

# Farmland Protection Efforts in the CV

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Only about 25% of California's land is in some type of agriculture.

About 50% is open pasture and range, about 39% is croplands remainder is woodlands and other categories.

<10% of the state is croplands

University of California Agricultural Issues Center

## Contributions of farmlands:

- ☀ Economic engine for region
- ☀ Employment on and off the farm
- ☀ Ag exports important for employment and reducing US trade deficit
- ☀ Open space
- ☀ Some environmental benefits
- ☀ Roles in water recharge and storage

Between 16% and 19% of California's  
ag production is exported  
to international markets

ag exports were valued at >\$6B

For each billion in ag exports  
27,000 jobs are created in the state.

\$1 in exports  $\Rightarrow$  \$1.40 in economic activity

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Why is a domestic source of food important?

Safer from: Chemical hazards  
Biological hazards

Generally produced in a more environmentally friendly manner

Workers treated more humanely



*Does farmland play a role in national security?*

We are dependent on foreign sources for oil

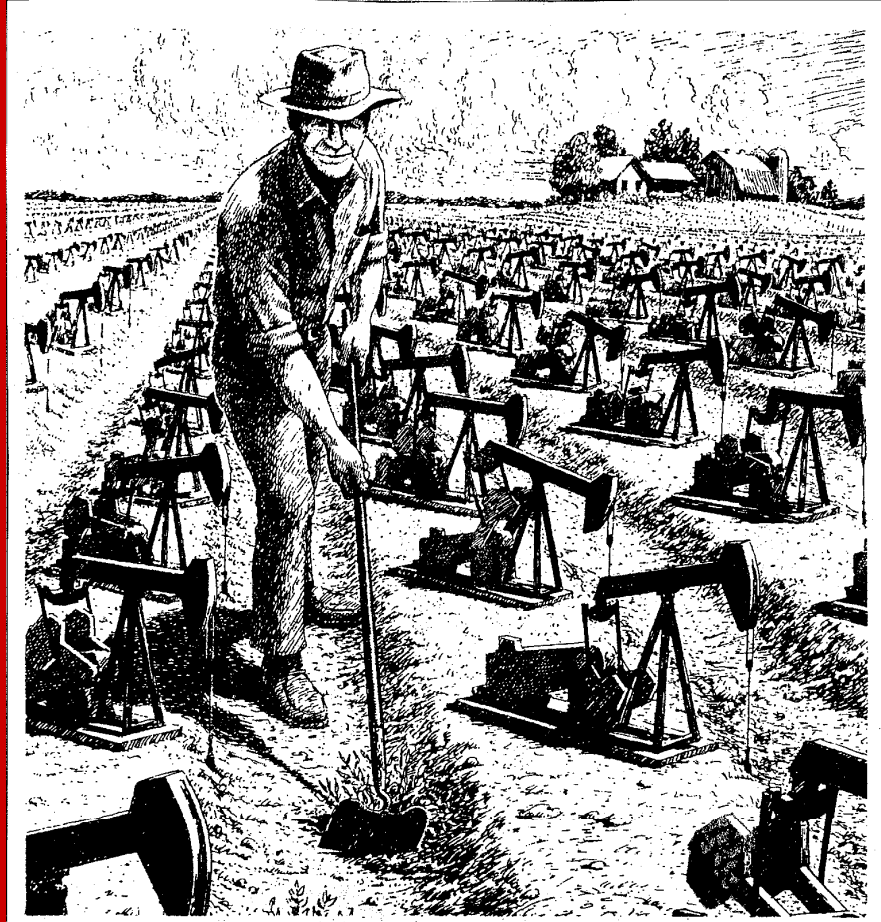
Dependent on others for cooperation in the war on terrorism and other foreign policy objectives.

Can we be dependent on external sources for any of our critical food needs?

Seemingly small events can be disruptive to our economy.

Food  
Fiber  
Flowers & foliage  
Forage


Fuel



Petroleum replacements:  
Acre of corn in every tank?  
Generate electricity?  
Bio-plastics?

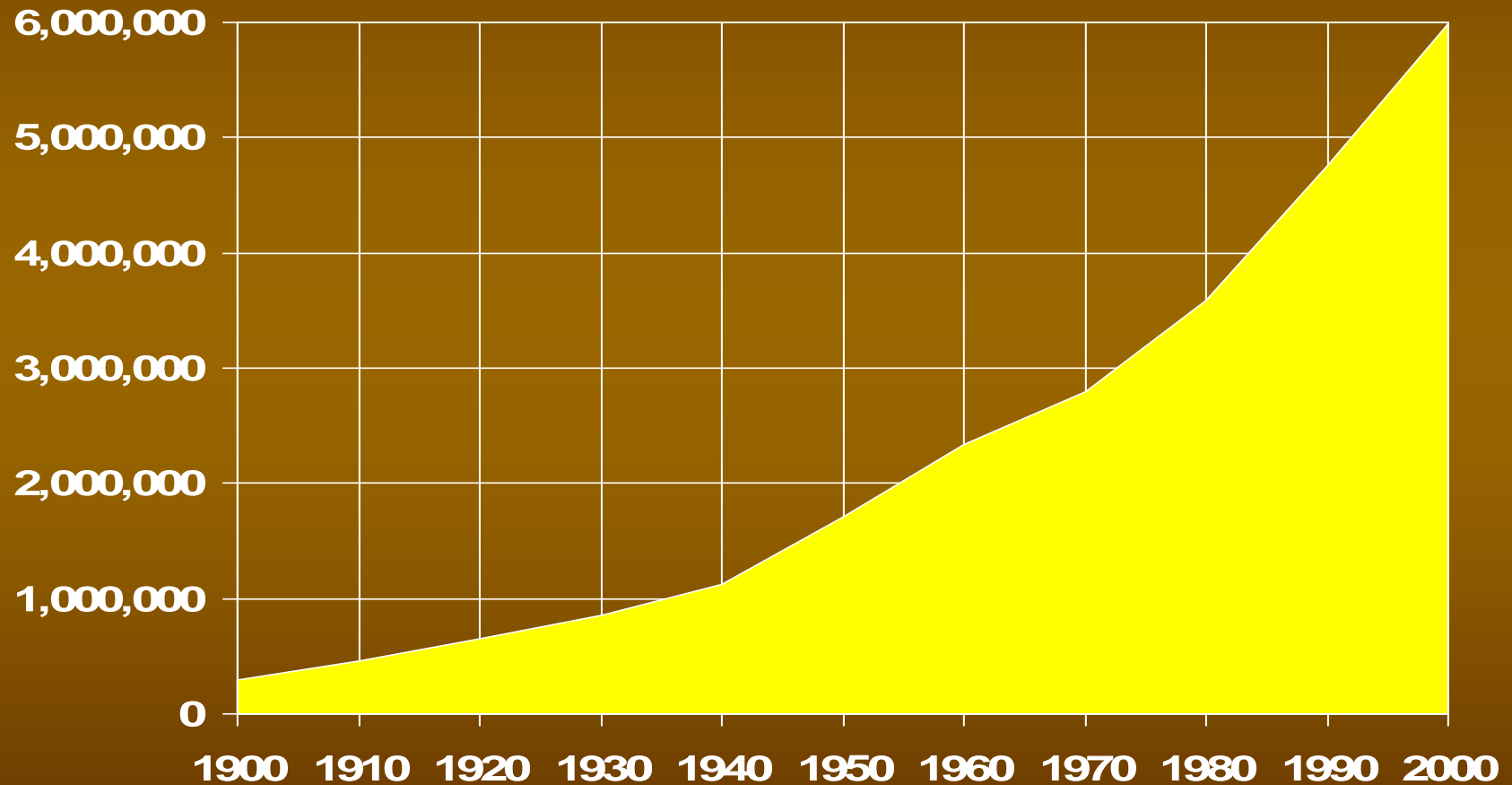


## How production farmland is lost:

1. urban growth
  2. splitting up into ranchettes
  3. farmers wanting to get out
  4. can't compete for water
  5. competition with wildlife objectives
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- A stylized silhouette of a mountain range in shades of teal, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

# Central Valley Population 1900-2000

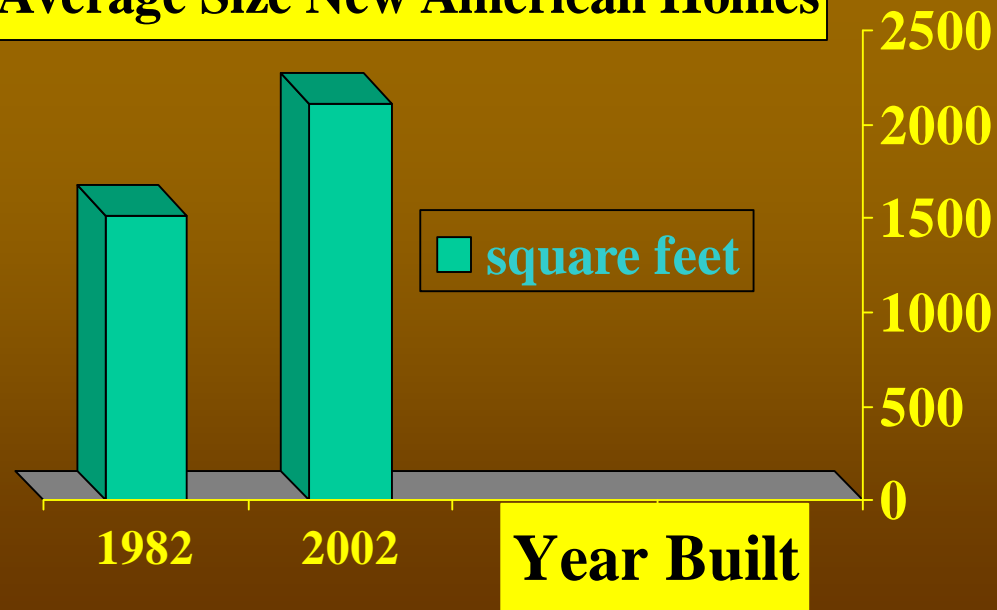
From: Public Policy Institute of California



# Supersizing Our Homes



**Average Size New American Homes**



From:  
Richard J. Jackson, MD, MPH  
State Public Health Officer  
California Department of Health Services

# WATER = JOBS

Water for food, fiber, forage and fuel  
production

Agricultural processors typically need  
> 1 Million gallons/day to operate

Some housing projects have been halted  
while waiting for court rulings on water  
issues.

# Competition with wildlife and ESA objectives

Purchase of lands or conservation easements for wildlife habitat

Protecting large tracts of marginal land  
→ forces urban growth onto productive farmland



# Farmland Protection Tools

## Right to Farm Ordinances (regulatory)

- + Strives to reduce rural-urban conflict by establishing a farmer's right to normal practices
- \* Needs to be included in residential deeds
- \* Must have notification prior to home sale
  
- Usually no prior notification
- Cannot take away right to complain to regulatory agencies or to sue
- Real problem is often trespassing, theft, dumping and added regulations near homes.

## General Plan and Ag Element (regulatory)

- +Designates direction of growth for a period
- +Ag Element: objectives, rules and penalties for ag land conversion and conservation.
- +May require some form of mitigation.
- Cities don't have ag elements
- Supervisors and Councils change
- Dev. comm. makes large contributions
- Counties and cities grant variances
- Often ignore GP
- Zoning easy to change
- GP is often enforced via lawsuit



## Agricultural Preserves

Areas in county eligible for 10-year  
W-Act contracts  
Established by B of S

## 20 Year Farmland Security Zones

Areas in county eligible for minimum  
20-year FSZ contracts

Established by B of S

Land valuation limited to 65% of regular  
W-Act (or) Prop. 13 value (whichever is  
lower)

Landowner applies to county.

## 10 Year Williamson Act

- + Contract: ↓ property taxes – give up development rights for 10 years
- Not permanent
- Speculators contract with intention of not renewing and later develop
- Profits from developing make the tax penalty for early cancellation less painful

## Agricultural Conservation Easements

- \*A permanent ag easement is placed on a parcel - permanently protecting it.
- \*Similar to selling mineral rights
- \*Considered permanent
- \*Can be donated for income tax benefits
- \*Can be sold
- \*Can be sold at a reduced value for combination of deduction and some \$
- \*Must be held by a qualified trust
- \*May be held by the govt - rare

## Agricultural Conservation Easements

- \* Can have estate planning, property and income tax benefits
- \* Land can be sold, inherited, encumbered
- \* Farming practices and crops can be changed to meet market demands
- \* Can allow for homes for family members
- \* Can combine with conservation easement for wildlife preservation

## Agricultural Conservation Easements

- Should be considered permanent – very difficult to change or remove
- Who holds the ACE is important
- Need to anticipate needs for future buildings
- Future owners or descendants may dispute the easement
- May end up close to town
- Developing is not an option if go broke
- Very slow and expensive process

## CV Land Trusts:

>AFT (prefers not to hold local easements)

>Yolo Land Trust → Yolo County

>Central Valley Farmland Trust

> CA Rangeland Trust

>Northern CA Regional Land Trust

>Sequoia Riverlands Trust

> Discussions taking place in Central and Southern SJV

## W-Act Conversions:

In lieu of large \$ penalties, developer purchases development rights to “comparable” lands and places them with a Trust

Comparable in soil capability and threat from urbanization.

Developer reimburses the Trust for costs and future monitoring and defense.



## Land banking:

A Trust, conservation organization or government agency purchases the land, removes development rights and then re-sells the land at a lower price to a farmer.

## Challenges to Preserving Cultivated Land:

Fewer funding sources for cultivated land

Funders like larger “heritage” projects

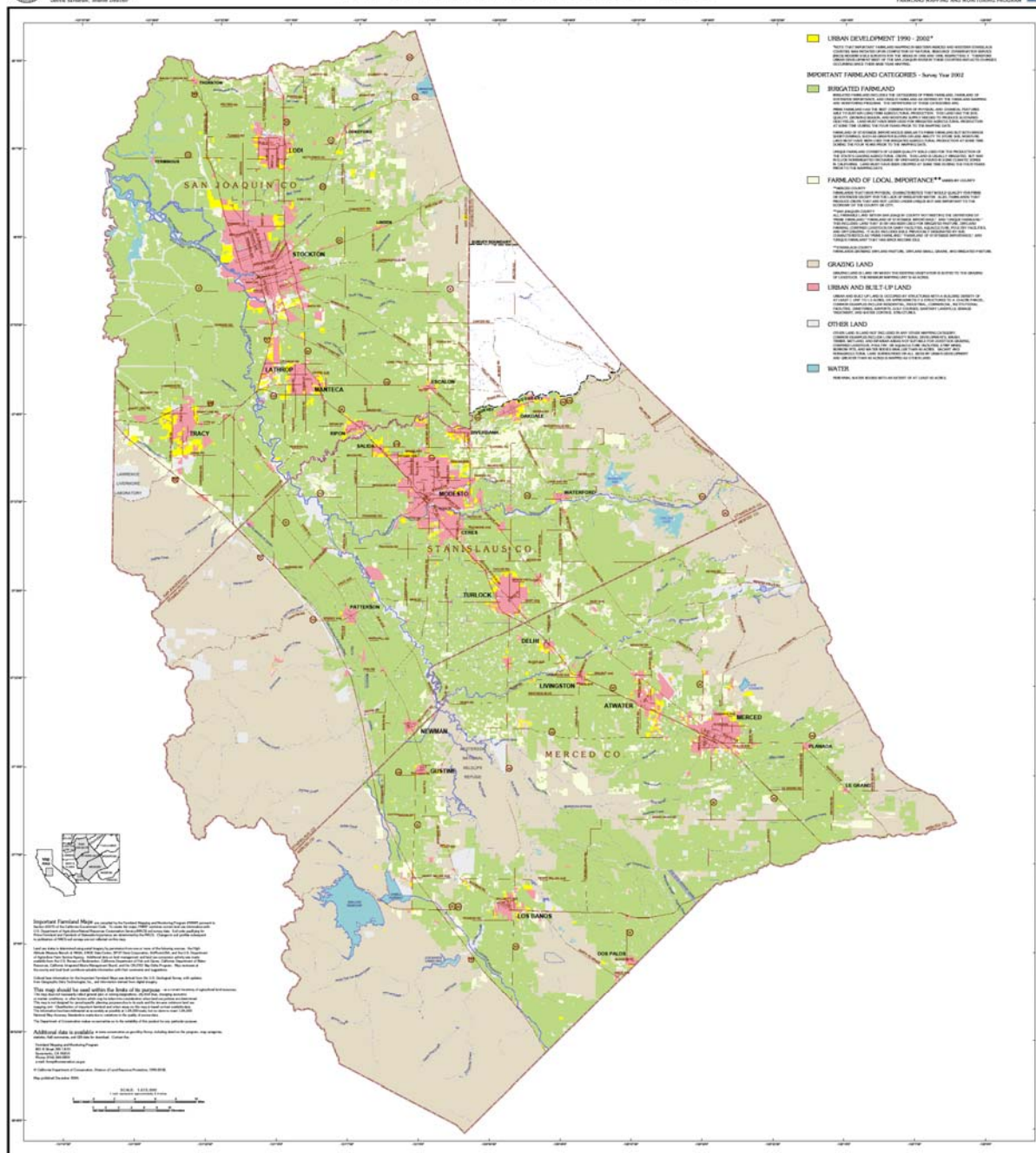
Habitat preservation is forcing growth onto prime farmland in some areas

Can become surrounded by urban growth or ranchettes

Cities founded on best soils

Cities scattered throughout sensitive areas

# URBAN DEVELOPMENT 1990-2002\* AND IMPORTANT FARMLAND 2002



# Urban Edge Study

Al Sokalow, UCD

Romero Lobo, San Diego

Sonya Varea-Hammond, Monterey

Maxwell Norton, Merced

- Better describe the nature of edge conflicts
- Document how farmers have changed practices for conflict avoidance
- Cal Ag article pending

