricultural practices.

There are many challenges facing California agriculture in the future. Recognizing this, CDFA and the State Board of Food and Agriculture worked with a collaborative consortium to create a guidance document called California Agricultural Vision: Strategies For Sustainability (Ag Vision). Ag Vision identifies key strategies for sustainability:

<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/agvision/>

CDFA and the CCA program are implementing Ag Vision by:

- Easing the burden of regulation on agriculture while maintaining health, safety and environmental standards by promoting cost-effective innovation in achieving the objectives of regulations.
- Expanding environmental stewardship on farms and ranches by identifying beneficial management practices that improve farm viability, the agricultural economy and the environment.
- Promoting agricultural research that anticipates 21st century challenges by working to ensure research and extension of research, which will stimulate innovation and adaptability to keep California's agriculture and food system the most productive, profitable and environmentally sound in the world.

Building relationships and creating effective partnerships is vital for sustaining California agriculture in the 21st Century. The CCA program has demonstrated great value by working in collaborative partnership to address nutrient management issues in the irrigated agriculture and dairy arenas. CDFA, through the guidance of the Ag Vision process, recognizes that numerous strategies will be needed for agriculture to enhance a sustainable future. 🌱