

Commodity Groups Meet to Review Sustainability Progress, Share Ideas for the Future

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The Almond Board of California convened other California agricultural groups, food processors and interest groups to outline solutions to ongoing sustainability challenges in the state.

While many agricultural sectors have successful sustainability programs in place, the meeting represented the first time these groups have come together to discuss cross-sector sustainability-related challenges. A diverse array of California's top agricultural products were represented including almonds, grapes, tomatoes, and other fruits and vegetables.

“If we are going to continue to successfully grow healthy and nutritious food in California, we need to extend our sustainable growing practices,” said Dr. Gabriele Ludwig, director of Sustainability and Environmental Affairs at the Almond Board of California. “We’ve all made great strides in our individual sectors but, by sharing information about how our programs work, we can uncover new opportunities and areas to explore.”

As California suffers through a fourth year of drought, many questions have arisen about the sustainability of agriculture in the state. However, this concept is nothing new to the groups involved in this meeting. “The groups gathered here today have been working to increase the sustainability of their crops and California agriculture far prior to the current drought,” said Dr. Ludwig. “While the drought is a poignant

reminder of our natural resource limitations, sustainability encompasses much more than just water. We are all working toward an environmentally sound, economically viable and socially responsible future for California agriculture, and today we're more united than ever.”

Several of the groups have already made key gains, due in part to ongoing programs which were highlighted during the meeting. A sample of these programs include:

The Almond Board of California's robust self-assessment and grower education program, the California Almond Sustainability Program, allows growers to review their current growing practices while learning about other sustainable opportunities available to them. Data collected through this program to date is representative of the California almond industry and provides vital information on how practices are being adopted and used across the growing community.

Sustainable Conservation is working together with agricultural companies, farmers, and government agencies to evaluate and promote new approaches to manage water and nutrients so farms and communities have clean, abundant water for years to come. The aim at Greener Fields Together is to deliver fresh food responsibly. With a commitment to innovation and sustainable best practices, Greener Fields Together will create long-term value for our communities and create a future for food.

Twelve different organizations participated including Campbell Soup Company, Del Monte Foods, PRO*ACT (Greener Fields Together), SureHarvest, Sustainable Conservation and the Almond Board of California.