



Contact Us!

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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 escribenos a ag@rcdsandiego.org.

Support for Growers in Transition to Organic

According to the Department of Agricultural Weights and Measures, San Diego is home to over 350 registered organic growers. Products are considered by the USDA to be organic if they were "grown on soil that had no prohibited substances applied for three years prior to harvest." Included in this list of prohibited substances are most

ensured by using other methods that build resilience to pests and increase soil organic matter. These practices include, but are not limited to:

- Planting nitrogen fixing cover crops to support plant growth, increase water filtration and support soil structure
- Practicing low-till or no-till to enhance the storage capacity of nitrogen and carbon in the soil
- Applying compost to enhance soil microbial activity, build pest resilience and increase water holding capacity
- Develop integrated pest management strategies that support native pollinators and local ecosystems

The [National Soil Project](#) conducted a study throughout the country's organic growers and found that "organically managed soils had an average organic matter content of 8.33 percent while conventionally managed soils averaged 7.37 percent."

From an economical perspective, there is also additional market value for organically grown produce and goods. As our culture shifts towards considering more sustainable means of production, organically produced goods are in higher demand. So, how do you get there? How do you plan your transition to an entirely new production method?

To address the challenges that may arise during the 36 month transition period from conventional to organic, the USDA has decided to offer support through the [Organic Transition Initiative](#). The program was unveiled in August of 2022, and aims to provide more technical, financial and market assistance to newly organic growers.

USDA Services

[Transition to Organic Production Program](#)

[Transitional Organic Grower Assistance Program](#)

At the state level, California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF) also provides direct technical and financial support to growers in transition.

CCOF Services

[Grants for Organic Transition](#) - \$10,000 offered to small farmers on the Central Coast, Southern Coast and Central Valley

[Grants for Students in Organic](#) - \$5,000 scholarships to college and vocational students training for careers in organic

[Grants for Hardship Assistance](#) - The Brimont Hardship Assistance Fund gives direct financial disaster assistance to organic producers. They offer various funding cycles throughout the year. In 2022, they are focusing on drought assistance.

Upcoming Events

Thursday, December 1st | Farmer & Rancher Grant Writing Workshop

10:00am - 12:00pm

Does applying to grants feel confusing and overwhelming? Learn the basics at a webinar hosted by the USDA Office of Partnerships & Public Engagement (OPPE) with the Fresno State University Jordan College of Agriculture and Division of Research and Graduate Studies. [Register here.](#)

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FARMER & RANCHER GRANT WRITING WORKSHOP

THURSDAY | DECEMBER 1, 2022
10:00 AM - NOON PDT VIA ZOOM

REGISTER HERE!



For more info, please contact Juan.Alvarez@usda.gov
USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

USDA Office of Partnerships & Public Engagement (OPPE) with the Fresno State University Jordan College of Agriculture and Division of Research and Graduate Studies presents this two-hour workshop that is targeted towards farmers and ranchers, including veteran and beginning farmers/ranchers, and will cover information ranging from but not limited to the following:

- * How to register on grants.gov
- * Proposal development process
- * Submission requirements
- * Workplan
- * Partnerships
- * Grant Writing Tips

Thursday, December 1st | December in Your Garden Webinar, UCCE San Bernardino County Master Gardeners

4:00pm - 5:00pm

Time to start planning your fruit tree planting and pruning, rose care and more. Learn what pests to be on the lookout for and learn what veggies to plant this winter!

[Register here.](#)

Wednesday, December 7th | Southern California Invasive Wildland and Urban Tree Pests Webinar, UCCE San Diego

1:00pm - 4:30pm

Continuing Education Credits available. [Learn more and register here.](#)

Thursday, December 8th | San Diego County Organic Agriculture Workshop

San Diego County Farm Bureau, Escondido | 1:00pm - 4:30pm

Participants will be updated on current status, regulations, and opportunities for support. Growers, CCA's, PCA's and other agricultural professionals who are interested in learning about organic agriculture are encouraged to enroll. [Learn more and register here.](#)

Thursday, December 15th | Seed Saver Series: Harvesting Cool Season Veggie Seeds Webinar, UCCE San Bernardino County Master Gardeners

5:00pm - 6:00pm [Register 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.](#)

We hosted our Strategic Planning Meeting on Tuesday, September 6th. Thank you to all who attended, provided their input, and became members for each working group. Through Fall of 2022 and into Spring of 2023, each working group will meet monthly to begin working towards their individual project goals. The projects that

- 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 County and municipalities, noting ADU exemptions, vulnerable populations and VMT benefits

Throughout the next few months, our team will be compiling a report documenting the process and results from the Outreach, Mapping and Policy phases. We aim to create a comprehensive document for future reference, as well as a short and informative pamphlet that can be distributed to policy makers.



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

Do you like winning contests? Check out the [San Diego ASLA](#) 2023 Compost & Mulch Design and Utilization Competition! Students, architects, engineers, and designers from around San Diego County are invited to show their skills and demonstrate innovative ways to use compost & mulch. [See here for more details.](#)

Tell the USDA how they can better support ag in America! [Learn about their goals and take the survey here.](#)

Take the Community Alliance of Family Farmers (CAFF) 2022 Annual Farmer Survey

Your input helps them shape their 2023 policy platform as well as inform CAFF programs. Plus, you could win some swag if you submit! [Share your thoughts 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.

Wild Willow Farm Classes

December 3rd, 10:00am | Mead & Cider Workshop

December 4th, 10:00am | DIY Wellness with Elderberry Syrup

December 10th, 10:00am | Vine & Herb Wreath Making

December 17th, 10:00am | Baking with Ancient Grains

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

Funding Opportunities

OPEN NOW: CCOF Brimont Hardship Assistance Fund - Organic Dairy Producer Grant

Deadline to Apply is Friday, December 2nd

Receive financial assistance to help cover losses from natural disasters, personal hardship, or other unplanned emergencies. \$5,000 - \$20,000 for dairy drought relief.

[Learn more and apply here.](#)

OPEN NOW: CCOF Organic Transition Grant

Deadline to Apply is Thursday, December 8th

These grants and technical assistance are available to small farmers from the California Central Coast, Southern Coast, and Central Valley regions who are interested in transitioning to organic production. \$10,000 per year for three years. [Learn more and apply here.](#)

OPEN NOW: CUSP Direct Farmer Grant Program for Drought Relief

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@redsandiego.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.

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.](#)



Zero Footprint'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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