



# GROWING OUR FUTURE:

## Sustainable Food Systems for California

CALIFORNIA IS AN AGRICULTURAL POWERHOUSE. For decades, California agriculture has been at the fortunate intersection of fertile lands, plentiful water, and a year-round sunny and temperate climate. This enabled California to become the leading agricultural producer in the nation. With more than 400 commodities and producing nearly half of the nation's fruits, vegetables and nuts, California provides diversity, specialty, and volume.

Sadly, we face threats to the roots of this productivity. Since 1984, we have lost about a square mile every four days (1.4 million acres), and we are forecast to lose a million acres of farmland by 2050. Pollinators that play a role in one of every three bites of food we eat are imperiled. In addition to uncertainties created by economic fluctuations and climate change, the current drought has created a profound challenge to farmers and ranchers.

In a land of such bounty, four million Californians do not know where their next meal is coming from. Many do not have access to healthy and affordable food. This hunger exists even while Californians throw away over six million tons of food products each year – 15.5% of the state's waste stream – and millions of tons are left in fields.

Many organizations are tackling these issues with energy, insight and creativity. Whatever topic each may focus on – land use or water policy, permanent land conservation, access to fresh, healthy foods, educating the next generation, farmworker needs, or other issue areas – our collective success depends upon Californians understanding, valuing, and actively supporting the land, water and human power necessary to deliver healthy and sustainably-grown food to all our tables.

# Building *and* Supporting **SUSTAINABLE FOOD** SYSTEMS *for* CALIFORNIA

California is an agricultural powerhouse for the state and nation. Yet we face losing it unless we all understand, value and actively support the land, water and human power that is necessary to deliver healthy and sustainably-grown food to our tables.

California leads the nation in year-round food production.



50%

of the fruits, vegetables and nuts grown in the US are from California

9

OF THE 10 top farmland counties in nation are in California

#1

Central Valley is largest area of best soils in world

400

number of commodities grown in California

## We have hunger in the land of plenty.

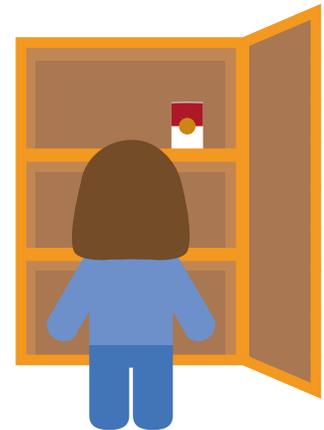
**food in·se·cu·ri·ty** (*noun*) the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.

Nearly  
**4,000,000**

Californians are food insecure

26%

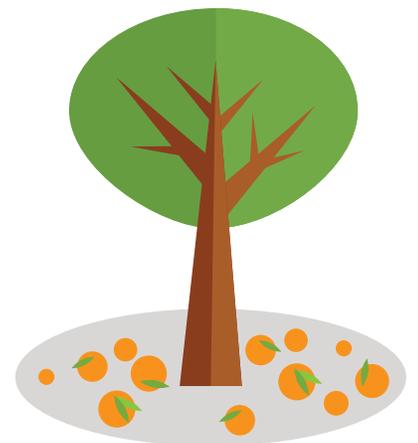
of kids are food insecure



## We waste prodigious amounts of food.

The typical family tosses out about \$1,500 of food yearly.

We dump more than 6 million tons of food per year—15.5% of the waste stream.



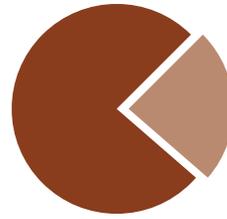
Millions of tons are left in the fields.

## Cornerstones for growing food are in jeopardy.



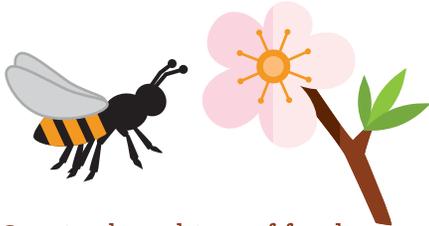
**1,000,000**

acres projected to be lost by 2050—equal to Sonoma County



**31%**

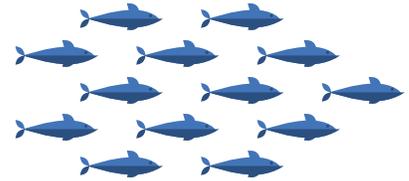
of farming and grazing lands lost 1970-2012



One in three bites of food depends upon pollinators who are in precipitous decline.



Drought and other climate change impacts threaten continuing production.

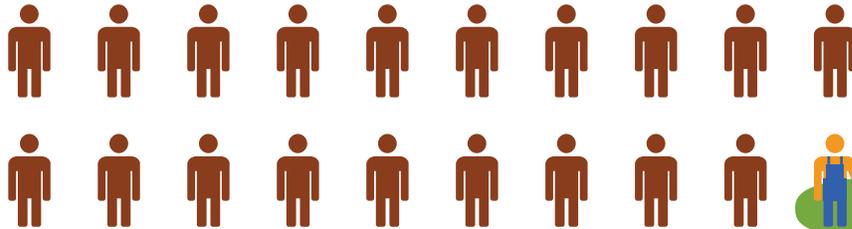


Fisheries are in decline, including the collapse of the Pacific sardine population, a crucial forage fish for marine life along the West Coast.

## Many do not know the origins of their food.

**95%**

of Californians live in metropolitan areas.

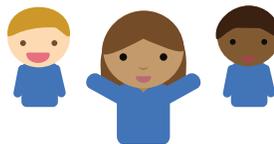


## Organizations are working to meet the challenge.

**CONSERVING THE LAND**



**EDUCATING NEXT GENERATION**



**GROWING HEALTHY FOOD**



**BUYING CALIFORNIA GROWN**



**STORING CARBON WITH COMPOST**



**PLANNING FOR AGRICULTURE**



**SHARING THE HARVEST**



**SUSTAINING CALIFORNIA**





## CONSERVING THE LAND

California food security depends on our best agricultural lands remaining available for growing food. Many land trusts work with farmers and ranchers to conserve their land permanently with conservation easements. The Central Valley Farmland Trust has protected over 13,500 acres of prime irrigated farmland on the San Joaquin Valley floor. The Marin Agricultural Land Trust has conserved almost half of the privately-owned farm and grazing land in Marin County.



## EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION

The Center for Land-Based Learning is dedicated to training the next generation of farmers. Adults who want to become farmers undertake an intensive seven-month program to learn what it takes to succeed, such as crop planning, irrigation, pest management, business planning, and food safety. In addition, thousands of high school students have graduated from the Center's education programs focused on farming, agriculture and resource management for sustainability.



## GROWING HEALTHY FOOD

Darrell and Callie Wood of Leavitt Lake Ranches raise grass-fed beef on more than 30,000 acres, incorporating progressive ranching methods that improve grassland stewardship and conserve wetlands while producing safe and healthy beef. The Woods are active supporters and leaders of rangeland conservation efforts in California. The Woods partnered with friends and family to form Panorama Meats which sells organic, grass-fed beef in California and many western states.



## BUYING CALIFORNIA GROWN

The Los Angeles Food Policy Council founded a program to empower major institutions to purchase local, sustainable, fair, humanely produced foods while improving access to healthy, high-quality foods. In committing to the Good Food Purchasing Program, the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Unified School District are supporting the regional food system and improving the quality of 750,000 meals served daily.



## STORING CARBON BY SPRINKLING COMPOST

Marin Carbon Project is demonstrating an effective, multi-benefit strategy for increasing carbon storage: adding compost to grazing land. Microbial processes turn the carbon into humus and increased plant growth captures more carbon. Adding compost also improves soil fertility, water absorption, and retention. Research suggests that if 5% of the state's grazing lands were composted, the soil could capture a year's worth of emissions from the farm and forestry industries.



## PLANNING FOR AGRICULTURE

The City of Riverside made the navel orange a symbol of bounty and a household staple, and more than 1,000 acres of citrus groves still grow today. A full 11% of the city's total acreage is designated for agricultural use, unparalleled for a Southern California city of its size. GrowRIVERSIDE, a diverse public-private partnership, is devoted to sustainable local agriculture as exemplified by adoption of a strategic road map to a robust local food system, and current consideration of an urban ag zone.



## SHARING THE HARVEST

The Yolo Food Bank and local farmers have developed a working partnership. Farmers may dedicate the bounty from several fruit trees, a row of lettuce, an acre of mixed vegetables, or a portion of their rice harvest, while others put fallow land back to work to provide fresh produce. The food bank distributes 4 million pounds of food a year and one-fourth of it is fresh produce, much of it from local farmers.



## SUSTAINING CALIFORNIA

TomKat Ranch is dedicated to providing healthy food on working lands in a way that sustains the planet and inspires others to action. The ranch serves as a learning laboratory for animal agriculture with cattle functioning as a conservation tool and supplying beef to LeftCoast GrassFed. The ecological robustness resulting from its management of working lands contributes to climate stability, healthy food and soil, biodiversity, and a well-functioning water cycle through these dry times.



The California Council of Land Trusts' (CCLT) mission is to build a statewide land trust community that is equal to the challenge and privilege of conserving our extraordinary land and water resources for all Californians. CCLT acts as a unified voice for more than 150 land trusts working throughout California. [www.calandtrusts.org](http://www.calandtrusts.org)

*We thank the California Department of Conservation for its support which helped make this report possible. Any information or opinion expressed does not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Conservation.*

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