May 4, 2021

RE: Budget Request: FY 2021-22 Investments in Economic Recovery and Resilience in our Food and Farm System to Combat Hunger, Protect Workers and Create Jobs

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we request $779 million for FY 2021-22 to support the economic recovery and climate resilience of our food and farm system. The time is now to scale up equitable solutions to the climate crisis that bring jobs to our communities, protect our essential frontline workers, and create a secure and resilient food and farming system. This request will fund a portion of investments proposed in AB 125, a bond proposal designed to create a more climate resilient and equitable food and farming system in California.

The coronavirus pandemic has laid bare the vulnerabilities of California's communities, exacerbating food insecurity and exposing essential frontline workers to disproportionate health risks. Rigid food supply chains have shattered, leaving farm products to rot in the fields while many Californians go hungry. The pandemic impacts on food security for Californians and our food and farm system have been wide-reaching:

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814
• Since the beginning of the pandemic, the number of food-insecure Californians increased by 2.1 million, exacerbating already high levels, for a total of 6.4 million food insecure people in the state.¹

• Farmworkers, many of whom live in overcrowded conditions, have been especially vulnerable to contracting the virus. One recent study found that Monterey County farmworkers were three times more likely to contract the coronavirus compared to other workers in the county.²

• Many farmers who relied on restaurant and institutional markets experienced a 50 percent loss in markets in the months following the start of the pandemic.³

• Restaurants and other food businesses have been decimated by the pandemic and many will likely remain closed post-pandemic.

An investment in robust and resilient food and farming systems will accelerate our state’s economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic while combating climate change and protecting our essential food and farm system workers.

We support AB 125, the Equitable Economic Recovery, Healthy Food Access, Climate Resilient Farms and Worker Protection Act, which proposes a comprehensive set of bond investments in our food and farm system. AB 125 has garnered bi-partisan support and has more than 160 local government, public health, food access and agriculture groups in support. This effort began at a time when budget deficits, not surpluses, were projected for the state.

Given the state’s significant surpluses and support from the federal government, and the urgency of the issues outlined above, we feel it is imperative that the state fund a portion of AB 125’s proposed investments now so we can begin to combat rising hunger in the state, protect farmworkers, and make our food and farm system more resilient and economically viable. We support, as outlined in AB 125, that 40 percent of the requested funds benefit disadvantaged communities, vulnerable populations, socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and those producers located in disadvantaged communities.

Below we offer our recommendations on FY 2021-22 investments in the economic recovery and resilience of the food and farm system.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

³ #FarmersFeedtheNeed – a coordinated effort to provide food to needy Californians. April 30, 2020. CDFA blog. https://plantingseedsblog.cdfa.ca.gov/wordpress/?p=21213
Andy Naja-Riese, Chief Executive Officer
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Torri Estrada, Executive Director
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Rebecca Spector, West Coast Director
Center for Food Safety

Nayamin Martinez, Director
Central California Environmental Justice Network

Sarait Martinez, Executive Director
Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño
EXPAND HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS AND COMBATING HUNGER: $155 million

Department of General Services: $50 million Grants for improving school meals, including funding kitchens, meal preparation, meal service, and dining infrastructure utilized for school nutrition programs.

Background: According to a 2020 UC Berkeley study, scratch cooking is one critical way to serve healthier meals in schools. Unfortunately, most California public schools either lack infrastructure to cook from raw ingredients or have aging, ineffective facilities to receive, store, prepare and serve food. Researchers estimate that it would take nearly $6 billion dollars to ensure that all California public schools have adequate infrastructure to support fresh meal preparation.

This budget request is a strategic first step toward enabling California schools to serve freshly-prepared meals, especially those serving high populations of low-income students. Given the nearly 50 percent rise in food insecurity in California as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the essential role that schools play in ensuring that children are nourished, this investment is more urgent than ever.

**Department of Social Services: $30 million** Grants for the enhancement and disaster resilience needs of the emergency food delivery system, including food banks, non-profit hunger relief organizations, and operators of the federal Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.

**Background:** The COVID-19 pandemic brought food insecurity to historically high levels in California, with communities of color disproportionately bearing the brunt of the impacts. Food banks served more than 1 billion pounds in 2020, or 917 million meals, a 74 percent increase overall. Right now, food insecurity remains more than double pre-pandemic levels. According to the California Budget & Policy Center, California is experiencing worse job loss due to COVID-19 compared to the Great Recession. As a result, food banks and other hunger relief organizations anticipate a decade of need to come. This funding will help expand community feeding program capacity long-term, and will come with a substantial return on investment: even a 1% reduction in food insecurity saves California $600M annually in prevented health care utilization and expenditures.5

**Department of Food and Agriculture: $55 million** Grants designed to ensure communities and Tribes may obtain or produce healthy, nutrient-dense, culturally relevant foods at certified farmers’ markets, community supported agriculture, community food gardens and urban agriculture, mobile markets and other healthy food retail outlets, health clinics and food pharmacies, and farm to senior programs.

**Background:** Even though almost half of the fruits and vegetables produced in this country come from California, nearly a quarter of California households lack access to healthy foods.6 Inequitable access to healthy foods like fresh produce contributes to food insecurity and poor health outcomes, especially in low-income communities of color, rural, and Tribal communities.

*CalFresh, Farmers Markets, and other Farm Direct Sites.* Considering COVID-19’s impact, enrollment in nutrition safety net programs has also grown dramatically with more Californians struggling to afford necessities, like food. CalFresh—California’s name for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—ballooned to over 2.6 million enrolled households in June 2020.7 As a result, food outlets including certified farmers’ markets, mobile markets, farm stands, and food retail stores have seen a significant increase in families shopping with CalFresh and other nutrition benefits. Programs like Market Match help make healthy foods more affordable for

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5 The Healthcare Costs of Food Insecurity. 2019. Feeding America
https://public.tableau.com/profile/feeding.america.research#!/vizhome/TheHealthcareCostsofFoodInsecurity/Health careCosts


CalFresh recipients; between 2019 and 2020, the statewide Market Match program\(^8\) grew 41% at farmers markets and other farm direct sites.

**Urban Farms and Community Gardens.** Urban farms and community gardens represent an untapped solution to increase access to affordable, healthy food, especially for low-income community members.\(^9\) A 2016 study of community gardening programs serving diverse, low-income populations in San Jose revealed that participants doubled their vegetable intake while reducing monthly food costs between $84 and $92.8.\(^10\)

**Feeding Seniors and Low-Income Californians with Chronic Illnesses.** In a typical year, the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons are distributed to 37,000 Californians to spend at farmers markets. This is a fraction of the number of eligible seniors experiencing food insecurity. Based on the successful Farm to School Program and Rhode Island’s Farm to Senior Program,\(^11\) a California Farm to Seniors programs would facilitate California farmers and ranchers marketing directly to long-term care facilities, home-delivered meals programs and other sources of local foods to seniors. The need for medically-tailored meals and other Food is Medicine\(^12\) programs, such as Veggie Rx and Produce Prescriptions, nearly doubled during Covid-19.

**Department of Aging: $20 million** Grants that fund infrastructure to improve senior nutrition programs for the distribution of congregate or home-delivered meals.

**Background:** COVID-19 exposed the significant unmet need for food by vulnerable California seniors. Across all senior meal programs, in 2020, there were a record 27 million meals delivered to older Californians (a 51% increase over 2019). The newly released California Master Plan on Aging\(^13\) highlights that California has the nation’s largest aging population. Meanwhile, according to the U.S. Census, almost 30% of older Californians are considered poor or near poor. Many senior feeding programs struggle to meet demand because they lack funding for infrastructure, equipment and other physical capacity constraints. This budget request is a critical starting point to ensure the programs are able to provide healthy meals to the growing numbers of older adults in need.

**PROTECT THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF CALIFORNIA’S FARMWORKERS: $157 million**

**Strategic Growth Council: $100 million** Grants for the development of multi-unit, family housing for farmworker families and households.

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\(^8\) See: https://marketmatch.org/
\(^12\) See: https://www.calfimc.org/
\(^13\) See: https://mpa.aging.ca.gov/
Department of Community Services and Development: $20 million Grants for improved energy efficiency, indoor air quality, renewable energy use and climate resilience for farmworker housing, either single family homes or multi-unit buildings.

Division of Occupational Safety and Health: $5 million Funding for the creation of a stockpile of personal protection equipment for farmworkers to be used in cases of emergencies such as wildfires or disease outbreaks.

State Water Resources Control Board: $20 million Grants to provide safe drinking and promote public health for farmworker families who lack access to safe and reliable drinking water sources.

Office of Emergency Services: $12 million Funding to expand the California State Warning Center to include targeted alerts for public health dangers for farmworkers and other essential workers.

Background: Overcrowded housing with improper ventilation and lack of access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are all factors contributing to the high risks of COVID-19 infections among farmworkers and their families in California. The proposed suite of investments is intended to improving housing conditions by building new multi-unit farmworker family housing that is connected to services (SGC) and upgrading existing housing to provide multiple benefits, including improved indoor air quality (CSD). SGC’s AHSC program has a history of building farmworker housing and related transportation projects. The investments will also fill a gap in PPE access for workers, which is needed not only during the pandemic but also during wildfire outbreaks (OSH). The Water Board investments will further efforts to improve access to clean, safe and affordable drinking water and the alert system investment (OES) will support improved notifications for farmworkers and others impacted by public health dangers, including wildfires.

STRENGTHEN REGIONAL FOOD ECONOMIES: $155 million

Department of Food and Agriculture: $140 million

Local and Regional Food Infrastructure Grants: $110 million Grants for local and regional food and fiber infrastructure to support processing, aggregation, cold storage and other supply chain infrastructure in response to changing climate conditions, to strengthen urban-rural

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15 See: [https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/Public_Affairs/pdf/Housing_Transportation.pdf](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/Public_Affairs/pdf/Housing_Transportation.pdf)
16 For one example of AHSC funding for farmworker housing, see the Imperial County-based project (Worthington, pg. 21): [https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsgc.ca.gov%2Fprograms%2FAhsc%2Fdocs%2F20200810-AHSC_R5Awards_Appendix_B.pdf&urp=gmail_link&gids=7628](https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsgc.ca.gov%2Fprograms%2FAhsc%2Fdocs%2F20200810-AHSC_R5Awards_Appendix_B.pdf&urp=gmail_link&gids=7628)
connectivity, and to support the development of more resilient and more equitable food economy. Please see section 80750 of AB 125.

**Background:** “Although California excels at growing healthy food, our current distribution system does not provide enough of this food to low-income communities.” – 2012 CDFA report. Food distribution systems were tested during the pandemic, revealing inadequate processing, storage and distribution systems. There are a number of shovel ready projects in California that, with state investment, can improve the reliability and resilience of regional and local food systems. Investment in food hubs can address local and regional food security and improve the profitability of local farms.

**Local Meat Processing Grants: $20 million.** Grants to develop new meat processing facilities, expand or upgrade existing meat processing facilities to increase the state and Tribal meat processing capacity.

**Workforce Development: $10 million.** Grants to provide funding to community colleges, universities, technical and vocational schools, and Tribal governments, communities and educational institutions, to provide workforce safety and development training for the meat processing industry.

**Background:** California’s ranchers face significant challenges accessing meat processing. In the last fifty years, California has shut half of its federally inspected slaughterhouses. Ranchers selling into local markets and raising grass-fed or organic livestock often rely on small regional slaughter facilities as they cannot meet the volumes and uniform size required by large meat processors. Furthermore, only a small handful of the remaining USDA slaughter facilities offer certified organic slaughtering, resulting in steep challenges for organic ranchers in getting their products to market. Studies that considered upgrading existing “custom plants” to USDA inspected plants found that funding for renovation and expansion of facilities was a significant barrier for businesses. To date, no custom plant in the state has upgraded to offering USDA slaughter and processing. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the public health and food security challenges of a concentrated meat processing sector.

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19 https://www.sfproduce.org/reinvestment-project
19 https://sarep.ucdavis.edu/fs/supply/values
21 Mendocino County Meat Plant (MCMP) Study. UC ANR. http://cemendocino.ucanr.edu/files/171140.pdf
22 Lack of processing hampers the organic meat business. https://www.agalert.com/story/?id=14779
**California State Coastal Conservancy: $10 million** Grants and expenditures for the development, restoration, and reconstruction of fishing facilities and related infrastructure serving the commercial fishing industry in urban coastal waterfront areas.

**Background:** The California State Coastal Conservancy has a current backlog of commercial fishing infrastructure projects of more than $70 million. The lack of investment in fishing industry infrastructure hurts the sustainable, small-scale fishing industry, which cannot compete with large, industrial outfits.

**California Energy Commission: $5 million** Grants to food processors for the adoption of energy efficient and renewable energy technologies to help California food processors work towards a low carbon future.

**Background:** Financial and technical assistance for the food processing industry in California can lower the industry’s carbon footprint while maintaining and strengthening the industry.

**Improve Agricultural Resilience and Advance Sustainable Agriculture: $205 million**

**Department of Food and Agriculture: $136 million**

**State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP): $40 million.** Grants for farmers and ranchers for on-farm water use efficiency projects to protect surface and groundwater.

**Background:** SWEEP was among the first of the state’s Climate Smart Agriculture programs and was established in 2014, during the peak of the state’s last significant drought. Since then, CDFA has funded 835 SWEEP projects for $81.1 million with an estimated water savings of 37.5 billion gallons (or 117 acre-feet), which is the equivalent of 70,500 Olympic-sized pools. The most recent round of SWEEP funding was $20 million from Prop 68 in FY 2018-19. CDFA held two solicitations, one in 2018 and another in 2019. Farmer demand for the program exceeded funding levels for all rounds of SWEEP funding, including the most recent funding cycles:

- Total number of applications submitted in those two solicitations (2018-2019): 709
- Total number of applications awarded in those two solicitations (2018-2019): 230
- Total dollars requested in those two solicitations (2018-2019): $56.3 million
- Total dollars awarded in those two solicitations (2018-2019): $18.85 million

CDFA is wrapping up an expert panel process to review SWEEP’s impacts and make recommendations for how the program be more responsive to both surface and groundwater efficiency and conservation.

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25 Conversation with SGC, April 2021. Spreadsheet list of projects from Central and Northern CA is available.
27 See: https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/sweep/
**Alternative Manure Management Program (AMMP): $20 million.** Grants for farmers and ranchers to do alternative manure management to reduce methane emissions and increase carbon sequestration.

**Background:** In 2019-2020, dairy and livestock producers, many of whom are small and mid-scale producers, requested over $50 million\(^{28}\) in AMMP funding to transition their operations from wet manure handling and storage—which produces the bulk of the state’s agricultural methane emissions—to dry manure handling and storing. Two-thirds of AMMP recipients transition to composting their manure, which provides soil building benefits. Despite the high demand for the program, CDFA funded just 11 projects at $8.9 million in 2020.\(^{29}\) The January budget proposal shifts AMMP projects to the Catalyst Fund, a low-interest loan program. However, moving AMMP projects into the Catalyst Fund will not work for the vast majority of small and mid-scale dairies in state, which are still recovering from years of depressed dairy prices and are not in position to take on more debt. Moreover, shifting funds away from established grant programs like AMMP to a new loan program will end funding for critical technical assistance for farmers and related demonstration projects. We request funding for AMMP to support family-scale dairies in reducing their methane emissions and improving overall air and water quality.

**Technical Assistance Fund for Climate Smart Agriculture: $11 million.** Grants to technical assistance providers to work with farmers and ranchers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon sequestration and improve resilience.

**Background:** CDFA currently has a relatively small TA Fund for Healthy Soils, AMMP and SWEEP programs that allows the CDFA to fund outreach, education, project development, application assistance and project implementation for three programs.\(^{30}\) In 2019, CDFA provided a little more than $2 million for TA providers in the state to work with producers on Climate Smart Agriculture program project development. In this budget request, we are recommending expanding the TA Fund to both support technical assistance for the Climate Smart Agriculture programs and allow for expanded technical assistance for farmers and ranchers to support their implementation of climate smart practices regardless of whether or not the producer applies to the programs. This will better allow the state to scale up adoption of climate smart agriculture practices by making the agronomic and economic case for these practices to producers.

**Organic Transition: $7 million.** Grants for farmers and ranchers to transition to organic agricultural production, including technical assistance to support farmers during the three-year organic farming transition period.

**Background:** Organic produce sales and production continue to grow rapidly, with increased consumer interest in organic produce since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Organic produce sales and volume grew 14.2 and 16 percent respectively in 2020, outpacing conventional

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\(^{28}\) See: [https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/AMMP/docs/2020-AMMP_ApplicationsReceived.pdf](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/AMMP/docs/2020-AMMP_ApplicationsReceived.pdf)

\(^{29}\) [https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/ammp/docs/2020-AMMP_ProjectsAwarded.pdf](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/ammp/docs/2020-AMMP_ProjectsAwarded.pdf)

\(^{30}\) See: [https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/technical/index.html](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/technical/index.html)
produce. CDFA’s recent draft report, Farmer- and Rancher-Led Climate Change Solutions Listening Sessions, cited the importance of investing in financial support and technical assistance for farmers transitioning to organic. Farmers face numerous financial and agronomic challenges through the three-year transition period required to become certified organic.

**Biologically Integrated Pest Management Program: $4 million.** Grants for on-farm demonstration projects that support farmers in reducing or eliminating toxic pesticide use.

**Background:** The Biologically Integrated Pest Management Program operated for many years as the Biologically Integrated Farming Systems and Biologically Integrated Orchard Systems programs. These early programs are credited with many orchards and other cropping systems moving away from calendar sprays of toxic pesticides toward better pest monitoring and reducing some of the most toxic chemicals. California needs to reinvigorate these efforts to support farmer outreach and education on reduced and no toxic pesticide use. While the administration considers alternative funding sources for this work in the long-term, immediate investment will allow projects to go forward in cropping systems that would benefit from IPM and alternative pest management education and outreach.

**Prescribed Grazing: $8 million.** Grants for farmers and ranchers to support prescribed grazing infrastructure to support wildfire prevention, improved livestock management, and biodiversity enhancement.

**Background:** Multiple vegetation management practices must be scaled up in California to improved wildfire prevention while also protecting biodiversity. Among those practices is prescribed grazing on grass and rangelands, which can reduce fire intensity, and can shift grasses from a highly flammable and effective fire spreader into a natural fire barrier. This shift has both ecological and safety benefits. For example, researchers at the UC Hopland Research and Extension Center have observed that sheep grazing in the Center’s oak woodlands prior to the Mendocino Complex Fire in 2018 reduced the fire intensity, which resulted in less tree damage (trunk scorching and canopy loss), higher tree survival rates, and less seed mortality. Prescribed grazing has gained recognition as a fire mitigation strategy in state policy in recent years. In 2015, the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection’s Range Management Advisory Committee released a white paper outlining the benefits, limitations, best management practices, and CEQA considerations for prescribed grazing projects. Prescribed grazing was subsequently explicitly included in the Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP) Environmental Impact Report (EIR), which streamlines CEQA for certain vegetation treatment projects.

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32 https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/climate/docs/CDFA_Farmer_Rancher_Led_Climate_Solutions_Meetings_Summary.pdf

33 https://thecounter.org/farmers-face-barriers-to-becoming-certified-organic-usda/

34 See: https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/opca/bifs.html

35 See: https://sarep.ucdavis.edu/are/ecosystem/bifs

36 See: https://bof.fire.ca.gov/board-committees/range-management-advisory-committee/

37 See: https://bof.fire.ca.gov/media/7208/white-paper.pdf
University of California Cooperative Extension: $10 million. Grants to UCANR to hire farm advisors, community educators or extension specialists with specialties in certified organic agriculture, small farm advising, and climate resilience and mitigation management and with cultural competence in the provisioning of services to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

Background: Only 13 out of 269 (or less than five percent) UC Cooperative Extension advisors and specialists work on organic farm systems, despite California being the leading organic agriculture state in the country. The state has only one specifically organic-focused Cooperative Extension Specialist, Joji Muramoto, and the UCANR budget does not fund his role. At the same time, organic farming has seen rapid growth in recent years, and organic farmland now makes up 10.6 percent of farm acreage in California. Decline in other UC specialists, including small farm advisors have hurt science-based, technical assistance outreach in the state. Over the past 20 years, state funding for UCANR has decreased by more than 50 percent. Thirty-seven states provide more public funding for agricultural research and Cooperative Extension per unit of agriculture production than California.

Tribal Agriculture and Food System Managers and Food Inspectors: $5 million. Funding for Tribal governments and organizations to support Tribal staffing of Agricultural or Food System Managers and Tribal Food Inspectors to further food sovereignty initiatives.

Background: There is little to no operational funding to support this key “make or break” element towards the building of sustainable Tribal agricultural and food systems programs. Often Tribal food systems programs must be managed by staff who split a portion of their very impacted schedules towards food initiatives, who are employed under different departments, leading to limited program sustainability. This support would also have direct impact at the foundational level of these programs, contributing to cutting edge solutions Tribes are seeking to implement around managing food safety inspection in alignment with FDA and other guidelines.

Beginning Farmer Training Programs: $1 million. Grants to community colleges, universities and qualified non-profits to train beginning farmers and ranchers and agricultural workers in business planning and farm management that includes sustainable and organic agricultural practices and a focus on climate resilience and mitigation management.

Background: A growing number of colleges, universities, and non-profit organizations are providing training for beginning and future farmers and ranchers in organic agriculture farm management. California State University, Fresno is developing a Minor in Organic Production Systems. While the long-term goal for this program is to raise $3.5 million to endow a permanent

41 Greg Perry, Agricultural and Resource Economics, Colorado State University. Briefing provided to Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors, March 31, 2021. Data from USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture based on 2018 allocations and farm gate receipts.
To run the program, the Ag One Foundation is currently working towards fundraising money enough to cover three years of salary for the position. Several other California colleges and universities have programs that train students in sustainable and organic agricultural practices, including Cal Poly SLO, Chico State, Santa Rosa Junior College, and more. Many of these programs rely heavily on private donations and need state funding support to succeed moving forward. Non-profit organizations such as ALBA also have proven success in training the next generation of organic farmers and agricultural professionals, cultivating dozens of successful farming enterprises. Serving 90% Latino farmers of an average age of 30 years, ALBA works to reverse racial inequities in our current farming system. Grant funding would go a long way to ensure the success of these programs.

**Healthy Soils Program (HSP): $30 million.** Grants to farmers and ranchers to increase carbon sinks and reduced overall emissions through soil management and woody biomass practices.

**Background:** HSP funds three-year grants for farmers and ranchers to transition to soil health practices that increase carbon sequestration and reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions. Program funding also includes demonstration projects that provide outreach, education, and research support for the program and technical assistance funding to improve project outreach, development, and implementation. Currently, HSP does not have funding for FY 2020-21.

Farmer demand for HSP exceeds past funding. In the last round of funding in FY 2019-20, more than 600 farmers applied to the program seeking nearly $40 million in grants. CDFA funded 312 applications totaling $21.8 million. DFA also received 39 demonstration project applications, seeking $6 million for FY 19-20. CDFA was able to fund 20 demonstration projects for a total of nearly $3 million. CDFA is also working to improve access to the program for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, who have received $7.3 million to date to fund 130 projects.


**Department of Conservation: $69 million**

**California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP): $18.5 million** Grants for the protection and enhancement of agricultural lands, including the acquisition of fee title or easements, that improve climate resilience, pollinator habitat, California native biodiversity, flood protection, or groundwater recharge.

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42 Establishing a Minor in Organic Production Systems. Fresno State College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology.
44 https://aeps.calpoly.edu/organic-farm/cal-poly-organic-farm
45 https://www.csuchico.edu/regenerativeagriculture/
46 https://shonefarm.santarosa.edu/
47 https://www.albafarmers.org/
48 See: [https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/healthysoils/IncentivesProgram.html](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/healthysoils/IncentivesProgram.html)
49 See: [https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/healthysoils/DemonstrationProjects.html](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/healthysoils/DemonstrationProjects.html)
Background: Established in 1995, CFCP is the state’s longest running farmland conservation program, which relies on limited bond dollars. Currently, the program has just $7 million dollars for its 2021 solicitation, which provides funding for conservation easements and improved land management on protected agricultural lands. As the state continues to lose an average of 50,000 acres of farmland every year, more is needed to stem the loss of this finite resource. Improved funding now for CFCP would allow the program to pivot to incorporating climate resilience as focus for future conservation easement investments.

California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP): $500,000  Funding for DOC to consult with Tribes to determine where traditional Tribal lands are located for the purpose of offering Tribes the first right of refusal to purchase the land and develop collaborative management processes for land management consistent with Tribal goals and access rights.

Background: This funding request builds upon the work of the state to improve relationships with the Tribal governments and organizations in California. The funding would allow DOC to set up a process for how the state might engage Tribes in land conservation activities that include collaborative management processes and first right of refusal.

Land Access and Tenure Grants: $25 million. Grants for improvement of land access and tenure among socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers and beginning farmers and ranchers. Eligible projects include acquisition of fee title projects for the purposes of selling or leasing the acquired agricultural land to socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers and beginning farmers and ranchers.

Background: Access to farmland in California remains difficult for many beginning farmers and farmers of color. To improve land access and tenure, we propose new funding at DOC to work in partnership with land trusts to develop “Buy, Protect, Sell/Lease” farmland that permanently protects the land and makes it available to under-resourced producers. These kinds of programs exist in other states and can be used in California to improve land access and tenure, which is critical for the state to improve equity in the farming system and address an aging farming population.

Regional Farmer Training Centers: $15 million. Grants to develop and expand regional farmer training centers to provide culturally-relevant assistance for socially disadvantaged farmers, beginning farmers and farmworkers.

Background: Half a dozen organizations have been working together for the last three years to develop a Central Valley Agroecology Center in Tulare County. They received multiple philanthropic and one government grant to develop a business plan and have spent the last year-and-a-half developing that plan. They will be ready to begin the initial rollout of the program in fall 2022 and will need funding to support the build out of infrastructure and development from now through 2024. There are other regional farmer training centers that would benefit from infrastructure investments that scale up their work, they include the Agriculture and Land-Based

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49 See: https://tribalaffairs.ca.gov/
Training Association (ALBA) based in Monterey County; Sierra Harvest’s Farm Institute for beginning farmers, based in Nevada County; Center for Land-Based Learning, based out of Yolo and Sacramento Counties; Huerta del Valle in Riverside County has started a new 6-month farmer training program, primarily with low-income Latino residents.

**Resource Conservation Districts and Tribal Resource Conservation Districts: $5 million.** Funding to hire Resource Conservation Districts and Tribal Resource Conservation Districts staff with expertise in organic and sustainable agriculture, conservation planning, climate resilience and mitigation management, and culturally competent provision of services to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

**Background:** Tribal RCDs are established in coordination with USDA, however, there are no funds attached to the establishment of a TCD. There are TCDs on the books in the state that have never been able to get off the ground due to such limited and competitive operational funding. TCDs can serve as the community nexus point for food and agriculture related educational programming, food access initiatives, community nutrition education engagement, and more. They can operate as an independent, but integrated entity within the Tribal community to leverage resources and partnerships specifically geared towards food systems and producer assistance. And for Resource Conservation Districts that operate in the state’s counties, of which there are 97, many have not recovered financially since the Great Recession. Many RCDs are being asked to increase their workload to address a variety of issues but lack the resources to adequately respond to local land conservation management needs, especially in times of greater weather extremes.

**Land Linking Grants: $5 million.** Grants to qualified non-profits, community colleges or universities to create farm and ranch land linking programs that connect beginning or socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers who are looking for agricultural land to farm to existing agricultural landowners for the purpose of establishing secure land tenure and accelerate equitable land access opportunities for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

**Background:** The average age of a California farmer is 59 years old. To address this aging workforce, California needs to invest in farm transfer and land access programs. By supporting state funding for farm linking programs and related technical assistance, the state can support the next generation of farmers and ranchers, including farmers of color, in becoming successful and sustainable stewards of the land.

**PROTECT GROUNDWATER RESOURCES: $75 MILLION**

**Department of Conservation: $50 million** Grants to groundwater sustainability agencies, counties, local agencies, and nongovernmental organizations for development or implementation of local programs supporting or facilitating reduced use of groundwater and multi-benefit land repurposing at the basin scale.
**Department of Food and Agriculture: $12.5 million** Technical assistance grants to support farmers and ranchers located in critically overdrafted basins to support the water use reduction goals of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).

**Department of Water Resources: $12.5 million** Grants to groundwater sustainability agencies in the San Joaquin Valley and Central Coast for the purpose of assisting small and socially disadvantaged farmers, and farmers and ranchers located in disadvantaged communities in meeting their requirements under SGMA.

**Background:** We proposed the following investments to be made over the next three years to support implementation of SGMA; please see Section 80760 of AB 125. Between 500,000 and one million acres of agricultural land is projected to be fallowed in the coming years as Groundwater Sustainability Agencies begin to implement their Groundwater Sustainability Plans. As the implementation of SGMA begins, and as drought descends on California, we see that the most vulnerable to the impacts are not only rural residents on shallow wells, but also small farmers—and especially small farmers of color—who often also have shallow wells that may be dewatered. In addition, some early SGMA actions include metering of wells and new fees whose costs fall disproportionately on small producers and may put them out of business.

**PREVENTING WILDFIRES AND PROMOTING WILDFIRE RESILIENCE: $15 MILLION**

**Department of Forestry and Fire Protection: $5 million** Grants for equipment and facilities for equipment storage for Tribal organizations, Tribal governments, public agencies, and non-profit organizations.

**Department of Housing and Community Development: $10 million** Grants for the development of workforce housing for land management workers on Tribal lands, forestlands, and remote watersheds.

**Background:** Controlled burns consist of low-intensity fires that are intentionally lit in ideal weather conditions to treat a specified area to achieve specific objectives (e.g., reduce fine or ladder fuels, enhance native species, and/or manage invasive species). Many Tribes in California have used controlled burns to steward fire-adapted landscapes and protect their communities for thousands of years. To address the state’s fire deficit, CalFIRE’s Forest Carbon Plan sets a target of implementing approximately 500,000 acres of vegetation treatment per year, which includes both thinning and controlled burns in non-federal forests, woodlands, and chaparral ecosystem. To achieve those targets, individual land owners, tribes, businesses and non-profits – which collectively own approximately 40 percent of the state’s forests and a sizable share of the state’s grasslands – will all need to play a role. Several Tribes are actively seeking partnerships with government agencies that respect their sovereignty and enable them to re-introduce controlled or cultural burns to the landscape. Many farmers and ranchers, Tribes, and fire and rangeland experts have also recently organized themselves into Prescribed Burns Associations, which UCCE Fire Advisor Lenya Quinn-Davidson describes as “community cooperatives for

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51 See: https://www.ppic.org/blog/water-availability-for-san-joaquin-valley-farms-a-balancing-act/
52 See: https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/documents/forest-carbon-plan
53 See: https://calpba.org/connect-ca-pba
prescribed fire.” To further facilitate the implementation of controlled burns, the state will certify its first class of “burn bosses” in 2021, thanks to a program established by SB 1260 (Jackson) in 2018. In our funding request, we are seeking infrastructure investments in equipment, equipment storage and worker housing in remote locations. We heard from Tribal leaders that the latter is especially needed as they expand their cultural burns projects.

**SUPPORT 21ST CENTURY ECOLOGICAL PEST MANAGEMENT: $2 MILLION**

**Department of Food and Agriculture: $2 million** Grants to non-profit organizations, public agencies, tribal governments, tribal organizations, crop or pest advisors, farmers, and insectaries to construct insectaries to produce beneficial organisms in support of ecological integrated pest management.

**Background:** Biological control is a cost-effective approach to non-toxic pest control that was first developed more than 100 years ago in California. Unfortunately, in recent years, California has under-funded biological control as a method to control pests in agriculture and urban landscapes. Biological control will become even more important with a changing climate. As temperatures rise, California is experiencing new pests that threaten crops and human health – from the Asian Citrus Psyllid to tropical mosquitos now found in the Central Valley. We propose a modest initial investment in developing beneficial insectaries in the state that can support biological control efforts.

**REDUCE FOOD WASTE AND INCREASE COMPOST PRODUCTION: $15 MILLION**

**Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery: $15 million** Grants or performance payments for compost infrastructure and food recovery projects at existing and new community composting facilities, on-farm composting facilities, and commercial composting facilities to reduce short-lived climate pollutants and nitrous oxide emissions and to support sequestration of carbon in the state’s agricultural and urban soils.

**Background:** Historically state-level investment in organics infrastructure has been limited to the Department’s GGRF grant and loan programs, which have been severely underfunded and oversubscribed. In fact, CalRecycle has a list of shovel-ready projects that were qualified to be funded in the previous grant cycle but did not receive money because of a lack of funds. Meeting SB 1383 (2016) landfill methane reduction goals and mandates for 75 percent diversion of organic waste (by 2025) will mean up to 8 million new tons of compost could be produced, but only if infrastructure is in place to process the materials. CalRecycle estimates organic materials management infrastructure will cost up to $3 billion, requiring at least a $100 million annual investment from the state to meet these highly-aggressive goals in the next five years.

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54 See: http://calag.ucanr.edu/Archive/?article=ca.2018a0027