

California Agricultural Mediation Program Is a New Free Resource to Help Farmers

Farming is an unpredictable business and farmers routinely face financial challenges. Narrow financial margins can result in temporary or long-term cash flow problems and unpredictable weather can result in significant losses. The California Agricultural Mediation Program (CALAMP) is a new resource to help farmers deal with financial and other problems.

Mediation is an informal way to resolve problems by utilizing an impartial person to assist the parties negotiate their differences. The mediator helps the parties by facilitating the discussion, identifying and clarifying the issues, and exploring options to resolve the problem. Mediations are confidential. CALAMP is certified by CDFA and receives a grant from the USDA that enables it to provide free mediation services to the agricultural community on many issues.

These issues include compliance issues with USDA farm and conservation programs, farm loans, rural water loans, credit issues, wetlands determinations, grazing on national forest system lands, and other agricultural issues deemed appropriate by the USDA Secretary of Agriculture.

Mediations involving farmers and creditors are the most common issue where CALAMP can help. When cash flow is tight, farmers often can't afford to make all their payments. If they fall behind on an account, typically the creditor charges interest. As the interest charges accrue, what started out as a small problem becomes a big problem.

CALAMP can help by working with farmers and creditors to work out installment payment plans that fit within the farmer's monthly cash flow and are fair to the creditor. While the creditors often make some compromises that make the monthly payments affordable to the farmer, the creditors are usually satisfied because they are receiving regular monthly payments and know the debt will be paid back.

Mediation is an ideal method to resolve financial and other agricultural problems because the parties tailor the solution to the circumstances, it often preserves the relationships, and it's faster and cheaper than other methods.

For more information: visit www.calamp.org or e-mail CALAMP at info@emcenter.org, or call (916) 330-4500 ext 101.