

Funding for farmers to improve air quality

Staff Reports

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service has \$9.5 million in funding assistance available for California farmers seeking to make farm improvements that will help air quality, water quality or conserve water.

"California farmers are faced with the most stringent environmental standards in the nation. These additional funds will help alleviate some of the burden on farmers and will help to improve the environment in the Valley. This is a win for farmers and a win for the environment," said Congressman Dennis Cardoza.

The additional funding for the San Joaquin Valley includes \$5 million for air quality practices and \$4.5 million toward water quality on dairy farms and water conservation. The funding is offered through the 2008 Farm Bill's Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

"We are happy to provide this additional investment to help farmers and ranchers conserve and improve California's air and water quality, and water conservation," said Ed Burton, NRCS state conservationist. "While this funding will go primarily toward pending unfunded applications, our local offices will continue to take new applications year-round, and offer landowners ongoing conservation planning and technical assistance. The funding adds to the approximately \$60 million NRCS has already obligated this year in EQIP conservation contracts."

Details of the funding include:

\$5 million for EQIP air quality practices to help reduce ozone precursors in the high-priority non-attainment areas of the San Joaquin Valley; primarily for replacing old diesel engines with engines that run 75 percent cleaner.

\$4.5 million in EQIP for water quality and conservation practices in the San Joaquin Valley for increasing irrigation system efficiency and managing dairy waste.