

Crops in Hot Seat

Certain fruit and nut crops are likely to decline in the future, because there won't be enough cold days for them to ripen properly, according to climate model predictions. Water shortages are likely to grow more severe as irrigation needs increase, and earlier ripening could impair the quality of wine grape harvests.

On the bright side, researchers are investigating how to sequester greenhouse gasses in the soils of rangelands and grazing pastures. And a number of laws passed in recent years now encourage the use of renewable energy on the farm — whether from solar panels or manure-powered methane digesters.

These were just a few of the topics discussed at the third annual California Climate and Agriculture Summit held at UC Davis in late February. The central theme of the event was that sustainable farming is good for the climate; while, conversely, climate change is going to be bad for farming. Over 200 scientists, ranchers,

students, and policy makers came together for the day of presentations, networking, and general intellectual cross-pollination.

“To have a broad perspective on this complex problem is essential if we're going to figure it out,” says Renata Brillinger of the California Climate and Agriculture Network, which organized the event. “We need multiple perspectives on theory, practice, and policy. We set out to create those conversations and we succeeded.”

Brillinger added that the sophistication of the presentations and the level of discourse have really evolved in the two years since the last summit — a sentiment that was echoed by other attendees.

“This is a new world to venture into,” says Nancy Scolari of the Marin Resource Conservation District, who came to the conference specifically to learn more about how ranchers can sequester carbon by managing their rangelands better. “We've been restoring streams for a long time. Now it's time to restore our pastures — because in the end it all is connected.” **JC**

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