

Brown OKs more money to drive polluting engines off farms

By John Holland, staff writer

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Farmers will keep getting help with replacement of high-polluting engines under a bill signed by Gov. Jerry Brown.

The measure extends through 2023 a program that covers up to 80 percent of the cost of new tractors, irrigation pumps and other equipment that burn much more cleanly than the old machinery.

“There is a big push to get newer, cleaner tractors in the fields,” said Tom Jordan, a senior policy adviser at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which takes part in the program.

The district also uses federal money and part of a \$12-per-vehicle annual surcharge on vehicle registration fees in the valley. All of it aims to keep residents breathing freely as farmers go about producing the region’s bounty.

The measure, Assembly Bill 8, provides \$2billion over 10 years for this and other efforts to reduce vehicle emissions in California.

The farm equipment program has wide support from agricultural leaders and health advocates – and from wrecking yards, which demolish the old equipment to ensure it never will pollute again.

The bill, by Assemblyman Henry Perea, D-Fresno, passed 54-19 in the Assembly and 29-6 in the Senate.

The farm incentives are part of the Carl Moyer Memorial Air Quality Standards Attainment Program, which has replaced or upgraded about 48,000 diesel engines since it started in 1998.

“Californians can rightly boast about being the nation’s leader on many fronts, but the fight against air pollution, and putting financial muscle behind the rhetoric, is among the most impressive,” said Ezra Finkin, policy director at the Diesel Technology Forum, in a news release.

The federal Natural Resources Conservation Service also has a program that helps remove polluting farm engines.