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Sustainable GROUNDWATER Management *Reshapes* FARMING in California's *Central Valley*

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If we have stand to have a significant an impact on California's Central Valley farmers as the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), in response to decades of diminishing groundwater supplies, the act requires local agencies to keep their groundwater basins in balance, which can only be done by replenishing groundwater supplies or using less water.

SGMA is already galvanizing attention on groundwater management, and it is sure to reshape finances, farmland, and ways of life for years to come. The transition to sustainable groundwater use is a long-term process, and it will take some time before acknowledging the alternative—an omnes-taxe-all battle for dwindling water—would likely be worse, especially for small-scale farms. The new regulations instead offer a manageable, fair, and inclusive way for grower-governed agencies to help shape their own future in the local level.

Water tables have fallen for the last 25 or 30 years—been pumping more out of the ground than has been replenished. You just can't continue to do that," says Dan Dooley, a former principal of Fresno-based strategic consulting firm New Current Water and Land.

Farmers in California's Central Valley have been ordered to form groundwater agencies and develop plans to end groundwater overdraft by 2040.

> "We have historically, for the last 25 or 30 years, been pumping more out of the ground than has been replenished. You just can't continue to do that."
>
> —Dan Dooley, principal at New Current Water and Land

The act's initial deadlines for comprehensive local plans that avoid long groundwater balances by 2040 are fast approaching, and pressure. So far, the state has rejected two plans, and it has ordered 21 groundwater agencies to develop Sustainable Plans (GSPs). The state's review of GSPs, which are the Sustainable Groundwater's heart and potential outcomes aren't setting.

Central Valley agriculture has entered a new reality with SGPM. Having surveyed and thrived through more than a century of geographic and substantive, Valley farmers face changes in the near-term, medium-term, and for generations to come.

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across California, the agency accounting for around 70 percent of the groundwater pumping were required to form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies, in GSAs, and develop plans to end groundwater overdraft.