

USDA Launches Effort to Assist California Producers Affected by Drought

From: USDA Office of Communications [<mailto:usda@public.govdelivery.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 04, 2014 9:33 AM
To: Rob Bennaton
Subject: USDA Launches Effort to Assist California Producers Affected by Drought

Release No. 0014.14

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USDA Launches Effort to Assist California Producers Affected by Drought

\$20 million available for agricultural conservation enhancements on key agricultural lands

WASHINGTON, Feb. 4, 2014 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced USDA will make \$20 million available for agricultural water conservation efforts throughout California to combat the effects of drought. Interested landowners and managers have until March 3, 2014 to apply for available funds.

"Working with our federal, state, and local partners, we are doing everything within our power to support those farmers and ranchers affected by this intense drought." said Vilsack. "These funds will help get a suite of scientifically proven conservation techniques on the ground and helping producers. USDA has a long, successful history of helping farmers and ranchers plan for and employ conservation practices that conserve and protect and maximize every available drop of water."

This announcement is part of broader Obama Administration efforts to help those impacted by the drought. Through the National Drought Resilience Partnership, launched as part of President Obama's Climate Action Plan, federal agencies are working closely with state, local government, agriculture and other partners on a coordinated response.

USDA is announcing this additional funding through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to help agricultural operators use water more efficiently, stabilize fallowed cropland, and protect their livelihoods for the future. Funds are available statewide to install a number of conservation practices including irrigation

efficiency, cover crops, rehabilitation of existing spring developments, protection of grazing lands, and other supporting components.

Funds will be divided between two specific funding pools: cropland and grazing lands. Cropland with a reduced water allocation of at least 85 percent will receive the highest priority. In order to be considered eligible for EQIP, the applicant must have a vested interest in agricultural production and meet other program eligibility requirements. For additional information, eligible landowners are encouraged to contact their local NRCS Service Center. Service center locations and more information on the drought initiative can be found at www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov.

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