THE SACRAMENTO BEE

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New agriculture bills introduced by California Legislators for the 2026-2027 session

How will they affect the Greater Sacramento area and California agriculture?



California agriculture is an important part of the state's economy, but farmers and agricultural communities face constant challenges including water availability, climate change, new technology, and natural disasters. Four bills introduced during the 2026-2027 legislative session address different parts of these issues.

Each of these bills focuses on a different issue facing California agriculture. While some could directly affect farms in the Greater Sacramento area, others focus on different parts of the state.

By Daniel Lindevald - Editor-in-chief

Agricultural Water Efficiency Grant Act

Sponsored by Senator Jerry McNerney (D – District 5)

SB-8 would increase funding to help California farmers install water-saving irrigation techniques and technology.

The bill would provide additional financial assistance for water-efficiency projects, including drip irrigation systems, soil-moisture monitoring devices, water-flow meters, pump modifications, low-pressure irrigation systems, and other approved water-saving technologies. Projects demonstrating significant expected water savings would receive priority, and small and medium-sized agricultural operations might also receive priority.

How much will it cost? SB-8 would appropriate $10 million from the General Fund to the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

For California agriculture: This could help farmers use less water through better irrigation systems. Smaller farms could also benefit since they might not have the money to pay for these upgrades themselves.

For the Greater Sacramento area: SB-8 could help local farms improve their irrigation systems and use less water. It could also give smaller farms in Sacramento and surrounding counties another way to pay for water-saving equipment they might not be able to afford on their own.



Central Coast Ag-Tech & Coastal Resilience Infrastructure Act

Sponsored by Senator John Laird (D – District 17)

SB-45 would create the Central Coast Ag-Tech and Coastal Resilience Grant and Tax Credit Program within GO-Biz, working with the Department of Food and Agriculture.

The program would provide competitive grants, matching funds, and faster permitting for projects involving advanced agricultural technology, improved irrigation systems, supply-chain modernization, and food-processing infrastructure that can better handle problems caused by climate change. These projects could include artificial intelligence and automated robotics for managing and harvesting crops, water-saving technology, energy-efficient storage and transportation, food-processing technology, and coastal monitoring.

Who would benefit? The bill would give priority to projects in Senate District 17 and surrounding agricultural areas, including parts of Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Benito, and San Luis Obispo counties.

How much will it cost? It would provide $15 million from the General Fund to GO-Biz.

For California agriculture: this bill could help farms use newer technology to deal with problems like not having enough workers or water. It could also help improve how agricultural products are processed and transported.



Rural Agricultural and Environmental Resilience Program

Sponsored by Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil (R – District 4)

SB-66 would establish the Rural Agricultural Resilience Grant Program within the Department of Food and Agriculture.

The program would provide grants for projects addressing many needs, including water resilience, environmental conservation, wildfire preparedness, and disaster preparedness. Eligible applicants include farms, ranches, agricultural businesses, cooperatives, irrigation districts, agricultural organizations, and local governments.

How much would it cost? The bill would provide $20 million over four fiscal years, with $18 million available for competitive grants and $2 million for administration, technical assistance, outreach, and evaluation.

One interesting part of the bill is that applicants wouldn't have to provide matching funds to receive a grant. This could make it easier for smaller farms that might not have the money to fund these projects themselves.

For California agriculture: This bill takes a broader approach by focusing on more than one problem. A single project could look at water use while also helping farms prepare for wildfires or other natural disasters. By addressing more than one issue, these projects could help farms better prepare for water shortages, wildfires, and other natural disasters.

Local Impact: This bill could give local farms and agricultural organizations another way to get funding for projects involving water conservation, environmental protection, and disaster preparedness. Farms in Sacramento and surrounding counties could also qualify for this funding.

Farmworker Heat Safety and Small Farm Support Act

Sponsored by Senator Anna Caballero (D – District 14)

SB-82 would establish additional heat protections for California agricultural workers. The bill would require agricultural employers to measure heat using the heat index, which accounts for both temperature and humidity. At a heat index of 90 degrees, workers would receive a paid 10-minute cool-down break every hour. At 100 degrees, workers would receive a paid 15-minute break every hour at a cooling station. When the heat index reaches 108 degrees, outdoor work between noon and 5 p.m. would generally be prohibited unless an air-conditioned shelter is available and the work is necessary to prevent the loss of a perishable crop.



Farmworker Heat Safety and Small Farm Support Act: *continued* The bill would also require annual heat-safety training in a language each worker understands, including Indigenous languages, and would prohibit employers from retaliating against workers who request required breaks, water or shade. Cal/OSHA would enforce the requirements and could issue penalties of up to $1,000 per affected worker for each day of a violation.

Small Farm Support: SB-82 would also create the Small Farm Heat Safety Grant Program for agricultural employers with 25 or fewer workers. Grants could be used for portable shade structures, cooling stations, water equipment, heat-index monitors and translated training.

How much will it cost? The bill would appropriate $15 million from the general fund to the Farmworker Heat Safety Fund, with priority given to farms in the San Joaquin Valley and other areas experiencing extreme heat.

For the Greater Sacramento area: This bill could affect farms and agricultural workers who deal with extreme heat during the summer. The additional breaks could help keep workers safe, while the grant program could help smaller farms pay for the equipment needed to follow the new rules.

Although these four bills deal with different issues, they all focus on problems that farmers and agricultural communities are facing in California. SB-8 focuses on saving water, SB-45 looks at bringing newer technology into farming, SB-66 would help farms prepare for natural disasters, and SB-82 focuses on protecting workers from extreme heat. For farms around Sacramento, the bills involving water use, disaster preparedness, and worker safety would be more directly relevant. SB-45, on the other hand, focuses mainly on the Central Coast, so its direct impact on Sacramento would be more limited.



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