

# ENGAGING GROWERS

## IN THE CALIFORNIA SUSTAINABILITY ALMOND PROGRAM (CASP)

CASP was developed by the Almond Board of California, an organization dedicated to supporting almond growers. It is based on decades of research and focuses on providing value and feedback directly to growers through workshops, reporting tools, and decision support calculators. SureHarvest, the Almond Board's sustainability partner for CASP, has many years of experience with farm-level sustainability data collection and strategies for promoting continuous improvement.

Through years of working together, a key learning emerged. Engaging with almond growers directly in the orchard helped to earn their trust. Drawing from this experience, the Almond Board and SureHarvest developed the CASP web-based assessment and reporting platform with confidentiality in-mind: data is only shared on an aggregate level and an 'opt-in, opt-out' feature allows growers to confidentially share data with handlers on a voluntary basis.

## GROWER OUTREACH AND TOOLS

One of the initial challenges to scaling up participation in CASP was convincing growers that documenting their production practices was worth the time investment. Together, SureHarvest and the Almond Board developed solutions to bridge that gap, including outreach strategies and tools:

### WORKSHOPS AND MEETINGS

Workshops are organized by topic (e.g., pollinator health) and offer growers access to industry experts who share relevant information with participants as well as the opportunity to learn from their peers. Workshops are conducted in almond orchards across the growing region that stretches over 500 miles north to south. These workshops and other meetings also offer growers hands-on support completing self-assessments as well as updates on regulatory requirements.

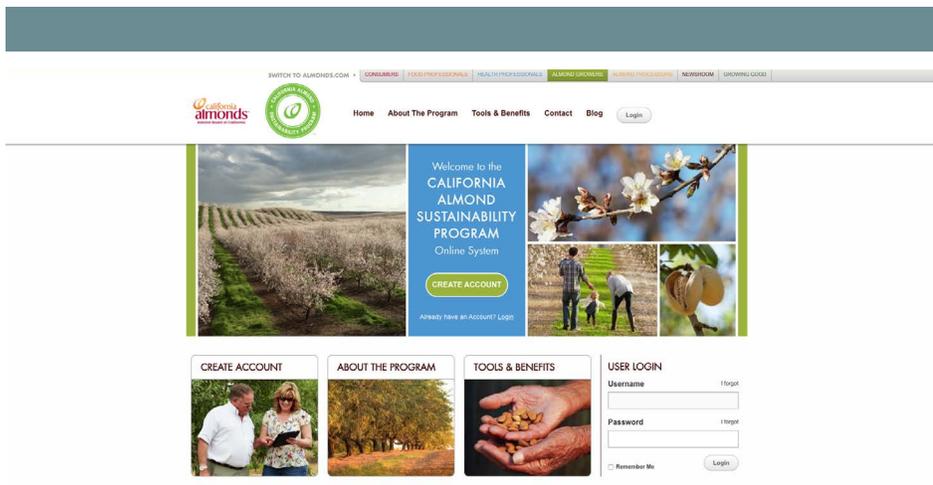
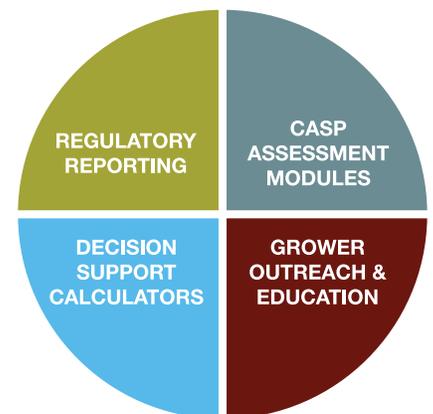
### OFFERING WEB-BASED REPORTS AND TOOLS

The CASP online platform, launched in 2012, allows growers to receive direct feedback through various online reports. These reports offer operationally relevant insights on growers' management practices and support efforts to optimize resource use efficiency. As the number of completed assessments grows, the CASP dataset continues to provide a robust baseline to establish statewide averages for each practice. With that data and upon completion of assessments, growers can see how they compare relative to the rest of the industry and prioritize areas for continuous improvement.



## CASP ASSESSMENT MODULES

- Irrigation Management
- Nutrient and Soil Management
- Air Quality
- Energy Efficiency
- Pest Management
- Ecosystem Management
- Financial Management
- Workplace and Communities
- Bee Health and Pollination



## LAUNCHING DECISION SUPPORT CALCULATORS

Using participant feedback, more tools have been added to CASP to help growers manage nutrient applications and irrigation efficiency. Growers who use the tools are able to save time working on regulatory reports, such as the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan required by the state's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program.

## DEDICATED ALMOND BOARD OF CALIFORNIA

In recent years, ABC has increased its investment in specialist support staff dedicated to interacting with growers in their orchards. This team helps growers to get involved with CASP and provides personalized answers to their questions.

The combination of outreach strategies and web-based tools has unlocked value for growers in the form of new insights on orchard management practices and regulatory relief through reporting tools. These investments have created tangible incentives for grower participation in CASP.

## WHAT'S NEXT: INCREASING ADOPTION AND CASP PARTICIPATION

The hard work on the part of growers, along with the outreach via workshops organized by the Almond Board of California over the last 10 years, demonstrate how a thoughtful and consistent approach to grower engagement and sustainability can yield great results.

CASP realized a new level of participation in 2018 with over 2,000 modules assessed, representing almost double the number of module assessments from the previous year. This robust participation in CASP should continue as investments in grower engagement increase, along with greater involvement by handlers as a part of the Supply Chain Program.



### Grower Perspective on CASP

**"The biggest benefit for me of participating in CASP is seeing what other growers are doing in the industry and how we can improve and incorporate new strategies into our operation. It has made me a better farmer."**

– Eric Genzoli, 4th generation almond grower, Turlock, CA

### NUMBER OF MODULE ASSESSMENTS

