

Feds financially helping farmers in Calif., Nev.

By Associated Press

The Obama administration is awarding \$48 million in grants in 13 states, mostly in the West, to help farmers and others conserve water and energy amid drought and climate change.

The money will pay for improvements to irrigation and water delivery systems as well as provide technical assistance for planning and engineering conservation measures.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the grants Thursday in Brighton, just outside Denver. He was in Colorado to speak at the Aspen Ideas Festival in Aspen on Friday.

The grants will help complete 76 projects and save 123,000 acre-feet of water, or about 40 billion gallons, each year, said Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Estevan Lopez.

The projects are in California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

Vilsack said \$15 million of the grants will come from his department and \$32.6 million from the Bureau of Reclamation, part of the Interior Department.

He said the grants are an effort by the Agriculture and Interior departments to coordinate their drought-response efforts. President Barack Obama in March directed government agencies to cooperate on drought preparedness and planning.

"We're not going to go off in one direction and have the Bureau of Reclamation go off in another direction," Vilsack said.