

Vision for California Agriculture by 2030

Locally grown foods are becoming a bigger part of the California consumer diet due to increased demand for food that has traveled fewer miles, is fresh, nutritious and traceable. This demand is fueling the growth of direct-to-retail farm product sales to bring food from farmers and ranchers right to the customer. Restaurants, grocery stores, schools, colleges, hospitals, and corporate kitchens all want to be able to tell the story behind the food they serve. A local food story can mean the food is more valuable to the consumer.

My vision for California Agriculture by 2030 is to develop Direct Market/Local Grown Agriculture Cooperatives under California Code in each county to add permanent agriculture infrastructure for small, sustainable and limited-resource producers who will be the highest priority groups served by the cooperatives, though the cooperative will be open to all. These cooperatives will create new revenue streams to directly support member farms and ranches as well as encourage individual enterprise growth and create new jobs. Cooperatives in each county should be members of each other for supply of seasonal and soil advantaged crops. Each county should prioritize its own product sales to increase community support of local production and keep dollars circulating in its own communities. Cost share facilities and services for members may include:

- Agriculture Resource Centers for education on food safety, proper processing procedures, master preserving, cooking demonstrations and a certified kitchen for all of the above.
- Cooperative e-commerce website for food buyers to purchase a variety of individually labeled member products all from one source.
- USDA inspected Mobile Slaughter Units for the humane harvest of livestock that work with local USDA inspected cut and wrap facilities. These units will add value to local grass-fed and organic meat products.
- Fulfillment facilities for processing member orders that offer post harvest coolers, freezers for local meat products and delivery vans.

The biggest challenges will be the limited opportunity to expand local agriculture production as demand for local or regional products increase because of high land values, high property taxes on good farming land not in Williamson Act and the liability associated with urban dwellers moving to rural areas that are not savvy to agriculture operations and advocate for policy that puts the burden on the people who feed them.

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Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you're a thousand miles from the corn field.
-Dwight Eisenhower-