

CR 11

Numerous comments were received recommending that only the growing of certain crops be allowed, that applications of fertilizers and pesticides should be prohibited, and that water availability should be based on agricultural practices. Crop selection and cultural practices are based on many factors, including soil type, water availability, climate, grower experience, production costs, and expected financial return. Crop selection is a private-sector decision, critical to the economic success of farming operations, and dependent on the skill and knowledge of the individual grower. CALFED is proposing incentives for changing irrigation practices, and is evaluating methods to reduce any harmful agricultural drainage. However, there are no statutes regulating the choice of crops grown by farmers. While production costs, which includes water costs, influence crop selection, the choices of crops grown and propagation methods are outside the scope of the CALFED Program.

Some commentors have stated that overall agricultural water use by agriculture should be reduced. The overall amount of water used by agriculture in the state cannot be measured accurately. Sources include groundwater, large-scale irrigation projects, local riparian-right diversions and multi-use reservoirs. In some areas, water can be used several times, with portions returned to the system each time. Estimates of agricultural water use vary widely, depending upon the source of the numbers. While some commentors have stated their opinion that agriculture in the state uses too much water, other commentors have stated their opinion that agriculture has too little water available. The purpose of the CALFED Program is not to reduce water use of any sector in favor of other sectors, but to ensure that all beneficial uses of water have a more reliable water supply and good-quality water. CALFED's programs include incentives for agricultural water conservation, as well as programs to conserve urban water and refuge water.

Comments have been received stating that agricultural users pay too little for their water, and that CALFED should ensure that all users pay their full costs for water. Costs for water in the state vary tremendously depending on a large number of factors. Among these factors are the source of water used (groundwater, riparian right stream water, contract water), location in the state, conveyance costs, electricity costs, and many others. For agricultural users, the costs can be very low or very high, depending upon these factors. Also, water contracts between the Bureau of Reclamation and Department of Water Resources with water wholesalers determine the rates paid by many growers. The purpose of CALFED is not to equalize water rates throughout the state, but to improve reliability for all users. One method that is proposed for the CALFED Program is to make water more of a market-based commodity, where water can be sold and transferred to its highest use based on willingness to pay, subject to local area protections. It should also be noted that for new storage facilities, federal law requires that the users pay the full cost of those facilities.