



# County of Yolo

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## **YOLO AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT PROGRAM**

Proposed Early Action to Implement Resolution No. 20-114 Related to the Climate Crisis

### **PROPOSED ACTION**

The proposed action will expand the Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District's (YSAQMD) Funding Agricultural Replacement Measures for Emissions Reductions (FARMER) Program or other programs accomplishing similar objectives by providing a dedicated funding stream for Yolo County farmers to replace gas-powered utility task vehicles (UTVs) with electric UTV equivalents (eUTVs). The FARMER Program provides funding to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural harvesting equipment, heavy-duty trucks, agricultural irrigation pump engines, tractors and/or other equipment used in agricultural operations. Funding programs such as FARMER often limit farmers to receiving funding to replace only two pieces of equipment, meaning that relatively lower-cost items such as UTVs are deprioritized by farmers in favor of higher-cost replacements such as tractors. By providing supplemental, dedicated funding targeted at eUTVs—a request that YSAQMD has received from Yolo County farmers—the County can increase access to electric equipment without displacing funding from other critical funding programs.

The expansion will prioritize eUTV funding for Yolo County farmers who meet the following criteria: 1) Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers' and/or Priority Populations<sup>ii</sup>; 2) farming operations where equipment replacement would have the largest greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction impact, however all farmers are eligible to apply, regardless of whether they meet any/all priority criteria. The action will focus on replacing UTVs with electric alternatives for which the Yolo Solano Air Quality Management District can easily quantify greenhouse gas emission reduction. By providing a dedicated funding stream for eUTV replacement, the County can increase the fuel efficiency of on-farm equipment, reduce exhaust emissions, and provide additional opportunities for farmers to explore equipment replacement. The County will partner with the Yolo County Farm Bureau and the Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District to conduct outreach to farmers, particularly those who might identify as Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers, to inform them of this expanded opportunity. This program will help the County achieve its goal of reaching net-negative greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

### **BACKGROUND**

To administer the FARMER Program, the California Air Resources Board allocates funding to local air quality management districts, which then hold competitive solicitations to disburse these funds. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has typically received almost 75% of FARMER funds, with the remaining 25% of funds shared between all other air districts in the state. While

these existing state programs are designed to help farmers transition to more sustainable agricultural practices and achieve climate action goals, they are underfunded, and can be inaccessible to historically underserved farmers. By providing supplemental funding targeted at eUTVs, the County can create an opportunity to increase access to electric farm equipment, increase the pot of funding available for agricultural equipment replacement in Yolo County, and help achieve the County's climate action goals.

## **CONSISTENCY WITH EXISTING POLICIES**

Funding agricultural equipment replacement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions supports strategies outlined in the *Yolo County Sustainability Plan*. Specifically, the *Yolo County Sustainability Plan* includes:

- Action EH-3.1: Promote agricultural methods that minimize air, soil, and water pollution consistent with the County's Organic Agriculture Program

The proposed action also supports the following measures outlined in the *2011 Yolo County Climate Action Plan*:

- A-2: Reduce fossil fuel consumption in field equipment
- A-3: Reduce energy use in agricultural irrigation pumping

## **BENEFITS TO DISADVANTAGED/VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES**

This action would prioritize agriculture equipment replacements for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and/or Priority Populations (including Disadvantaged Communities, low-income communities, and low-income households).

## **GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSION REDUCTION**

The projects implemented from the expanded grant program will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The electrification of Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTVs) will produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions when powered by electricity, reduce exhaust emissions, and reduce gasoline consumption. Conversations with YSAQMD staff revealed that over the past five years, the average FARMER program UTV retrofit project led to emissions reductions of 28.65 metric tons CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) over the project lifespan.

## **CO-BENEFITS**

The proposed action will reduce repair costs for farmers, improve equipment reliability, reduce noise pollution, and reduce harmful exhaust emissions.

## **TRANSFORMATIVE/REPLICABLE ELEMENTS**

If the program is successful in its first year of implementation, the program may continue annually to further equipment electrification in the County, however there is no guarantee of this. The success of this pilot program will serve as a model for other counties to replicate.

## DEGREE OF READINESS

This project requires an agreement with the Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District to administer the grant program. The County and YSAQMD have already discussed the project in detail.

## COSTS

The County proposes offering \$10,000 in retrofit funding funds for standard selected/eligible applicants and \$15,000 (or up to 100% of the vehicle replacement cost, whichever is lower) for selected/eligible applicants who are socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and/or priority populations, up to a maximum amount of \$130,000.

## FUNDING

County Staff recommend allocating \$130,000 of American Rescue Plan funds to this program. Pending approval and partnership with the Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District, additional sources of funding from YSAQMD may be provided.

## CONCERNS

Yolo County is committing one-time funds to expand the program to the Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District; expansion of the program, and the commitment of ongoing funding by YSAQMD depends on success and interest levels of this pilot program.

## PARTNERS

- Yolo County Air Quality Management District (administrator of the funds, outreach support)
- Yolo County Farm Bureau (education to farmers about the program)

## PERSONNEL

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<sup>i</sup> Building on the language defined in Assembly Bill 1348— the Farmer Equity Act (2017) —we define **Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers** as those belonging to a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. These groups include, but are not limited to, people who are African American, American Indian, Alaskan native, Hispanic, Asian-American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander.

<sup>ii</sup> We use the California Air Resources Board (CARB) definition of **Priority Populations**, which includes disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, and low-income households. Priority Populations can be identified using CARB's online mapping tool here: <https://webmaps.arb.ca.gov/PriorityPopulations/>. CARB designates Priority Populations using the following definitions:

**Disadvantaged Community (DAC):** The California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) defines DACs as the following: (1) census tracts receiving the highest 25 percent of overall scores in CalEnviroScreen 4.0; (2) census tracts lacking overall scores in CalEnviroScreen 4.0 due to data gaps, but receiving the highest 5 percent of CalEnviroScreen 4.0 cumulative pollution burden scores; (3) census tracts identified in the 2017 DAC designation as disadvantaged, regardless of their scores in CalEnviroScreen 4.0; (4) and areas under the control of federally recognized Tribes.

**Low-Income Communities and Households:** CARB's Priority Populations Investments program defines these groups as "those with incomes either at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income, or at or below the threshold designated as low-income by the California Department of Housing and Community Development's 2021 State Income Limits."