

**DOCKETED**

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## **Climate Innovation Program - Agrivoltaics**

*Additional submitted attachment is included below.*



## BLUEWAVE

January 9, 2024

California Energy Commission  
715 P Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Climate Innovation Program

We appreciate that the California Energy Commission (CEC) has included projects as eligible in the Climate Innovation Program (CIP). When done responsibly, agrivoltaics make it possible to grow renewable energy while strengthening farm viability, reducing irrigation demand, providing necessary shade, and protecting crops and healthy soil.

As the CEC moves forward with drafting guidelines for the CIP we have the following suggestions in order for the state to maximize the benefits of its investment:

- 1) Expand the awardees. Under the existing program only “California-headquartered companies” are eligible to receive an award. We think this places significant limits on the program’s success in scaling up agrivoltaics deployment. We suggest that you include educational institutions who are actively researching the technology, non-profit organizations who have decades of trust built up with the farmers and ranchers who we need to buy-in to the concept, and municipal utilities who are innovators in this field. We understand that this change might have to be done statutorily and would be interested in working with you on this important change. If the above is not possible due to statutory and time constraints, then we would urge you to make partnering with a “California-headquartered company” as simple as possible.
- 2) Farmer and Rancher Liaison. Many farmers and ranchers in California are skeptical about solar development on productive agricultural land. To bridge the gap between farmers and solar developers, the program should prioritize projects that include partnerships with organizations with agricultural technical assistance experience and trusted relationships with farmers.
- 3) Prioritize agrivoltaics’ unique multiple benefits. Not all solar systems are created equal and the program should look to incentivize those projects that propose to achieve optimal agricultural and solar outputs and are truly dual use.
- 4) Reduce environmental impact. Projects proposing to use innovative materials, designs, and installation methods which reduce soil compaction and disturbance, should be scored higher.

Agrivoltaic systems can bridge the tension between solar energy infrastructure and conservation of California’s nationally significant farmland, and benefit clean energy, rural communities and agriculture. At its core, agrivoltaics enables agricultural and energy production on the same piece of land. In addition to efficiently producing clean energy, agrivoltaics can offer important

economic opportunities for farmers through the combination of solar lease payments and continued agricultural production. Additional benefits - for communities, for wildlife, for farmland conservation, and even for increased production for certain crops, grasses and livestock that are vulnerable to extreme heat and prefer some shade - are possible, too.

California is behind the curve when it comes to integrating renewable energy projects and agriculture. Across the country in states like Colorado, Arizona, Massachusetts, and Maine, clean energy associations, farm advocates, solar developers and researchers are partnering up with state governments to explore applications for dual use and novel agrivoltaic systems. Getting projects in the ground will demonstrate to farmers, ranchers and solar developers that agrivoltaics is possible and beneficial for California's agro-economy. The CEC has the opportunity now to promote investments in agrivoltaic projects in the CIP.

Thank you for your consideration of our suggestions. We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this and answer any questions.

Sincerely,

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Resilient Agricultural West Advisor, American Farmland Trust

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Policy Director, Community Alliance with Family Farmers