

AB 409

Agricultural Climate Adaptation Tools

Assemblymember
Monique Limón
37TH DISTRICT



THIS BILL

Assembly Bill 409 would establish a competitive grant program in the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to develop climate adaptation planning tools and trainings for agricultural producers.

The bill would require the director to make available, upon appropriation, up to \$2,000,000 to fund the grant program.

BACKGROUND

The 77,000 farms and ranches in the State of California are uniquely vulnerable to the impacts of a changing climate, including increased frequency of extreme weather events, constrained water resources, new pest and disease pressures, and reduced winter chill hours.

The State and University of California (UC) have made significant investments in research to better understand agriculture's unique vulnerabilities and adaptation strategies to a changing climate. Not enough has been done to translate climate risks to the farm level and assist farmers in adapting to climate change.

In 2018, CalCAN conducted a series of 12 focus groups across 9 regions of the state with 60 farmers, ranchers, technical assistance (TA) providers, and other agricultural professionals. Farmer and rancher participants often expressed uncertainty about where to find locally-relevant and science-based information on climate risks and the type of information that would help them make adaptive management decisions.

To assess relevant climate risks and adaptation strategies and integrate them into their business planning and decision-making, farmers and ranchers need science-based, farm-level planning tools and trained TA providers to work with them. This is especially true for small and moderately scaled, and of disadvantaged farmers and ranchers who do not have equal access to technical assistance and, on average, have fewer resources to adapt to climate change.

TA providers and agricultural organizations also need training in climate risk management. According to a 2017 survey of 144 UC Agriculture and Natural Resources staff, 88% of respondents believe it is important to incorporate climate change information into farm extension programs, but only 43% actually do.¹ Respondents had a low level of confidence in their ability to incorporate climate change in their extension programming, citing a lack of access to climate information. They also expressed interest in education on technical tools and information resources, as well as training in climate science communication.

PURPOSE

AB 409 would build on OPR's existing adaptation work by establishing a competitive grant program to achieve three objectives:

1. Develop science-based, farm-level agricultural adaptation planning tools.

¹ Grantham T, Kearns F, Kocher S, Roche L, Pathak T. 2017. Building climate change resilience in California through UC Cooperative Extension. *Calif Agr* 71(4):197-200. <https://doi.org/10.3733/ca.2017a0045>.

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2. Pilot the tools in three regions with local farmers, ranchers, TA providers, and ag organizations.

3. Provide trainings for TA providers and ag organizations on how to use the tools and effectively communicate about climate adaptation.

Eligible applicants include Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), UC Cooperative Extension, and qualified nonprofit organizations.

Priority will be given to joint applications that take a collaborative and inclusive approach that includes the following:

1. Participation in the development of the planning tools by farmers, ranchers, TA providers, and agricultural industry organizations, such as commodity groups.

2. Incorporation in the tools of the unique needs of small and moderately scaled farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, and female farmers and ranchers.

SUPPORT

California Climate & Agriculture Network
(Sponsor)
Community Alliance with Family Farmers
CA Certified Organic Farmers
Ecological Farming Association
CA FarmLink
Wild Farm Alliance
Occidental Arts & Ecology Center
Center for Food Safety

STAFF CONTACT

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