

Climate Adaptation in Agriculture

Ag & Natural Resources Committee, Sonoma County Food System Alliance

Hosted by Sonoma Land Trust

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SCFSA members: Brittany Heck (Gold Ridge RCD), Wendy Krupnick (Community Alliance with Family Farmers), Teri Shore (Greenbelt Alliance), Evan Wiig (Farmers Guild)

NBCAI members: Caitlin Cornwall, Sonoma Ecology Center & Genevieve Taylor, Ag Innovations

Purpose: To discuss NBCAI's big question: What are the most important systemic changes that are needed, to make progress specifically on this goal: *Promote food system security and agricultural climate preparedness?*

Meeting Highlights

- Farms have extremely important contributions to the regeneration of the environment, for example - water security, water quality, wildlife enhancement, carbon farming and more.
- Farms are stressed by high land costs, drought and climate change; doing what we can to support their work has an important payback to the larger community.
- Government can make it easier for farmers to do the right thing by scaling down tools such as the Williamson Act to include small farmers, and use it to incentivize their ecosystem services contributions, and make it easier to process and distribute food locally.

Recommended next steps:

- Greenbelt will soon be coming out with a toolbox for protecting/promoting farmland for the bay area.
- Bay area food system project by American Farmland Trust, may or may not be a priority.

Feedback on Goal:

1. Put food system issues into #3, not lump with wine ag? Wine ag is completely in a different world than food ag. Or maybe not? The symptom of stress in wine is selling to large corporations, which has a huge potential local impact economically and ecologically.
2. Need Sub-goals for food and ag goal
 - Big strategic need: Land made economically available to farmers.
 - Less big: what to do with green waste from farms, schools, restaurants, households, processing and using it locally.

What can Producers/ag business do to further this goal?

- Water security, water quality, wildlife projects by RCDs, carbon farming. Water conservation.

- should market climate-smart qualities of their products.
- Shifting breeds or livestock species or crop cultivars.

What can government do to further this goal?

- Sustainable Ag Lands Conservation debate about whether to spend AB32 funds, because can't prove whether certain practices permanently sequester carbon. They should accept the research and put compost application in riparian areas, e.g. In the list of practices. Protocols for evaluation were written just for emissions reduction and doesn't deal well with sequestration.
- Williamson Act important but does not help new farmers, mostly because new farms are smaller than 10 acres and can't do 10-year lease. So, a Williamson-ette Act, or maybe a different name to avoid baggage, Small Farm Incentive Program or Farm Incubation Incentive. Do it on a county basis (already doing some of this).
- Sell idea of compost as valuable not only to waste management but also to the Air Board, for carbon sequestration and GHG mitigation.
- Ag land conversion mitigation fee? American Farmland Trust is working on this for the state. How big a problem is conversion in Sonoma County?
- Make it easier (financially, regulation-wise) to locally process food especially meat. Shared cold storage. HR 3187.
- More oversight of terms like "local" "natural" "sustainable" "water-smart" No green-wash! Otherwise incentive is lost.
- Fund trials and research on tools/equipment and practices, including changing breeds and cultivars.
- Get food economics and food system into core curriculum.
- Pay for ecosystem services. Long-term, it's got to happen, but it will probably roll out for starting specific new practices. Financially and politically, will only work if include costs of ecosystem harm.

What can individuals do?

- Have eco-system services "Fundable" with private funding, make it part of their land purchase process.

What can the NGO and Education sector do?

- Teach home economics for real. What does it mean to buy local? How to stretch a piece of meat? E.g. CERES is doing this.
- Footprint of foods, make it clear the difference in footprint between local and imported food.
- Get it into core curriculum.

What does ag look like in a climate-changed future in Sonoma County?

- This is now, not future: Lost all Rome apples this year, Santa Cruz farm program's fruit trees hammered, garlic at Shone Farm lost, all due to loss of chill. Perennials will keep getting more confused. Impacts on horticulture. Decreased stocking rates from drought and cost of feed.