USDA AGRIGULTURAL AIR QUALITY TASKFORCE CLIMATE VARIABILITY AND BIOENERGY SUBCOMMITTEE

- Congress directed the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service to establish a task force to address air quality issues in 1996. The task force is comprised of USDA employees, agricultural representatives, farmers and scientists in the fields of agriculture and air quality who are appointed by the Secretary to help in their role of providing oversight and coordination related to agricultural air quality.

- The Agricultural Air Quality Task Force (AAQTF) promotes USDA research efforts and identifies cost-effective ways the agricultural community can improve air quality. It also helps better coordinate activities and resources among USDA agencies and other federal partners such as the Environmental Protection Agency.

- The first AAQTF meeting was in Fresno in March 1997.

- Air quality and climate change are the primary focus for AAQTF, and intrinsically include soil and water in ecosystem considerations.

- Joined in 2004 and met great resistance to discussing climate change.

The Evolving Sustainability Landscape

Food Resilience Initiative

General Mills, Nestle, Wal-Mart, Kellogg, Coca-Cola

Microsoft

UN Principles for Responsible Investment

Field to Market

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

Production agriculture practices need to be considered, analyzed, and presented in a fair, balanced, and practical manner when used for quantifying sustainability.

A scientific, systems-based approach is required.

Market value of agricultural production data must be protected so it does not get underestimated or used inappropriately.

Collecting and providing this information and making any operational practice changes takes time and money.

If food manufacturers want to provide corporate responsibility in the form of agricultural sustainability to their stakeholders, they need to provide incentives to insure this can occur.

AAQTF Recommendations

NRCS work with partners such as Field to Market and others to insure a uniform, scientific, systems-based approach is developed that can be used as a template for all production agriculture sustainability index efforts.

USDA work with EPA as they initiate implementation of the “Clean Power Plan” to investigate if there is a role for offsets to be provided to existing power plants under Section 111(d) of the Clean Air Act when agricultural producers utilize voluntary, verifiable best practice standards.

NRCS staff work with CDFA and the CARB to help quantify the water efficiency, reduced GHG emissions and any other environmental benefits that will result from the water conservation measures that are implemented using State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP), authorized by emergency drought legislation (Senate Bill 103). This could serve as pilot using NRCS practice standards (i.e. 441 and 442) to provide verifiable results that can be used in various venues. The current qualitative ranking tool for GHG benefits is a good first step but is not adequate for the quantification needed for this and other venues.

Climate Change Consortium for Specialty Crops: Impacts and Strategies for Resilience: 2013 CDFA report

Grower Technical Assistance and Incentives (pg 42)

Climate change impacts increase grower needs for technical assistance. Resource Conservation Districts, UC Cooperative Extension, and USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service are appropriate programs or agencies for this type of technical assistance. These agencies can provide one-on-one training and expertise to growers about climate change impacts and adaptation strategies. These resources need to be locally available to growers at any scale of operation. CDFA can support these efforts through advocacy to public agencies and private stakeholder groups for reinvestment into technical assistance agencies.

The Consortium recommended that it is important to encourage industry to provide leadership in finding solutions to offset climate change impacts by providing incentives to growers. CDFA can support USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service in a review and creation of policies to improve grower's ability to adapt to climate change. It would be necessary to consider new technologies for water, soil, and pest management and suggest ways to scale best management practices (BMPs) to farms of all sizes.

Recommendation	Key Partners	Level of Priority	Time frame	Potential Cost to CDFA
Outreach & Education				
Grower Technical Assistance CDFA should facilitate an increase in grower technical assistance and trainings specific to climate change adaptation, such as for water, soil, and pest management, by doing the following: 1) Advocate for public (e.g. CA PUC, CEC, etc.) and private (e.g. commodity groups) re-investment in grower technical assistance such Resource Conservation Districts and UC Cooperative Extension; 2) Increase grower awareness of existing technical assistance and training programs; 3) Act as a clearinghouse for climate change adaptation-specific best management practices (BMPs) and coordinate with other groups to disseminate this information to growers; 4) Coordinate with agencies and education institutions to develop new trainings, (optional) certification programs, and continued education units (CEUs), for pest, soil, and water management practices that help growers adapt to climate change. CDFA should: • Coordinate trainings through existing training funding programs carried out by agencies and groups like DWR and Irrigation districts; • Tailor climate change outreach programs to pest control advisors and nutrient managers.	• Resource Conservation Districts • UC ANR Cooperative Extension • CA State Universities • Regional Water Boards • Ag Associations & Commodity Groups • Ag Commissioners • Growers • DWR • Irrigation Districts • NRCS •CA Certified Crop Advisors • CA Assoc. of Pest Control Advisors • Assoc. of Applied IPM Ecologists • Xerces Society	Primary	Med	Low

Safeguarding California: Reducing Climate Risk

Natural Resources Agency

Climate Risk and California Business (pg 18)

Institutional investors can adopt investment practices that encourage positive climate action. Companies help create markets for ecosystem services. Business and industry groups can encourage the development of climate policies and raise awareness about climate change issues.

Actions Needed to Safeguard Agriculture (pgs 35-39)

Developing incentive programs for sustainable, science-based practices that create resilience to climate impacts, including pilot-projects to demonstrate proof-of-concept;

Provide technical assistance and financial incentives to farmers and ranchers implementing climate resilience strategies and systems.

Developing incentives for agricultural ecosystem services, such as beneficial soil practices by improving soil moisture during hotter, drier conditions.

Working collaboratively with partners to provide info on climate risks as well as financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers interested in adopting practices that create resilience against climate risk.