Now that Governor Brown has ordered the state's first mandatory water restrictions, it's important to keep one number in mind: ***one-sixth.*** That is the amount of California water that goes to one crop: alfalfa. It's a pretty low

And our Catastrophe, Too

value crop. And it is not even for human consumption directly; it is used for cattle feed. It could be grown much more easily in the better-watered eastern US, but why should farmers worry about it? They are getting free water based on antiquated water rights law.

It's great that the Governor is taking these proactive steps:

> Cities have to stop watering the median strips that run down the middle of roads. The state will partner with local agencies to remove 50 million square feet of grass — the equivalent of about 1,150 football fields — and replace it with drought-tolerant landscaping.
>
> State agencies will create a temporary rebate program to encourage homeowners to replace water-guzzling appliances with high-efficiency ones. Golf courses, campuses and cemeteries must cut their water use. New developments will have to install drip or microspray systems if they irrigate with drinking water. Water agencies will discourage water waste with higher rates and fees.

But you might notice that agriculture escapes once again. Until and unless someone takes on the powerful Imperial Irrigation District, which owns close to one-third of the state's water rights, we will not fix this problem. When confronted with this, State Water Board director Felicia Marcus dismissed it as "finger-pointing," but sometimes finger-pointing is necessary when someone needs to be fingered. And Marcus might still be in denial:

> Brown's order requires agricultural districts in depleted groundwater basins to share data on groundwater use with the state.
>
> "The agricultural community is already being hit very hard," Marcus said.

> For the second year in a row, Central Valley growers without senior water rights are likely to get no supplies from the valley’s big federal irrigation project. Last year farmers idled about 500,000 acres for lack of water, and this year they may be forced to leave even more cropland unplanted.

The community is being hit hard because it has to *share data*? It’s a fair point about agriculture users without senior water rights, but that is the whole point: it is those *with* senior water rights that need to be cracked down on. Any agriculture user at this stage that is not using drip irrigation is guilty of waste. The entity that can enforce that is the State Water Resources Control Board. It’s time.

Yippee! We win again!