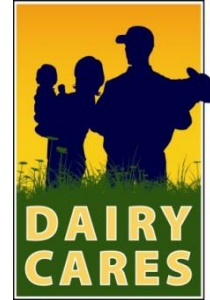


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## Dairy Cares Newsletter

July 2014

[DairyCares.com](http://DairyCares.com)

# California agriculture expected to bear brunt of economic damage caused by enduring drought

In April, the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) reported that every inch of California was experiencing at least some degree of drought, ranging from “moderate” to “exceptional.” The finding was a first in the program’s 15-year history of tracking such conditions in the Golden State.

Today, the Drought Monitor still shows California – from north to south and east to west – in the throes of an extraordinary drought (see right). Unfortunately the map is a lot redder as of July 22, with nearly 82 percent of the state now experiencing “extreme” or “exceptional” drought conditions.

Hardest hit by drought is the highly productive Central Valley, home to a variety of world-class farming operations, including the vast majority of the state’s 1,496 family-owned dairies. Farmers are wrestling with tough planning decisions, such as which crops to grow, the number of acres to plant, expected crop yield and quantity, and simply whether there’s even enough water to put a crop in the ground.

A [recent study](#) released by the UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences stresses the economic hardship in store for California’s economy, particularly the agricultural sector. According to the study, the 2014 drought will cost the state economy \$2.2 billion, with \$1.5 billion in direct costs to the agricultural community. That represents a net revenue loss of about 3 percent of the state’s total agricultural value.

Other key findings from the UC Davis study on the effects of the 2014 drought on California agriculture include:

- The loss of 17,100 seasonal and part-time agricultural jobs, which represents 3.8 percent of farm unemployment;
- The removal of 428,000 acres, or 5 percent, of irrigated cropland from food production in the Central Valley, Central Coast and Southern California; and

· Statewide dairy and livestock losses from reduced pasture and high hay and silage costs, representing \$203 million in lost revenue.

### **Dairy families continue to be good water stewards**

Despite the grim water and economic outlook facing all Californians, dairy families are accustomed to doing more with less, having long been leaders in water conservation, efficiency and recycling. Dairy families have steadily and dramatically reduced the amount of water they use to produce each gallon of milk. In fact, dairy farmers have reduced the overall water footprint of a glass of milk by 65 percent since 1944. In other words, producing a glass of milk today uses about a third of the water it did during the Franklin Roosevelt administration. ([Source: Capper, et al. \(2009\). Journal of Animal Science.](#))

Dairy families are also utilizing the latest and best science and educational tools available to them through the award-winning California Dairy Quality Assurance Program (CDQAP). In June and July, CDQAP hosted free [drought assistance workshops](#) to dairy farmers throughout the Central Valley. Expert presenters from UC Cooperative Extension and California State University systems provided helpful information on deficit irrigation techniques, extension of limited feed resources and implementation of nutrient management during drought conditions. CDQAP also launched a [“Drought Info Page”](#) earlier this year that includes resources to help dairy farmers manage issues on the farm related to drought conditions.

California dairy families are working to be water-wise, and recognize that water is a precious, finite resource to be used responsibly. As millions of families continue to enjoy affordable, nutritious and delicious dairy foods, they can do so with confidence that the family farmers producing these products are making every effort to conserve, recycle and protect the water resources upon which we all depend.

*Dairy Cares is a statewide coalition supporting economic and environmental sustainability and responsible animal care. Our members include Bar 20 Dairy Farms, California Cattlemen’s Association, California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Campaign, California Dairy Research Foundation, California Farm Bureau Federation, Dairy Farmers of America-Western Area Council, Dairy Institute of California, GHD, Inc., Hilmar Cheese Co., Joseph Gallo Farms, Land O’Lakes, Merck Animal Health, Milk Producers Council, Ruan Transport Corp., Western United Dairywomen, Yosemite Farm Credit and others. For information, visit [DairyCares.com](#) or call 916-441-3318.*