



The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
 Governor of California  
 State Capitol  
 Sacramento, CA 95814

August 21, 2019

**Re: Improve Healthy Soils/Agricultural Resiliency Strategies in Bond Measure**

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of the undersigned agriculture, conservation and business groups, we write to express our concerns that the current natural resource/climate resiliency bond measures under debate in the legislature, SB 45 and AB 352, lack any meaningful investment in healthy soils, on-farm water conservation, and other agricultural resiliency measures that are critical for meeting the stated goals of the bond, including drought preparation, safe drinking water, and flood protection, and improved climate resiliency.

Agricultural lands cover 25 percent of California's landmass and utilize 80 percent of the state's developed water. Investments in transforming our food and farming systems to be more resilient will be critical to meeting our climate goals, securing our food supply and improving environmental health outcomes in our rural communities. Yet, AB 352 proposes investing *only 5 percent* of the total bond funding in agricultural strategies. We have not seen the latest language for SB 45 but previous versions also only included \$200 million for agricultural activities.

California farmers and ranchers are currently experiencing the impacts of greater weather extremes, challenging their ability to produce the food that we all depend upon. Climate science tells us these impacts to agricultural production will only get worse in the years and decades to come unless we act now. We believe SB 45 and AB 352 are important efforts to bring much needed climate resiliency resources to our communities, but as currently drafted the bond bills fail to invest adequately in our agricultural industry and rural communities.

A recent University of California assessment found that by the end of the century rising temperatures and related reduced winter chill hours will impact key crops<sup>1</sup>. Central Valley land suitable for production of walnuts and several stone fruits will be cut in half by 2050. The Central Valley is not alone in experiencing the extremes of weather impacts on crop production. With increasing heat waves, pest pressures and water constraints, Southern California farmers are experiencing a precipitous decline in their ability to produce avocados, for example. Moreover, we are losing an unsustainable level of the state's farmland to urban conversion, roughly 40,000 acres on average per year - increasing significantly the greenhouse gas emissions profile of our land and limiting our ability to adapt to a changing climate. Rising temperatures, farmland loss, combined with greater variability in precipitation – from drought to floods – puts the state's agricultural industry at great peril.

For too long, natural resource bond measures have failed to invest adequately in agricultural solutions to climate change. For example, Proposition 68 only invested *\$10 million* in improving our agricultural carbon sinks, which not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions but improve soil water holding capacity and drought tolerance for farms and ranches. This small sum will only reach a few hundred of our more than 70,000 farms and ranches, covering 25 million acres.

As currently drafted SB 45 and AB 352 call out a diversity of strategies to support improved agricultural resilience to climate change, but then spreads so few dollars over these strategies to make their impact negligible. The low funding levels will mean there will only be one to two years of funding for most agricultural adaptation activities. Moreover, the bond funding may have long-term negative impacts on funding for agricultural climate strategies as it will likely hurt any efforts to have those activities funded by the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF). We experienced this with Proposition 68 funding. For example, the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEET), which supports on-farm water conservation projects, received one-year, Proposition 68 funding for FY 2018-2019, but had all of its GGRF funds eliminated for that same year and again in FY 2019-2020. This is despite significant water savings and greenhouse emissions reductions associated with SWEET projects<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://www.mdpi.com/2073-4395/8/3/25>

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://calclimateag.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/CSA-Fact-Sheet-2019-SWEET.pdf>

As stated in a recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPPC) *Climate and Land Use* report<sup>3</sup>, we cannot avoid the worst impacts of climate change without transformation in our agricultural and natural resource sectors. And a 2018 IPPC report<sup>4</sup> identified soil carbon sequestration as the greatest potential for reducing emissions at the lowest cost. As the largest agricultural state in the country, California can and should lead the world in these efforts.

We respectfully request that the funding Healthy Soils and Improving Climate Resilience of Agricultural Lands, increase from the proposed \$200 million to \$1.5 billion. Of that total, we propose \$860 million to include such strategies as healthy soils practices incentives and demonstration projects, on-farm water use efficiency projects, adaptation tools for farmers, dairy and livestock compost projects, farmland conservation, protecting our lands that improve flood mitigation, groundwater recharge and wildlife habitat. These efforts will also need boots on the ground – our technical service providers to make this work possible, including assistance for small and mid-scale producers and socially disadvantaged farmers. Additionally, we propose the remaining \$640 million fund critical infrastructure, including the building of compost facilities<sup>5</sup> to move our green waste to productive use.

Your leadership is critical right now to shaping the bond measures or we will lose this unique moment to scale-up and embrace transformative food and farming systems to meet the greatest challenge our lifetime and that of future generations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nathan Harkleroad  
Program Director  
Agriculture and Land-Based Training  
Association

Kara Heckert  
California State Director  
American Farmland Trust

Trey Petrey  
General Manager  
Anderson Valley Land Trust

Neil Edgar  
Executive Director  
California Compost Coalition

Laurel Marcus  
Executive Director  
California Land Stewardship Institute

Jeanne Merrill  
Policy Director  
California Climate & Agriculture Network

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<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/srccl/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

<sup>5</sup> According to CAPCOA, CalRecycle and the ARB, about 20 million tons of organic material will need to be recovered annually to meet the requirements of SB 1383. This will require 70-100 new composting facilities, the capital outlay for which is estimated to be \$2 - \$3 billion. In addition, according to estimates from the SWRCB, the maintenance and upgrade of existing composting infrastructure necessary to comply with the new Compost WDR will require an investment of up to \$450 million. Community composting and small to medium scale on-farm operations are estimated to require another \$500 million. Annual, \$600M. Total by 2024, \$3.1B

Nita Vail  
Chief Executive Officer  
California Rangeland Trust

Sara Aird  
Co-Director  
Californians for Pesticide Reform

Torri Estrada  
Executive Director  
Carbon Cycle Institute

Rebecca Spector  
West Coast Director  
Center for Food Safety

Sri Sethuratnam  
Director, California Farm Academy  
Center for Land-Based Learning

Sigrid Wright  
Executive Director/CEO  
Community Environmental Council

David Runsten  
Policy Director  
Community Alliance with Family Farmers

Deborah Ores  
Senior Attorney  
Community Water Center

Marcy Coburn  
CEO  
CUESA

Jan Derecho  
Executive Director  
Ecological Farming Association

Rebecca Burgess  
Executive Director  
Fibershed

Judith Redmond  
Co-owner  
Full Belly Farm

Rex Dufour  
Western Regional Office Director  
National Center for Appropriate Technology

Dave Henson  
Executive Director  
Occidental Arts & Ecology Center

Margaret Reeves  
Senior Scientist  
Pesticide Action Network

Vicky Dawley  
Executive Director  
Resource Conservation District of Tehama  
County

David S. Gates, Jr.  
Vice President, Vineyard Operations  
Ridge Vineyards, Inc.

Michael Dimock  
Director  
Roots of Change

Sibella Kraus  
President  
SAGE

William J. Keene  
General Manager  
Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation +  
Open Space District

Wendy Sommer  
Executive Director  
Stop Waste

Kris Beal  
Executive Director  
Vineyard Team

Jo Ann Baumgartner  
Director  
Wild Farm Alliance

cc: Secretary Karen Ross, CDFA  
Secretary Jared Blumenfeld, CalEPA  
Secretary Wade Crowfoot, CNRA  
Director Kate Gordon, OPR/SGC