

# California Almond Sustainability Program (CASP)

## Project Leader: Joe Browde

SureHarvest, Inc., 201 Needham Street, Modesto, CA 95354  
(209) 238-9556 jrbrowde@sureharvest.com

## PROJECT SUMMARY

### Objectives:

- Collect self-assessment data to document sustainable practices (e.g., natural resource stewardship) used by growers and handlers
- Provide education to support the continuous adoption of cost-effective, environmentally and socially responsible practices
- Communicate results to public policy makers, almond/food companies, and consumers
- Increase grower and handler participation and develop more self-assessment modules
- Develop and implement an online assessment and reporting system and other value-added applications

### Background and Discussion:

Since 2001, the Almond Board of California has championed the sustainability of the California almond growing community to public policy makers and in the marketplace. Now, major almond buyers, large retailers, and food service companies are asking suppliers to objectively demonstrate their sustainability. The Board's Sustainability Program, facilitated by SureHarvest, combines self-assessment and related educational processes to document growers' and handlers' thoughtfulness and achievements in adopting cost-effective, environmentally and socially responsible practices. Growers and handlers participate by attending workshops and assessing their use of best practices from modules designed by peer growers and handlers, university specialists, and other experts.

Alternatively, participants independently assess their operations using the newly developed online system. Current modules are irrigation management, nutrient management, air quality, energy efficiency, and pest management. Additional modules are being developed. The ability to self-assess on-line went live in 2012. The submission of assessment information is voluntary and individual responses are confidential.

Having real-performance information about the use and continuous adoption of sustainable practices is crucial for telling the "almond growing story" to external stakeholders. Therefore, the Board is able to communicate sustainable almond production in terms of practices that make practical and economic sense for California almonds.

The program provides additional value to participating growers and handlers through personalized sustainability reports, enabling them to compare their use of practices to those for peers. These reports along with technical presentations at workshops and the online system are designed to help participants identify and implement site-specific sustainable practices.

Since starting the self-assessments, and through a significant push by the Almond Board in 2012, more than 500 operations have completed one or more modules for one of their orchards. Efforts are now under way to analyze the data.

SureHarvest will work with the Board and partners to increase program elements and participation, convey results, and ensure additional value for growers and handlers.

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**Project Cooperators and Personnel:** Kendall Barton, Jenny Korschak, Gabriele Ludwig – ABC; Andrew Arnold, Cliff Ohmart - SureHarvest

### For More Details, Visit

- Posters location 64, Exhibit Hall A & B during conference; or on the web (after January 2013) at [www.almondboard.com/researchreports](http://www.almondboard.com/researchreports)
- Posters of the Sustainability modules located in Exhibit Hall A & B, poster numbers 60, 61, 62, 63, and 65 during conference; or on the web (after January 2013) at [www.almondboard.com/researchreports](http://www.almondboard.com/researchreports)
- Additional California Almond Sustainability Program information can be found at the Almond Board Booth during conference; or on the web at <http://almondboard.com/Growers/Sustainability>