



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development

World Wide Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>

Ben Higgins, State Director

Release No. 36.07

Contact: Sarah Pursley

Office: (530) 792-5801

Cell: (916) 798-9295

GRANT AIDS SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY CITRUS GROWERS

USDA Rural Development grant expands weather forecast program throughout citrus region.

VISALIA, Calif., July 25, 2007 – California Citrus Mutual (CCM) provides accurate, real-time weather reports and on-line forecasts to citrus growers in the San Joaquin Valley, California's predominant citrus region, which helped many growers minimize their losses during the 2007 freeze. With the help of a \$61,000 Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) from USDA Rural Development, CCM will soon expand their weather services into Kern County, the fastest growing citrus region in the San Joaquin Valley. Today, USDA Rural Development State Director Ben Higgins presented CCM Chairman Philip LoBue with a check for the RBEG funds at their monthly board meeting in Visalia.

“In today's global marketplace, California's citrus farmers understand that they need to stay on the cutting edge of innovation to stay competitive,” said Higgins. “These funds will help ensure growers throughout the entire San Joaquin Valley have timely access to critical information which can help minimize crop losses due to adverse weather conditions.”

USDA Rural Development's RBEG funds are available to rural communities, non-profit corporations and tribes for projects that strengthen the economic conditions of rural areas through business and job development and training as well as project planning. CCM will use funds to help expand their weather into Kern County, as well as make upgrades to their website and existing equipment.

“We are pleased to accept this grant on behalf of the citrus industry,” said LoBue. “Not only will these funds help expand service into Kern County, it will allow us to update and repair aging equipment, ensuring our growers continue to receive important weather information they rely on to help mitigate freezing weather conditions and the resulting economic impacts.”

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development has invested over \$76 billion since the beginning of the Bush Administration to provide equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. As a result, over 1.5 million jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at one of California's 25 local USDA Rural Development offices or by visiting <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>.

#

“Committed to the future of rural communities”
United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development
430 G Street, Agency 4169, Davis, CA 95616-4169
Telephone (530) 792-5801 Fax (530) 792-5837
<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>