

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 and regulators, almond/food companies and consumers.
- Increase grower and handler participation and develop more self-assessment modules.
- Develop and implement an integrated online assessment, reporting, educational and decision support 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. Major almond buyers, large retailers and food service companies increasingly ask 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 peers,

university specialists and other experts. Many participants independently assess their operations via the project's online system.

Established modules are irrigation management, nutrient management, air quality, energy efficiency and pest management. Modules/content for financial and ecosystem management, water quality, and workplace and communities will be used in 2015. Submission of assessment results is voluntary and individual responses are confidential. As of October 2014, 1,247 growers and handlers have participated in the program, resulting in 113,724 assessed acres.

Having real-performance information about the use and continuous adoption of sustainable practices is crucial for telling the "almond growing story" to external stakeholders. Thus, the Almond Board can communicate sustainable almond production via practices that make practical and economic sense for California almonds. A key milestone was the 2014 Almond Sustainability Report that documented statewide baseline performance.

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.

SureHarvest continues with the Almond Board and partners to increase program participation, to provide targeted education and decision-support tools via the online system and workshops, convey results, and ensure other value for growers and handlers.

Project Cooperators and Personnel: Jenny Nicolau, Gabriele Ludwig, Tim Birmingham – ABC; Franklin Dlott, Andrew Arnold, Cliff Ohmart, Brad Suggs, Jeff Dlott – SureHarvest

For More Details, Visit

- ABC booth or online at Almonds.com/Sustainability
- Poster location 75, Exhibit Hall A + B during the Almond Conference; or on the web (after January 2015) at Almonds.com/ResearchDatabase
- Related project: 14-STEW-CROP1-Looker