

Advancing Agricultural Land Equity in California

Recommendations of the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force

Select recommendations for funding

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.

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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 funding

The value of farm real estate in California has increased by 28.3% since 2018. Prices reached a high of an average of \$12,000 per acre in 2022, which was a 10.1% increase from the previous year.³ Throughout the Task Force's process, priority producers and Tribal land stewards consistently shared how these trends act as a primary barrier to accessing and establishing secure tenure on agricultural land. Additionally, existing funding options are limited in scope and scale, and eligibility criteria often do not match the realities of beginning, small-scale, and lower-revenue operations. New, tailored funding opportunities are essential to ensure that priority producers and Tribal land stewards can navigate the high and rising cost of agricultural land in California.

Below is a selection of recommendations intended to provide funding support to priority producers and Tribal land stewards. For detailed information, including complementary recommendations and a more comprehensive understanding of how land equity may be achieved, please review the [full report](#).

1.1.a Develop an Ancestral Land Return Fund for California Native American Tribes to acquire agricultural land within their ancestral territories.

2.1.a Develop a Restorative Land Fund that is accessible to priority producers and Tribal land stewards who wish to acquire, maintain ownership, and establish tenure on land in California for agricultural use.

2.3.a Fund organizations that directly benefit priority producers and Tribal land stewards to purchase and then lease or transfer agricultural land to priority producers and Tribal land stewards.

2.4.a Establish a loan program with low-interest, loan forgiveness, or reverse amortization options to support land acquisition and wealth-building for priority producers and Tribal land stewards who are often excluded from available financing.

2.4.b Establish a debt forgiveness program modeled on the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness program for priority producers and Tribal land stewards to alleviate debt incurred for agricultural operations.

3.3.a Establish and fund a California Producer Retirement Fund to ensure producers and Tribal land stewards have a secure retirement option without depending on the sale of their land to the highest bidder.

4.2.a In new and existing conservation programs, fund:

- The acquisition of agricultural conservation easements and enhancements.
- Permitting, deferred maintenance, infrastructure, farmworker housing, and other costs to bring a property into a ready state to support a viable agricultural operation.
- Transaction costs and legal and technical support to negotiate and close land transactions, leases, and conservation and agricultural easements.

6.1.b Fund through continuous appropriation existing grant programs focused on urban agriculture, such as CDFA's Urban Agriculture Grant Program, and expand programs to identify and address gaps in support for urban agriculture and regenerative agricultural use.

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/>
- 3 "Land values 2022 summary." (2022). U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Agricultural Statistics Service. Last accessed Oct. 2, 2025 from https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Todays_Reports/reports/land0822.pdf



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