The impacts of the 2014 drought are likely to be much worse than in 2009 — with socio-economic impacts up to 50% more severe.

Groundwater Pumping

California received only 29% precipitation this year — the economic consequences of the drought are stacking up:

- About $450 million in additional costs for groundwater pumping and an estimated $800 million in increased energy costs
- Non-floodplain regions are becoming susceptible to flooding in some cases due to groundwater overdraft and subsidence, or sinking of the ground

Dry Horizons

A socio-economic forecast was done at the request of the California Department of Food and Agriculture by the UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences. The UC Davis researchers used computer models and the latest estimates of State Water Project, federal Central Valley Project, and local water deliveries and groundwater pumping capacities to forecast the economic effects of this year’s drought. The findings are troubling:

- Reduced surface water deliveries of 6.5 million acre-feet of water, or 32.5% of normal water use by Central Valley growers

- Fallowing of 410,000 acres means higher food prices and fewer choices for consumers

- Estimated loss of 14,500 seasonal and full-time jobs and household income decline of $555 million

- 60% of the economic losses will occur in the San Joaquin Valley, which is responsible for producing about 1/3 of the nation’s field, vegetable, fruit and nut crops

Data from: Preliminary 2014 Drought Economic Impact Estimates in Central Valley Agriculture, Richard Howitt, Josué Medellín-Azuara, Jay Lund, UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences prepared for California Department of Food and Agriculture, 5/19/14.