

INTEGRATING AGRICULTURE INTO CLIMATE MITIGATION IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY



The *Integrating Agriculture into Climate Mitigation* project aims to support the conservation and enhancement of agricultural lands by integrating **working lands** components into key Santa Clara County climate and planning documents, with an emphasis on direct implementation of carbon sequestration projects.

Agriculture plays an essential role in providing “ecosystem services” such as food, wildlife habitat, water, healthy soils and open space. Farmers and ranchers can use **carbon farming practices**, including compost application, cover crops, riparian restoration, and hedgerows, to increase the amount of carbon that is removed from the atmosphere and store it in soils to mitigate climate change.

Agricultural producers who are already implementing carbon farming practices on their land are supported by a network of organizations that provide them with financial and technical assistance, including but not limited to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services, RCDs, UCCE and non-profit organizations such as the Carbon Cycle Institute, Point Blue, and CAFF. If the County invests in this existing infrastructure, it could significantly enhance the pace and scale of adoption of carbon farming and help meet County’s climate mitigation goals. This project will solicit input from the agricultural community and other stakeholders in order to develop **policies and programs that incentivize producers** to play a more prominent role in adapting to climate change at the local level.

Partners on this project include Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District, Loma Prieta Resource Conservation District, County of Santa Clara, the Carbon Cycle Institute and UC Cooperative Extension. The project is funded through a grant from the Department of Conservation.

We are engaging the agricultural community to:

- raise awareness of the County’s working lands climate action project;
- **provide a forum for members of the agricultural community to voice their thoughts** on the potential for integrating agriculture and working lands into the climate action plan; and
- gather specific information on the scalability of, opportunities for, and barriers to carbon farming in Santa Clara County.



The planning documents will outline a range of measures and actions for programs and projects to:

- **conserve and protect agricultural lands;** and
- provide a framework for planning and implementing carbon farming practices on working landscapes to sequester carbon, increase water availability, enhance wildlife habitat and increase agricultural productivity and resiliency to climate change.

This project will inform the development of countywide policies and implementation strategies recommended by other plans as well, such as the *Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan*. Feedback also will be used to help clarify where investments can be made to help improve programs such as the County’s **Agricultural Resilience Incentive (ARI) Grant Program**, which is designed to provide direct payment for services to eligible farmers who engage in climate-beneficial practices.