



ENVIRONMENTAL FARMING ACT SCIENCE ADVISORY PANEL (EFA SAP)

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES for September 13, 2024

EFASAP Call to Order

- Jon Gustafson joined the panel as a non-voting member and representative from USDA NRCS for the first time. Member Gustafson is the State Resource Conservationist

Minutes from Previous Meeting

- The panel members present unanimously approved the May meeting minutes.

Climate Strategy Update

- Deputy Secretary Jameson provided an update on the Climate Strategy for Agriculture, which was the topic of the last EFASAP meeting.
- The report is going through an internal interagency review prior to release for public comment.
- The report structure is outlined in the “CDFA Climate Strategy Overview Presentation” PDF on the [EFASAP website](#).
- Panel and Public Comment highlights included suggesting that the Strategy address the following, among other issues:
 - Consider broad benefits of grazing and include other grazing species
 - Address how the state will respond to economic reductions from water restrictions and embed economics in each chapter
 - Integrate the strategies for promoting biodiversity and integrative pest management
 - Consider how geography and water sources will require different adaptation strategies
 - Identify measurable milestones
- This item was not decisional.

Cover Cropping Report

- Ryan Flaherty, Senior Director of Circular Economies at Sustainable Conservation, described the motivation of the report as ensuring the viability of non-cash crop vegetation under SGMA to promote watershed, ecosystem and human health.
- The presentation is available in the "SusCon Cover Cropping Report EFASAP Presentation" PDF on the [EFASAP website](#).
- The Report is the product of a collaborative process with over 100 participants and includes an assessment of current knowledge, a policy analysis and recommendations.
- The report concluded that some common assumptions in GSA approaches do not reflect best available science and thus discourage cover cropping, and that methodologies for calculating consumptive water use do not account for water-related benefits of cover crops.
- Key recommendations included research, technical assistance, pilot programs and continued convening.
- Panel and Public Comment highlights include the following, among other issues:
 - Cooperative extension and RCD's need to be involved in promoting cover crops, but there are anecdotal examples of cooperative extension discouraging them; there was an additional public comment that UCCE may discourage summer cover crops but has not discouraged winter ones
 - Suggestion that DWR should provide guidance to GSAs based on this report
 - There have been anecdotes of penalties for cover crops in orchards in the Central Valley
 - A discussion of the significant shortfalls of satellite data for assessing cover crop water usage
 - Suggestion for SusCon to connect with the Groundwater Resources Association
 - The Almond Board has also been investing in research on ET and found challenges understanding water sources.
 - Suggestion that cover crops could be considered environmental water use rather than ag water use.
- This item was not decisional.

CANCELLED: OEFI Program Assessment.

- Speaker Nick Babin was unable to make the meeting today. CDFA will reschedule this presentation at a future EFASAP meeting.

Public Comment

- There was a public comment requesting the meeting to start at 10am to accommodate public transit from the Central Valley.

EFA SAP Attendance

Present

Michelle Buffington, PhD, California Air Resources Board, CalEPA, Member

Don Cameron, Terranova Ranch, Member (Remote)

Vicky Dawley, Tehama RCD, Member and Vice Chair

Leonard Diggs, Pie Ranch, Member (Remote)

Jeff Dlott, PhD, Landscan, Member and Chair

Judith Redmond, Full Belly Farm, Member

Brianna St. Pierre/Annalisa Kihara State Water Resources Control Board, CalEPA, Member

Erik Porse, California Institute for Water Resources, UCANR, Member

Absent

Keali'i Bright, California Department of Conservation, Member

Amanda Hansen¹, California Natural Resources Agency, Member