

California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force Charter

I. Background

The California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force (Task Force) was established in 2022 to develop recommendations on how to equitably increase access to agricultural land for food production and traditional tribal agricultural uses (Ting, Chapter 249, 2022). Per the authorizing statute, on or before January 1, 2026, the Task Force shall submit a report to the Legislature and Governor that includes a set of policy recommendations on how to address the agricultural land equity crisis.

II. Composition

The Task Force will consist of a regionally diverse group of individuals, including native and tribal liaisons and individuals with expertise in issues affecting socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (Ting, Chapter 249, 2022). The Task Force shall be comprised of up to 13 members, including:

- Native and tribal liaisons
- A land trust representative
- Individuals with expertise in issues affecting socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers
- An individual with expertise in agricultural land acquisition and finance
- A State Board of Food and Agriculture member
- A farmworker representative
- A beginning farmer
- The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Farm Equity Advisor
- An individual from the CDFA Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) Farmer Advisory Committee

Members shall be appointed by the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) in consultation with the CDFA Farm Equity Advisor and the California Truth and Healing Council. Members shall ensure that the Task Force's recommendations further the objectives of the Farmer Equity Act of 2017, including ensuring the

inclusion of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in rural and urbanized areas in the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of food and agriculture laws, regulations, and policies and programs.¹

III. Task Force Objectives

The primary objective of the Task Force is to develop policy recommendations on how to equitably increase access to agricultural land among socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. Addressing the land equity crisis in California requires a broad, deep, multi-sectoral collaboration among farmers, California Native American tribes, state legislators, agency officials, community leaders, landowners, and numerous others.

To this end, the Task Force will:

- Explore critical concepts such as “agricultural land equity.”
- Consider research on current land management and ownership, including assessments of the overlapping factors that shape land access.
- Review diverse State and non-State projects and mechanisms to identify opportunities, challenges, and resources needed to advance equitable land access.
- Actively engage, include, and learn from communities, groups, and individuals affected by the land equity crisis throughout the duration of the Task Force. Upon final adoption of recommendations, share recommendations with communities involved in the process with options for follow up and/or next steps.
- Consult with California Native American Tribal Nations who can help to guide and educate the Task Force on the appropriate historical knowledge necessary to make informed recommendations.
- Hold public hearings and offer opportunities for public comment to ensure transparency for the duration of the Task Force.
- Identify and employ other approaches to developing recommendations within the scope of the authorizing statute, as appropriate.

¹ As described in Sections 511 and 513 of the Food and Agricultural Code.

IV. Roles and Responsibilities

Task Force Members: Members act in a manner that enhances respect, mutual understanding, and trust among all members. Members contribute experience, expertise, data, and information to help clarify issues and advance analyses and recommendations. Members may communicate news about the project to their organization/ governing body/ tribe/ community and discuss topics of concern with their organization/ governing body/ tribe/ community to better inform the Task Force's decision-making.

Task Force Chair and Vice Chair: The Chair will preside over Task Force meetings and represent the Task Force in public meetings. The Vice Chair will be responsible for fulfilling the Chair's duties when the Chair is unavailable.

Administration: The Task Force is administered by the SGC. SGC staff is responsible for meeting logistics, meeting agenda and meeting material development, tracking action items, and project coordination and management. SGC staff will participate in discussions when requested by Task Force members but will not engage in decision-making. Following each meeting, SGC staff will develop a high-level summary of critical issues, any decisions or agreements, and action items. SGC staff will conduct data and policy analysis, mapping, and other research to support Task Force deliberations and reporting requirements as needed. SGC staff counsel will provide legal support and ensure compliance with the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act.

Facilitators: Facilitators are responsible for assisting SGC staff in developing meeting agendas and materials and managing the meetings. Facilitators are neutral with regard to the content being discussed; at the same time, facilitators will provide guidance on the collaborative process and associated best practices, such as ensuring balanced participation, mutual understanding, shared responsibility, and inclusive solutions. Facilitators also provide members with a confidential outlet for discussing concerns about the process.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC): TAC members will provide subject matter expertise on an ad-hoc basis on issues related to Task Force discussions, including review and guidance on draft recommendations, particularly regarding feasibility and strategies for implementation.

V. Operating Protocols

A. Meeting Structure and Language Access

- Meetings will be conducted in accordance with the Bagley–Keene Open Meeting Act and provisions contained in the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force Bylaws (§ 3 Operational Procedures).
- Meeting notes will be prepared with a focus on key points, ideas, action items and agreements rather than as transcripts. Unless very specific to understanding the content, references will generally be made to the content rather than the members. Draft meeting notes will be circulated to all members of the Task Force within three weeks of meetings. Approved meeting notes will be shared publicly on the project website.
- Supplementary meeting materials will be shared with Task Force members and posted to the SGC website prior to each meeting.

B. General Principles of Collaboration

Using the following general principles of collaboration, Task Force members agree to:

- **Act in good faith in all aspects of this process and communicate their interests.** Members agree to make a concerted effort to provide requested information to other members or to explain the reason why or why not. Tentative or sensitive information will be treated appropriately.
- **Ensure everyone has an equal voice in the conversation.** Members agree to recognize the validity of and seek to understand different points of view and different interests.
- **Seek to develop inclusive solutions that meet the range of interests around the table.** Disagreements will be viewed as conditions to be managed or problems to be solved rather than battles to be won.
- **Express concerns and support in meetings consistent with concerns and support they express in other forums, including in sessions with the press.** Outside of meetings, members will represent comments made in these meetings as Task Force comments. Personal references will be avoided, and members will only speak for themselves. If requested, a member can refer an inquirer to another member so they can also speak directly for themselves.
- **Only make commitments that they intend to keep.**

C. Standard Meeting Ground Rules

Task Force members, support staff, and all meeting participants agree to adhere to the following standing meeting ground rules during all meetings of the Task Force and related ad hoc group/ subcommittee meetings:

- **Electronic courtesy.** Turn cell phones or any other communication item with an on/off switch to “silent.” Do not text or conduct any outside correspondence during meetings. If you must make a call or send a text, please step out of the room. If you do not believe you will be able to participate fully, please discuss your situation with one of the facilitators.
- **Be comfortable.** Help yourself to refreshments or take personal breaks.
- **Humor is welcome** and important, but should never be at someone else’s expense.
- **Stay focused on the objectives and deliverables.** There are many related topics that people care about. The Task Force cannot address all of these. The facilitator will help the group stay focused on the deliverables.
- **Use common conversational courtesy.** Don’t interrupt others. Use appropriate language. Avoid third-party discussions.
- **Treat each other with respect.** People are passionate about these issues and, in many cases, have invested their careers in this work. People offer their time, expertise, insight, and resources in these discussions. Respect the work that people do to advance the conversation and create common ground.
- **All ideas and points have value.** You may hear something with which you disagree. You are not required to defend or promote your perspective, but you are asked to share it. All ideas have value in this setting. If you believe another approach is better, offer it as a constructive alternative.
- **Avoid editorials.** Avoid ascribing motives to or judging the actions of others. Tell us what is important to you and what you would like to see.
- **Honor time.** To achieve meeting objectives, it will be essential to follow the time guidelines provided by the facilitator.

D. Consensus-Seeking Decision-Making

Consensus signifies agreement among all members. A member is in consensus if they strongly support, “can live with,” are neutral on, or choose to stand aside from weighing in on a given recommendation. The Task Force will seek consensus when developing its recommendations. Seeking consensus means that members will make a determined, good-faith effort to participate consistently, explore issues,

share and understand information, and work to understand and meet everyone's interests. If the group cannot reach a consensus after a good faith effort, it may make more than one recommendation to the Legislature on a subtopic within its report.

VI. Schedule and Work Plan

The schedule and work plan for developing deliverables is a stand-alone document separate from this Charter. The schedule and work plan will be periodically revised to reflect project developments. The Task Force will submit its final report to the Legislature and the Governor no later than January 1, 2026.

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