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Valley Air District Offers Clean Air Funding for Sustainable Agriculture

Clean air funding currently available, with increased funding for small growers

In the San Joaquin Valley, strong collaboration between agricultural operations, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (Valley Air District), California Air Resources Board (CARB), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is providing significant reductions in air pollution, toxic air contaminants, and greenhouse gases through public and private partnership to deploy the latest and cleanest technologies. These incentive-based efforts have significantly reduced air pollution from various agricultural operations through applicant cost-shared grant programs, with enhanced incentive funding for smaller farming operations facing the greatest difficulties in transitioning to new equipment. Through these efforts, over 16,000 old high-polluting agricultural pieces of equipment have been replaced, and the open burning of over 109,000 acres (nearly 3,000,000 tons of woody waste) has been eliminated through non-burning alternative practices including chipping and soil incorporation.

Funding sources in support of these clean air efforts include local Valley Air District funding, California Climate Investments and other state funding, and federal Diesel Emission Reduction Act and Targeted Airshed Grant funding. As key examples of currently available funding, the District recently accepted \$168.4 million from the State of California under the Funding Agricultural Replacement Measures for Emission Reductions (FARMER) program, and \$180 million for the Alternatives to Agricultural Open Burning program.

“The District appreciates the Governor, State Legislature, and Federal government recognizing the public health benefits that result from these clean air investments,” stated Samir Sheikh, Executive Director/Air Pollution Control Officer for the Valley Air District.

“The San Joaquin Valley agricultural sector feeds our nation and the world, and sustainable agricultural strategies put into place by the Valley Air District’s Governing Board allow our Valley growers to produce the best quality produce and crops using the cleanest practices and equipment,” stated Stanislaus County Supervisor Vito Chiesa, Chair of the Valley Air District’s Governing Board.

These District incentive programs provide funding to farmers, matched with applicant funding, to voluntarily replace their old, higher-polluting equipment with new, much cleaner equipment. To ensure equitable access to these resources, small growers are offered additional incentives, including:

- **Agricultural Tractor Replacement Program:**
 - Operations of 100 acres or less can now receive up to 80% off the cost of eligible new latest certified equipment
 - Operations of 100 acres or less can now receive up to 80% off the cost of eligible certified pre-owned Tier 3 equipment
 - Operations between 101 and 500 acres can now receive up to 70% off the cost of eligible new latest certified equipment.

- **Alternatives to Open Burning Incentive Program**

- Operations of 100 acres or less can now receive an additional \$100 per acre (in addition to \$300 to \$1,300 per acre based on crop type and practice) to deploy clean alternatives to open burning

Officials from the Valley Air District, CARB, USDA-NRCS, U.S. EPA and California Legislature gathered with Valley farmers and leaders this morning to crush several old high-polluting tractors and pieces of equipment that were being eliminated through the program. On hand for the crushing of her old tractor was small farmer and Vice President of the African American Farmers of California, Shirley Rowe. "I just received my new tractor! It's a New Holland, it's beautiful and they are going to teach me how to drive it and I am real glad to get rid of my old International and get into this cleaner tractor," she stated. "I'm very grateful to the Valley Air District and I am hopeful that small farmers can continue to use these various programs."

In addition to these programs, the District offers a variety of programs to support Valley farmers, residents, businesses, and public agencies with cleaner equipment, vehicles, and practices. Visit www.valleyair.org/grants or call the grants team at 559-230-5800 for more information.

Clean air investments in the Valley have significantly reduced air pollution, resulting in substantial air quality improvements throughout the Valley. Despite these improvements and ongoing local clean air efforts, more state and federal investment is needed to continue addressing mobile source emissions under state and federal jurisdiction (heavy duty vehicles and equipment) that make up the majority of air pollution in the San Joaquin Valley.

The Valley Air District covers eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and San Joaquin Valley air basin portions of Kern. For additional information about the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, visit www.valleyair.org or call 559-230-6000.