



## Farmers & Ranchers Newsletter



### Contact Us!

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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.

(RCD) esta 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 escribenos a [ag@rcdsandiego.org](mailto:ag@rcdsandiego.org).*

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## Agritourism as a Tool for Connection

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Our modern world moves faster and gets more complex each day. We spend more time connected to a device than we do connecting with each other and our surroundings. The symptoms of our increasingly artificial reality have lead folks to pursue reconnecting with nature and the environment. Of the many ways people are choosing to get re-grounded, one of the most popular is through building a stronger understanding of where our food comes from. Great options for re-engagement include supporting your local food vendors at a farmers market or subscribing to a weekly community supported agriculture food delivery. You can also go straight to the source and pick it yourself!

well as provides the space and time to educate people about the work that goes into turning a seed in the soil into a tasty treat in their basket. There is also the benefit to the grower of reduced labor, marketing and transport costs when their customers are already in the field. U-Picks can be a great way to fortify lean seasons by increasing direct sales via U-Pick during the growing periods of popular fruits like strawberries, apples and various stone fruits.

Agritourism helps place farmers and their farms front and center for the common consumer who might not think twice about where and how their food is being grown. It also adds a layer of compassion and understanding for the workforce that harvests our food daily. Harvesting your own produce makes food personal and relatable, which are essential as we work towards rebuilding the cultural value of agriculture.

If you are interested in creating a U-Pick operation at your farm, [here is a great guide](#) from the University of California Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program about how to start planning!

#### **Check out some local examples of U-Pick throughout San Diego:**

**Wild Willow Farm and Education Center** - Head on down to the Tijuana River Valley to hand pick strawberries through the Summer. You can also volunteer every Saturday or take a wide range of classes throughout the year. [Learn more here.](#)

**Julian Farm & Orchard** - Breathe the crisp mountain air as you pick berries! Open June through October on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays from 10:00am to 4:00pm. [Learn more here.](#)

**Apple Starr Orchard** - Plan a trip this Fall to pick organic apples and pears in the Laguna Mountains. [Learn more here.](#)

**Carlsbad Strawberry Company** - Visit this large coastal operation to pick daily from 9:00am to 6:00pm. [Learn more here.](#)



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**Welcome, Andy!**



to offer irrigation evaluations at your commercial operation starting this Fall. In addition, we can reimburse the cost of a pump efficiency test for producers who cultivate 50 acres or less, or those who belong to an underserved ethnic group. These evaluations will be performed by our new irrigation technician, Andy Williamson!

Originally from the UK, Andy arrived in California in 2018 and joined the RCD a few months later to coordinate our community garden program and also serve as an assistant to the Healthy Soils demonstration project at the Tijuana River Valley Community Garden. Although his academic background is in Economics, he has a longtime passion for sustainable agriculture and is an alumni of the Multinational Exchange for Sustainable Agriculture program in Applied Agroecology. Now a small-scale farmer himself, he understands deeply the economic and environmental necessity of using our natural resources more efficiently and particularly water in these times of drought. Andy comes to the team with great personal investment in helping other farmers improve their irrigation efficiency so that agriculture in San Diego can continue productively long into the future.

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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!

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## Upcoming Events

### Working Rangeland Wednesdays Webinar Series

Biweekly from 6:00pm - 6:45pm

- August 24 - Irrigating with Limited Water
- September 7 - Fall/Winter Forecast and Remote Sensing

Join UC Cooperative Extension Advisors, Specialists, Researchers, and Ranchers for a biweekly summer webinar series highlighting applied, land manager-oriented solutions for rangeland drought challenges. [Register here.](#)

### **San Diego Irrigated Lands Group Annual Education Webinar**

Thursday, August 18th | 9:00am - 11:00am | Zoom

The RCD of Greater San Diego will be leading a water quality training that includes information on soil health and how to prepare for extreme weather events, like drought.

[Register here.](#)

### **Compost Connector Webinar**

Wednesday, August 24th | 10:00am - 11:30am | Zoom

Join us for a presentation by Zero Foodprint about their Compost Connector program, which helps agricultural producers get subsidized compost! [Register here.](#)

### **Young Farmers and Ranchers Social Hour**

Wednesday, August 31st | In-Person

Beginning farmers are invited to enjoy a rotating happy hour or farm tour on the evening of the last Wednesday of each month. Come learn from peers in agriculture and build the next generation of local farmers and ranchers. Contact Connor McClelland

([connor@sandiegoaglab.com](mailto:connor@sandiegoaglab.com)) to join.

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## **Your Support Needed**

### **San Diego Agricultural Planning Program**

The Agricultural Planning Program is a two-year planning grant funded by the CA Dept of

Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). [You can learn more here at our website.](#)

Now in the Policy Phase, agricultural associations are invited to join decision makers to address the priority topics of land access, water availability and efficiency, and workforce development. During our next meeting on the morning of September 6, we will hold a strategic planning session and form working groups to demonstrate model initiatives for policy implementation. Popular examples of policy initiatives from our July sessions included a listing of available agricultural lands, dedicated agricultural use for water recycling facilities and incubator training programs for beginning farmers. To view recordings of previous sessions, [you can visit our YouTube channel.](#)



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## Educational Resources & Opportunities

### Stay Up to Date on Regional Agricultural Work

UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE) is now publishing a quarterly newsletter with content from their research, specialists and updates on their programs. [You can register here.](#)

### Support CA Farm Conservation

If you own or manage California farmland, please take the 10 minute California Farm Conservation Survey TODAY to improve the quality of conservation programs for California farmers! [Follow this link for the survey and more info.](#)

### Enhancing Pollinator Habitat on Working Lands

Are you a commercial farmer or rancher interested in promoting native habitat for

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.



### **Farming 102 at Wild Willow Farm**

Are you looking to learn more about specific crop families? Join the wonderful educators down at Wild Willow Farm for a series of classes throughout the summer. Focuses include the brassicas, beets, tomatoes and more. [See here for a full schedule of classes.](#)

### **Farmer & Farmworker Mental Health**

If you, your family, or your staff are struggling with mental health, you are not alone. [Check out these resources](#) from CDFA and [these resources](#) from the American Farm Bureau, and get the support you need.

### **Hire a Patriot**

If you are in need of additional labor at your operation, consider hiring a former service member. You can both search for jobs and post job opportunities [here](#).

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## Funding Opportunities

### **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. Deadlines are coming up! 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](mailto:joel.kramer@rcdsandiego.org), 619-562-0096 x103).

**Community Alliance with Family Farmers** Family Farmer Emergency Fund is currently open to farmers who suffered losses in crops, sales or additional expenses due to the 2021-2022 drought. Applications deadline extended to August 15. [Find the online application here.](#)

**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.

**US Department of Agriculture** offers a variety of programs to help farmers, ranchers, communities, and businesses that have been hard hit by natural disaster events, like drought, fire and flooding. [See here for more info.](#)



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Get funding for carbon farming practices through **Zero Food Print's Restore CA** private grant. They have just re-opened their applications for a short time only, from June 7th through August 8th, and are awarding \$200,000 total with a max individual grant request of \$25,000. If you applied for the Healthy Soils Program, you may have everything you need for this quick and easy application. [Check here for more info!](#)

**Zero Food Print's Compost Connector** is designed to get the maximum greenhouse gas reduction from organic material--not sending it to 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](#).



Photo Credit: Kathy Keatley Garvey

**Seeds for Bees** is a program funded by Project Apism, to provide farmers and ranchers with subsidized cover crop seed mixes that support honeybees. Enrollment is open until August 31st, but supplies go fast so [check out more info here today!](#)

**Organic Farmers and Farmers in Transition** can receive support from the USDA to help cover costs of organic certification and additional expenses in the process. Applications are due October 31st. [See more information here.](#)

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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.

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farmers who are often overlooked for federal and state funding. Applicants must be farming between 10-20 acres and the operation must identify as Woman, Black, Indigenous, Asian, Immigrant or Latino owned. Deadline to apply is August 31st. [To learn more and apply, see here.](#)

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

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## Job Openings

### **Agricultural Technical Assistant**

#### **Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County**

We are seeking an Agricultural Technical Assistant who is passionate about agriculture and conservation, to conduct field visits with farmers, ranchers, and land managers to connect them with resources and programs that improve soil health, pollinator habitat, water efficiency, and general production. Deadline for applications is Wednesday, August 17th.

[See here for a full job description and how to apply!](#)

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## 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

- **Grant application support** for conservation practices and related programs
- **Technical guidance** for implementing conservation practices
- **Request a Carbon Farming Plan** [here](#)
- **Funding opportunity** updates for conservation practices
- **Plant selection** for native hedgerows and habitat buffers
- **Free chipping** for unincorporated County residents - [Visit Fire Safe Council](#)

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