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Ag Vision—led by the California State Board of Food and Agriculture and facilitated by Nuffer, Smith, Tucker—is a plan for all Californians.

FARMERS, RANCHERS, PARTNERS & FRIENDS:



California's agricultural history runs deep, starting first with Native Americans and Indigenous peoples—the Paiute, Washo, Mono and more—who built upon California's unique natural elements, including its fertile soils and climate, to grow and harvest. Later settlers brought additional agricultural heritage and ingenuity to the Golden State. No doubt these farmers and ranchers, and the generations that followed them, endured a variety of challenges along the way—but their hard work paid off.

Today, California is home to more than 400 commodities and a more than \$49 billion agricultural industry that generates at least \$100 billion in related economic activity. While there is much to be proud of in this work, ensuring California agriculture continues to thrive for future generations will require the same spirit of innovation and exploration embraced by early farmers to tackle new challenges and build new opportunities. Enter Ag Vision for the Next Decade.

Ag Vision is about securing a place for California agriculture well into the future. It's about demonstrating impact on climate change, preserving natural resources and benefiting the environment. It's about building strong, local communities and a thriving statewide economy. It's about attracting future generations of agricultural leaders and farm workers with rewarding and fruitful work, and it's about fostering support for California agriculture from urban and rural constituents and those who represent them. At the end of the day, Ag Vision is about inclusivity and growing opportunity for all stakeholders—and we can't do it alone.

Ag Vision is not just a plan for farmers and ranchers. It's a plan for every Californian, from those who care about the land and landscape and making it better for the future, to those who work with or live around farming communities. It's a plan for those curious about their food, those who buy fresh California fruit at their local grocery store, and those who receive nutritious dairy foods from their local food bank or school. It's also a plan for young people looking to apply technology and innovation in new ways.

Bringing about the vision set forth here will require commitment, collaboration, and partnership not only from farmers and ranchers but also from the public and private sector to reimagine the future of agriculture as one of opportunity. Like early farmers and ranchers in California, we're up for the challenge ... are you?

To Growing Opportunity,

Karen Ross
Secretary
California Department of Food and Agriculture

Don J. Cameron
President
California State Board of Food and Agriculture



AG VISION—HOW WE GOT HERE

Vision setting is no easy task. For single organizations, it's about articulating the desired end game of an organization's work. Ag Vision, however, is about defining the desired future, not for a single entity, but for the totality of California agriculture, which is as diverse as the people who live here. The first Ag Vision effort started in 2008 under the leadership of the California State Board of Food and Agriculture. After undergoing several iterations, Ag Vision was revitalized in 2021 by Secretary Ross under the facilitation of Nuffer, Smith, Tucker, which assisted the effort in 2017 with the development of a purpose statement (see Pg. 5).

The 2021/2022 Ag Vision process is also a project of the State Board of Food and Agriculture and planning efforts included:

- The development of the Ag Vision Task Force. Recognizing the vastness of California agriculture, a task force representing the diversity of crops grown in California along with a variety of geographic regions was developed to review feedback from all stakeholders and use it to oversee development of the plan.
- One-on-one, qualitative telephone and virtual interviews with members of the task force and members of the State Board of Food and Agriculture—a Governor-appointed advisory board to the Secretary and Governor, which addresses key issues for California's farmers and ranchers, community stakeholders, and citizens.
- Seven, virtual roundtable discussions with various segments of California agriculture—from dairy and livestock farmers to berries growers and tree nuts producers—along with processors and supply chain partners. In addition, the perspectives and unique challenges and opportunities for small and historically underserved farmers and ranchers were gathered through ongoing discussions with ad hoc Historically Underserved Farmer and Small Farmer Advisory work groups. The California Department of Agriculture's Farm Equity Advisor also lent her input and expertise.
- One-on-one interviews with agencies within the administration, including the California Air Resources Board, California Natural Resources Agency, State Water Resources Control Board, Department of Conservation, California Public Utilities Commission, California Labor & Workforce Development Agency, and California Environmental Protection Agency.

USING THIS PLAN: A CATALYST FOR WORKING TOGETHER

The priorities outlined in Ag Vision are designed to represent the areas in which CDFA can play the biggest role in affecting the vision. The plan is not intended to list all activities of CDFA in support of the vision, but rather identify key areas of focus. Ag Vision is designed to serve as a catalyst for collaboration and partnership, as required by the complexity of issues faced today.

Whenever possible, the State Board of Food and Agriculture and CDFA will enlist the support of partnerships as an overarching strategy. Together, the State Board and CDFA call upon other state agencies, traditional and non-traditional partners with an interest in food and agriculture, and the farming community to join us in supporting Ag Vision.

We also acknowledge that many within agriculture are engaging in substantive efforts that support the priorities here. Through Ag Vision, we aim to create learning networks, where—together—we can bring the vision identified here to life, collectively. Contact Josh Eddy, executive director, California State Board of Food and Agriculture, at 916-654-0462 or josh.eddy@cdfa.ca.gov for ways to get involved.



A PLAN FOR ALL: SMALL-SCALE AND HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED PRODUCERS

The California State Board of Food and Agriculture, along with California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), continue to be focused on equity. This means ensuring small-scale and historically underserved farmers and ranchers have the opportunity to become more involved with the State Board, CDFA, and throughout government—and Ag Vision is no exception. Nearly 1 in 4 or 20% of California producers are members of a historically underserved (socially disadvantaged) group and many of these farmers are also small-scale farmers, operating on less than 100 acres.

As part of this effort, careful consideration was given to the needs of these agricultural producers. The Ag Vision process included a dedicated roundtable with an ad hoc Historically Underserved Farmer and Small Farmer Advisory work group, focused specifically on the unique needs of this segment of agriculture. The California Department of Agriculture’s Farm Equity Advisor also lent her input and expertise. As a result, this plan and programs that it inspires will more accurately reflect and respond to the entire industry.

THE FARMER EQUITY ACT AS A FOUNDATION

The Farmer Equity Act (AB 1348) was passed in 2017, and recognized that historically underserved (termed “socially disadvantaged” in the legislation) producers have historically been subjected to racial, ethnic and gender discrimination and have not had equal access to the programs, policies and resources necessary to successfully operate their businesses. The Farmer Equity report, published in 2020, outlined recommendations for how to address equity across CDFA programs, policies, communications and representation on boards and commissions. Addressing equity takes time and concerted effort to re-align programs and practices to ensure the most underserved groups are prioritized and that these groups are guiding policies and programs intended to serve all Californians.

BEING ACCOUNTABLE

To address disparities, metrics must be in place from which future progress and success can be measured. For that reason, it’s important to note there is a dedicated effort to gaining metrics on the number of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers involved in all CDFA programs, including Farm to School, Urban Ag, Food Hubs and the Farmworker Training and Workforce Development Program. Baseline metrics for these programs and more are being gathered during 2022-2023. Once baseline metrics are established, CDFA will set quantifiable objectives aimed at improvement.





A RECOMMITMENT TO OUR PURPOSE

Ag Vision and the leadership behind it first developed a purpose statement for California agriculture in 2017. At the time, consumers in California and beyond were showing decreased levels of trust in everything from public institutions, private entities, and even non-governmental organizations. Although trust continues to decline, the articulation and demonstration of a clear purpose for how an organization—or in this case, the entire California agricultural community—benefits society may help counteract and re-build trust.

In our view, there could be no better industry to articulate a purpose than agriculture. Food—healthy and sustainably grown food—is the foundation not only for health and wellness but also for allowing people and communities to thrive. What’s more, the methods by which food is grown can not only yield public benefits but also contribute to environmental resilience, ensuring working landscapes for generations to come. The following statement, developed in 2017, continues to resonate today:

PURPOSE STATEMENT:

***Making California a better place to live
because of what we grow and how we grow it.***

Rationale for Support:

In developing the purpose statement, leaders of Ag Vision carefully wove in key benefits of California agriculture. Each piece of the statement is rich with meaning:

- California agriculture is “making California a better place to live” across numerous fronts. Farmers and ranchers not only contribute to the food system, landscape, and way of life but also are increasingly supporting local communities—and these efforts are ongoing. In addition, farmers and ranchers are continuously learning from the past and evolving practices and production methods. In applying research, shared learnings, and innovation to improve environmental stewardship and use of natural resources, farmers and ranchers are also positively impacting climate change.
- “What we grow” speaks to the diversity of crops grown in California. The state is home to more than 70,000 farming operations of all sizes and 400 commodities encompassing livestock and specialty crops, permanent and annual crops, and conventional and organic farms. Food produced here goes a long way toward fueling health and wellness for California residents and global citizens alike.
- California growers of all types—from multi-generational to beginning farmers, urban agricultural pioneers, and immigrant farmers—are on the leading edge of innovation, set the standard for environmental stewardship, and take great care in how they grow, thus supporting the importance of the “how we grow it” part of the purpose statement.

ENGAGING URBAN AND OTHER AUDIENCES

No matter where we go, we consistently hear agricultural stakeholders talk about the need to “tell our story.” We believe rather than “tell,” we should actively engage—and the purpose statement is a great place to start. The more we articulate and engage stakeholders in a common purpose, the more successful we will be in earning and generating public support. To that end, everyone in agriculture has the ability to advance the industry by talking about and demonstrating the purpose and doing so often.

ON MINDS OF FARMERS AND RANCHERS

The Ag Vision process (see Page 3) provided a window into the hearts and minds of farmers and ranchers throughout the state. Below are just a few of the issues we heard about:

- Ag communication
- Aging population of farmers
- Biofuels and energy
- Changing demographics
- Climate change
- Consolidation
- Diminishing funds for research
- Energy dependence
- Finite natural resources
- Inequities in farming
- Infrastructure
- Invasive species and pests
- Labor challenges
- Lack of access to capital
- Land availability
- Nutrition equity
- Perception of agriculture
- Political pressures
- Push back on science
- Regulatory pressures
- Rising costs
- Supply chain
- Technology, automation, mechanization and innovation
- Urban encroachment

WITHOUT WATER NOTHING ELSE IS POSSIBLE

Throughout Ag Vision, water has been top of mind for farmers and ranchers as we are experiencing extreme, sustained drought conditions caused by hotter, drier weather. Environmental, agricultural, and municipal systems are all stressed, and there is a sense of urgency over the next two decades to invest in water reliability and find smarter, faster ways to complete water projects and programs. The ultimate goal is to secure the future of California's water supply. While management of our state's water resources is not directly within the purview of CDFA or the State Board, CDFA is a partner in Governor Gavin Newsom's Water Resilience Portfolio, with the understanding that without water nothing else is possible and water is vital to the food security and nutritional security. In addition, CDFA and the State Board will focus on collaborating, convening and forming partnerships that help address water related concerns and opportunities for farmers and ranchers. Examples include

- Unifying and strengthening the role of agriculture as a partner with drinking water advocates and disadvantaged communities in providing clean drinking water
- Forging new partnerships between agriculture and environmentalists with a shared goal to survive the drought, and address the state's long term water supply and healthy ecosystem challenges
- Supporting environmental health and water supply reliability for cities, farms, habitat and ecosystems through ongoing engagement in Voluntary Agreements.
- Further supporting water supply reliability through expanded water storage capacity (above and below ground), demand reduction, groundwater recharge on agricultural lands and the capturing of floodwaters (FloodMAR).
- Modernizing regulatory structures and overall water conveyance to move smarter and faster in addressing climate and water challenges.

Collaboration among all water users is necessary to bring about fair and effective water management of the state's scarce water supplies, and CDFA and the State Board are committed to representing agriculture on water issues, supporting partnerships and identifying creative solutions that benefit multiple parties.

OPPORTUNITIES EXIST FOR GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AND EXPORT GROWTH:

All eyes are often on California as leaders in environmental stewardship, innovation, and progress. The efforts outlined in this plan can support increased competitiveness on the local and global level, and the California State Board of Agriculture and CDFA encourage farmers and ranchers of all sizes to build upon their good work to both expand domestic presence and grow export market participation.



OUR VISION AND PATHWAYS TO ACHIEVEMENT

What is the desired future we want to create? What are we all working so hard to achieve? We understand many in agriculture are facing their share of challenges. Ag Vision is about flipping the switch on the current state in which some feel agriculture in California is facing existential threats and instead envisioning a future where opportunity is abundant.

Under this desired future, opportunity abounds for current and future generations of farmers and ranchers, from multi-generational families to new beginning farmers. Individuals also benefit—from farmworkers and communities adjacent to where food grows to people who enjoy and receive the bounty of what's grown here. Importantly, the opportunity is ripe to tackle what has been called “the” challenge for younger generations: climate change. California farmers have always been at the forefront of innovation, and opportunity exists to put this innovative spirit to work and serve as leaders in growing food and agricultural products in a way that contributes to and makes the world and environment better.

VISION:

California agriculture is growing opportunity – for farmers and ranchers, farmworkers, individuals and communities – and is demonstrating leadership on climate action.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: BRINGING FORTH THE VISION

A key theme throughout the Ag Vision process has been a desire among farmers and ranchers to be valued, recognized, and viewed as essential to the fabric of California. And while good work abounds, growing and earning this recognition requires a renewed commitment from agriculture to serve as good stewards of public trust now and in the future.

It means aligning with the values of diverse urban and rural constituents and those who represent them. It means thinking beyond the practices and tools of today and investing in what's needed in the decades ahead. It means caring for people, communities, and natural resources, and fostering a more climate-smart, resilient, and environmentally regenerative food system. And while this new model involves agriculture demonstrating leadership on a range of issues, it also calls upon the State of California to protect, support, and create opportunities for farmers and ranchers to do their good work. With that, the Ag Vision process identified five key priority areas where the California Department of Food and Agriculture can best support the vision:

- **Foster climate-smart, resilient, and regenerative food systems**—Support efforts that improve agriculture's effect on the environment, encourage wise stewardship of water and natural resources, eliminate waste and are regenerative, e.g., practices that enhance ecosystems and improve the land.
- **Build healthy, local communities**—Invest in local and socially disadvantaged communities—with emphasis on the diverse populations who often work at and with, and live adjacent to California farms—while supporting equity and the California economy through nutritious, California-grown farm products.
- **Drive next-generation talent and tools**—Support workforce development programs aimed at attracting, supporting, and providing high-quality jobs and leadership opportunities for a diverse agricultural workforce, while also driving research and real-time feedback from farmers and ranchers to stimulate and accelerate innovation to solve problems and build opportunities.
- **Enhance understanding of agriculture**—Serve as the voice for California farmers and ranchers within the administration and with other agencies, and support the engagement of urban and rural audiences.
- **Collaborate on smarter regulations**—Work with other state agencies, stakeholders, and the administration to explore and support smarter regulations that rethink ways to both meet public obligations and support farmers with simplified, less expensive regulatory compliance, reporting, and implementation.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY: FOSTER CLIMATE-SMART, RESILIENT, AND REGENERATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS

Support efforts that improve agriculture's effect on the environment, encourage wise stewardship of water and natural resources, eliminate waste and are regenerative, e.g., practices that enhance ecosystems and improve the land.

CDFA WILL SUPPORT THIS PRIORITY THROUGH:

1. Growing Climate Smart Agriculture programs—including sustainable pest management, nutrient management, healthy soils, water use efficiency and methane reduction—and practices that support regenerative agriculture.
2. Establishing partnerships to develop metrics and create markets for ecosystem services.
3. Identifying models to minimize waste, cycle nutrients, and repurpose crop and processing byproducts to beneficial uses.

Support from Agricultural Communities:

Farmers and ranchers of all sizes and types have made great strides in improving the ways in which food is grown. What's more, achieving climate goals is not exclusive to any size or type of farming operation. We encourage all farmers to continue to do their part by considering ways they can enhance ecosystems and improve the land. Participating in CDFA's Climate Smart Agriculture voluntary incentive programs is also a great way to help. The farming community can also share stories about their contributions to the environment and wise use of natural resources. Industry groups can set climate-friendly environmental sustainability goals—including those aimed at sound stewardship of natural resources, supporting ecosystems, and eliminating and repurposing waste—and serve as a unified voice to the buying community on climate change initiatives and measures.

How We Measure Success:

- Increase the number of acres in which Climate Smart Agriculture practices are utilized.
- Increase state investment in Climate Smart Agriculture—supporting new and existing programs that foster on-farm adaptation.



WHAT IS 'REGENERATIVE'?

While the term “regenerative” is relatively new, the principles behind the concept reflect practices that some farmers have embraced for generations. Even so, the “regenerative” terminology is gaining traction and support like never before due in part to the belief that “regenerative” moves beyond the philosophy of “do no harm” to one of making things better. While there is no universal definition of “regenerative agriculture,” many believe regenerative approaches include those that help mitigate climate change, improve soil health, restore biodiversity, and enhance ecosystems.

A PROJECT OF THE STATE BOARD

Moving forward, the California State Board of Food and Agriculture will work to define what “regenerative” means and provide recommendations on how it can be measured. By establishing common language and definitions, agriculture can shape the definition of “regenerative” and strengthen its relationship with consumers and other stakeholders by showing how what happens on the farm can fit within the “regenerative” framework.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY: BUILD HEALTHY, LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Invest in local and socially disadvantaged communities—with emphasis on the diverse populations who often work at and with, and live adjacent to California farms—while supporting equity and the California economy through nutritious, California-grown farm products.

CDFA WILL SUPPORT THIS PRIORITY THROUGH:

1. Furthering Farm to Fork and Farm to Family initiatives, which aim to connect school districts, food banks, and community members directly with California's farmers and ranchers while supporting agricultural education. These programs are especially important for small and historically underserved farmers.
2. Advancing programs and initiatives that improve communities by promoting healthy food choices and nutrition, including the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, Senior Farmers' Market Program, Healthy Refrigeration Grants and more.
3. Supporting the establishment of Farmworker Resource Centers, which offer resources and access to services related to housing, health care, immigration, and labor rights.
4. Supporting efforts to modernize fairgrounds and develop Community Resilience Centers to provide continuous community benefits that enhance community resilience through civic, social, educational, and economic development programming.
5. Expanding partnerships with technical assistance providers and community-based organizations to provide educational resources to small, historically underserved farmers and ranchers.

Support from Agricultural Communities:

Farmers and ranchers have always been part of local communities, and under this priority, the State Board of Food and Agriculture, along with CDFA, calls upon those in agriculture to become even more involved. This means not only being a good neighbor, but also identifying community-specific issues and taking action on those issues. From the need to provide access to clean drinking water to challenges related to housing and workforce development, farmers and ranchers should identify community-specific issues and look for ways to help. What's more, all farmers regardless of size or product, are encouraged to support Farm to Fork initiatives, including Farm to School or Farm to Family programs.

How We Measure Success:

- Expansion of farmers markets, agricultural education, nutritional assistance and industry led partnerships with local food banks.
- Increase access to resources and services that are currently limited in agricultural communities through partnerships with community organizations, farmworker associations and other local-based entities.
- Increase locally grown products in school meals.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY: DRIVE NEXT GENERATION TALENT AND TOOLS

Support workforce development programs aimed at attracting, supporting, and providing high-quality jobs and leadership opportunities for a diverse agricultural workforce, while also driving research and real-time feedback from farmers and ranchers to stimulate and accelerate innovation to solve problems and build opportunities.

CDFA WILL SUPPORT THIS PRIORITY THROUGH:

1. Supporting workforce development programs, including those at community colleges, to attract and upskill farmers and farmworkers.
2. Convening University of California, California State University and community college representatives, and agricultural stakeholders to develop to a Master Plan for California Agricultural Science and Research. This Master Plan would further sustainable pest management, climate adaptation, nutrient management, food safety and plant/animal health.
3. Serving as a catalyst for collaboration among the industry to support tools and talent for the future.

Support from Agricultural Communities:

Agriculture can help CDFA drive the agenda for where innovation is needed and identify growing and upcoming skills gaps. Individual companies, commodity groups, and trade associations can also directly support innovation and research efforts for the betterment of food systems. On-farm education, training and employee development, and wellness programs can also help drive awareness of agriculture as a sector of choice for future generations. Support of programs like 4-H, Future Farmers of America, MANRRS (Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences) and third-party workforce development programs will also bolster interest from young people in agriculture.

How We Measure Success:

- Expanded industry-led investment to meet current agricultural labor needs and upskill the existing workforce.
- Increase number of young people who see agriculture as a career of choice.
- Increase state investment in agricultural research and infrastructure.
- Expanded sufficient broadband access within rural communities providing high speed connectivity to homes, schools, farms and communities.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY: ENHANCE UNDERSTANDING OF AGRICULTURE

Serve as the voice for California farmers and ranchers within the administration and with other agencies, and support the engagement of urban and rural audiences.

CDFA WILL SUPPORT THIS PRIORITY THROUGH:

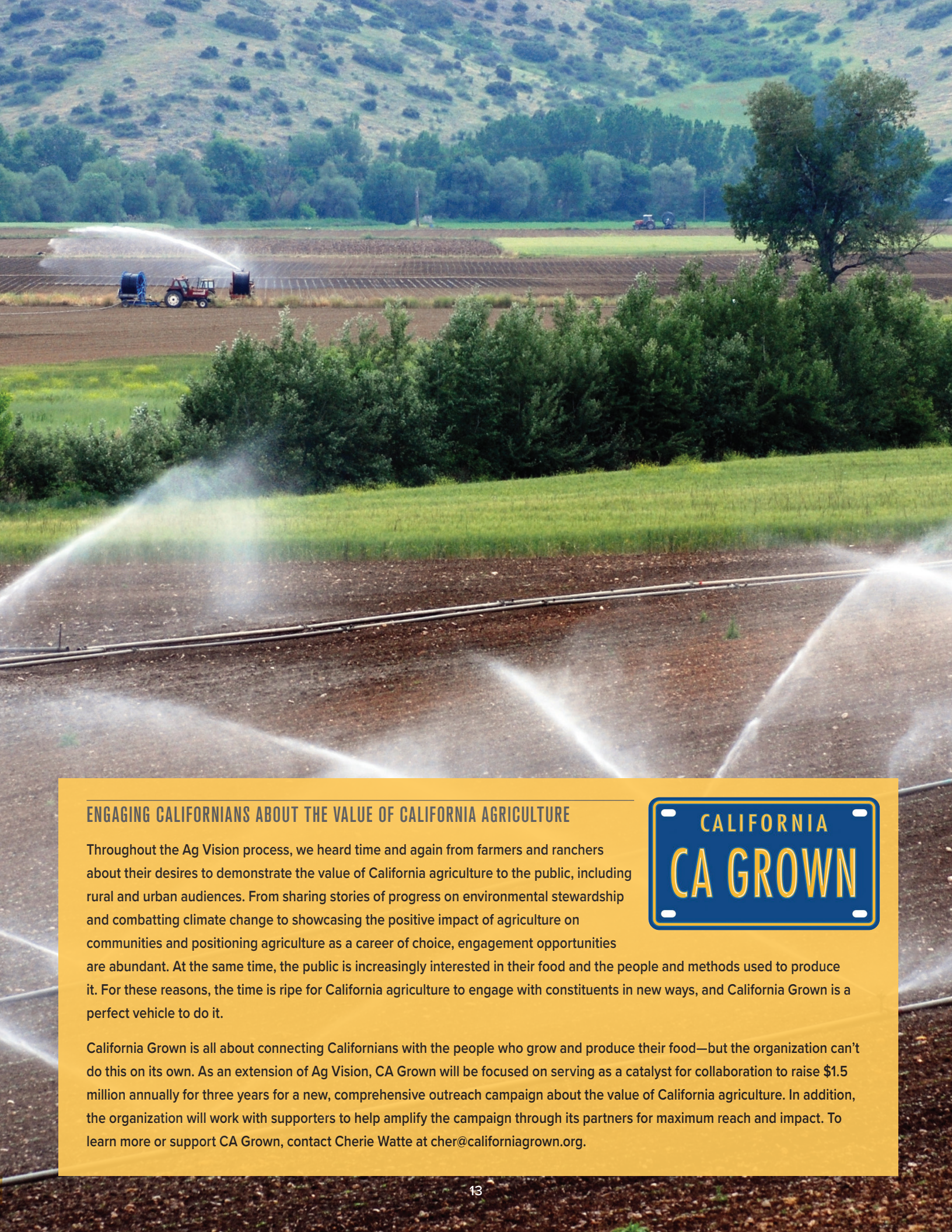
1. Connecting the Governor's Office and other California agencies to farmers, ranchers and others in the agricultural value chain on issues critical to the viability of farmers and ranchers, including water, infrastructure, regulations and more.
2. Supporting California Grown to increase engagement with urban and rural audiences about the value of California agriculture.
3. Expanding funding for agriculture education and agriculture literacy programs for students K-12, post-secondary and adult education through the promotion of the CalAgPlate Grant Program and other initiatives.
4. Supporting agricultural literacy within CDFA programs, including Farm to School and the Specialty Crop Block Grant programs.

Support from Agricultural Communities:

Partner with CDFA on engagement efforts, providing the voice and face of California farmers and ranchers with California agencies and the legislature. Farmers and ranchers can also invest in issues and opportunities of interest to Californians, and use those investments to provide storytelling opportunities. Importantly, farmers and ranchers can invest in California Grown as a way to further consistent agricultural communication (see sidebar). Lastly, those in agriculture can support the CalAgPlate program as a way of demonstrating support for California agriculture, while raising funds for ag education.

How We Measure Success:

- Raise at least \$500,000 from CA Grown signatories and other stakeholders and \$1 million annually in grant funding for three years for a campaign specific to the value of California agriculture.
- Increase revenues generated by the CalAgPlate program to support ag literacy programs.



ENGAGING CALIFORNIANS ABOUT THE VALUE OF CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE

Throughout the Ag Vision process, we heard time and again from farmers and ranchers about their desires to demonstrate the value of California agriculture to the public, including rural and urban audiences. From sharing stories of progress on environmental stewardship and combatting climate change to showcasing the positive impact of agriculture on communities and positioning agriculture as a career of choice, engagement opportunities are abundant. At the same time, the public is increasingly interested in their food and the people and methods used to produce it. For these reasons, the time is ripe for California agriculture to engage with constituents in new ways, and California Grown is a perfect vehicle to do it.



California Grown is all about connecting Californians with the people who grow and produce their food—but the organization can't do this on its own. As an extension of Ag Vision, CA Grown will be focused on serving as a catalyst for collaboration to raise \$1.5 million annually for three years for a new, comprehensive outreach campaign about the value of California agriculture. In addition, the organization will work with supporters to help amplify the campaign through its partners for maximum reach and impact. To learn more or support CA Grown, contact Cherie Watte at cher@californiagrown.org.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY: COLLABORATE ON SMARTER REGULATIONS

Work with other state agencies, stakeholders, and the administration to explore and support smarter regulations that rethink ways to both meet public obligations and support farmers with regulatory compliance and implementation. We do this through: 1) permitting and regulatory processes, 2) grant and loan programs, and 3) communication, coordination and collaboration.

CDFA WILL SUPPORT THIS PRIORITY THROUGH:

1. Mapping existing regulations and processes (i.e., what information is required, when, and for what purpose) as part of a Smarter Agriculture Regulatory Framework Initiative, which will examine regulatory areas that present the biggest reporting burden for farmers, with the aim of identifying areas of excessive and/or redundant reporting.
2. Identifying strategies to reduce burdens while meeting obligations. Strategies may include information sharing between agencies and groups; removing information that does not need to be collected; and exploring technical solutions to ease how information is reported to the state.
3. Supporting technical assistance for farmers and ranchers implementing existing regulations, with the aim of easing compliance time and cost for farmers of all sizes, including small and mid-size farmers.
4. Collaborating, convening and forming partnerships that help address water related concerns and opportunities.

Support from Agricultural Communities:

Represent agriculture to the legislature, and provide boots-on-the-ground representation on the impact of regulations on the farm. Serve in an advisory function to CDFA and with other agencies to identify duplication, conflicts, and challenges in addressing current regulatory frameworks.

How We Measure Success:

- Establish a Smarter Agriculture Regulatory Framework Initiative that furthers collaboration by agricultural associations, state agencies and stakeholders in easing regulatory compliance, reducing costs and meeting the needs of agricultural production and environmental sustainability.

SMARTER REGULATIONS AT WORK

Dairy Digester Work Group

In 2011, CDFA in the collaboration with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Agriculture convened the California/Federal Dairy Digester Working Group to assist in identifying and removing barriers to wide spread adoption of dairy digester systems in California. The working group included not only federal/state government representatives, but also stakeholders from academia, industry, non-profits, and utilities.

The two-year process resulted in a commitment of partnering agencies to coordinate efforts for permitting, support and funding to dairy digester projects. Economic, technical and regulatory hurdles were reduced, making digester systems more feasible in the nation's number one dairy producing state. As a result of this work, the number of dairy digesters expanded from 13 in 2011 to 77 in 2021. Moving forward, this same commitment to smarter regulations can positively benefit other sectors within California agriculture, while meeting public obligations and encouraging climate-smart, resilient and restorative food systems.

On-Farm Compost Work Group

Starting in 2020, CDFA has been working with partners at US EPA Region 9, USDA NRCS, CalEPA, stakeholders, and a dozen additional state and regional entities to reduce the barriers to adoption for on-farm composting. On-farm composting provides a number of ecological and economic benefits for the state of California. It can improve soil health, improve water quality by avoiding over-application of manure, improve air quality by reducing agricultural burning, and reduce input costs for farmers and ranchers.

The work group reviewed existing literature and met with stakeholders to understand some of the barriers to composting on-farm. The primary barrier was confusion about what was needed for regulatory compliance and a lack of clear demonstration projects that can be replicated. To address this, the group has developed a resource site clarifying existing regulations and a tool that helps farmers and ranchers understand exactly which regulations apply to their operation. The group is currently pursuing avenues to promote farmer to farmer education and create cost studies that clearly demonstrate the feasibility of composting.



Thank you to everyone who helped support the development of Ag Vision. While the completion of the plan is an important step, it is just the beginning. The State Board of Food and Agriculture and CDFA look forward to ongoing collaboration with farmers and ranchers, supply chain partners and the State of California and its agencies and citizens to bring about this important vision of growing opportunity and demonstrating leadership on climate action.

Karen Ross
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Questions or Comments on Ag Vision?
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