

Smashing and Recycling Old Tractors Helps Assure Air Quality Benefits for the San Joaquin Valley

By USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service
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FRESNO, Calif., Sept. 24, 2013 -- /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Farmers are well known for their ability to tinker and innovate to keep farm equipment running for years and years. But sometimes you've got to let the old equipment go.

Jason Weller, Chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), with help from machinery operators at Bruno's Iron and Metal in Fresno, today demonstrated the process that the local agricultural and regulatory leaders have agreed upon for destroying old, higher-polluting agricultural equipment. Together they reduced a 20,000 pound tractor to a metal cube that would never plow another field with its old, less efficient engine.

Weller was joined in his tractor smashing demonstration by Jared Blumenfeld, administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency Region 9; Lynn Terry, deputy executive officer of the California Air Resources Board; and Seyed Sadredin, executive director and air pollution control officer of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Sandra Schubert, undersecretary for California's Department of Food and Agriculture, and Manuel Cunha Jr. of the Nisei Farmers League made comments on behalf of the farming community. Using incentive programs, farmers who agree to destroy their old equipment can replace it with the cleanest technology. Those new engines typically run 75 percent cleaner than the old ones.

Using this approach, over 3,200 California farmers have been able to reduce NOx emissions (ozone precursors) by some 3,400 tons/year since 2009 while replacing over 3,200 pieces of high-emitting equipment. This is roughly *the equivalent of removing more than one million cars from California highways*. About 93 percent of these reductions are occurring in the San Joaquin Valley, which has some of the most impaired air quality in the nation. "What you're doing here—having the farming and regulatory communities work together, ahead of regulation—to set up a framework that farmers can adopt and regulators agree provides the needed air quality improvements, is remarkable," said Weller. "Other areas of the country could learn a lot from what is happening here," he said.

"The tractor replacement program is a perfect example of a successful public/private partnership; bringing together multiple public agencies and the agricultural industry to provide assistance in replacing old farm equipment and achieving much-needed emissions reductions in the Valley," said Seyed Sadredin, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's executive director and air pollution control officer.

In an effort to obtain even more near-term emission reductions, the Air District is partnering with the agricultural industry on an innovative and first-of-its-kind tractor trade-up pilot program. This pilot program allows growers with the oldest tractors to trade up to newer units that are in turn being replaced by brand new tractors. This three-way trade up program allows growers that would perhaps not otherwise be able to participate in the program to get into newer, cleaner tractors for little out of pocket cost. At today's event Sadredin, along with Caterpillar Tractor company, presented the keys of a trade up tractor, to farmer Will Scott, who is one of the first to participate in the new version of the engine replacement program.

Lynn Terry, Deputy executive officer for California Air Resources Board also spoke, saying, "Today's event recognizes that California's commitment to clean air includes innovative incentive programs that promote technology advancement. The willingness of the agricultural community to invest in a clean technology future for the Valley will have real public health benefits."

"California's Central Valley is one of the world's most productive agricultural regions," said Jared Blumenfeld, EPA's regional administrator for the Pacific Southwest. "With this partnership, EPA, USDA and local champions like Manuel Cunha, will be helping farmers switch out their old and dirty tractors for some of the cleanest running ag equipment on the planet. Once again, we appreciate the ag community working together to clean-up the valley's air."

"We would like to acknowledge USDA-NRCS, EPA, ARB, and the Air District, as well as farmers and ranchers, for their efforts in cleaning the air. The incentive funding from NRCS, the Air District, and ARB through Carl Moyer funding has given farmers the opportunity to replace older tractors with newer, cleaner burning equipment. The new equipment is helping the Valley and the state achieve our air quality goals ahead of time. This would never have been achieved without the agencies agreeing to the Memorandum of Understanding," said Manuel Cunha, Jr., president of the Nisei Farmers League.

"This is an excellent way to highlight the voluntary steps taken by farmers to reduce air pollution and become more sustainable," said Sandra Schubert, undersecretary for California Department of Food and Agriculture. "We greatly appreciate NRCS and the California Air Resources Board for their tireless efforts to ensure that farmers' actions are taken into account when determining air pollution reductions. We hope this will serve as a model for other compliance efforts."

Farmers, NRCS, and the regulatory community, have been working hard for over a decade to decrease agricultural pollution. In the past 20 years, the San Joaquin Valley has seen a 60 percent decrease in NOx emissions, a key component of smog. The destruction and recycling of old, polluting equipment, as demonstrated at Bruno's today, is an important part of this success and assures regulators and the public that these voluntary achievements are real and verifiable, and contribute to cleaner air in the Valley.

[Fresno Bee News Blog, Tuesday, September 24, 2013:](#)

Tractor replacement: Like taking 1 million cars off road

by Mark Grossi

Farmer Will Scott Jr.'s 1989 Massey-Ferguson tractor sat on trailer Tuesday, waiting for demolition. Nearly a quarter-century old and spewing plumes of pollutants, it was time.

Scott's little tractor — which toiled on his 40-acre spread — had an honorable and memorable demise, according to public officials who gathered at Bruno's Iron and Metal on Golden State Boulevard in Fresno.

With its destruction, the tractor replacement program in California has removed the equivalent of 1 million vehicles or 3,400 tons of nitrogen oxides per year — most of the reduction coming in the San Joaquin Valley. Nitrogen oxides are a key component in summertime ozone.

It's a voluntary program involving \$100 million in government funding to help farmers replace old tractors. The more than 3,200 farmers who have gotten involved in the last four years typically get tractors that run 75% cleaner.

Scott was pleased with his role and the celebration Tuesday.

"I'm impressed you took the time to come out here and see this," said Scott, whose replacement tractor is a newer, cleaner-running trade-up. "You're including the small farmer."

The gathering featured Rep. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, along with leaders from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the California Air Resources Board and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Among the crowd was Jason Weller, new chief of Natural Resources Conservation Service; Jared Blumenfeld, EPA regional director, and Lynn Terry, deputy executive officer of the state air resources board.

All talked about the continuing air-quality improvement in the Valley, though it still has a long way to go for healthy air. Farm air pollution is among a long list of pollution sources, they noted.

Seyed Sadredin, executive director of the local air district, announced the Valley had gone through the entire summer without exceeding the federal one-hour ozone standard.

"That's the first time in our history," he said.

But the star of this show was the 1989 tractor and Scott, who grows black-eyed peas, okra, corn, tomatoes, cabbage and broccoli.

"I think it shows we are all working together," he said. "There are a tremendous amount of small farmers here, and we are part of the solution, too."

Future of natural gas vehicles on display at fair

By Laura Liera, staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2013

Did you know you can fuel some cars with the gas you use to barbecue?

While you shouldn't hook up your own natural gas tank to your car, BMW, Chrysler, Honda and Hyundai have collaborated to create an array of six dual-fuel natural gas vehicles that can take both gasoline and natural gas.

NGVs are fueled with compressed natural gas, which is stored in cylinders aboard a vehicle. They get about the same fuel economy as conventional gasoline vehicles.

Rob Duchow, public affairs manager with Southern California Gas Co., said these new cars are better for air quality.

"They use about 30 percent fewer greenhouse emissions so for regional air quality purposes, this is an environmental benefit," Duchow said.

A BMW X3, Chrysler 300C, Honda CR-V and Hyundai Sonata are touring the country for two years to generate interest and awareness. The cars made a two-day stop at the Kern County Fair so people could see the models. In the Chrysler 300C model, for example, the cylinder was inside a large black box in the trunk.

So a cleaner air emission car could cost you cargo space. But costwise, natural gas is about \$2.30 a gallon while gasoline averages \$3.80 a gallon, Duchow said.

Currently, there are two NGV stations in Bakersfield, and one each in Wasco, Delano and Tehachapi.

Cars aren't the only NGVs on the road.

All 40-foot Golden Empire Transit buses use natural gas as their fuel source.

Gina Hayden, marketing and business development manager for GET, said the company switched to CNG buses in 1996.

Several years ago, public transit agencies in California were required to reduce emission fuels. GET bus opted for natural gas.

"The air quality is important in our region plus it's much less expensive to fuel than diesel," Hayden said.

Although the buses are better for the environment, the cost of a new 40-foot CNG bus is pricey.

In 1996, the cost of a CNG bus was \$326,000. Today it's \$510,000.

While a car that uses compressed natural gas may cost about \$3,000 more than a gasoline model, Charles Haas, senior market adviser with the NGV program, said those who drive long distances will benefit.

"People in Bakersfield drive long distances because the towns are so spread out," Haas said. "So if you're driving 12,000 to 15,000 (miles) a year with a CNG car, you will start seeing significant savings."

For more information on NGVs, visit socalgas.com, and search NGV.