

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.
- Communicate results to public policy makers and regulators, almond/food companies and consumers.
- Increase grower and handler participation and add and refine self-assessment content.
- Develop and implement an integrated online assessment, reporting, educational and decision support system, as well as 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 California Almond Sustainability Program (CASP), 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 assessing their use of sustainable agricultural practices from modules designed by peers, university specialists and other experts. Participants complete assessments at workshops or directly online at sustainablealmondgrowing.org.

The program's initial modules included irrigation management, nutrient management, air quality, energy efficiency, and pest management and this year have expanded to include ecosystem management, financial management, and workplace and communities. Submission of assessment results is voluntary and individual responses are confidential. As of October 2015, 1,429 growers and handlers have participated in the program.

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

In the spring of 2015, a series of three workshops were presented at several locations throughout California's almond growing region. Workshop topics were devised based on key sustainability opportunities identified through the CASP program: Water & Nitrogen Management, Pest & Honey Bee Management, and Air & Energy Stewardship. Presentations from these workshops are available online at Almonds.com/Growers/Sustainability under the Workshop Presentations section

Grower decision-support tools also continue to be added to the online system to increase natural resource use efficiencies and ease regulatory reporting (nitrogen budgeting, farm mapping, etc.).

Having real-performance information about the use and continuous adoption of sustainable practices is also crucial for telling the "almond growing story" to external stakeholders – something that has been valuable in addressing media attention and scrutiny over the past year.

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

For More Details, Visit

- "About the California Almond Sustainability Program" presentations during the 2015 Almond Conference (refer to program); ABC booth; or online at Almonds.com/Growers/Sustainability
- Poster location 76 Exhibit Hall A + B during the Almond Conference; or on the web (after January 2016) at Almonds.com/ResearchDatabase