

Advancing Agricultural Land Equity in California

Recommendations of the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force

Select recommendations for local governments

Overview

California faces an agricultural land equity crisis that must be promptly addressed. For decades, many producers and Tribal land stewards have been systemically excluded from owning and holding onto agricultural land due to race, ethnicity, gender, class, and citizenship status, among other factors.¹ Today, the resulting inequities in ownership and secure access to agricultural land are worsened by increasing land consolidation and financialization, climate change, and burdensome regulations.²

The California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force was established in the California Budget Act of 2022 (**AB 179**) to submit policy recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on how to equitably increase access to land for food production and traditional Tribal agricultural uses. The Task Force developed recommendations through a collaborative public process that engaged over 400 producers, California Native American Tribal leaders and members, and others across California. The final report was submitted in December 2025.

Recommendations are divided into six sections



Prioritize Tribal stewardship and land return.



Fund and incentivize land acquisition for priority producers and Tribal land stewards.



Halt, mitigate, and reverse agricultural land consolidation.



Preserve California's agricultural land while prioritizing equitable land access and stewardship.



Prioritize and protect secure land tenure.



Support urban agriculture.

Agricultural land equity is when priority producers and Tribal land stewards have access to secure, affordable, and viable land for the stewardship and cultivation of food, fiber, medicine, and cultural resources without systemic barriers, disparities, or exploitation.

Priority producers and Tribal land stewards are those who have been historically and systematically excluded from landownership and secure tenure for agriculture and traditional Tribal uses.

Select recommendations for local governments

Local governments have a key role to play in advancing equitable land access through preserving agricultural land, prioritizing ancestral land return and stewardship, and reducing barriers for urban and rural producers. For example, local governments should adopt innovative zoning ordinances and policies that allow for Tribal stewardship and for the wide range of infrastructure needed to maintain a viable farm operation. Local governments can also limit development on agricultural land and ensure that leasing terms on publicly held lands are fair and accessible to priority producers and Tribal land stewards.

Below is a selection of recommendations that outline policies and actions to advance agricultural land equity at the local level. These recommendations—written for the Governor and Legislature—may also be considered

and advanced by local governments. For detailed information, including complementary recommendations and a more comprehensive understanding of how land equity may be achieved, please review the [full report](#).

1.3.c Direct public entities that hold land to adopt right of first refusal policies that ensure public lands transitioned out of public ownership are offered to California Native American Tribes first at zero or minimal cost.

1.4.c Direct the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation to work with California Native American Tribes to develop model zoning ordinances that address the specific needs of non-federally recognized and federally recognized California Native American Tribes. Include mechanisms to support stewardship on Tribal land, including traditional Tribal housing.

3.2 Develop local first opportunity to purchase ordinances for priority producers and Tribal land stewards.

4.3.a Incentivize and support local governments to establish agricultural land development mitigation programs that preserve adjacent agricultural land of the same or better quality at not less than a one-to-one ratio.

4.3.b Incentivize and support local governments to adopt innovative land use planning strategies to limit development on agricultural land by establishing urban growth boundaries and implementing agriculture preservation overlays.

4.4.c Fund counties and cities to hire agricultural land liaisons whose purpose is to work with local agencies, community-based organizations, and priority producers and Tribal land stewards to track available publicly held land, publicize available lands in an accessible way, and support all parties in establishing fair and effective lease agreements.

4.4.d Incentivize and support local governments to make land that they already hold accessible to priority producers and Tribal land stewards by providing secure, long-term leases.

5.5.a Direct the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation to develop model ordinances that facilitate secure agricultural land tenure and stewardship, with emphasis on equitable land access, regenerative agriculture, and Tribal co-stewardship (see [**Appendix D**](#) in the full report for models).

5.5.b Incentivize and support revisions to zoning codes and local regulations to facilitate the continued viability of small-scale, diversified agricultural operations.

6.2.c Incentivize and support the inclusion of urban agriculture in access agreements on publicly held lands managed by local jurisdictions, such as parks and urban lots.

6.2.d Direct the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation to compile existing zoning codes, urban agriculture assessments, and general plan amendments from jurisdictions that have removed barriers to urban agriculture as part of a public-facing report identifying ways that jurisdictions can support urban agriculture.

6.2.e Remove legal and zoning barriers to compost production at scales that support urban agriculture.

Endnotes

- 1 California Department of Food and Agriculture. (2020). "2020 Report to the California Legislature on the Farmer Equity Act." Last accessed Feb. 26, 2026 from <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/farmerresources/pdfs/2020FarmerEquityReport.pdf>
- 2 O'Connor, Teresa. (2024). "What the 2022 Census of Agriculture confirms about California." American Farmland Trust. Last accessed Oct. 2, 2025 from <https://farmland.org/2022-census-of-agriculture-california/>



The full report in English, report summaries in multiple languages, and more information about the Task Force can be found online at: bit.ly/ALETF-about