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The RCD is committed to supporting San Diego's ever-growing community of Farmers and Ranchers. We equip hard-working stewards of the land with conservation practices known as regenerative agriculture which help to improve farm and ranch productivity. This holistic approach to managing working lands strengthens agricultural businesses while conserving natural resources, reducing the risk of wildfire and adapting to the effects of climate change.

El Distrito de Conservación de Recursos (RCD) está comprometido a apoyar la creciente comunidad de agricultores y rancheros en el condado de San Diego. Proveyendo prácticas de conservación a nuestros agricultores, conocidas como agricultura regenerativa, estas practicas aumentan la productividad de granjas y ranchos. Además, esta manera de cultivación de tierras beneficia a las empresas agrícolas, conserva los recursos naturales, reduce el riesgo de incendios y adapta las granjas a los efectos de cambio climático

Para recibir estas noticias de subsidio, eventos e investigaciones de agricultura regenerativa puede contactarnos en español, solo tiene que responder a este mensaje o escribirnos a ag@redsandiego.org

Climate Change on Farms from San Diego to Gdansk

By Joel Kramer, Ag Specialist

Conservation District as part of a US State Department through [Young Transatlantic Innovation Leaders Initiative \(YTIIL\)](#) fellowship. The goal of the trip was to learn about the potential for carbon markets to incentivize regenerative agriculture with the guidance of my generous host Mateusz Ciasnocha of [European Carbon Farmers](#).



In Poland, our fellow farmers are experiencing many of the same challenges as farmers here in San Diego. The impacts of climate change are felt as drought stresses water supplies, cold snaps impact yields, and an unstable market undercuts prices. Despite our vastly different climates, the impact is the same - increased variability in weather patterns. The [Drought Monitoring Center at the Polish Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation \(IUNG\)](#) has tracked this development over the last 20 years. Today, farmers are observing early inconsistent snow, shallow rivers with exposed islands, and reduced standing water in fields. The changes are tangible and come with some benefits, but demand adaptation.

We started our trip in the Vistula Delta which was engineered by ingenious contributions from Dutch Mennonites, but lies mostly below sea level. Much like the Sacramento Delta, flooding in the Vistula is a major risk, as we [observed in our 2017 floods](#). San Diego shares several key traits with the northern port city of Gdansk in Pomerania. The coast moderates weather relative to our broader regions, the nearby city can support the local market and tourism can bolster the industry for small-scale farmers.

Overall we share much with Polish government and farmers, as California leads globally with quantification of greenhouse gas sequestration and financing of programs through cap and trade, as detailed in the [CalCAN article on the progress of the Healthy Soils Program](#). However, government financial support is much more widespread in the European Union where subsidies and incentives for farmers are largely non-competitive. The United States system encourages more adaptation and innovation but our farmers lack the support they need in an already challenging market and environment. These are different approaches to a common, complicated problem: global markets struggle to account for ecosystem services, making it challenging to monetize conservation practices.

We visited farms who are taking advantage of incentives in the [European Union Common Agriculture Policy](#) to produce their crops using regenerative practices. For example, Marian and Sabina Ciasnocha of Sledz Farm in the Vistula Delta transitioned their farm from annual staple crops to perennial grasses to farm hay with less soil disturbance. On the other side of Pomerania we visited [Goodvalley](#), a Danish company which seeks to produce climate neutral pork by producing their own feed, applying manure to fields and running the operation with biogas from the manure. Further south we visited the [Hereford Mazury Cattle Ranch](#), where Marcin Ciok has transitioned from a feedlot to holistically-managed pastures. We also visited Hania and Krzysztof [Kowalski and their award-winning](#) flax oil

production. These farmers have seen the economic benefits of regenerative practices, as reduced inputs and labor have reduced costs while niche markets have improved sales.



Sledz Farm | Optimized Production of Staple Field Crops



Hereford Mazury | Holistic Management of Free Range Cattle

As this was a diplomatic exchange, we actively advocated for the needs of farmers to government agencies ranging from municipalities to the US Embassy. As YTLI fellows we had the honor of visiting the US Embassy in Warsaw where we discussed the exchange, regional security concerns and opportunities in agriculture with Alicia Hernandez, the Agricultural Counselor for the US Department of Agriculture Foreign Agricultural Service for Eastern Europe and her staff. As the leaders of carbon sequestration on working lands, farmers must be encouraged to participate in government and to do so they require a seat at the table. While we encourage farmers to adopt conservation practices to adapt to climate change, we cannot escape the reality that emissions are a global phenomenon. Both San Diego and Gdansk are border towns which will likely need to support climate refugees fleeing regions struck by heat waves, flooding and unstable markets. Even if we are successful enough to adapt to new climatic conditions in each of our home regions and countries, we must continue to address climate change globally by drawing down emissions. Working lands are the key to cooperating and buying time to transition our economy to a society with less conflict over distant resources.



Pomeranian State Government | Marshall Józef Sarnowski and Agriculture and Environment Director, Krzysztof Palkowski

The sincere hospitality of Polish people was striking. Mateusz and I were regularly invited into farmers' homes for a full meal as part of our visits and professionals shared local farm goods and hot tea to accompany every meeting. The exchange was truly rewarding and I am deeply grateful to Mateusz and our colleagues in Poland for their dedication, ingenuity and generosity.

These many encounters showed me that our societies are intimately linked. For example, as many as 10 million U.S. citizens have Polish ancestry, while the farmers we visited were always most proud of their U.S. farm equipment. The trip challenged my assumptions about the region's development following communism and gave me an opportunity to educate Polish people about the nuances of farming and life in the United States beyond what international media portrays. While both the United States and the European Union are actively incentivizing conservation practices in agriculture, the programs differ in terms of the funding available, application competitiveness, and verification of carbon sequestration. Each system could benefit from attributes of the other and our organizations are working to bridge that gap.

We hope to continue this exchange, educating Polish farmers about the potential for carbon farming through practices like compost application, and learning from them how to better support the agricultural industry in California and the United States. The climate for agriculture is changing and we admire the farmers who lead, from San Diego to the Baltic Sea.

Meet Our New Team Members!



Hi there, I'm Daniela Mejia, and I'm excited to be the new **Community Garden Coordinator**. I was born and raised in San Diego only minutes away from the Mexico/US border. I am also first generation Mexican American. After graduating High School in 2008

growing food, sustainable living, and holistic health. In 2012 I graduated from Pacific College of Oriental Medicine with an Associates in Body Work and Applied Sciences, and I began building my own Massage Therapy Practice. In 2016 I participated in Farm School at Wild Willow Farm which made me a more confident and knowledgeable gardener. Working for an environmental organization like the RCD feels like a dream come true. The RCD gives me the opportunity to grow my knowledge and build new skill sets to better support other gardeners. I'm proud to represent diverse cultures and diverse gardening practices for the Community Gardens. If you have questions about the Tijuana River Valley Community Garden, you can reach me at daniela.mejia@rcdsandiego.org.



Gregg Cady is a native San Diegan that always tells very funny jokes. His love for cooking and growing food led him to study plant science in college. In 2018, he joined the RCD as Head Gardener and helped establish the Carbon Farming Demonstration Plot at the Tijuana River Valley Community Garden. After the RCD assumed responsibility for Wild Willow Farm and Education Center in 2019, Gregg soon took over as Farm Manager. Now, as our new **Farm Conservation Advisor**, Gregg is working with agricultural producers in San Diego to implement conservation practices and develop carbon farming plans. Gregg believes that we all should care about our role in the environment and advocates for using science to develop agricultural practices that mitigate our impact and reverse ecological harm. If you are a farmer interested in developing a carbon farm plan or have questions about on-farm conservation practices, you can reach Gregg at gregg.cady@rcdsandiego.org.

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, January 18th | Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training Course San Diego Farm Bureau, Escondido, 8:30am - 5:30pm

The U.S. FDA's Produce Safety rule requires in § 112.22(c) that for each farm, "At least one supervisor or responsible party for your farm must have successfully completed food safety training at least equivalent to that received under standardized curriculum recognized as adequate by the Food and Drug Administration." This PSA Grower Training Course is one way to satisfy this requirement and is the only course currently recognized by FDA. Attendance costs \$35 and includes course materials, lunch and a certificate of completion. [Learn more and register here.](#)

Thursday, January 19th | AgTech Gathering Churchill House, 140 West 3rd Ave, Escondido. 3:00pm - 6:00pm

speaker, mentor hours with experts, and food/drink! [Register here.](#)

Tuesday, January 31st | Compost Equipment Demo

Carlsbad Flower Fields, 9:00am - 12:00pm

Hosted by the RCD of Greater San Diego County, San Diego UC Cooperative Extension, and Agriservice. Join us to discuss the benefits of compost, view a range of equipment used for automated application, and learn about resources available to implement practices that increase soil health. You will receive additional event information via email. [Register here.](#)

Sunday, February 26th through Friday, March 3rd | 35th Annual CA Small Farm Conference

Engage in a week of learning, inspiration and community building at CAFF's hybrid conference. There are over 50 online workshops, videos, and interactive forums, and a local in person gathering on Thursday, March 2nd at Wild Acres Farm in Escondido. Admission is on a sliding scale. [Learn more and register here.](#)



Wild Willow Farm Classes

Saturday, January 7th - 10:00am | Fruit Tree Pruning and Training

Monday, January 9th - 9:00am | Winter Fruit Care

Monday, January 9th - 10:00am | Nutrition Workshop

Saturday, January 14th, 10:00am | Planting and Propagating Fruit Tree Workshop

... and MANY more! [Check out the full lineup of classes here.](#)

San Diego Agricultural Planning Program

The Agricultural Planning Program is a two-year planning grant funded by the CA Dept of Conservation with Cap-and-Trade proceeds, and is managed by the San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). [You can learn more here at our website.](#)

Through Fall of 2022 and into Spring of 2023, our working groups will meet monthly to begin working towards their individual project goals. The projects that each working group will focus on are:

- 1. Land Access:** Creation and management of a central database for matchmaking agricultural producers with public and private lands available for lease or sale
- 2. Water Availability & Efficiency:** Design and identify funding sources for a small-scale pilot project of Rancho California's [CropSWAP](#) program which incentivizes the replacement of mature orchard trees with low demand crops or root stock
- 3. Agricultural Workforce Development:** Streamline development of farmworker housing by preparing farmworker housing templates that are pre-approved by the

VMT benefits

Our team is finalizing the project report and is excited to share our work with you in Spring 2023!



Free Irrigation Evaluations for Commercial Ag Operations

If you are interested in receiving an irrigation evaluation or pump efficiency test, [you can sign up at this link](#). These resources will be offered to all regions except North West San Diego. Plug your address [into this map](#) to see if you are located in our jurisdiction or the Upper San Luis Rey Conservation District.

If you are located in the Mission district, you can receive similar support from them [here](#). Every drop of water saved is money saved, as well as more stability for managing your farm during extreme weather. We are here to help you improve your operation!

Educational Resources & Opportunities

Data Training for the Small Farm

CAFF recently hosted a webinar series to teach small farmers about data concepts, resources and how to use data to enhance marketing. You can find the recordings [here](#).

Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone

In an effort to encourage urban ag, the City of San Diego offers a reduced property tax rate for eligible land parcels. To see if you qualify and learn more, [check it out here](#).

Enhancing Pollinator Habitat on Working Lands

Are you a commercial farmer or rancher interested in promoting native habitat for pollinators? In partnership with Partners for Fish & Wildlife, NRCS and Earth Discovery Institute, the RCD of Greater San Diego County is offering site visits to assess the quality of native pollinator habitat on farms and ranches. Assessors then present producers with an actionable plan to enhance native pollinator habitat, as well as connect them with support to apply to NRCS funding opportunities for the installation. [Use this form to sign up for a site visit](#). You can also [consult this guide](#) for more information on the benefits of maintaining pollinators and their habitat on your working lands.



2022 San Diego County Crop Report

The County of San Diego's Agriculture, Weights and Measures will be distributing the 2022 Crop Report Questionnaire in early January 2023 via mail. Crop data for reporting by the grower on the questionnaire includes crops grown, yield, and gross value. Deadline to submit is February 28, 2023. If you have not received a 2022 Crop Report Questionnaire in the mail, please visit their website at www.sdcaom.org for a copy, or contact Bosko Celic at bosko.celic@sdcounty.ca.gov. Learn more [here](#).

Funding Opportunities

OPEN NOW: UC SAREP's Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems

Competitive Small Grants Program

Deadline to submit proposal is Tuesday, January 10th

UC SAREP will fund projects up to \$10,000 that fall within two priority areas:

1. Support California's farmers, ranchers, and land stewards of all scales in identifying, piloting, and transitioning to:
 - environmentally regenerative approaches to producing crops and livestock (including but not limited to soil health, organic and agroecological practices, integrated pest management, crop diversification);
 - pathways for realizing economic return from ecologically-sound crop management practices and fair labor practices;
 - marketing and distribution strategies that support diversified, decentralized, and locally self-organized supply chains;
 - strategies that promote producer-to-producer networking and producer-to-supply chain networking
2. Support California's rural, urban, and Tribal communities to identify, implement, and evaluate strategies to:
 - expand access to healthy, sustainably produced, culturally appropriate foods;
 - ensure worker wellbeing across the food chain;
 - minimize the community and environmental costs of food production and distribution;
 - strengthen connections between consumers and producers;
 - establish and strengthen producer-to-producer connections and producer-to-supply chain connections

Eligible applicants include farm or food system businesses operating in California, non-profit, tax-exempt organizations operating in California, state and local government agencies, tribal governments, and California public and private institutions of higher education. Priority will be given to projects that benefit [socially disadvantaged communities](#), Tribal communities, and/or socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers, and land stewards. [Learn more and apply here!](#)

OPEN NOW: Young Farmer Grant Program

Deadline to apply is Friday, January 13th

The National Young Farmers Coalition is partnering with Chipotle to offer \$5,000 grants to 75 young farmers and ranchers (ages 18 to 40) to support them in building careers in agriculture, with a focus on "regenerating soil and community". Funding is for farmers who are relying on agriculture for their livelihood. [Learn more and register here.](#)

Deadline to apply is Sunday, January 15th

These direct grants will assist small-scale and historically underserved producers to apply for relief grants for those most in need of immediate drought assistance. If you can show that your operation has been affected by drought (sales or crop loss reports, water bill rate or usage increase, etc) and have not already received drought relief from a CDFA program, you may be eligible for up to \$20,000 to recover your losses; average award is \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Examples of covered expenses can include but are not limited to:

- Increased electric utility bills of 50% or more due to increased electricity rates
- Surface water costs if increase from year prior
- Cost of hauling water for livestock
- Lowering ag well pumps if a primary source of water is lost
- Emergency upgrades to irrigation system (paired with conservation)
- Decreased crop yields/crop loss due to less water available or having to fallow land

Not Covered:

- Drilling new well
- Upgrading pump to a larger size which would draw more water

[Producers must apply for the funds through CA Association of Resource Conservation Districts \(CARCD\) at this link.](#)



Disaster and Extreme Weather Assistance Programs

Drought, Fire, COVID-19 - if your business has been struck by disaster this year, non-profits and agencies are offering funds to help. If you are a small-scale producer in San Diego or part of a socially disadvantaged group, we are here to help you complete your application. To help you navigate the application process, set up an appointment at the RCD with Joel Kramer (joel.kramer@rcdsandiego.org, 619-562-0096 x103).

County of San Diego is offering support to businesses impacted by COVID-19. [You can learn how to apply here.](#) Awards average \$5,000 and the grant can be used to reimburse previous expenses, or for new expenditures within 60 days of the grant award.

communities, and businesses that have been hard hit by natural disaster events, like drought, fire and flooding. [See here for more info.](#)



Zero Foodprint's Compost Connector is designed to get the maximum greenhouse gas reduction from organic material - keeping it out of the landfill is good, but turning organics into compost and applying it onto working lands is great. Everyone is eligible, though farms willing to take larger amounts of compost will likely be prioritized. Projects can be submitted at any time, and will be fulfilled on a rolling basis. For additional information, head to their [website](#).



Organic Farmers and Farmers in Transition can receive support from CCOF to help cover costs of organic certification and receive educational resources to ease the transition. [See more information here.](#)

Do you want to get serious about conservation practices on your working land? The National Resource Conservation Service offers financial and technical support to agricultural producers and non-industrial forest managers through the **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**. [See here](#) for how to apply! Deadline for applications is April 1st, with additional funds set aside for border regions.

Looking for other funding options? [Check out UC Cooperative Extension's directory](#) of available opportunities!

Carbon Farming Support

We are here to help you! From direct assistance to technical advice, here are some of the services that the RCD offers to San Diego farmers and ranchers, free of charge:

- **Soil sampling** for organic carbon content
 - **Irrigation evaluations** - [sign up here](#)
 - **Technical guidance** for implementing conservation practices
 - **Request a Carbon Farming Plan** [here](#)
 - **Plant selection** for native hedgerows and habitat buffers
 - **Free chipping** for at risk homeowners within the San Diego River and Consortium Watersheds - [Visit Fire Safe Council](#)
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