

California Almond Sustainability Program (CASP)

Project Leader: Joe Browde

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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
- Release of Almond Sustainability Report 2014 to 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 Almond 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 online assessment and reporting system.

Current modules are irrigation management, nutrient management, air quality, energy efficiency, and pest management. Development of additional content includes Financial and Ecosystem Management, Water Quality, and Social Responsibility. Submission of assessment results 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 Almond Board is able to communicate sustainable almond production in terms of practices that make practical and economic sense for California almonds.

The program provides more value to participants through personalized sustainability reports, enabling them to benchmark their use of practices to statewide uses. These reports, technical presentations at workshops, and the online system help participants identify and implement site-specific sustainable practices.

As of July 2013, 1,081 growers and handlers have participated in the program, resulting in 95,496 assessed acres. This data is supporting the first California Almond Sustainability Program Report to be published in December 2013.

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

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

For More Details, Visit

- "Almond Sustainability Report 2014" available at ABC booth or online at <http://www.almondboard.com/Growers/Sustainability>
- Posters location 75, Exhibit Hall A and B during conference; or on the web (after January 2014) at www.almondboard.com/researchreports
- Sustainability and Almonds – Where are We? Symposium (Room 308-313) on Wednesday, December 4, 3:40 – 4:40 p.m. during conference