

Note: This is a PRELIMINARY DRAFT prepared by Strategic Growth Council staff for Task Force members' review and discussion at the February 12 & 13, 2025 meeting.

Draft for Review: Report and Recommendations of the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force

Compiled by the California Strategic Growth Council
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Summary

This **DRAFT** report summarizes the deliberations and recommendations of the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force (Task Force). Established in the California Budget Act of 2022 (AB-179), the Task Force is charged with developing 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 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, and an individual from the CDFA BIPOC Farmer Advisory Committee.

The views and recommendations expressed herein are those of the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force and do not reflect an endorsement by the State of California.

This document is a preliminary summary of conversations to date and is subject to change.

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Executive Summary

[ADD: One-page summary of the Task Force and recommendations in this report for policymakers]

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Overview

California's agricultural land equity crisis

Stable and secure land tenure is vital in achieving long-term prosperity for California's farmers, a robust food system, and healthy natural and working lands. Like much of the United States, however, California's history has been characterized by inequitable access to land, especially for Tribal Nations who have been dispossessed of their ancestral lands and others experiencing marginalization around the intersection of race, class, gender, and other identities.¹

Two groups in particular—California Tribal Nations and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers—have experienced systematic dispossession and exclusion in California. The State of California was founded on the violent removal of California Native Americans from their lands and continued forms of discrimination and dispossession, as formally recognized in Governor Gavin Newsom's apology issued in 2019 (Executive Order N-15-19). As elsewhere in the United States, Black and other farmers of color in California have faced centuries of discriminatory practices by both State and Federal agencies and have faced disproportionate impacts of farmland consolidation.²

These social categories intersect with others to create multifaceted forms of inequity that shape who can access which lands, under which conditions, and for which purposes. Race and ethnicity intersect with other axes of disparity including, but not limited to gender, sexuality, nationality, language, age, socioeconomic class, access to resources, years of experience, intergenerational resources, and scale of operation.

Disparities in land access have far-reaching consequences. Secure access to land is a central element of one's ability to generate and accumulate wealth from agricultural production, and recent scholarship has pointed to billions in lost wealth for Tribal Nations and Black communities who have faced centuries of government-enacted dispossession.³

Importantly, it is not just monetary wealth that is lost when ties to land are severed but also other forms of wellbeing, including cultural belonging and relations of care. Land ownership characteristics impact farmers' decision-making and business practices in ways that impact their ability to steward the land and respond to climate change risks.⁴

Increasing equitable access to affordable and ecologically sustainable agricultural lands is a necessary step in addressing past harms and interrupting contemporary inequities toward a more just and sustainable food system.

The California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force

[ADD: Overview of the Task Force, including

- Enabling legislation
- Membership

- Prior work (including Farm Equity Report)
- Meetings
- Subcommittees
- Outreach and engagement]

What is agricultural land equity and why is it important?

Equitable access to agricultural land is foundational to individual, community, and cultural wellbeing.

Agricultural land equity is the process of eliminating disparities in secure and affordable access to viable land for the cultivation of food, fiber, medicine, and culturally valuable resources. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures toward meaningful improvement in the lives of land stewards who have been historically and systematically excluded from secure land tenure.⁵

Advancing agricultural land equity requires a nuanced understanding of how forms of inequity overlap and a diverse set of solutions that are anchored in specific socioeconomic, geographic, and historical contexts. Rather than a singular checklist of required components, agricultural land equity is a process that must be designed in consultation with individuals and communities.

The goal of land equity is agricultural land justice: a vision and transformation of society to eliminate intersectional hierarchies and advance collective wellbeing, where Tribal Nations and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, in particular, have the dignity, resources, power, and self-determination to fully thrive.

As discussed below, land equity is deeply connected to a range of issues, including economic wellbeing, food security and health, and environmental sustainability.

Economic prosperity

Agriculture is the cornerstone of many of California's regional economies. Yet agriculture is an increasingly insecure form of livelihood. [CITE: CDFA reports on agricultural economy].

Among many challenges, farmers and ranchers rate land access as a primary barrier to successful agricultural businesses.⁶ Reducing barriers to secure land access and tenure is therefore necessary to ensure that farming is an entry-level profession that is affordable and sustainable, with opportunities for intergenerational wealth and land access. This stability and continuity are critical to workforce development and economic opportunities.

Food security, diversity, and health

Equitable access to agricultural land produces healthy, diverse, and robust food systems. This is as true for California's cities and peri-urban communities as for its rural regions.

Advancing agricultural land equity means embracing and promoting the diverse crops and production practices that provide economic, environmental, cultural, and health benefits to communities across the state.

Sustainability and climate resilience

Advancing agricultural land equity establishes a foundation for the next generation of land stewards who are critical to achieving California's climate goals. Ensuring that diverse farmers and ranchers have secure and stable access to the land that they cultivate is key to stewarding California's agricultural resources into the future.

Reducing barriers to land access for land stewards who have been excluded has three immediate impacts on California's climate resiliency. First, it puts agricultural land into the hands of farmers and ranchers, thereby limiting the financialization of California's farmland that treats one of its most valuable resources as an investment object like any other, often resulting in the mismanagement of agricultural lands and resources.

Second, by establishing structures for sovereignty and secure land tenure, it creates pathways for land stewards to care for land in culturally and environmentally meaningful ways. Secure tenure is necessary for farmers and ranchers to be able to devote the time and money required to cultivate healthy ecosystems and access the State programs that are intended to result in resilient working lands, such as the Healthy Soils Program.

Third, on average, smaller farms tend to have more diverse cropping patterns.⁷ This diversity has been shown to play an important role in climate resiliency. Addressing land insecurity is therefore critical to ensuring that the State meets its climate resiliency goals.

Background and context

Centuries of dispossession and continued inequities

Theft of California Tribal Nations' Land

As formally recognized in Governor Gavin Newsom's apology issued in 2019 (Executive Order N-15-19), the State of California was founded on the violent removal of California Native Americans from their lands and continued forms of discrimination and dispossession.

[ADD: Truth & Healing Council report]

Throughout this report, the term "California Tribal Nations" is used in reference to both federally recognized and non-federally recognized California Native American Tribes. This term was selected to denote the inherent sovereignty of Native communities and their relations of care since time immemorial with the land that is now called California.

Discrimination against socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers

In 2017, the California legislature passed Assembly Bill 1348, the Farmer Equity Act. The Act formally recognizes the ongoing barriers faced by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

(BIPOC) and women farmers in accessing land and other resources necessary to conduct farming in California. It directs the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to address racism in agriculture through actions across the department.

Per the California Food and Agriculture Code, "socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers" are members of a socially disadvantaged group, meaning they have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as group members without regard to their individual qualities. These groups include African Americans, Native Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders.

As established by AB 1348, California’s agricultural sector is shaped by structural disparities that lead to inequities in land access and tenure. These inequities are identifiable in the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture, which reported the following characteristics for producers in the State of California.⁸

Table 1: Number of acres of farmland in California 1) owned and 2) rented or leased by producer demographic category.

Census demographic category	# of acres of owned farmland in CA	% of total acres owned	# of acres of rented or leased farmland in CA	% of total acres leased
American Indian or Alaska Native	510,539	3%	377,827	3%
Asian	651,644	4%	226,408	2%
Black or African American	50,275	0.3%	73,900	0.6%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	156,886	1%	61,209	0.5%
White	13,605,035	82%	9,630,521	84%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	1,606,177	10%	1,147,355	10%
Female	6,865,714	41%	4,612,045	40%

Note that producers may select more than one demographic category, resulting in percentage totals over 100.

Of the data captured in the census, Black or African American producers were the only group to lease or rent more acres of farmland than were owned (60 percent leased versus 40 percent owned). Black or African American farmers were also the most likely demographic group to identify as “new and beginning farmers” (40 percent compared with an across-demographic average of 31 percent).

Barriers to equitable land access and secure tenure

Through its convenings, the Task Force identified several key barriers to land access and secure tenure, including the cost and availability of land, access to resources, lease terms, and the potential impacts of policies and regulations.

[ADD to these sections: site visit case studies]

Land is too expensive

In recent decades, the cost of agricultural land has increased significantly. Since 2018, the value of farm real estate in California has increased by 28.3 percent.⁹ In 2022, the average cost of California farm real estate was \$12,000 per acre, an increase of 10.1 percent from the year prior.¹⁰

The cost of agricultural real estate has outpaced the growth in sales value. Between 2020 and 2021, the total sales value of California agriculture increased by 3.6 percent.¹¹ These rising costs are partly caused by rising rates of institutional investment in agricultural land in California and elsewhere. Since the financial crisis of 2007–2008, speculative investments in agricultural land across the United States have risen substantially, covering approximately 25 percent of all acquisitions.¹² Alongside land, water is also the subject of intensive speculative investment that is reshaping the agricultural landscape.¹³

High land costs are an especially significant barrier for many socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, who, in addition to facing discrimination in obtaining agricultural credit, are more likely to operate smaller, lower-revenue farms and have weaker credit histories, which can make it difficult to qualify for loans.

Suitable land is unavailable

Resource-constrained farmers and ranchers often seek smaller parcels of land and implement more diversified farming practices. However, small yet viable parcels are difficult to find, especially at an affordable price.

Agricultural land in California is largely consolidated among large-scale landholders. Statewide, the largest 5% of properties—with “property” defined as all parcels owned by a given landowner—account for 50.6 percent of California cropland. The smallest 84% of properties comprise just 25 percent of cropland.¹⁴

Millions of acres of farmland are expected to transition between owners in the next 15 years.¹⁵ Without a vision and clear plan for implementation, it is likely that this land transition will exacerbate existing inequalities, with powerful landholders further consolidating land ownership.

In addition to land consolidation, urban development has reduced the number of acres of agricultural land in the state. American Farmland Trust found that across the United States “between 2001 and 2016, 11 million acres of farmland and ranchland were converted to urban” and residential land use, or approximately 2,000 acres each day.”¹⁶ Urban sprawl removes land from agricultural production and drives up prices, as developers are generally able and willing to purchase land at higher values.

Resources are inaccessible

[ADD: Inaccessibility of capital and related resources, effect on ability to access and maintain tenure on land]

Short-term leases can lead to insecure land tenure

Many socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in California operate on a year-to-year lease. Tenants with short-term or insecure leases are less likely to have the time and resources to invest in conservation practices and land and infrastructure improvements. They are also less likely to qualify for funding and technical assistance programs.

While short-term leases may be desirable in some instances—for example, beginning farmers who are avoiding a long-term commitment or wishing to minimize risk—short-term leases limit opportunities for business development, land improvements, and wealth creation often necessary for land acquisition.

Under many lease agreements, the tenant is responsible for making improvements or fixing broken infrastructure or equipment, yet the value associated with these improvements accrues to the owner, not the tenant, thereby making it even harder for tenant farmers to build enough capital to acquire land.

Policies and regulations can have disproportionate impacts

Agricultural regulations can be unevenly enforced in ways that impact equity. Stringent food safety standards, for instance—which can require high compliance costs—can impede diversification and serve as barriers to land access, particularly for small farmers.¹⁷

Additionally, agricultural labor laws prohibiting labor sharing discriminate against and challenge small Southeast Asian refugee farmers who rely on cultural practices of labor reciprocity and unpaid help from extended family networks to sustain their economic viability.¹⁸

[ADD: Tribal Nations example; impacts of SGMA]

As these examples suggest, shifting policy and regulatory frameworks and their uneven enforcement are more likely to adversely affect Tribal Nations and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, thereby worsening inequities.

State efforts to advance related priorities

[ADD: Brief overview of parallel efforts, including:

- Farmer Equity Act
- Reparations Task Force
- Truth and Healing Council
- CNRA Stewardship Strategy
- 30 x 30 and related strategies

- Equity commitments in California Climate Investments programs like Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program]

Structure of Recommendations

This section outlines key terms and concepts as defined by the Task Force that structure its findings and recommendations.

Key Terms and Concepts

Priority communities

For the purposes of this report, priority communities are those who have been historically and systematically excluded from land ownership and secure tenure for agriculture and traditional tribal uses. This includes members of Tribal Nations and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, as well as others who have faced discrimination based on intersectional social categories including race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, age, nationality, and language.

Agriculture and agricultural land

Advancing agricultural land equity requires a careful assessment of the term “agriculture” and how it has been used to exclude certain communities and practices. Settlers used agriculture to displace California Tribal Nations from their ancestral homelands. Approaches to agricultural productivity centered on commodity crops have resulted in public structures and programs that support business operations but ignore, or in some cases actively prohibit, forms of agricultural production that are focused on household- or community-level subsistence and food sovereignty.

Agricultural land equity thus requires an expansive understanding of agricultural production and land stewardship. For the purposes of this report, the term “agriculture” is defined as the knowledge and practice of cultivating plants, animals, and ecosystems for food, fiber, medicine, or other resources.

“Agricultural land,” accordingly, encompasses lands that are stewarded to produce resources valuable to the communities engaged in the practices and knowledge of cultivation.

This expansive understanding of agriculture and agricultural land is intended to capture peoples’ reciprocal relationships with land and ecosystems that support many others, both human and non-human. This relates to the importance of the quality of land in evaluations of agricultural land equity. The question is not only who can access land but also which lands different people can access and under what conditions.

This last point gestures to the central role of governance and sovereignty in achieving

Sovereignty

Land equity requires stability and sovereignty on land once access is achieved. For the purposes of this report, “sovereignty” refers to the authority and responsibility to govern. Sovereignty, in contrast to the term “autonomy,” is focused on relationships and responsibilities that accompany control over decision-making.

This approach to sovereignty is applicable in two interrelated yet distinct contexts:

- sovereignty as a defining characteristic of California Tribal Nations’ and the foundation for nation-to-nation relations and responsibilities, and
- land sovereignty as a social justice issue for those who have been deprived of a homeland and who have faced systematic dispossession, including ancestors of enslaved individuals.

In both contexts, control, agency, and responsibility are key. While exercising sovereignty will look different for citizens of Tribal Nations than it will for others, a critical component of land equity is autonomy over land use and decision-making.

This highlights another core component of land equity: it will mean different things and entail different actions depending on two factors:

- the historical and contemporary harms that are being addressed, and
- the diverse goals of individuals, communities, organizations, and governments.

For some, land equity requires full sovereignty on ancestral lands. For others, land equity entails building wealth on the land and ensuring intergenerational land access. And for others, achieving land equity entails building capacity for cooperative landholding and collective organizing.

These forms of agricultural land justice are anchored in different but complementary understandings of sovereignty. The process of advancing land equity must reflect the exercise of sovereignty by recognizing and respecting diverse communities’ rights and responsibilities of self-governance.

This diversity of goals requires a nuanced understanding of agricultural land equity as a community-centered process. It also requires acknowledging and addressing how solutions have differential impacts depending on the specific community and context. Efforts to advance land equity therefore must entail careful analyses of whether any given action will reduce disparities and produce measurable change in the lives of land stewards who have been historically and systematically excluded from secure land tenure.

Dimensions of agricultural land equity

The recommendations that follow are divided into two primary dimensions of agricultural land equity: 1) Land access and acquisition, and 2) land tenure.

Land access and acquisition

Land access and acquisition refers to how people, organizations, and governments gain the physical and legal ability to be in relationship with the land and may encompass a combination of allowable activities, such as use of the land for food and fiber production, decision making power about allowable uses, ability to benefit financially, and the right to sell or transfer the land to another person or entity.¹⁹ Land acquisition refers to obtaining a parcel of land along with the ownership or usage rights of that land while ancestral land return, more specifically, means returning land to Tribal Nations. The effective return of land—also known as Land Back—includes secure tenure, ownership, and Tribal sovereignty as the fullest expression of land access²⁰.

Land tenure

Agricultural land equity does not stop with land access; rather, it requires stable relationships to land and just governance structures. The length of a lease can influence tenants' ability to adopt conservation practices, invest in land and infrastructure improvements, and qualify for farm programs. While short-term leases may be desirable in some instances – for example, beginning farmers not seeking a long-term commitment or wishing to minimize risk – short-term leases limit opportunities for business development, land improvements, and wealth creation often necessary for land acquisition.

For the purposes of this report, land tenure refers to the relationship that individuals and groups hold with respect to land and related resources. Land tenure rules define how property rights to land are allocated, transferred, used, or managed in a particular society.

Land tenure encompasses a broad range of relationships and responsibilities that farmers, ranchers, Tribal land stewards and culture keepers, and others hold with the land. Critical to these relationships are the land use governance structures that shape what is allowable and possible on the land, who makes decisions and how they are made, and which goals and outcomes are prioritized with those decisions.

Recommendations

NOTE: The recommendations that follow are a preliminary summary of Task Force discussions to date and are subject to change with further discussion and development.

Land access and acquisition

Return ancestral lands to California Tribal Nations

To address the violent dispossession of land from California Tribal Nations, public agencies and private entities can expand access to and return ancestral lands in numerous ways. There are now dozens of projects in the State of California to learn from, improve upon, and replicate that have re-established land access, stewardship opportunities, and co-management agreements directly with Tribal Nations.²¹

[ADD: Case studies of re-establishing land access and ancestral land return for Tribal Nations]

Recommendations:

- Equip with regulatory power the commitments from Governor Newsom’s Statement of Administrative Policy as it relates to Native and Ancestral Lands.
- Return State-owned lands to Tribal Nations.
 - Grant clear authority to state agencies to transfer land directly to Tribal Nations without the need for a third-party intermediary.
 - Address and update current policies and regulations, including the Surplus Land Act, that prohibit direct land transition.
 - Ensure Tribal Nations do not need to create alternative entities or purchase the land at fair-market value or at auction.
 - If collaboration with a third party is required, prioritize partnerships with Tribal-led and serving organizations and culturally competent community-based organizations.
- Incentivize land trusts and private individuals to transfer land to Tribal Nations.
- Fund and support ancestral land return projects:
 - Create new or increase funding to existing programs that support Tribal Nations’ land acquisition.
 - Provide grants, financial assistance, and legal aid to Tribal Nations working to convert fee land to trust land.
- Ensure that ancestral land return projects are informed by consultation with Tribal Nations and establish funds to support pilot projects.
 - Recommended best practices include:
 - Develop and implement nation-to-nation consultation procedures.
 - Give land, rather than money to buy land, without restrictions.
 - Land return should not include significant costs to the Tribal Nation or members receiving the land.

Conserve agricultural land to facilitate equitable access

Incorporate agricultural land equity into existing conservation priorities

- Establish an agricultural land conservation target informed by the 30x30 process
 - Prioritize Tribal Nations and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in 30x30 implementation strategies.
 - Fund agencies’ implementation and monitoring efforts.

Incentivize changes in zoning and land use planning

- Direct and incentivize local governments to do the following:
 - Reduce development pressure on peri-urban and rural lands by supporting and reducing barriers to building housing on unused and underutilized infill sites.
 - Adopt urban growth boundaries and encourage innovative land use planning and zoning amendments to limit development on prime agricultural land.

Support land trusts focused on equity

- Fund buy-protect-sell programs that conserve agricultural land while prioritizing equitable access.
- Support land trusts in acquiring land, e.g., through capacity-building grants. Require that the sale of property protected by agricultural conservation easements be sold to priority communities and entities that support these communities.
- Restrict the resale price of properties protected by agricultural conservation easements to ensure they remain affordable for agricultural producers.
- Establish financial, technical, and legal support for land trusts and technical assistance providers to link sellers with Tribal Nations and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.
 - Fund training for land trusts focused on how to develop better, more effective easements, implement buy-protect-sell, and advance land trust cultural competency—particularly regarding Tribal Nations.
 - Fund technical and legal support for farmers and Tribal Nations to maneuver land transactions with land trusts.
 - Fund cultural competency training and other technical assistance for land trusts.
 - Fund land trusts to cover the costs of permitting, maintenance, and other expenses so that those costs are not deferred to receiving land stewards.
- Create a land trust accreditation process to educate land trusts on matters pertaining to equity and cultural competency and create mechanisms by which to evaluate implementation of best practices.
- Make public funding for land trusts contingent upon their accreditation and other characteristics:
 - Equity outcomes
 - Community-based
 - Cultural competency
 - Demonstrated ability to engage with land stewards and consider their need in easement creation.

Leverage public lands

In California, just four percent of cropland is publicly owned by local, state, federal or another form of non-Tribal government. Roughly 50 percent of these 300,000 acres is currently fallowed.²² While this is a relatively small area compared to the 96 percent of privately owned farmland in California, these hundreds of thousands of acres present a significant opportunity for government agencies to leverage this land as a tool for land equity.

Local government-owned land

- Support and incentivize local governments to make public land accessible at low or no cost through partnerships with community-based organizations.

- Develop these incentives in consultation with local agencies and organizations.
- Support and incentivize the inclusion of urban agriculture in access agreements on public lands run by local jurisdictions such as parks, urban lots, etc.
- Expand the California Surplus Land Act to require local jurisdictions to incorporate feasibility assessment for agriculture and Tribal uses into their process of identifying excess sites. Separate this land from the housing pipeline and auction requirements.

State-owned land

- Direct DOC and CALFIRE to collaborate with agencies that own land suitable for agriculture to conserve these valuable resources and make them available to land stewards or return them to Tribal Nations.
- Direct DOC to establish access agreements that allow for cultivation of current public lands and the additional lands conserved in recommendations above.
- Pay land stewards for their stewardship of public lands.

Facilitate equitable transition of private lands

- Require land sales to be public information.
- Fund local and regional organizations to develop culturally competent and regionally informed first opportunity to purchase ordinances for adoption by local governments.
- Fund technical assistance for land seekers to ensure fair purchase or lease agreements.
- Establish a state tax credit for the landholder selling or leasing at lower than market value.

Develop State succession strategy

- Provide support, funding, and technical assistance for equity-focused succession strategies.
- Incentivize and promote lease-to-own arrangements.
- Establish tax incentives for landowners to rent and sell to priority communities.
- Support/facilitate partnerships between landowners and priority communities with the ultimate goal of sovereignty and full ownership.
- State should create trusts to hold land that would otherwise go into probate when landowner dies. This is one strategy to keep the land out of the private land market.
- Establish funding for land-linking programs to:
 - Support ongoing improvements and maintenance and continuously research and add new properties available in all regions across the state.
 - Support capacity building and regional staff for the managing organization to partner with counties and local governments.
- Fund acquisition for priority communities:
 - Establish a state fund to support land acquisition and related costs, such as legal fees or down payments.

- Create a low interest loan program or improve existing loans for underserved farmers to advance land access for Tribal producers and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

Land tenure

Advance sovereignty for California Tribal Nations

- Tailor support to specific needs of federally recognized and non-federally recognized Tribal Nations.
- Remove barriers to Tribal Nations' ability to implement Traditional Ecological Knowledge such as cultural fire and fund efforts to share and advance this knowledge in culturally appropriate ways.
- Enforce existing laws, such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, intended to protect Native remains, sites, and practices to California Tribal Nations.

Incentivize equitable governance in easements and covenants

- Incentivize agricultural conservation easements and covenants that:
 - Enable cultural land management.
 - Provide flexibility for farmers to respond to changing environmental and market conditions.
 - Allow for building infrastructure that is necessary for land stewards to live on the land, such as housing.
- Fund intermediary landholders to develop necessary infrastructures on the land to support a profitable agricultural business before placing a conservation easement on the land.

Advance equity in landowner-tenant relationships

- Regulate lease agreements or support the development of a Tenant Farmers' Bill of Rights to ensure fair leasing terms and respect for tenants' rights, including decision-making powers.
- Create incentives for long-term agricultural leases that benefit both landowners and tenants.
- Increase access to legal support and fund technical assistance providers who act as neutral mediators to assist with contract and relationship development.
- Ensure support for groups that provide lease mediation services. This includes support for approaches that can address unfair lease terms without resorting to formal legal procedures.
- Develop mechanisms that allow tenant farmers to retain the monetary value associated with improvements made to leased land.

Support adequate housing on agricultural land

- Incentivize local governments to do the following:

- Develop agriculture housing permission zoning policies that allow for housing construction for farmworkers and farm owners on the land they steward, including mobile and other alternative forms of housing.
- Minimize regulations and regulatory compliance requirements that limit or prohibit non-traditional forms of housing on agricultural land, including mobile homes, trailers, modular homes, double-wide homes, tiny homes, RVs, and campers
- Minimize the associated permitting with housing construction on agricultural land while creating and maintaining a maximum ratio of housing-to-agriculture use that grants landowners flexibility in how they use their land without thwarting the ultimate goal of agricultural land conservation.
- Amend local Williamson Act implementation to ensure that housing, even temporary housing, is permitted on agricultural land.

Address inequitable impacts of policies and regulations

- Develop and implement right to farm protections, protecting farmers from nuisance complaints.
- Incentivize local governments to do the following:
 - In urban contexts, include composting and on-site resource management in agriculture zoning.
 - Transform single-use zoning regulations into multiuse zoning that allows for agriculture in areas zoned for other uses as well as housing, retail, and agriculture-related industry in areas currently zoned exclusively for agriculture.
 - Implement agriculture preservation overlays in zoning codes.
 - Modify zoning codes to allow for cultural land management.
- Increase interagency collaboration to avoid and address conflicting programs and requirements. For instance, policies aimed at increasing soil health can come into conflict with irrigation regulations.
- Establish a process by which proposed regulations and policies that may impact priority communities are evaluated by the California Department of Food and Agriculture BIPOC Advisory Committee and Small Producer Advisory Committee.
- Modify census-based programs, policies, and decisions that affect farmers and farmworkers to account for the fact that farmers and farmworkers are often undercounted in the Census.²³
- Build a precedent of exemptions for priority communities, including tiered models that align regulations, paperwork, and fees with a farm's size and its resources.
 - If a sole proprietor cannot meet the requirements established by a rule or regulation, adjust the regulation or provide exemptions.

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

- Establish de-minimus standards for small farms, as there are for domestic water consumption, that allow for unregulated water usage and withdrawal.
- Fund third-party organizers that can facilitate groundwater market access with technical assistance, outreach, and education.
- Require neutral third parties administrate groundwater markets.
- Ensure the protection of groundwater and drinking water for disadvantaged communities.
- Improve equity in groundwater allocation models to preserve land value.
- Avoid disproportionate landowner fees for groundwater use by implementing tiered fees.
- Evaluate and address the impacts of land fallowing and repurposing on small farmers.
- Establish best practices for water markets:
 - a. Anonymous users and trades.
 - b. Start small and evaluate water markets frequently, with regular stakeholder participation.
 - c. Manage groundwater trades for groups of small farmers.
- Define exceptions for vulnerable communities and structure groundwater allocations to protect such communities.
- Fund third-party organizations to facilitate groundwater market access with technical assistance, outreach and education, and manage groundwater trading for groups of small farmers.

Improve equitable access to resources

- Assess and modify application, eligibility, and reporting requirements for programs designed to advance access to agricultural land to align with equity objectives.
- Redesign and create new programs to increase priority individuals' access.
 - Fund technical assistance providers to increase capacity
- Evaluate the effectiveness of technical assistance and capacity-building programs in meeting equity goals and objectives.
- Revise existing and establish new programs to advance agricultural land equity:
 - Block grants that are designed to be responsive to specific communities and needs.
 - Grants to individual farmers and ranchers to support land access, such as funding for acquisition costs.
 - Downpayment assistance to improve access to conventional loans and other available finance.
 - Tax incentives that directly benefit priority communities.
 - Low-interest, forgivable, or reverse amortization loans.
 - Funding for intermediary actors like land trusts to purchase and hold land to then pass to priority communities, e.g., through buy-protect-sell programs.

Conclusion and Next steps

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