



CALIFORNIA FOOD + FARMING NETWORK

Growing California's Fair, Sustainable & Prosperous Food & Farming System

A platform for the next Governor & Legislature of California

October 2018



California needs a new framework to address food and farming, centered on those who are most vulnerable in the food and farming system. As a result, the challenges facing California's food & farming system are significant and so are the opportunities. The next California Governor has their work cut out for them, particularly in the current federal climate. Consider these statistics:

- **One in eight Californians face hunger** because of distribution problems and an incentives system that emphasizes exports over local food needs. At the same time, **one in four Californians suffers from diet-related diseases**, which is directly linked to social inequality, food availability and poverty.
- **Agriculture accounts for at least 8% of statewide greenhouse gas emissions**. And with current climate change patterns, **California faces significant yield reductions** for some of the state's most productive crops including almonds, wine grapes, strawberries, walnuts, peaches and cherries.
- **Over 200 million pounds of pesticides are used** in the state annually, including over **40 million pounds of carcinogens**. And fertilized fields in the San Joaquin Valley account for between 25 and 41% of all nitrous oxide emissions in California. And over 254,000 Californians in the San Joaquin and Salinas Valleys are at risk for nitrate contamination in their drinking water, often from fertilizers.
- The pay gap for California restaurant workers, particularly women and people of color compared to their white counterparts is significant; **people of color earn \$6.12 less** and white women earn \$3.34 per hour less than white men in the San Francisco Bay Area.
- **The largest 2% of California farms make up over 60% of farm sales** in the state. And the average age of a California farmer is over 60 years old.
- Food continues to be the single most prevalent material in California's waste stream, with **over 5.5 million tons of food sent to the landfill every year**. Landfilling uneaten food and other organic waste releases more than 8.3 million tons of greenhouse gases each year in California, comprising 20% of the state's methane emissions.

These numbers can seem disheartening, and it's important to remember there are people behind these statistics. But there are opportunities to not only address these threats but reverse the broader trends. The below recommendations, compiled by a number of organizations working in the food and farming sector, reflect the diversity of the needs of California communities and outline pathways for advancing solutions together.

Ecological Agriculture and Food Production

It time's to develop a comprehensive plan for California that fundamentally shifts agriculture and food production so that it is environmentally, socially and economically just. This includes:

- **Phasing out all neurotoxic organophosphate pesticides (Administrative):** The use of volatile and hazardous pesticides such as chlorpyrifos, a known Prop 65 neurotoxicant, continues in agricultural fields despite links to impacts on children's developing brains. Given the persistence of these chemicals in the air, and impacts on water, food, pollinators, farmworkers, and rural communities, California should move forward with phasing these pesticides out of production.
- **Enlarging and strengthening the state's role in promoting organic agriculture (Legislative):** California needs to provide regulatory support and additional incentive dollars for certified organic agriculture that protects worker and consumer health, promotes soil health, is more climate resilient, and is more profitable for farmers. While California has the largest number of farms in organic production (2,713) in the country, this pales in comparison to the total number of farms in the state (over 77,000). The state should provide additional support to farmers, particularly during the three-year transition period to organic.
- **Making a definitive determination about safety of oil wastewater (Legislative):** Amid growing controversy around the impacts of oil production in the fertile San Joaquin Valley, questions remain as to whether it is safe to use lightly treated wastewater from oil production to water food crops and recharge groundwater basins. If the state is unable to make this assessment in a timely fashion, new rules should order the immediate and swift termination of the practice.
- **Implementing laws that encourage the use of compost and mandate the recycling of organic waste (Administrative, Budget):** Organic materials make up two-thirds of the waste stream, but when managed outside the landfill, these same materials can be composted into a valuable soil amendment that sequesters carbon, increases soil water-holding capacity, prevents erosion, and reduces impacts of, and need for, synthetic fertilizers. California should prioritize the implementation of statewide organic waste collection programs, identify public funding sources to expand and develop organic waste recycling infrastructure, encourage the use of healthy soils practices, enforce AB 1826 (Chesbro, 2014), and fully implement SB 1383 (Lara, 2016) in ways that reduce environmental and health impacts in already overburdened communities.

- **Providing technical assistance & incentives for transitioning, organic and other ecological farmers (Administrative, Budget):** Modest incentives through the state's climate smart agriculture programs and federal conservation programs aren't enough to support California farmers. California should make deeper investments in farmers who adopt practices to reduce pesticide use, increase biodiversity, save water, and sequester carbon.
- **Effectively implementing SB 27 (Livestock: Use of Antimicrobial Drugs) (Administrative):** SB 27 protects against antibiotic resistance by restricting the regular use of antibiotics in California animal agriculture operations. Given the grave public health threat posed by antibiotic overuse in livestock, the state should send a clear signal to producers that on-farm antibiotic use practices need to change. The California Department of Food & Agriculture has failed in this area thus far.

Economic Viability of Local Food and Small-Scale Agriculture

Given increased consolidation in the food and farming sector, as well as the significant positive impacts of local production to local economies, it remains important to support the economic viability of smaller food and farm entrepreneurs in the marketplace. First steps include:

- **Investing in small growers by enhancing market opportunities (Budget, Administrative):** California should build capacity for small growers and historically underserved farmers to sell to institutional buyers such as schools, hospitals and prisons. The state should also provide infrastructure and funding to the California Farm to School Network to support under-resourced rural schools.
- **Providing necessary funding for farmer education & support (Budget):** Cooperative Extension, particularly the Small Farm Program, provides scientifically rigorous and locally relevant support for farmers, including technical assistance and conservation planning. Critical funding to Cooperative Extension hasn't been restored since the 1990s, leaving farmers — particularly diversified and farmers of color — without the support they need to remain successful. California needs to invest in these farmers and socially disadvantaged communities and provide culturally-relevant technical assistance.
- **Enhancing land security for farmers (Budget, Legislative):** Leasing and owning land remains one of the most difficult challenges facing California farmers, particularly for beginning and immigrant farmers. The state should help broker better land access for these farmers, including utilization of tax credits, conservation easements, and facilitation of cooperative models of ownership.

- **Supporting land-based education and small farm incubation (Legislative, Budget):** In addition to tending the fields, many farmworkers have the ‘will and skill’ to farm independently. Support for land-based education and farm incubation will enable aspiring farmers—immigrant field laborers included—to fill the boots of California’s aging farm owners and help reinvigo- rate the rural economy.
- **Providing access to more state and coun- ty-level resources to help farmers navigate existing regulatory hurdles (Legislative, Bud- get):** Given the complexity and number of rules that farmers, particularly smaller farmers, must face, California should provide culturally appropriate and accessible online and offline support for farmers to navigate these regulations. In particular, officials should consider requir- ing a county-level farmer ombudsperson.

Improved Access to Healthy Food & Beverages

It’s time to adopt an equity framework approach to food access, as there’s more to the issue than simply someone’s physical access to food. California needs to address food access from a framework of equity in income, education, health access, culturally relevant foods, etc., targeting those most in need due to racial, gender and geographic dispari- ties. Officials should fund and consider research on the food impacts of inequalities in our state, with a focus on income, race, gender, education, and health care inequality. The state must ensure that nutrition resources are culturally relevant to the mosaic of traditions, religions, and food preferences among Californians. Some initial steps include:

- **Advancing a statewide sugary beverage fee (Legislative):** In a disappointing move, the 2018 legislature passed a measure to preempt local governments from enacting local sugary beverage fees. The Governor should work with the legislature to adopt a statewide fee that helps address sugary beverage consumption and directs funding to localized high-impact programs that promote physical activity and healthy eating.
- **Expanding the Farm to Food Bank Tax Credit (Legislative):** Currently, the state provides a tax credit for eligible farmers who donate fresh produce to food banks or other charitable feeding groups. However, the credit is restricted to fresh produce. This means that several categories of healthy, California grown foods— from rice and beans to canned peaches, milk or peanut butter—are ineligible. These feeding groups, much like produce growers, still face storage and cooling costs for donations, which the credit helps offset. Expanding prod- uct eligibility will reduce waste across the food system, helping the state reduce methane emissions and meet

its climate goals, while providing access to protein items needed for balanced nutrition.

- **Fully funding the CalFood Program (Budget):** CalFood enables food banks to purchase only California grown foods, especially protein and produce items vital for a healthy population. Fully funding this program at \$20.6 million annually would provide more than 100 million meals comprised of California foods to those in need, leveraging the efficient purchasing power of food banks to stretch state resources while supporting our agri- cultural sector.
- **Reducing food waste generated in the state and recover edible food to feed people (Leg- islative, Budget):** Minimizing food waste through prevention or rescuing edible food conserves the resources that go into growing, processing, and transporting uneaten food. California should prioritize the successful implementation of the food waste prevention and rescue goals of SB 1383 (Lara, 2016) and increase funding for CalRecycle’s Food Waste Prevention and Rescue grant program.
- **Maximizing Participation in Nutrition Pro- grams (Administrative, Budget):** California has made incredible strides in improving the reach of federal nutrition programs such as CalFresh, school meals, and the nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). However there are still many opportunities to ensure that every eligible Californian receives the benefits from these programs. There is an urgent need to stream- line enrollment and benefits distribution to minimize churn and administrative burden on Californians in need. Every \$1 billion in CalFresh benefits, for example, creates as many as 14,000 jobs in California’s food-rich economy by making sure grocery stores have customers and there is demand for farmers’ harvests. Many of these programs also directly benefit small producers such as the farmers markets programs in CalFresh and WIC.
- **Advancing consistent and increased funding for California Nutrition Incentive Program (Budget):** The state has begun investing in and has already seen the benefits of healthy food incentive programs, which match customers’ CalFresh benefits so clients can purchase even more fruits and vegetables. These programs have proven to be a win-win-win for California’s low-income families, farmers, and the econ- omy, especially when offered through direct marketing outlets like farmers’ markets. The 2018 Market Match Impact Report showed that an invest- ment of \$2.5 million in incentives led to \$9.7 million in economic impact— that’s a 360% social return on invest- ment. Demand still outstrips funding for these incredibly popular and effective programs. The State currently funds



the program at \$5M per year, but funding should be increased and made baseline to ensure CNIP's long-term sustainability.

- **Creating a one-stop shop for critical food and health services (Administrative, Budget):** The state must significantly improve and streamline access to food assistance, health coverage and other safety net services for low-income Californians through a “one-stop shop” or horizontal integration approach. This would ensure that low-income Californians can more easily access food assistance along with healthcare and other services for which they are eligible.
- **Establishing universally free school meals in all California schools (Legislative):** All students should be able to rely on a healthy meal regardless of their parents' ability to pay. School meals should include nutritious, fresh California-grown foods to the greatest extent possible by incentivizing schools to purchase California-grown foods and prepare school meals with minimally-processed foods.

Food Chain Worker Advancement

Over 2 million Californians, or 13% percent of the state's workforce, work in the food system, including farm labor, processing, distribution and sales. Lifting up food chain workers, including ensuring living wages and workplace safety, from farmworkers to processors to restaurant workers, is critical to the long-term health and vibrancy of our communities. Some initial steps include:

- **Establishing workplace democracy to ensure community & consumer safety (Administrative, Legislative):** When workers are able to speak up against violations of health & safety measures and aren't overworking, they are more productive, better able to contribute to our communities and able to speak out for the benefit of food consumers. California officials need to ensure continued workplace democracy, including the right to organize unions and fair contracts, particularly in the face of the *Janus v. AFSCME* court decision.
- **Increasing penalties for pesticide drift incidents (Legislative):** Given several large-scale pesticide drift incidents over the past year, as well as the limited fines to those who expose farmworkers to harmful products, fines and oversight should be increased to prevent future events, ensure proper investigation and pay for their impacts.
- **Ensuring full implementation of a living wage beyond minimum wage increases (Legislative):** It is sadly ironic that 23% of food system workers have to use food stamps. Beyond a minimum wage increase, policies such as providing stability in scheduling so that low-wage workers can earn an adequate living for their families, must be implemented.

- **Committing to protection for sanctuary communities (Administrative):** California's protections for immigrants remain under threat, including for mixed-status farms and workers across the food chain. California officials should continue to block threats of deportation, and uphold accountability for fair pay and equal treatment for all.

The **California Food & Farming Network (CFFN)** is made up of over fifty organizations from across the state striving to improve the food and farming system. Collectively, CFFN is dedicated to advancing state policies that are rooted in communities, promote fairness and racial equity, secure financial prosperity and advance environmental sustainability. We share information, provide expertise, build alignment and advance policies through the multi-sector network.

Participating members include:

Agriculture & Land Based Training Association
Berkeley Food Institute
CA4Health
Californians Against Waste
California Alliance of Farmers' Markets
California Association of Food Banks
California Farmers Union
California FarmLink
California Food Policy Advocates
California Institute for Rural Studies
Californians Against Waste
Californians for Pesticide Reform
Center for Food Safety
Community Alliance for Agroecology
Ecology Center
Environmental Working Group
Los Angeles Food Policy Council
Natural Resources Defense Council
Occidental Arts & Ecology Center
Pesticide Action Network
Public Health Institute
Roots of Change
Sacramento Food Policy Council
Slow Food California
United Food & Commercial Workers - Western States Council



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