SDRILG MEMBER SURVEY UPDATE

5/10/2023

San Diego Region
Irrigated Lands Group

SAN DIEGO REGION IRRIGATED LANDS GROUP

- A SAN DIEGO REGIONAL BOARD RECOGNIZED THIRD-PARTY MONITORING GROUP
- THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY FARM BUREAU PROVIDES FARM BUREAU MEMBERS IN SAN DIEGO, SOUTHERN RIVERSIDE, AND SOUTHERN ORANGE COUNTIES (REGION 9) WITH THE OPTION OF GROUP COMPLIANCE THROUGH THE SAN DIEGO REGION IRRIGATED LANDS GROUP, A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
- CURRENT MEMBERSHIP IS ABOUT 1300, AND INCLUDES SOME MEMBERS FROM RIVERSIDE AND ORANGE COUNTIES WHO ARE WITHIN THE SAN DIEGO REGION

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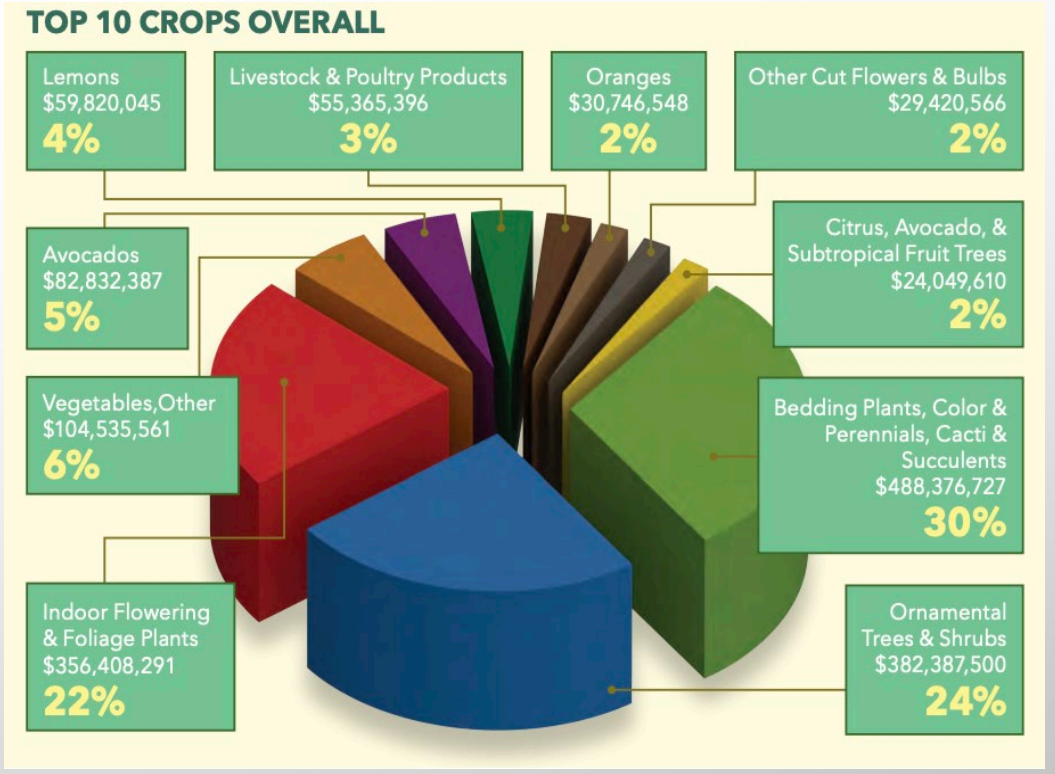
FARMING IN THE SAN DIEGO AREA:

- FOLIAGE, NURSERY, BEDDING PLANTS, AND OTHER ORNAMENTAL CROPS ARE ABOUT 70% OF ALL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION $$, THE MAJORITY IN CONTAINER PRODUCTION
- SAN DIEGO REGION PRODUCTION AND HARVESTS ARE YEAR-ROUND
- MEDIAN FARM SIZE IS 4 ACRES, AND 69% OF FARMS ARE 1-9 ACRES
- WHILE THERE ARE AROUND 5000 FARMS IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY (AS PER THE SCHEDULE F), ONLY A SUBSET FIT THE IRRIGATED LANDS CATEGORY. IN ADDITION, NOT ALL ACREAGE ON ANY FARM IS ACTUALLY IRRIGATED.
- ABOUT 1300 FARMS ARE INCLUDED IN THE SDRILG



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SDRILG SURVEY OF MEMBERS:

- BASED ON COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE SDRILG, A SURVEY WAS CREATED TO ASK SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CURRENT AND UPCOMING AG ORDERS AND OTHER WATER QUALITY REGULATORY PROGRAMS
- WE HAVE RECEIVED 200 RESPONSES TO DATE FROM MEMBERS OF THE SDRILG, SO FAR
- ALL RESPONSES WERE ANONYMOUS
- MOST RESPONSES CAME FROM SAN DIEGO COUNTY GROWERS, WITH ADDITIONAL RESPONSES FROM RIVERSIDE AND ORANGE COUNTY GROWERS WITHIN THE SAN DIEGO REGION
- HIGHLIGHTS AND COMMENTS FOLLOW

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1. SAN DIEGO REGION AGRICULTURE IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM CENTRAL VALLEY AGRICULTURE

- MOST SAN DIEGO REGION RESPONDENTS' FARMS ARE 10 ACRES OR LESS; NOT ALL ACREAGE IS IRRIGATED
  - AVERAGE CENTRAL VALLEY FARM IS APPROX. 375 ACRES
- MANY SAN DIEGO GROWERS PRODUCE A LARGE NUMBER OF DIFFERENT CROPS, NOT JUST ONE; SAN DIEGO REGION AGRICULTURE IS FOCUSED ON SPECIALTY CROPS
- CONTINUOUS CROPPING IS VERY COMMON IN THE SAN DIEGO REGION, WITH CONTINUOUS INPUTS, MULTIPLE GROWING CYCLES AND HARVESTS
- TERRAIN IS VERY DIFFERENT AS MOST GROWERS IN THE SAN DIEGO REGION GROW ON HILLSIDES, SOMETIMES VERY STEEP. FLAT VALLEYS ARE NOT THE NORM
- SOME WATER QUALITY PRACTICES REQUIRED BY CENTRAL VALLEY REGULATIONS WILL LIKELY NOT BE EFFECTIVE OR POSSIBLE IN SAN DIEGO BECAUSE OF THESE DIFFERENCES

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2. COSTS OF PRODUCTION IN THE SAN DIEGO REGION ARE ALREADY VERY HIGH

Most growers use district water, with an average cost of $2500+ per acre ft (and increasing)

- Most crops use 3-acre ft/acre per year, and water costs are up to $7500 or more per acre
- Wasting water is cost prohibitive

San Diego Region crops are labor intensive, as there is almost no automation for production or harvest used with the crops grown here. Most growers do not value their own labor when considering labor costs

Land costs are very high in the San Diego Region

Costs for fertilizers and crop protection materials are High and increasing

Costs of energy for lighting, cooling, pumping etc. are high and increasing

Additional water quality monitoring, inspections and BMP costs for water quality must be as efficient as possible as they do not add to productivity and income

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3. OVERLAPPING REGULATIONS WITH MULTIPLE INSPECTIONS FOR THE SAME ISSUES

- MANY SURVEY RESPONDENTS WERE NOT CLEAR ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE MS4/AGRICULTURE WATER QUALITY "AWQ" OR OTHER COUNTY PROGRAMS, CITY INSPECTIONS, AND THE AG ORDER(S) REQUIREMENTS AND INSPECTIONS BY THE REGIONAL BOARD
- SOME ARE UNAWARE THAT BOTH PROGRAMS EXIST
- MANY SUGGESTED THAT DUPLICATE INSPECTIONS BY DIFFERENT REGULATORY GROUPS SHOULD BE COORDINATED OR CONSOLIDATED INTO ONE INSPECTION
- THERE ARE CONCERNS ABOUT WHAT IS CONSIDERED TO BE A WATER QUALITY ISSUE UPON INSPECTION

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4. IRRIGATION AND FERTILIZATION

- 99% OF GROWERS INDICATED THAT THEY TAKE STEPS TO MINIMIZE EROSION FROM THEIR PROPERTY
- NUMEROUS GROWERS COMMENTED THAT THIS YEAR WAS UNUSUAL AND DIFFICULT WITH THE LARGE AMOUNT OF RAIN AND INABILITY TO GET EQUIPMENT INTO LOCATIONS TO REPAIR EROSION AND OTHER ISSUES
- A LARGE NUMBER OF GROWERS RETAIN RUNOFF WATER FOR REUSE IN RETENTION PONDS
- A LARGE NUMBER OF GROWERS ACCOUNTED FOR THE LEVEL OF NITROGEN ALREADY IN THEIR IRRIGATION WATER WHEN APPLYING FERTILIZER.
- GROWERS OF NURSERY AND CONTAINER CROPS INDICATED THAT MUCH OF THEIR FERTILIZER MATERIAL IS SHIPPED OFFSITE WHEN PLANTS ARE SOLD AND THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION
- ALL POSSIBLE SOURCES OF NUTRIENTS IN WATER SHOULD BE CONSIDERED, PARTICULARLY IN AREAS WHERE AGRICULTURE IS INTERSPERSED WITH OTHER LAND USES

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5. SUGGESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

- CONSOLIDATE ALL WATER QUALITY INSPECTIONS
- DEVELOP A FOCUSED EFFORT TO TAKE CARE OF THE MOST COMMON WATER QUALITY ISSUES FIRST, FOR EXAMPLE A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO PROVIDE RESOURCES AND EDUCATION ON "EROSION CONTROL BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES"
- PROVIDE SITE VISITS COORDINATED BY GROWERS AND TRAINING FOR INSPECTORS WHO MAY NOT BE COMPLETELY FAMILIAR WITH GROWING PRACTICES IN THE SAN DIEGO REGION
- MOST GROWERS INDICATED THAT THEY CANNOT AFFORD TO WASTE WATER, CANNOT AFFORD TO USE TOO MUCH FERTILIZER AND CANNOT AFFORD TO USE PESTICIDES UNLESS ABSOLUTELY NEEDED
- PROFIT MARGINS FOR MANY GROWERS ARE GENERALLY VERY SMALL (OR NON-EXISTENT SOME YEARS)

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