

Sacramento Valley Field Crops Newsletter, Summer 2014



University of California

Agriculture and Natural Resources ■ Cooperative Extension ■ Colusa County

Drought impacts on agriculture and groundwater

A report released in July from the UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences summarized the impacts of the 2014 drought:

“The 2014 drought will result in a 6.6 million acre-foot reduction in surface water available to agriculture. This loss of surface water will be partially replaced by increasing groundwater pumping by 5.1 million acre-feet. The resulting net water shortage of 1.5 million acre-feet will cause losses of \$810 million in crop revenue and \$203 million in dairy and other livestock value, plus additional groundwater pumping costs of \$454 million. These direct costs to agriculture total \$1.5 billion. The total statewide economic cost of the 2014 drought is \$2.2 billion, with a total loss of 17,100 seasonal and part-time jobs.”

A summary of the report is available here:

http://www.news.ucdavis.edu/search/news_detail.lasso?id=10978

and the full report can be found here:

https://watershed.ucdavis.edu/files/biblio/DroughtReport_23July2014_0.pdf

‘A slow-moving train wreck’

This is the description of the groundwater situation from Professor Richard Howitt, the study’s lead author. It is estimated that two-thirds of the state’s water supply will be pumped from wells in 2014, as in previous dry years. I know that people are seeing well water levels drop in the Sacramento Valley.

This ‘overdraft’ (pumping more out of the aquifer than is being recharged) is clearly not sustainable on a year-in, year-out basis. Even though groundwater and the regulations that may eventually accompany its use make for thorny conversation, it is a conversation that is happening, and one that we all need to engage in (as politely as we can).

Most of the farmers I know are forward-looking problem-solvers. For that reason, I want to point your attention to an overview of the groundwater situation, some policy efforts that are currently afoot, and **the role that agriculture might play in groundwater recharge/banking**. These are summarized in a recent California Agriculture article by University of California scientists Thomas Harter and Helen Dahlke. The article is available here:

<http://ucanr.edu/repositoryfiles/cav6803p54-136027.pdf>

and a printed version will accompany mailed versions of this newsletter.

Managing corn in drought conditions

I recently recorded a presentation for the California Water and Drought Seminar video series:

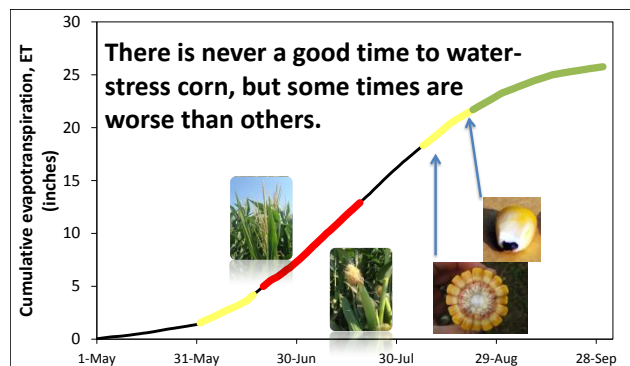
http://ciwr.ucanr.edu/California_Drought_Expertise/Insights_Water_and_Drought_Online_Seminar_Series/

on managing corn under California’s drought conditions. The video recording is not yet available, but the slides from the

presentation as well as the text are available here:

<http://cecolusa.ucanr.edu/files/195616.pdf>

A brief summary:



- 1) The worst time is during the weeks leading up to and following tassling and silking, when pollination is occurring.
- 2) If you must stress the crop, the mid-vegetative and late stages of grain filling are the times that will probably have the least yield consequence.
- 3) Be sure to quit irrigating after the crop has reached maturity.

Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) deadline for winter wheat is September 30th

The first enrollment deadline for SCO is September 30th for winter wheat. Colusa, Sutter and Yolo counties are all eligible, as are several counties in the San Joaquin Valley:

<http://www.rma.usda.gov/news/currentissues/farmbill/SCOWheatfilingdates.pdf>

A factsheet on the new SCO program is available from the USDA here:

<http://www.rma.usda.gov/news/currentissues/farmbill/2014NationalSupplementalCoverageOption.pdf>

This includes information on how SOC relates to ARC coverage. Another useful summary of SOC and how it relates to ARC, with some practical examples, is provided by Oklahoma State University at this link:

<http://osuwheat.com/2014/08/11/agriculture-policy-news-supplemental-coverage-option-sco-for-winter-wheat/>

Meeting announcement

There will be a meeting/listening session to discuss the possibility of developing crop insurance for alfalfa and other forage crops. It is being hosted by Agralytica, under contract with the USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA). The objective of the listening session is to receive input from producers to assist with the development of either a new or improved crop insurance policy to better meet the risk management needs of forage producers. The meeting will be **Tuesday, September 9th from 7:30-10AM at UCCE's Norton Hall, 70 Cottonwood Street, Woodland, CA 95695**. A full meeting announcement is attached at the end of this newsletter.

A digital copy of this newsletter is available:

<http://cecolusa.ucanr.edu/Field Crops/Newsletter 805/>

Don't hesitate to contact me with questions, concerns or ideas:

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