Guiding Principles for Biodiversity

To deliver on the goals set forth in the Climate Resilience Strategy for California Agriculture, CDFA seeks to develop a set of guiding principles for its work promoting on-farm biodiversity.

Biodiversity is crucial for maintaining healthy ecosystems, supporting human well-being, and sustaining the planet's resilience to environmental changes. All species, from microbes to large animals, support processes like nutrient cycling, pest control, pollination, soil formation, water and air purification, and climate regulation, ensuring ecosystems remain healthy and resilient to natural and human disturbances. Research and experience now show that in many but not all areas enhancing on-farm biodiversity can have more benefits than drawbacks to agricultural resilience. Across our agricultural landscapes, a diverse range of crops, livestock, pollinators, soil organisms, and natural enemies of agricultural pests contribute to healthy ecosystems. Farms and ranches are also integral to habitat connectivity between natural landscapes and are essential for supporting conservation goals, including California's 30x30 strategy.

The CDFA Strategic Plan for 2025–2030 identifies Goal 1 as fostering equitable and resilient food systems and communities. Within this goal, Objective 3 focuses on promoting a healthy and sustainable interface between agriculture and natural systems, including through investments in biodiversity protection. The CDFA Climate Resilience Strategy for California Agriculture calls on state agencies to work collaboratively to boost biodiversity on farmlands in support of state goals (see Appendix 1), including through the creation of a guiding principles document for CDFA to align the Department's internal and external work in support of biodiversity and sustainable agriculture throughout California.

Addressing the intersections between agricultural production and native biodiversity conservation calls for approaches that support safe, economically viable food production alongside responsible ecological stewardship. Through policy engagement, programmatic investments and technical assistance, and using available resources, CDFA will follow these guiding principles:

- Agricultural communities can realize social, economic, and environmental benefits from promoting native biodiversity.
- Agricultural lands can serve as vital habitat corridors that strengthen biodiversity conservation across the state.
- Farmers and ranchers can enhance biodiversity on and adjacent to agricultural lands while protecting food safety.

- Monitoring is necessary for a cycle of improvement for biodiversity and community outcomes.
- Not all forms of biodiversity are compatible with every type of agriculture.
- CDFA will consult with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife if wildlife conflicts arise.

Appendix 1: Supporting Plans, Policies, and Documents:

California Biodiversity Initiative Executive Order B-54-18

Launched to preserve our state's biodiversity by integrating biodiversity protection into the state's environmental and economic goals and efforts. CDFA and CNRA are directed to achieve goals consistent with the Convention on Biological Diversity. The California Biodiversity Initiative Roadmap outlined long-term steps for achieving the initiative's goals.

30x30 Executive Order N-82-20

Created the state goal to conserve 30 percent of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030– known as 30x30 and specifically calls on CDFA to coordinate with other agencies.

Sustainable Pest Management Roadmap

The Roadmap provides a course of action to accelerate a systemwide, statewide transition to sustainable pest management in agricultural and urban environments that supports agriculture and our urban and rural communities.

Soil Biodiversity in California Agriculture: Framework and Indicators for Soil Health Assessment

The report was commissioned by CDFA and written by Below Ground Biodiversity Committee, is an overview of efforts to identify soil biodiversity indicators and monitor soil health.

California's Partnership with the IUCN

California will partner with IUCN to work on shared priorities such as 30x30, nature-based solutions, and climate resilience.

CDFA’s Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Promotes a healthy interface between agricultural and natural systems that include biodiversity protection.

CDFA’s Climate Resilience Strategy

One of the key objectives is to increase beneficial biodiversity on-farm to improve resilience of farms, plants, and animals to climate change.

AB 923 (Ramos, 2022) & CNRA-led Tribal Stewardship Policy

Encourages state agencies to work with tribal communities for land management decisions on a tribe’s ancestral lands, bolstering progress towards the state’s 30x30 initiatives.

State Wildlife Action Plan - Agriculture Companion Plan

Examines the health of wildlife and prescribes actions to conserve wildlife and vital habitat before they become rarer and costlier to protect. The Agriculture Companion Plan examines this specifically in the context of agriculture.