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Attitudes and Actions: Evaluating Producer Responses to Watershed Management Systems on California's Central Coast

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Abstract Text:

This project promoted better understanding of the influence of watershed management systems on the attitudes and actions of agricultural producers on California's Central Coast. Local watershed management systems include regulatory waivers of waste discharge requirements for irrigated agriculture producers conditioned, in part, by participation in education programs promoting individual farm water quality planning. We evaluated these systems using a social survey of approximately 1700 irrigated agriculture producers in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties on the Central Coast of California. The survey measured perceptions of water policy effectiveness, producer participation in education and individual farm water quality planning, and implementation of on-farm water quality management practices. The results of this project will be compared to social survey results from the Sacramento Valley of California, where watershed management systems have not included broad educational and water quality planning requirements for individual producers.

Impact Statement:

The outputs of the project will be identification of the factors explaining producer attitudes and actions as influenced by watershed management systems that actively promoted education in farm water quality planning. Project outcomes will include guidance to improve the design of critical system components to carry education into action, such as educational outreach materials, extension of information and innovations through trusted water quality management groups, suggestions for improvements to organizational structures, and revisions to current regulatory programs. The desired impact is successful implementation of on-farm water quality management practices.