

New California Water Reductions Don't Apply to Farmers

Agriculture in California consumes about 80 percent of water used by humans. Brown's executive order requires farmers to submit information on water usage to the state, but not to cut back further.

Jay Lund of the UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences says across-the-board cuts to agriculture would be economically disruptive.

"The farmers are already receiving reductions, mandatory reductions by the state and federal water projects, and the local water projects," says Lund.

Lund says the state would have a hard time enforcing water cut backs on agriculture, because farm water usage data is not usually collected by the state.

"If you asked farmers to reduce their water use by 25 percent, you would have a very hard time enforcing that. Because farm water use is often not measured, and even if they measured it, the state is not organized to collect that," says Lund.

Lund says the Governor's executive order allows agricultural districts to manage their their drought plans locally.

Environmental advocates say the new rules let the farming sector "off the hook."

But farmers say they've already been hurt by the drought.

The state says farmers will receive no water this year from federally-managed systems, and only 20% from the state water project.