

SENATE BILL SB-66

Introduced by Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil (R-4)

An act relating to Rural Agricultural and Environmental Resilience Program. .

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB-66, Marie Alvarado-Gil (R-4). Rural Agricultural and Environmental Resilience Program. .

Existing law establishes and funds various programs administered by the Department of Food and Agriculture and other state agencies to support agricultural operations, water conservation, natural-resource conservation, climate resilience, and related projects. Existing programs provide financial assistance for activities including agricultural water-use efficiency, soil health, conservation practices, and other forms of agricultural and environmental resilience.

This bill would establish the Rural Agricultural Resilience Grant Program within the Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to fund integrated projects that address multiple resilience needs facing agricultural operations and rural communities, including water resilience, environmental conservation, wildfire preparedness, and disaster preparedness. Grants would be available to agricultural operations, local governments, resource and irrigation districts, agricultural organizations, and eligible partnerships, with priority given to projects demonstrating measurable public benefits and coordinating with existing state programs.

The program would be designed to complement, rather than duplicate, existing state agricultural, water, conservation, and wildfire-resilience programs.

This bill would appropriate twenty million (\$20,000,000) dollars over four fiscal years for the program, of which (\$18,000,000) would be available for competitive grants and Two million dollars (\$2,000,000) would be available for program administration, technical assistance, outreach, and evaluation.

Vote: Majority. Appropriations/fiscal: yes. Local program: no.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE – 2025-2026 SIMULATION SESSION	
SENATE BILL	NO

Introduced by Senator Alvarado-Gil
September 29, 2026

Establish a competitive grant program to help agricultural operations and rural communities invest in their water resilience, environmental conservation, wildfire preparedness, and disaster resilience projects

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB [], as introduced, Senator Alvarado-Gil. Rural Agricultural and Environmental Resilience Program.

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Vote: majority Appropriation: yes Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

Agriculture is an important component of the economies and communities of rural California.

Agricultural operations and rural communities face interconnected risks associated with water shortages, drought, environmental degradation, wildfire, extreme weather, power outages, and other disasters.

Investments that improve the resilience of agricultural operations can also

provide broader benefits to rural communities by protecting agricultural production, local businesses, employment, infrastructure, natural resources, and community preparedness.

Existing state programs provide funding for specific agricultural, environmental, water, and wildfire-resilience activities. However, these programs may not address projects that combine multiple resilience needs facing agricultural operations and rural communities. This bill would provide a coordinated funding opportunity for those integrated projects while requiring coordination with existing programs to prevent duplication.

Incentive-based programs can encourage agricultural operations and rural partners to invest in resilience without imposing universal requirements on agricultural operations.

SEC. 2. The Department of Food and Agriculture shall establish the Rural Agricultural Resilience Grant Program.

The program shall provide competitive grants to eligible applicants for projects that improve the resilience of agricultural operations and rural communities.

Eligible applicants may include any of the following:

Farms and ranches.

Agricultural businesses and cooperatives.

Resource conservation districts.

Irrigation districts.

Agricultural associations and organizations.

County governments.

Local governments.

Partnerships among two or more eligible entities.

(c) A project may include multiple agricultural operations or community partners if the project demonstrates a shared resilience benefit.

SEC. 3. Grant funds may be used for integrated projects addressing two or more of the following resilience areas:

Water resilience, including water-use efficiency, agricultural water infrastructure, groundwater recharge, drought preparedness, water storage, and other projects designed to improve water reliability or reduce agricultural water use.

Environmental conservation, including soil-health practices, riparian restoration, habitat restoration, runoff reduction, watershed protection, and other conservation practices.

Wildfire preparedness, including vegetation management around agricultural facilities, defensible space, fire-resistant infrastructure, emergency water storage, backup power, emergency access improvements, and protection or hardening of agricultural equipment and infrastructure.

Disaster preparedness, including emergency preparedness planning, backup systems, emergency equipment, infrastructure hardening, power-outage resilience, and continuity planning.

SEC. 4. The Department of Food and Agriculture shall administer the program.

The department shall establish application procedures, eligibility requirements, grant criteria, reporting requirements, and other guidelines necessary to implement the program.

In awarding grants, the department shall consider all of the following:

The severity and likelihood of the risks addressed by the proposed project.

The number of agricultural operations or rural community members that may benefit from the project.

The measurable resilience benefits of the project across the applicable water, environmental, wildfire, or disaster-preparedness areas.

The applicant's ability to implement the project successfully.

The extent to which the project coordinates with existing state, local, or federal programs.

The extent to which the project provides benefits to multiple agricultural operations or the surrounding rural community.

(c) The department shall establish procedures to prevent the duplication of funding for the same project under multiple state programs. The department shall also consider whether proposed activities could reasonably be supported through an existing state grant program and prioritize funding for eligible activities that complement existing programs.

SEC. 5. Grants awarded under this bill shall be competitive and shall not require an applicant to provide matching funds as a condition of eligibility.

The department may give additional consideration to applications that leverage private, local, federal, or other nonstate resources.

The absence of matching funds shall not by itself disqualify an otherwise eligible applicant.

SEC. 6. The sum of twenty million dollars (\$20,000,000) is hereby appropriated from funds identified by the Legislature for purposes of this bill, to be available over four fiscal years, upon appropriation by the Legislature.

Eighteen million dollars (\$18,000,000) shall be available for competitive grants.

Two million dollars (\$2,000,000) shall be available to the Department of Food and Agriculture for program administration, technical assistance, outreach, grant management, and evaluation.

Individual grants shall generally not exceed one million dollars (\$1,000,000), subject to criteria established by the department.

The department shall establish application procedures, eligibility requirements, grant criteria, reporting requirements, application review timelines, and other guidelines necessary to implement the program.

The department shall establish a reasonable timeline for reviewing complete grant applications and notifying applicants of grant award decisions. The department shall make reasonable efforts to notify applicants of an award decision within 90 days after the application deadline.

SEC. 7. The Department of Food and Agriculture shall require each grant recipient to report information necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the funded project.

Reports may include information regarding water savings, conservation outcomes, wildfire preparedness improvements, disaster resilience, infrastructure protection, agricultural operations served, and other outcomes identified by the

department.

The department may use grant recipient information to evaluate the program and inform future agricultural resilience investments.

SEC. 8. The Department of Food and Agriculture shall coordinate implementation of this bill with existing state agricultural, water, conservation, wildfire-preparedness, and disaster-resilience programs to the extent feasible.

SEC. 9. The Department of Food and Agriculture shall implement this act consistent with applicable state and federal law.