
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Senator Blakespear, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 1486

Author: Soria

Version: 1/22/2026

Hearing Date: 7/1/2026

Urgency: No

Fiscal: Yes

Consultant: Alyssa Poletti

SUBJECT: Climate resiliency: research farms: grant program

DIGEST: This bill requires the California Department of Education (DOE), in consultation with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), to establish a grant program to provide grants to public postsecondary educational institutions that are designated as Agricultural Experiment Stations or Agriculture Research Institutes by the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU) to develop or expand research farms to improve climate resiliency.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) The Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024 (SB 867, Allen, Chapter 83, Statutes of 2024), approved by the voters as Proposition 4 at the November 5, 2024, statewide general election, authorizes \$10 billion in general obligation bonds to finance projects for safe drinking water, drought, flood, and water resilience, wildfire and forest resilience, coastal resilience, extreme heat mitigation, biodiversity and nature-based climate solutions, climate-smart, sustainable, and resilient farms, ranches, and working lands, park creation and outdoor access, and clean air programs. (Public Resources Code (PRC) § 90000 et seq.)
- 2) Proposition 4 includes \$300 million for improving climate resilience and sustainability of agricultural lands, of which \$15 million is available, upon appropriation, for DOE, in consultation with CDFA, to provide grants to public post-secondary educational institutions that are designated as Agricultural Experiment Stations or Agricultural Research Institutes, to develop research farms to improve climate resiliency. Specifies that funding for each institution is limited to no more than \$1 million. (PRC § 93570)
- 3) Allows state agencies to provide materials or services for other state agencies subject to approval by the Director of General Services (Government Code

(GOV) § 11256)

This bill:

- 1) Allows the State Department of Education (DOE) to advance payments for any contracts or agreements with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) for fiscal years 2026-27 and 2027-28 without approval from the Director of General Services to:
 - a) Construct a new research farm; or
 - b) Maintain, alter, or improve an existing research farm.
- 2) Specifies that the agricultural experiment stations or agricultural research institutes (e.g. research farms) eligible for the \$15 million of Proposition 4 funding for climate resilience, upon appropriation by the Legislature, must be designated by the University of California and the California State University.

Background

- 1) *Proposition 4.* Proposition 4 authorized the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$10 billion to fund projects for safe drinking water, drought, flood, and water resilience, wildfire and forest resilience, coastal resilience, extreme heat mitigation, biodiversity and nature-based climate solutions, climate-smart, sustainable, and resilient farms, ranches, and working lands, park creation and outdoor access, and clean air programs.

Of these funds, Proposition 4 allocated \$300 million to fund improvements in climate resilience and sustainability of agricultural lands. As part of this allocation, \$15 million was made available, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to DOE, in consultation with CDFA, to provide grants to public postsecondary educational institutions that are designated as Agricultural Experiment Stations or Agricultural Research Institutes, to develop research farms to improve climate resiliency, as specified. The proposed 2025-26 State budget does not appropriate these funds for research farm grants.

The Assembly Appropriations Committee analysis states that “The Governor’s Proposition 4 expenditure plan, proposed as part of the administration’s January budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year, places this \$15 million in a “pending allocation” category. The Legislative Analyst’s Office noted in a February report that the administration is requesting that the Legislature provide more guidance around its intentions for three bond activities –

including the \$15 million for research farms at postsecondary education institutions – for which the Governor’s expenditure plan does not yet include an appropriation timeline.”

The Budget Act of 2025 (SB 105 Wiener, Chapter 104, Statutes of 2025) made the appropriation contingent upon the enactment of this bill.

- 2) *Climate impacts on agriculture.* California’s agricultural operations generated nearly \$60 billion in 2024; its top exports included almonds, dairy and dairy products, pistachios, wine, and walnuts.¹ Climate change poses direct threats to California’s agricultural productivity, the livelihoods of farmers and ranchers, and food security.² As the climate continues to warm, experts predict that some areas of the state will no longer be able to support the production of certain crops, including wine grapes, walnuts, and some stone fruits.³ Increasing droughts, unpredictable precipitation, extreme heat, diseases and pests, and wildfires have the potential to significantly impact the state’s critical agricultural productivity.⁴
- 3) *University research farms.* California has numerous research farms and programs at The California State University (CSU) system and the University of California (UC) system.
 - a) CSU has ten campus centers and institutes (CCIs) that are devoted to agricultural research.⁵ These research organizations are affiliated with CSU campuses but also offer noncredit instruction, information, or other services to groups beyond the campus community. They are designed to serve public organizations and agencies, private companies, and individuals throughout California. The CCIs include the Agribusiness Institute at Chico State University, which offers general agricultural business expertise, and the Irrigation Training and Resource Center at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, which provides training and technical assistance for industry members, farmers, and state and local government agencies. The four CSU campuses with colleges of agriculture (CSU Chico, Fresno State, Cal Poly Pomona, and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo)

¹ CDFA, *California Agricultural Production Statistics*. <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Statistics/>

² California Climate and Agriculture Network, *Climate Threats to Agriculture*. <https://calclimateag.org/climatethreatstoag/>

³ USDA Climate Hubs, *California Crops Under Climate Change*.

<https://www.climatehubs.usda.gov/hubs/california/california-crops-under-climate-change>

⁴ Medellin-Azuara, J., et al. (2024) *Cultivating climate resilience in California agriculture: Adaptations to an increasingly volatile water future*, Sustainability Science. <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2310079121>

⁵ CSU, *Agriculture*. <https://www.calstate.edu/impact/Pages/research/agriculture.aspx>

operate working farms and ranches to support education and research in agriculture.⁶

- b) UC Davis plays a key role through the UC Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) and the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. The UC ANR operates 10 research and extension centers (REC) with 13,000 acres to study diverse climates, ecosystems, and crops.⁷

Comments

- 1) *Purpose of Bill.* According to the author, “Proposition 4’s research farm grants will help California’s public colleges improve existing, or help start up, research farms with a focus on improving climate resiliency.”
- 2) *Circumventing funding delays.* Despite the successful passage of Prop 4, the \$15 million earmarked for research farms at postsecondary education institutions has not been allocated to any Agricultural Experiment Stations or Agricultural Research Institutes. AB 35 (Alvarez) aims to speed up delays in Prop 4 spending by allowing for emergency regulations. AB 1486 has similar aims: to speed up Prop 4 spending by authorizing \$15 million to research farms through the DOE and CDFA without approval from the Director of General Services. AB 1486 could release already-promised funding to vital climate resiliency research. This research is needed sooner rather than later as the climate crisis poses an immediate threat to California’s agricultural industry.

DOUBLE REFERRAL:

This measure was heard in Senate Education Committee on June 4, 2026, and passed out of committee with a vote of 7-0.

Related/Prior Legislation

AB 35 (Alvarez) allows agencies to adopt emergency regulations for programs needed to implement The Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024. This bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water.

⁶ Beall, A. (2025) *CSU Research Cultivates Sustainable Future for Agriculture*, CSU. <https://www.calstate.edu/csu-system/news/Pages/CSU-Research-Cultivates-Sustainable-Future-for-Agriculture.aspx>

⁷ UC Agriculture and Natural Resources, *UC ANR Research and Extension Centers: About Us* <https://ucanr.edu/program/anr-research-and-extension-centers/about-us>

SB 105 (Wiener, Chapter 104, Statutes of 2025) appropriates funding for grants to public postsecondary educational institutions that are designated as Agricultural Experiment Stations or Agricultural Research Institutes, to develop research farms to improve climate resiliency contingent on the enactment of AB 1486 (Soria).

SOURCE: Author

SUPPORT:

California State University, Office of the Chancellor

OPPOSITION:

None received

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