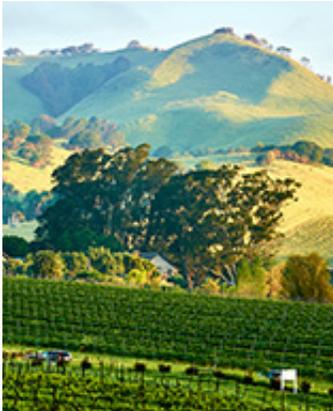


A Menu for Advancing California's Equitable and Agroecological Food and Farming System

A Briefing Packet for California's State Leaders



What is this briefing packet?

We know there are many inequities facing Californians right now and that numerous competing priorities are brought to the legislature each year. This briefing packet provides the background, potential solutions, and resources to serve your communities' food and farming interests. It is divided into four pillars: **Regional Food System Resilience; Farmworker and Food Chain Worker Advancement; Improved Access to Healthy Food; Agroecological Food and Farming Practices**; and, also includes an Appendix with Legislative History. Despite these four pillars, it is important to remember that the food and farming system is just that—a system, in which each of these pillars is inextricably linked. To effectively address the system's challenges, California must comprehensively address our food and farming system to ensure it is equitable.

The California Food and Farming Network is a network of almost 50 members across the state, building a movement centered on racial equity to transform the food and farming system through state policies.

Overview: Transforming California's Food & Farming System

The California Food and Farming Network (CFFN) envisions an equitable and agroecological food and farming system that has recognized and repaired injustices to Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) workers, producers and communities, and which generates healthy, affordable, accessible, nutritious and culturally appropriate food and agricultural products.

California leaders have an opportunity to build the system we imagine even in the face of threats from climate change, racial inequities, and public health crises. In fact, food and farm policies can help mitigate and transform these crises. As we build this thriving, equitable food and farming system, we must consider foundational aspects of California's food system:

California is home to a multi-billion dollar agricultural industry that provides hundreds of thousands of jobs. **Over a third of the country's vegetables and two-thirds of the country's fruits and nuts are grown in California.**¹ In 2020, California accounted for 36% of all organic production.²

In the midst of California's megadrought, production costs have risen and **\$1.7 billion in farm revenue was lost in 2021**,³ with **76% of California's small-scale farmers reporting being negatively impacted by drought.**⁴

California agriculture used **209 million pounds of pesticides in 2018**, and **counties with a majority Latinx population use 906% more pesticides per square mile** than counties with fewer than 24% Latinx residents.⁵ The environmental and health costs of pesticide use are often borne by communities of color.⁶

CalFresh (known federally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP) provides benefits that help households afford food. **Participating in CalFresh prevents poverty for nearly 700,000 Californians annually.**⁷ Even so, **1 in 5 Californians face hunger.**⁸ This issue is exacerbated by racial inequities, with Black and Latinx individuals more likely to worry about running out of food,⁹ and 23% of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander residents, in Los Angeles County alone, living in food insecure households.¹⁰

Health care costs associated with food insecurity cost California more than \$7 billion annually, more than any other state in the United States.¹¹

California employs an estimated **800,000 farmworkers**, many of them undocumented, who serve as a backbone for much of the U.S. food system. These workers earn an **average annual income of less than \$18,000** and only **37% are estimated to have health insurance.**¹² Rising temperatures also present more dangerous working conditions for an already-hazardous occupation.¹³

Approximately 2.3 million undocumented immigrants contribute to California's rich diversity and economy, yet **45% of them are affected by food insecurity**¹⁴ and the majority remain ineligible to participate in the California Food Assistance Program.¹⁵

In California more than **80% of farms operate on less than 180 acres** and nearly three-fourths operate on **less than \$100,000 in annual sales.**¹⁶

The state's average temperature is projected to **increase an additional 1.5 to 4.5 degrees C by the end of the 21st century.** Heat waves and fewer cool nights can lead to more pest pressure, diseases and weeds. Without adaptive measures, yields of almonds, walnuts, oranges, and table grapes may see a **20% decline and avocados a 40% decline by 2050.**¹⁷

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Key Takeaways

Regional Food System Resilience

- Our current infrastructure silos sectors despite their interconnectivity. Today's food supply chain is large and rigid, unable to respond quickly to address modern day disruptions (e.g., fire, drought, pandemics) while lacking the ability to support local food economies.
- California grows the majority of food for our nation, and yet 1 in 5 Californians are hungry, 49% of the Black, Indigenous, and people of color small farmers experience food insecurity, and the state's food chain workers live in poverty. This is not our definition of a thriving industry.
- Extreme concentration of infrastructure, under-investment and divestment in rural regions over the last 50 years have resulted in limited opportunities for local, small businesses to thrive.
- Building integrated regional food system infrastructure by investing in regional food hubs, community food retailers, and collective processing facilities can simultaneously solve economic, environmental, and food security challenges, benefiting farmers, land stewards, farmworkers, the climate, and local communities.

Farmworker and Food Chain Worker Advancement

- Farmworkers and food chain workers are essential to the function of California's agricultural system, and yet work in one of the most dangerous industries in the nation. The state can ensure that these workers enjoy the safe working conditions they deserve by improving enforcement of existing laws and establishing processes to help them navigate filing workplace complaints.
- With 90% of California's agricultural workers from Mexico and Central America, all state programs serving farmworkers must be linguistically accessible.
- With climate-fueled crises as the new normal, the state needs to create safety net pay or insurance to compensate all farmworkers—regardless of immigration status—impacted by smoke, extreme heat, and drought.

Improved Access to Healthy Food

- 1 in 5 Californians are struggling with food insecurity; with deep disparities for Black and Latinx people.
- Barriers still exist for accessing federal benefits that Californians are eligible for—in the CalFresh (SNAP) program, only 59% of likely-eligible people are enrolled. It benefits our entire state to maximize our federal benefit drawdown by improving access to CalFresh. \$1 spent in CalFresh generates up to \$1.80 in economic activity.

- California is a national leader in implementing systemic solutions to hunger, such as the California Food Assistance Program and School Meals for All.
- California is a state with an unparalleled farming system that can feed everyone if we focus on the root causes of inequitable access: systemic racism.

Agroecological Food and Farming

- California food and farming is largely dominated by a conventional, chemical-dependent agricultural system that harms farmworkers, small farmers, farmers of color and the environment.
- Agroecology, an approach that incorporates ecological principles and practices to farming, presents an alternative that works with nature, not against it, and upholds the well-being and agency of those directly implicated in land work (i.e. farmworkers, farmers, indigenous communities, and community-based organizations).
- California can promote agroecology by supporting and increasing the equity of climate smart agriculture programs and increasing access and tenure to farmland of small-scale farmers, Indigenous communities, farmers of color and farmworkers.
- The state needs to adopt concrete goals to reduce usage of chemical pesticides, increase support for farmers to transition to less chemical-dependent farming systems like diversified organic farming, and reform the Department of Pesticide Regulation.

CFFN'S Commitment to Racial Equity:

CFFN believes that a food and farming system that is not just, equitable, and inclusive is not sustainable, and in order to create the food and farming system that the world needs, it is imperative that we dismantle oppression and work towards racial equity. We believe that public policy has played a central role in institutionalizing racism, and must be used to dismantle it. Advancing policies that center racial equity and are rooted in the lived experiences of impacted communities is an essential strategy for transforming systems and creating lasting change. Read our full [Racial Equity Statement here](#).

Four Ingredients to Build an Equitable Food and Farming System



environmental justice



regional food system resilience



climate justice



water justice



health equity



farmworker and food chain worker advancement



improved access to healthy food



agroecological food and farming



urban and rural solidarity



immigration reform



racial justice



CALIFORNIA FOOD + FARMING NETWORK

CFFN believes these four ingredients are interconnected and essential to address the challenges California faces. They build on and contribute to other social justice movements to create a healthier, more just California.

Regional Food System Resilience

Why This Matters

Today's unprecedented set of ecological (fires and drought), epidemiological (pandemics) and technical (cyber attacks¹⁸) emergencies have dramatically revealed the shortcomings in our nation's food system. It is evident these emergencies have become our new normal and the seemingly robust and multi-trillion dollar globalized food system is ill-equipped to handle disruption and leaves little economic returns or healthy food for our communities.

A resilient regional food system is able to withstand and recover from disruptions so that all people have access to nutritious and culturally relevant food. It is one that heals communities and where everyone has sovereignty and dignity to determine the food they produce or eat, providing the intangible but powerful benefit of promoting environmental awareness, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering a sense of place.

Challenges

California's multi-billion dollar agricultural industry provides hundreds of thousands of jobs and produces a bounty of food, and yet 1 in 5 Californians are hungry¹⁹, 49% of the Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) small farmers experience food insecurity²⁰, and the state's food chain workers live in poverty. This is not our definition of a thriving industry. Our food system must shift to not only feeding the nation, but also ensuring our own communities are nourished and resilient.

COVID-19 revealed and exacerbated these issues, with USDA Secretary Vilsack affirming that the pandemic "led to massive disruption for growers and food workers. It exposed a food system that was rigid, consolidated, and fragile. Meanwhile, those growing, processing and preparing our food are earning less each year in a system that rewards size over all else."²¹ Extreme concentration of infrastructure, under-investment and divestment in rural regions over the last 50 years have resulted in limited opportunities for small businesses to thrive, lack of small regional food production, aggregation and processing facilities, as well as minimal technical assistance to support community food producers in an ever changing environment. We must simultaneously protect against disruptions, and reverse the epidemic of diet-related disease and the degradation of rural and tribal economies that have resulted from these trends.



Food sovereignty: All people have the right to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound methods, and to define and prosper in their own food and agriculture systems.

Shared Economic Prosperity: All people have equitable opportunity to fully participate and build wealth in the food and farming system, contributing their food and ag cultures, knowledge and skills to strengthen and diversify opportunities and build resilience for all.



Solutions

Our current infrastructure silos sectors despite their interconnectivity. Integrated regional food system infrastructure would equitably benefit the farmer, land steward, farmworker, environment and communities eating its bounty. Regional crop and livestock facilities will open more competitive markets for small- and medium-sized farms, which make up over 85% of California's farms. The state must stimulate this regionalization to simultaneously solve economic, environmental, and food security challenges within tribal lands and other underserved communities. Solutions include:

Infrastructure Investments

- Provide grants to purchase infrastructure, coupled with technical assistance for: small- and mid-scale farm tool sharing systems, technology, cold storage, refrigerated and delivery trucks, commercial kitchens/food processing and preservation facilities (which can support organic waste reduction compliance), food aggregation facilities, and community garden and orchard development.
- Expand year-round infrastructure for certified farmers' and tribe-operated fisherman's markets.
- Invest in human infrastructure for community food systems planning and implementation.

Training & Technical Assistance

- Establish workforce development programs to support the processing and institutional procurement of California's organic produce, proteins from climate-friendly livestock operations, sustainable yield fish catch, and other sources of culturally-relevant food.
- Empower youth to grow their own food through a *Garden to College* pipeline emphasizing community gardening, horticulture, and education.
- Provide small and BIPOC farmers with culturally and linguistically appropriate technical assistance to ensure they have access to government resources, education and loans.

Procurement & Food Service

- Provide grants for dining areas, food preparation, and retail to be included in low-income housing projects and food insecure neighborhoods.
- Expand the Healthy Refrigeration Grant Programs to ensure California captures its fair share of USDA loans and grants aimed at addressing the nation's processing challenge.
- Leverage public food purchasing dollars to support small- to mid- sized agricultural producers.

For examples of past and ongoing legislation see [Appendix A](#).



Farmworker and Food Chain Worker Advancement

Why This Matters

There are nearly 800,000 agricultural workers in California. These primarily Latinx and Indigenous Mexican and Central American immigrants bring with them cultural and technical knowledge of farming systems from their countries of origin and are the drivers of California's agricultural industry. Despite their central role in producing food for our state—and the world—agricultural workers labor for low wages in one of the most dangerous industries in the nation, facing physically demanding work, exposure to pesticides, high heat and wildfire smoke, and high rates of sexual harassment and violence in the workplace.

These unacceptable conditions are not inevitable or random. Today the majority of our farmers, farmworkers, food industry workers and food service providers are Black, Indigenous, and people of color, undocumented, or live in mixed-immigration status families. An estimated 90% of California's agricultural workers are foreign born—85% from Mexico and 5% from Central America. Approximately 57% are unauthorized to work in the United States.²² The precarious and dangerous position that the nation's broken immigration system puts these workers in contributes to their exploitation, while endangering our nation's food security since working conditions and pay discourage long term employment in agriculture for those that can—or are forced to—find a way out.

Challenges

While state worker protection agencies have a role in ensuring the health, safety, and fair employment practices, the enforcement systems established to protect food chain workers are failing to do so. One reason is that these systems depend on those workers to file complaints, but complicated claims processes, mistrust of government agencies, and fear of retaliation, deter workers—both undocumented and documented—from filing complaints. These challenges are exacerbated by the language inaccessibility within our state agencies. In many cases, government offices do not have websites or voice messages in Spanish, and lack adequate staff that can speak Spanish, Indigenous, or other non-English languages spoken by workers, causing many farmworkers to miss critical information surrounding workplace safety and labor rights and making navigating the complex network of state worker protection agencies nearly impossible.

Food system employers who wish to avoid their responsibilities to create safe working conditions, provide safety trainings and pay livable wages have been aided in recent decades



Empowered Workers: Workers are respected and valued as essential to the survival and health of our communities, share in the wealth of their labor, have the power to shape their working conditions and lives, and the opportunity to become owners or prosper within the food system.

by a shift toward hiring through farm labor contractors and subcontractors in the field and temporary agencies inside food processing facilities. There has been an exponential growth in the use of the H-2A temporary worker visa program, which sees high rates of labor violations because of the vulnerability of temporary migrant workers whose housing, transportation, food, and visas are managed by their employers.

The poverty wages farmworkers and food chain workers receive force them to live in unsafe and overcrowded housing, making them more susceptible to public health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. The climate crisis is also causing an increase in the number of days with extreme heat, hazardous wildfire smoke, and droughts forcing land to be left unplanted, which decreases work opportunities. Most farmworkers are excluded from safety net programs due to their immigration status, including unemployment insurance, forcing workers to seek out work in dangerous conditions to survive disasters and decreasing their ability to speak up for fear of retaliation. Further, while investment in workforce development is common in many economic sectors, it has been absent for agricultural and food sector workers.

Solutions

Investments that directly support food and farm workers are critical to the recovery and well-being of our state as a whole and the nation's food security.

Improve workplace safety for farmworkers and food chain workers, including:

- Increase enforcement of state agency regulations.
- Improve regulations on farm labor contractors and temporary hiring agencies, including improved training and education on workers rights and harassment.
- Establish interagency collaboration between Cal/OSHA, Agricultural Labor Relations Board, Labor Commissioner's Office, CA Department of Public Health, Workforce Development Agency, etc. to help workers navigate reporting of health and safety labor law violations more efficiently.
- Implement diverse and efficient language accessibility to all statewide regulatory agencies, including worker outreach and information on enforcement actions in languages understood by workers.
- Develop a multilingual audio and text-based notification system to inform essential frontline workers about conditions like heat and smoke that can impact their health.
- Improve and expand affordable housing for essential food chain workers, with farmworkers' specific needs in mind, including proper HVAC systems and adequate weatherization for smoke and extreme heat.
- Mitigate chemical pesticide use, as explained in the [Agroecological Food & Farming Section](#).

Living wage, comprehensive benefits and professional development should be guaranteed for the essential labor these workers provide our state:

- All food chain workers should have livable wages with professional benefits, including paid sick leave, disability insurance, parental leave, pension plans, and overtime for all workers, regardless of citizenship status.
- Create a supplemental paid sick leave benefit to cover quarantine and infection times during public health emergencies.
- Extend access to safety net programs for undocumented immigrants, including unemployment insurance and food benefits (see Food4All in the Improved Access to Healthy Food section).
- Create safety net pay or insurance to compensate farmworkers and food processing workers during climate-fueled crises, regardless of immigration status.
- Build food sector workforce development programs, informed by workers' input, by identifying training opportunities for those who want to stay in ag and those who want pathways into other sectors.
- Appropriate funding for English language proficiency and digital literacy training so workers can advance to higher paying positions.
- Reduce barriers to unionization of farmworkers, such as allowing mail-in ballots for union elections.

For examples of past and ongoing legislation see [Appendix A](#).



Improved Access to Healthy Food

Why This Matters

Everyone deserves the right to nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate, and traditional foods they need to thrive. And yet, according to a recent statewide survey, three in four Californians with low or moderate income worried about running out of food in the past year, and three in five actually did run out of food.²³ The rates of food insecurity across race are especially stark for households with children: an overall rate of 27.8%, and, much worse, 38.1% of Latinx families and 33.8% of Black families are facing irreparable harm from hunger.²⁴ Of the total number of households that receive CalFresh, only 5% are Asian American, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander backgrounds, even though these groups comprise around 16% of the state's total population.²⁵

As a network, we approach our work from the perspective that there is sufficient food to meet all communities' needs without exploitation of people or the planet when resources are distributed equitably and managed responsibly. Hunger is a failure of equitable distribution and access—economic, physical, and cultural—not scarcity or inadequate production. In fact, California is a state with an unparalleled farming system that can feed everyone if we focus on the root causes of inequitable access: systemic racism. People aren't hungry because there's not enough food, they are hungry because of systemic racism.²⁶

Challenges

With the USDA reporting that the CalFresh (SNAP) participation rate of 59% among the working poor in California is one of the lowest in the country,²⁷ we have work to do to remove obstacles and improve access to this crucial anti-hunger program. Similarly, during the 2019/20 school year, only 56% of students participated in school meals.²⁸ These compounding failures of social safety nets to reduce food insecurity lead to disparate health outcomes among racial groups and increased health care spending. In 2020, nearly 11% of all Californians, nearly 13% of Latinx and 15.5% of African Americans, have been diagnosed with diabetes in California.²⁹ Health care costs associated with food insecurity cost California more than \$7 billion annually, more than any other state in the United States.³⁰

Expanding crucial state safety net programs to Californians that have historically been excluded, and fully investing in them is necessary to keep Californians fed, and at the same time we must be thinking creatively about how to fully eradicate hunger in our communities by addressing root causes of hunger.



Food is a Human Right: All communities have access to the nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate, and traditional food they need to thrive.



Solutions

There are a number of crucial safety net programs in California that our state must continue to fully fund and expand:

- Scale up investments in the California Food Assistance Program to expand vital food assistance to everyone (all ages) regardless of immigration status.
- Continue to simplify the CalFresh application and renewal process to increase the state's low participation rate from only 59% to meet or exceed the national average of 85%, which requires improving the program's cultural and linguistic accessibility in languages such as Chinese, Korean and Spanish.
- Increase the baseline benefits for CalFresh to reflect the high cost of living in California.
- Continuously appropriate and expand funds to the CA Nutrition Incentive Program (CNIP), which provides fruit and vegetable supplemental benefits. CNIP also supports the Farmers Market Nutrition Program, which provides coupons to seniors and WIC recipients to shop at eligible farmers' markets.
- Continue to fully fund the CalFood program that supports food banks in purchasing CA grown foods.
- Implement the Tribal Nutrition Assistance Program with appropriate consultation from tribes.
- Ensure successful implementation of School Meals for All, including maximizing meaningful student participation, funding school kitchen infrastructure and improving

school food procurement by supporting districts to buy healthy food that supports ecological health, fair treatment of workers and benefits local economies.

- Expand access to nutrition programs in childcare settings, including ending the racist "pay penalty" for family child care home providers to help ensure that child care providers are fairly compensated for meal service.
- Transition medically supportive food and nutrition interventions, such as produce prescriptions, medically supportive groceries and medically tailored meals, from optional services to be covered by Medi-Cal.

Communities are well-positioned to know how to meet their food needs, including accessing culturally appropriate foods that support their local economies:

- Support farmers and food banks to work together to feed their own communities.
- Invest in community health funds, such as the Health Equity and Racial Justice Fund, where community based organizations can choose how to address food insecurity.
- Place a fee on sugar-sweetened beverages to combat an epidemic of diet-related diseases and to allow communities resources and autonomy in deciding how to foster preventive health practices.

For examples of past and ongoing legislation see [Appendix A](#).



Agroecological Food & Farming

Why This Matters

California's food and farming system is largely dominated by conventional, industrial agriculture that harms farmworkers, small farmers, land stewards, farmers of color and the environment. These farming systems are largely producing food for export rather than local consumption, while contributing significantly to the environmental health and climate crises we face. And yet, continuing food production in California—particularly diversified small- and medium-scale farming that produces food consumed right here in California—is essential to our survival and wellbeing. Unfortunately, California is losing at least four small farms a day³¹—and it is very clear why—challenges facing small farmers are overwhelming, making the simple act of growing food to feed communities an uphill battle.

Agroecology is a solution. Agroecology means farming in a way that respects nature while centering the decision-making power of farmworkers, farmers, Indigenous communities and community-based organizations. It promotes conserving resources, minimizing chemical inputs and enhancing biological processes that improve efficiency. Agroecological practices can transform our farming landscape to a model that mitigates climate change and increases resilience by building soil health, increasing water retention, and enhancing biodiversity.

Challenges

Small- to mid-scale family farms struggle to thrive for many reasons. The realities of the climate crisis disproportionately affect people who make a livelihood working the land, which includes the 1 in 5 California farmers who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).³² This is exacerbated by existing government programs that prioritize funds for large, industrial monoculture systems and are fundamentally inaccessible to diversified farming systems operated by underserved communities. This is evident in the fact that Asian American farmers that receive federal payment get \$15,748 on average, Latinx farmers receive \$12,585, American Indian farmers receive \$11,297 and Pacific Islander farmers receive \$8,537 to white farmers \$19,711.³³

What's more, most farmers are limited in their ability to invest in sustainable land stewardship practices given the risk of being forcibly removed from land they do not own. With 50% of California cropland owned by 5% of the total landowners, and 37% of land owned by non-farmers and rented or leased, it is evident that the foundations of our agricultural system are not owned by our communities but by large companies and non-farmer investors.



Ecological Health: Our food and farming system is rooted in agroecological systems determined by impacted communities, shifting power away from corporate agribusiness. This means honoring Indigenous and cultural practices, and farming in harmony with nature so that people and the land are nourished and healed.

These interests invest in conventional agriculture systems that rely heavily on chemical inputs and contract labor. Such agricultural operations typically rely on extractive models focused on maximizing the return on investments and exports, rather than investing in our communities and ecosystems. The reliance on chemical fertilizers and pesticides (which are applied at a rate 4.5 times higher than the national average³⁴) has created a public health crisis, primarily amongst farmworkers and rural Latinx communities who are most impacted by their use. Chemical fertilizers and pesticides lead to water and air pollution that can cause acute poisoning and long-term disease, from developmental disorders in children to cancer. They also harm biodiversity, soil health and water quality.

Climate change is worsening many of these problems with increased pest pressure and decreased crop resilience, leading to more pesticide use and exposure. At the same time, small-scale and underserved food producers are losing their ability to farm due to drought, which is exacerbated by certain large-scale farms using more than their fair share of water. Farmers are also at risk from worsening wildfires, damaging their crops, infrastructure and homes.

Solutions

Many of the problems associated with our current model of agriculture in California can be solved through transitioning to agroecology, which is already practiced by many small and BIPOC farmers, and can be supported in the following ways:

- Prioritize access and tenure to farmland ownership for BIPOC farmers. Systemic racism continues to hinder these farmers from gaining tenure and ownership of farmland in myriad ways: massive inherited wealth disparity, unjust lending practices in large part due to discriminatory practices by the USDA, and limited access to support services.³⁵
- Invest in drastically underfunded small- and mid-sized farmer infrastructure, see the [Regional Food System Resilience section](#).
- Invest in linguistically and culturally appropriate technical assistance for small-scale and historically underserved farmers to help growers access on-farm support, financial resources and business development (e.g. cooperative development).
- Adopt concrete goals to reduce chemical pesticide use in the state, increasing technical input and financial support to farmers to adopt more ecologically-friendly pest management practices with emphasis on supporting small and BIPOC farmers and diversified organic farms.
- Reform the Department of Pesticide Regulation to ensure more enforcement of pesticide regulations and a rigorous evaluation process of the safety of pesticides.
- Support regulatory policy to stop speculative investment in California's agricultural land.³⁶
- Directly fund prescribed grazing—using goats, sheep or cattle to manage vegetation—as mitigation for climate change impacts that also promotes wildfire resilience and community safety with co-benefits like increased ecological and soil health and regional food and fiber production.
- Fully fund CDFA's Climate Smart Ag Programs, including the Healthy Soils Program, which supports practices like composting, cover cropping, and reduced nitrogen fertilizer use, in addition to the Sustainable Ag Lands Conservation program and the State Water Efficiency & Enhancement Program. Ensure equitable access to these programs for BIPOC food producers, while expanding programmatic costs to include the time and skills needed for producers to execute these practices.

For examples of past and ongoing legislation see [Appendix A](#).



Equitable Policymaking for a Vibrant Future

Equitable policies come from equitable policy development processes. CFFN centers lived experiences as expert knowledge. We know that communities of color are those most impacted by inequity and injustice in the food and farming system. Our Network's [decision making body](#) is intentionally made up of leaders from grassroots organizations; by centering the voices, interests, and priorities of those most impacted by the food system, we believe they can and should shape the policy solutions that impact millions of people across our state. We invite you to do the same.

Dozens of CFFN members contributed their expertise to this document. **Please contact Beth Smoker (bsmoker@caff.org), CFFN Policy Director, for questions and connections to CFFN members.**



◀ This image was the result of a visioning process by our members who imagined what a just food and farming future for California could look like.

Endnotes

- 1 [California Agricultural Production Statistics](#)
- 2 https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Statistics/PDFs/2021_Ag_Stats_Review.pdf
- 3 [Policy Brief: Drought and California's Agriculture](#)
- 4 2021 Community Alliance with Family Farmers Survey
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- 6 [Pesticides and environmental injustice in the USA: root causes, current regulatory reinforcement and a path forward](#)
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- 30 CDC State Level and County Level Estimates of Health Care Costs Associated with Food Insecurity
- 31 USDA NASS data statistics.
- 32 AKA - Socially Disadvantaged Farmers & Ranchers see - 2020 CDFA Farmer Equity Act Report
- 33 USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture
- 34 Ferguson, Rafter, Kristina Dahl, and Marcia DeLonge. (2019). *Farmworkers at Risk: The Growing Dangers of Pesticides and Heat*. Cambridge, MA: Union of Concerned Scientists. <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/farmworkers-at-risk>
- 35 2020 Farmer Equity Report
- 36 <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11977>
- 37 AB 608 (Gordon, 2016) CalFresh School Meals; SB 138 (McGuire, 2017) School Meal Program: Free and Reduced Price Meals, Universal Free Meal Service; AB 1871 (Bonta, 2018) Charter schools: free and reduced-price meals; SB 499 (McGuire, 2019) California-Grown for Healthy Kids

Appendix A - Legislative History:

Key policies and budget investments that support our food and farming system

As new state leaders, this section is meant to provide an educational foundation of important policies and budget investments over recent years that have contributed to (or would have contributed to) transforming our food and farming system.

Many of these policies were achieved incrementally over a number of years, building momentum, bi-partisan support, and power. For example, the achievement of School Meals for All in 2021 (with further investments in 2022) had years of foundational policies preceding it.³⁷

Some of the below policies are in that incremental stage and require more work to fully realize (such as fully funding Food4All and establishing a Health Equity and Racial Justice Fund). Some policies establish state values, such as the Farmer Equity Act of 2017, others correct decades of inequities, such as Farmworker Overtime, and many invest financial resources into crucial, often life-saving programs. We need all of these tactics to change broken systems and address structural inequities.

There is a momentum of success, with communities stepping into their power and state leaders realizing the importance of these issues, and the vast, transformative impact that a thriving food system can have on our state.

[Hungry for more legislative history? You'll find a decade of key legislation and budget investments in CFFN's annual scorecards here.](#)

Regional Food System Resilience		
Policy	Description	Status
Health Equity and Racial Justice Fund, Budget Investment, (2021 & 2022)	Would have supported transformative community-driven change to reduce health inequities and advance racial justice.	<i>Failed. Included in the Legislature's budget but not supported by the Governor.</i>
AB 1009 (Bloom, 2021) Community Food Hub Pilot Program	Establishes investments in food aggregation and distribution infrastructure needed to increase purchasing of regional, ecologically healthy and equitably produced food.	<i>Passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.</i>
AB 125 (Rivas, 2021) Food and Farm Resilience Bond Act of 2021	Would have put a \$3.3 billion bond measure in front of California voters to invest in programs and infrastructure to strengthen our food and farming system across agriculture, farmworkers, hunger, and regional food economies.	<i>Held in Assembly Natural Resources, partially achieved in the 2021 surplus budget, which invested \$1.3 billion in programs from this Bond Act.</i>
AB 626 (Garcia, Eduardo, 2018) California Retail Food Code: microenterprise home kitchen operations	Expanded the types of homemade foods legally approved for sale, opening up new opportunities for home cooks. The bill could have done more to ensure home cooks and consumers are sufficiently protected from food safety issues or other employment concerns.	<i>Passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.</i>
AB 2413 (Pérez, 2014) Office of Farm to Fork	Establishes the Office of Farm to Fork within the Department of Food and Agriculture which now houses many programs aimed at supporting regional food systems across the state.	<i>Passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.</i>

Farmworker and Food Chain Worker Advancement

Policy	Description	Status
AB 2082 (R. Rivas, 2022) Farmworker Indigenous Language Outreach Program	Would have required Cal/OSHA to directly contract with community-based organizations (CBOs) in three counties to provide outreach services for farmworkers who speak indigenous languages.	<i>Died in Assembly Appropriations Committee.</i>
AB 2847 (E. Garcia, 2022) Unemployment: Excluded Workers Pilot Program	Establishes a pilot program in the Labor and Workforce Development Agency to provide income assistance to unemployed excluded workers who are not eligible for the state or federal benefits administered by the Employment Development Department due to immigration status.	<i>Passed by the legislature, but not funded. Pending signature by the Governor.</i>
SB 114 (Budget, 2022) COVID-19: Supplemental Paid Sick Leave	Provides two banks, up to 80-hours, of supplemental paid sick leave to workers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. One 40-hour bank could be used for various COVID-19-related needs, including time off to care for a loved one or receive the vaccine; the second 40-hour bank of paid time off required a positive COVID-19 test result.	<i>Achieved in the budget.</i>
AB 941 (Bennett, 2021) Farmworker Assistance: Resource Centers	Establishes a pilot grant program to create local farmworker resource centers to provide farmworkers and their families information and services related to labor and employment rights, education, housing, immigration, and health and human services.	<i>Passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.</i>
SB 606 (Gonzalez, 2021) Workplace Safety	Improves Cal/OSHA's ability to enforce existing worker safety laws and regulations in order to protect workers from unsafe or unhealthful working conditions, and also creates higher penalties for employers that violate these standards.	<i>Passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.</i>
AB 1066 (Gonzalez, 2016) Farmworker Overtime	Phases in overtime pay for farmworkers after 8 hours in one day and/or 40 hours in a week, like all other hourly workers.	<i>Originally introduced as AB 2757 and killed on the Assembly floor; Passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.</i>

Improved Access to Healthy Food

Policy	Description	Status
School Meals for All (Skinner, 2021 & 2022)	Ensures that two free school meals would be provided during each school day for all K-12 public and charter school students. In 2022-23 the budget includes over \$2 billion in additional funding to implement School Meals for All, make improvements to school kitchen infrastructure, enhance school food procurement, and related school meal investments.	<i>Achieved in the budget.</i>
SB 464 (Hurtado, 2021 & 2022) Food4All	Modernizes the California Food Assistance Program to provide food assistance benefits to households who are currently ineligible solely due to their immigration status. This policy received funding in the FY 2022-23 budget for ages 55 and up.	<i>Achieved in the budget, but program is not yet fully funded to cover all eligible undocumented individuals.</i>
SB 1481 (Becker, 2022) Food With Care: Fair Pay for Child Care Providers. Free Meals for All Kids	Would have ended the racist "pay penalty" for family child care home providers and would have ensured that child care providers are fairly compensated for meal service.	<i>Held in Assembly Appropriations Committee.</i>
SB 882 (Weiner, 2020) CalFresh–Simpler for Seniors	Improves access to CalFresh by establishing appropriate enrollment methods by phone, online, and in person, with special attention for the needs of seniors.	<i>Achieved in the budget.</i>
AB 138 (Bloom, 2019) California Community Health Fund	Would have taxed sugary beverage distributors to create a California Community Health Fund to support prevention and treatment of disease.	<i>Held in the Assembly Revenue and Taxation Committee.</i>
AB 1811 (Arambula, 2018) California Fruit and Vegetable EBT Pilot Project	Creates a pilot project to develop a scalable model for increasing the purchase and consumption of California-grown fresh fruits and vegetables by delivering supplemental benefits to CalFresh recipients in a way that can be easily adopted by USDA Food and Nutrition Service and authorized retailers of various types, sizes, and locations.	<i>Achieved in the budget. Pilots set to launch early 2023</i>
AB 1321 (Ting, 2015) Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program	Creates the Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Account, administered by CDFA's Office of Farm to Fork, to collect matching funds from the federal Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program.	<i>Passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.</i>

Agroecological Food & Farming

Policy	Description	Status
AB 2499 (Maienschein, 2022) Organic Transition Pilot Program	Creates an Organic Transition Pilot Program to provide resources to farmers and ranchers, with prioritization of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, to help them transition to organic farming.	<i>Died in Senate Agriculture, partially achieved in the budget.</i>
<p>The Sustainable Pest Management Work Group, created through the budget process, is a cross-agency, multi-stakeholder group that is charged with creating a policy roadmap, to be released fall of 2022, for California to transition to safer and more sustainable pest management.</p>		
AB 986 (R. Rivas, 2019) Regional Economies + Equity in Agricultural Land (REEAL) Act of 2019	Would have established a program at the Department of Conservation to increase access to farmland and capital for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, while preserving agricultural lands.	<i>Died in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.</i>
SB 458 (Durazo, 2019) Protect Children from Brain-Damaging Chlorpyrifos Act of 2019	Bans the use of chlorpyrifos, a brain-damaging pesticide used on agricultural crops.	<i>Held in Senate Appropriation Committee, but achieved via DPR agreement with registrants (manufacturers of chlorpyrifos products) to end sale and use of all chlorpyrifos products in California after December 31, 2020.</i>
AB 2377 (Irwin, 2018) Technical Assistance for Climate Smart Agriculture	Requires 5% of the annual budgets for the Climate Smart Agriculture Programs to go towards technical assistance for farmers transitioning to climate smart practices, requiring at least 25% of the funds available to be used to support socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.	<i>Passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.</i>
AB 1348 (Aguiar-Curry, 2017) Farmer Equity Act of 2017	Enables the Department of Food and Agriculture to provide better resources, technical assistance, and decision-making power to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers of color, mandating they be included in all department laws, regulations, policies and programs.	<i>Passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.</i>