

California State Senate

SENATOR
LOIS WOLK

THIRD SENATE DISTRICT



Senate Bill 1350 **Healthy Soils Program** *By Senator Lois Wolk*

Summary

SB 1350 requires the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to establish and oversee a Healthy Soils Program to provide incentives to farmers whose management practices contribute to healthful soils and result in net long term on-farm greenhouse gas benefits. Upon appropriation, SB 1350 also directs \$20 million to the Department of Food and Agriculture to support the Healthy Soils Program.

Bill Details

- Requires CDFA to establish and oversee a Healthy Soils Program to provide incentives, including loans, grants, research, and technical assistance or educational materials and outreach, to farmers whose management practices contribute to healthful soils and result in net long term on-farm greenhouse gas benefits.
- Increases the membership of CDFA's Environmental Farming Panel to include additional relevant experts.
- Directs \$20 million, upon appropriation by the Legislature, from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund to CDFA to support the Healthy Soils Program.

Background

California's agriculture industry contributes over \$40 billion annually to our state's economy. Climate change, however, threatens the continued viability of this industry. The latest science suggests that future challenges will include rising temperatures, increases in extreme weather events, constrained water resources, reduced winter chilling hours, and rising sea levels. This fourth year of extreme drought shows that farmers and ranchers are on the frontlines of climate impacts.

California agriculture is also uniquely positioned to provide climate benefits by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. State-funded research suggests some agricultural practices will not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but can also help to store atmospheric carbon in soils, trees and other woody plants. Many of the most effective agricultural climate protection strategies provide additional environmental and health co-benefits such as enhanced on-farm resilience to climate impacts, improved air and water quality, water conservation, enhanced wildlife habitat and healthy rural communities.

The Environmental Farming Act of 1995 created CDFA's environmental farming program and the advisory Environmental Farming Act Science Advisory Panel. The program and panel were created to promote farming practices that "contribute to the well-being of ecosystems, air quality and wildlife and their habitat." However, the 1995 Act did not anticipate the agricultural challenges and opportunities presented by climate change and should be updated and funded.

Support

California Department of Food & Agriculture – sponsor

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