

Drought tips available for farmers

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Credit: Elena Zhukova

Drought strategies for managing alfalfa and many other crops are available free from UC Agriculture and Natural Resources. As California endures a fourth year of drought and ever-tightening water supplies, water-management strategies have become even more critical to farmers.

To help farmers make the best use of the [water](#) they have available, a series of new and updated drought tips fact sheets has been developed by UC ANR scientists and funded by the California Department of Water Resources.

"These drought tips provide irrigation management recommendations for a broad range of agricultural crops and under different water supply conditions," said Daniele Zaccaria, UC ANR Cooperative Extension agricultural water management specialist at UC Davis and major organizer of the drought tip series. "The information in these tips will be of practical use for growers and other water-related stakeholders now and into the future as our agricultural community continues to adapt to climate variability and to a changing water supply situation."

UC ANR scientists have identified best management practices for a wide range of annual and permanent crops and irrigation systems and methods during the drought. In the drought tips series, they also give advice for managing soil salinity and using shallow groundwater for irrigating crops. For beef cattle, they provide recommendations for culling herds and feeding to supplement grazing.

The following drought tips are currently available for free download at ucanr.edu/drought-tips :

- Drought strategies for alfalfa
- Drought management for California almonds
- Use of shallow groundwater for crop production
- Drought strategies for walnuts
- Fog contribution to crop water use
- Reclaiming saline, sodic and saline-sodic soils

Several more drought tips for dozens of commodities and situations are in the process of being published and will be posted online soon.

Decades of UC ANR research underlie the information contained in the drought tips. In the 1970s and again in the 1990s, UC ANR partnered with DWR to develop a series of drought management fact sheets.

"DWR has worked with UC ANR to update the drought tips and make sure the latest and best information on water [management](#) is available to growers," said Peter Brostrom, DWR water use efficiency section manager.

The California Institute for Water Resources, which coordinates water-related research and extension education across the 10 UC campuses and UCANR, has the drought tips and more drought resources online at ciwr.ucanr.edu.

"Even if El Niño brings rain this fall, water scarcity will continue to impact California farmers," said Doug Parker, director of UC ANR's California Institute for Water Resources. "As climate change continues to reduce the average annual snowpack, it is likely that droughts in California will become more frequent and severe in the years to come."

Provided by UC Davis

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