

# Briefing Materials

## Prepared for the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force Meeting on November 13 & 14, 2024

The California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force (Task Force) was established in the Budget Act of 2022 ([AB 179](#)) to develop recommendations to equitably increase access to agricultural land for food production and traditional tribal agricultural uses. The Task Force consists of a regionally diverse group of individuals representing socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, land trusts, agricultural finance and real estate, and the State of California.

This briefing packet, developed by Strategic Growth Council (SGC) staff, includes two components:

1. A staff report to share information and updates, and
2. Background information and materials for the interactive working session on November 14.

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# Strategic Growth Council Staff Report

To California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force Members

November 13 & 14, 2024

## Announcements & Updates

### *Per diem allowance for public Task Force members*

AB 1448 (Hurtado) was signed by Governor Newsom on September 28, 2024. As per Section 75129.5 (a), SGC may “provide public members of the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force...a reasonable per diem allowance as specified in Section 11564.5 of the Government Code, or at a higher rate that may be established by the task force, for each day’s attendance at a noticed meeting of the task force.”

Section 11564.5 of the Government Code specifies a \$100 per diem allowance. At the November meeting, Task Force members will vote on whether to increase the per diem allowance to \$500 per day’s attendance at a noticed Task Force meeting.

Similar to the per diem procedures for the California Air Resource Board (CARB)’s Environmental Justice Advisory Committee (EJAC), this increased rate accounts for the work that Task Force members accomplish in between quarterly meetings, including drafting, reviewing, and providing feedback on materials and participating in subcommittee meetings and working groups as required.

### *Land Access Experiences Survey*

At the request of the Task Force as part of their statewide outreach efforts, staff developed a survey for farmers, food and fiber producers, and land stewards about their experiences related to land access in California. The survey will go live on November 4, 2024 and is available in English, Spanish, and Chinese with virtual and hard-copy options. Staff will collaborate with the Task Force members, along with community partners, to ensure the survey reaches a diverse set of priority communities as defined by the Task Force. More information and the link to the survey are available [on our website](#).

### *Seeking Advisory Committee Members*

Strategic Growth Council is seeking individuals who hold a range of experiences and knowledges related to agricultural land access, acquisition, and land return in California and are interested in joining an Advisory Committee (AC) to the Task Force. AC members will serve as a resource to the Task Force by sharing

knowledge, contributing research, and providing feedback on the Task Force’s draft recommendations. Individuals may fill out this [Advisory Committee interest form](#) to express their interest in joining. Staff will distribute this interest form widely and request that others share this opportunity with their networks.

### *Task Force Website Updates*

The work of the Agricultural Land Equity Task Force is highlighted on the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) website. The [Task Force webpage](#) includes all meeting information, Task Force member biographies, and ways the public can engage with the process. Details on how the public can make a comment during meetings or submit written communication to the Task Force at anytime are also included.

### *California Department of Food and Agriculture Tribal Listening Session*

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) hosted listening sessions for Tribes across California from June 2023 to February 2024 in collaboration with the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC). The sessions focused primarily on identifying current barriers and challenges to accessing CDFA grant programs, resources and services; and to propose recommendations for CDFA to address historic and current barriers to engagement with tribes. The CDFA Listening Sessions Report provides an overview of methods used and a synopsis of the Listening Sessions. You can learn more on [CDFA’s website](#).

### *Travel reimbursement*

As of October 1, 2024, the State has adopted federal travel reimbursement rates and policies. The details are available on the [CalHR website](#).

The updated budget table appears on the following page.

### *Updated Task Force budget table*

Current as of September 30, 2024.

<b>Category</b>	<b>FYs 22-23 &amp; 23-24 expenditures</b>	<b>Current FY (23-24) expenditures through Sep.</b>	<b>Total budgeted</b>	<b>Total obligated</b>	<b>Total remaining</b>
Personnel (SGC staff)	\$157,875	\$51,158	\$1,100,760	\$1,100,760	\$0
Operating expenses (travel, facilitator, language access, etc.)	\$100,429	\$10,707	\$884,240	\$278,101	\$495,003
Research and technical assistance	\$0	\$0	\$270,000	\$0	\$270,000
Local assistance (e.g., grants, pilot projects, research)	\$0	\$0	\$1,000,000	\$0	\$1,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$258,304</b>	<b>\$61,865</b>	<b>\$3,255,000</b>	<b>\$1,378,861</b>	<b>\$1,765,003</b>

## Responses to Questions from Task Force Members

### *What is the process for requesting photo permissions from site visit hosts?*

Staff have requested verbal or written permission to use photos from past site visit hosts. Only photos from hosts who have provided permission have been used in SGC's materials to-date. For the November meeting, SGC's communications team developed a photo permission form that staff distributed to site visit hosts in the Salinas region. This photo permission form will be used moving forward.

### *Can Task Force members send feedback on materials in between meetings?*

Yes. Task Force members may correspond with staff on an individual basis in between public meetings. Staff will collate Task Force members' feedback for further review and discussion by Task Force members.

# Background and Materials for November Meeting Discussions

During the November meeting, the Task Force will continue defining its core priorities and deepening discussion about select topics from the Work Plan. Part of day 2 will include a working session for Task Force members where they will divide into small groups to discuss each of the three dimensions of land equity, along with the “guiding principles and commitments” section, as represented in the updated version of the Work Plan. To prepare for these small group conversations, staff recommend that Task Force members review the updated Work Plan and read through the materials below. They are as follows:

1. An overview of parallel State efforts related to land equity,
2. An update on research into existing policy recommendations, and
3. Descriptions and examples of different approaches to making recommendations.

## Updated Work Plan

The updated Work Plan was distributed to Task Force members alongside this briefing packet and will be made available on the project website. The work plan is a compilation of the past year of conversations at quarterly Task Force meetings and nine meetings of the six Subcommittees. The range of topics identified in the Work Plan represents the ideas that Task Force members have shared to-date that they would like to address in their work together. This document is organized by three dimensions of land equity and includes “potential solutions” under each topic.

## Parallel State Efforts Related to Land Equity

As the Agricultural Land Equity Task Force continues its progress toward its first draft of recommendations, members have expressed a desire to situate their work alongside parallel efforts within the State of California. The list below (in chronological order by date enacted or established) provides an introductory overview of related initiatives. While each has its own unique objectives, the outcomes and ongoing work of these efforts overlap with the Task Force's stated goals and focus areas.

### *Farmer Equity Act, California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)*

Established in 2017, the Farmer Equity Act formally recognizes the ongoing barriers faced by BIPOC farmers and women farmers in accessing land and other resources

necessary to conduct farming in California and directs the CDFA to address racism in agriculture. The CDFA released the [Farmer Equity Report](#) in 2020 and the agency's [Racial Equity Action Plan](#) in September 2023 which includes dozens of actions aimed at meeting those goals. The legislation that established the Agricultural Land Equity Task Force outlined that the CDFA Farmer Equity Advisor would be a member and that the Task Force should ensure that its recommendations further the objectives of the Farmer Equity Act of 2017.

### *Reparations Task Force*

The Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans (Reparations Task Force) was established in September 2020. The Reparations Task Force studied the institution of slavery and its effects on living African Americans. The Reparations Task Force submitted its [final report](#) to the California Legislature in June 2023 where they outline hundreds of recommended policy changes related to compensation, rehabilitation, and restitution. Among the wide range of topics explicitly addressed in the report's ten chapters, land dispossession was woven throughout the Task Force discussion and the public comment.

### *30x30 Executive Order*

In October 2020, Governor Newsom signed Executive Order N-82-20, known as [30x30 California](#), establishing a state goal of conserving 30 percent of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030. This Executive Order led to a statewide mobilization towards the goal, land conservation statewide, and other efforts relevant to the work of the Agricultural Land Equity Task Force. One example is the [Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy](#), published in 2022, which identifies "land management actions that help protect climate vulnerable communities, achieve carbon neutrality, improve public health and safety, and expand economic opportunity". Equity is listed as a core priority along with seven ways that the State will work toward equity and environmental justice. The Strategy includes croplands, grasslands, forests, wetlands, and other ecosystems.

### *Tribal Stewardship Strategy, CNRA*

The California Natural Resource Agency (CNRA) has committed to partnering with Tribal Nations across their departments and in the various ways they are helping to implement the 30x30 goal. For example, in 2023 they launched the [Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Program](#) which awarded over \$100 million and supported the return of approximately 38,950 acres of land to California Native American Tribal Nations.

Building on these efforts, CNRA is developing a [Tribal Stewardship Strategy](#) (resources and information at the bottom of the linked page) to establish policies and resources that advance tribal access and co-management of public places and natural resources and returning ancestral lands to tribal ownership. CNRA will seek tribal consultation and public comment on a draft of the Tribal Stewardship Strategy in early 2025.

### *Truth & Healing Council*

The [California Truth & Healing Council](#), created by Governor Newsom via Executive Order N-15-19, began meeting in 2020. The Council bears witness to, records, examines existing documentation of, and receives California Native American narratives to clarify the historical record of the relationship between the State of California and California Native Americans in the spirit of truth and healing. The Council will submit a final written report of findings to the Governor's Office by 2025, which will include a holistic understanding of the historical relationship between California Native Americans and the State, recommendations aimed at reparation and restoration, and considerations for how to prevent similar policies in the future.

## Existing Policy Recommendations

As with parallel State initiatives, Task Force members have expressed a desire to ensure that their recommendations build from and complement existing reports published by a range of public and non-governmental organizations.

In the [August 2024 briefing packet](#) (p. 12), staff shared a publicly-viewable, extensive list of [Reports and Recommendations on Agricultural Land Access and Equity](#), which includes dozens of examples of existing policy recommendations written by public and private entities. While not exhaustive, this list captures many of the existing recommendations related to topics that the Agricultural Land Equity Task Force (ALETf) has expressed interest in addressing.

Staff are reviewing these existing reports and recommendations and will summarize and share specific examples with the Task Force to meet their goal of deepening rather than replicating existing findings. Staff will share summaries of existing recommendations relevant to the specific scope of individual Working Groups, Subcommittees, and quarterly meeting topics, and will incorporate this information as relevant into the first draft of recommendations discussed at the February 2025 Task Force meeting.

## Approaches to Designing Policy Recommendations

In the [February 2024 briefing packet](#) (p. 14), staff shared examples of different reports authored by similar bodies to assist the Task Force in designing an approach to its final report of recommendations. During the November Task Force meeting, members will begin to draft policy recommendations based on the ideas they have shared in previous meetings. To prepare for those conversations, staff have created the section below to reiterate some of the information in the February 2024 briefing packet and outline different approaches to designing individual policy recommendations.

Each approach listed below includes illustrative example from a handful of reports in the ["Reports and Recommendations" list](#) described in the previous section. These examples were chosen for their explanatory power and are not an indication of staff's beliefs or commitments.

Please refer to the works cited section for a hyperlinked reference for each citation.

### *Goals and Vision Setting*

Recommendations can be designed to articulate a large, ambitious goal or vision that may not be feasible in the short term, but is aligned with the authors' worldview and desired long-term impact.

#### **Example:**

- "We are calling on Congress to make a historic investment in facilitating equitable access to one million acres of land for the next generation of farmers." (National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC), 2023)

### *Institutionalize Progress*

Recommendations can seek to institutionalize efforts, much like the legislation that created the Agricultural Land Equity Task Force, to ensure there is time and resources dedicated to a certain topic on an ongoing basis. There are several examples that reference the Agricultural Land Equity Task Force explicitly.

#### **Examples:**

- "Create a BIPOC and/or Latinx farmer task force or advisory committee, likely under the Sonoma County Office of Equity and in concert with the state's Land Equity Task Force, to provide feedback and make recommendations regarding land tenure and equitability." (Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Sonoma Ag + Open Space), 2023)



- “A Department of Agricultural Equity within local, state, or federal government could achieve many [land access and equity] goals... It would provide dedicated staffing to advance social, economic, and environmental justice for farmworkers, small and diverse farmers, and agricultural communities.” (Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE) et al., 2024)

### *Knowledge Building*

Recommendations can propose research, information sharing, or education required to effectively understand, evaluate, and address relevant issues. Some of this knowledge building may involve increasing communication across geographies, agencies, and existing efforts.

#### **Examples:**

- “Invest in data collection, reporting, and research on farmland tenure, ownership and transition” which should involve authorizing “mandatory, recurring funding for land-access related data gathering” and collecting “nationwide data on farmland concentration” (NYFC, 2023)
- Conduct a real estate analysis. Engage in mapping and analysis of Sonoma County land suitable and/or available for smaller-scale farming (Sonoma Ag + Open Space, 2023)

### *Modify or Implement Existing Programs or Legislation*

Recommendations can call for improvements or changes to existing programs and legislation, e.g., moving a proposed piece of legislation forward or implementing a program in a specific way. Some examples include increased or permanent funding, changes to program guidelines, and/ or emphasizing priority for certain communities.

#### **Examples:**

- “Conduct significant reforms to the Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones (UAIZ) Program... in order to be more expansive and intentional in increasing access to land.” Some reforms include: “Increase financial incentives for cities to implement the program; Provide sufficient technical assistance for farmers and landowners; Explore different forms of rent stabilization”. (Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF), 2024)

- “Establish, and significantly increase funding for, state farmland protection programs” such as the previously proposed “California law AB 986, the Regional Economies and Equity in Agricultural Lands (REEAL) Act” which would “provide grant funding to eligible conservation entities to protect farmland from development, facilitate sales or long-term leases to farmers of color, and provide assistance for down payment costs and infrastructure improvements.” (NYFC, 2020)

### *New Programs and Ideas*

Recommendations may propose a new program or structure that does not already exist, or perhaps exists in another state or country. This kind of recommendation may describe an existing project already taking place that should be replicated and supported.

#### **Examples:**

- Create local climate resiliency land banks, rethinking agricultural land as public infrastructure and farmers as critical employees. These projects would fund the purchase and protection of farmland, employ farmers, and invest in processing infrastructure to ensure that municipalities have access to a secure source of local food in the face of the climate crisis. (NYFC, 2020)
- “Pass state legislation to help farmers manage their student loan debt so they can better access capital for land purchases.” (NYFC, 2020)
- “Invest in a dedicated source of multi-year funding for technical service providers supporting farmers on land access and landowners transitioning out of farm ownership.” (NYFC, 2023)

### *Incentives and Regulatory Actions*

Recommendations can be designed to support and encourage certain activities or behaviors or, conversely, they can take a regulatory approach by limiting or prohibiting activities. One approach or the other may be more effective depending on the desired outcome and unique context.

#### **Examples of incentives:**

- “Expand incentive structures and opportunities” for community land trusts, which “are a great structural tool to support existing [urban agriculture] while securing communities of color futures when applied in urban spaces.” (CAFF, 2024)

- “Amend state and local property tax structures to support agricultural activity at smaller scales.” (NYFC, 2020)

#### **Examples of regulatory action:**

- Permitting agencies or community benefits agreements could require that large-scale developments that convert farmland must “set aside a percentage of land to remain in agriculture and be used for socially beneficial purposes”. (CAUSE et al., 2024)
- “Reduce competition for farmland from non-agricultural buyers” through strategies such as “working farm easements that permanently protect farmland and encourage producer ownership” or “anti-corporate farming laws that restrict the involvement of certain corporations in agricultural production.” (NYFC, 2020)

### **Cited Reports**

Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF). 2024. [“California Urban Agriculture: Challenges, Pathways, and Equity for a Resilient Landscape.”](#)

Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE), Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP), and Lideres Campesinas. 2024. [“Healing Land, Collective Power.”](#)

National Young Farmers’ Coalition (NYFC). 2020. [“Land Policy: Towards a More Equitable Farming Future.”](#)

National Young Farmers’ Coalition (NYFC). 2023. [“2023 Farm Bill Asks.”](#)

Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Sonoma Ag + Open Space). 2023. [“Land Access and Land Tenure for Limited Resource Farmers.”](#)