

CALIFORNIA FARMLAND CONVERSION REPORT 2006-2008



January 2011

Documenting changes in agricultural land use
since 1984.



Edmund G. Brown, Jr., Governor

John Laird, Secretary, Natural Resources Agency

Derek Chernow, Acting Director, Department of Conservation

California Department of Conservation

Division of Land Resource Protection (DLRP)



Our Mission:

The Department of Conservation balances today's needs with tomorrow's challenges and fosters intelligent, sustainable, and efficient use of California's energy, land, and mineral resources. DLRP's goal is to lead the change in the value proposition for the conservation of agricultural and open space land in California.

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP)

The Program:

The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program provides consistent, timely and accurate land use data for assessing present status, reviewing trends, and planning for the future of California's agricultural land resources.

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Cover Graphics

Front: Tomatoes drying in the field contrast with adjacent agricultural land, Stanislaus County. Imagery from the National Agricultural Imagery Program, 2010.

Back: Cattle brands used at California missions. The 21 missions from San Diego to Sonoma brought livestock husbandry to the state, along with many crops important in California today. For more on the California Mission Trail, see: www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=22722

For a directory of cattle brands currently used in California, see:
www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Livestock_ID/2007_Brand_Book.html

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California Farmland Conversion Report 2006 – 2008

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
DIVISION OF LAND RESOURCE PROTECTION
FARMLAND MAPPING AND MONITORING PROGRAM

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Principal Data Sources include digital soil survey data, produced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service; with aerial imagery from the National Agricultural Imagery Program (NAIP) and Digital Globe, Inc. Additional imagery for rural areas included Landsat 7 satellite data and aerial imagery acquired by Aerials Express and U.S. Geological Survey.

Cultural base information for the Important Farmland Maps was derived from public domain data sets, based upon design of the U.S. Geological Survey, with updates generated by digitizing over current imagery.

Additional data on land management and land use conversion activity was made available from the U.S. Forest Service, California Department of Transportation, and the California Integrated Waste Management Board. GIS data posted at county and city websites proved valuable in many locations.

Map reviewer comments contribute substantially to improving the quality of the information. These reviewers include county and city planning offices, county agricultural commissioners, resource conservation districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service district conservationists, California Farm Bureau Federation, University of California Cooperative Extension, California Cattlemen's Association, local water and irrigation districts, public interest groups, and building industry representatives. Many of these groups also participated in development of the Farmland of Local Importance definitions for their respective counties.



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Dear Land Conservation Partner:

On behalf of the Department of Conservation, I am pleased to present the **California Farmland Conversion Report 2006-2008**. This analysis of agricultural land use conversion trends, based on detailed geographic information system mapping, is the twelfth biennial report of the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP). This report can be found on our Web site at www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp.

The FMMP was established in 1982 to document the location and extent of California's important farmlands, and to report on how they change over time. The Important Farmland Maps are used in the planning process to gauge the impact of planning decisions on agricultural land throughout the State. Population projections and today's environmental challenges make this information more important than ever.

Irrigated farmland in California decreased by more than 317 square miles (203,011 acres) between 2006 and 2008. The highest-quality agricultural soils, known as Prime Farmland, comprised 49 percent of the decrease (98,471 acres). Urban land increased by 72,548 acres, a 29 percent decrease relative to the 2004-2006 reporting period. This was the lowest urbanization rate since the late 1990's, reflecting the onset of the recent economic recession. Long-term land idling was the largest factor contributing to irrigated land decreases, primarily in the San Joaquin Valley. The report contains county and regional summaries of the dynamics that occurred beyond the urban edge, providing context for larger planning issues.

Identifying strategic farmland resources is an important first step in maintaining California's agricultural vitality. The Department of Conservation thanks the agricultural organizations and local governments that work with us to produce these useful tools for conservation planning.

Sincerely,

Derek Chernow
Acting Director

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California Farmland Conversion Report

2006 – 2008

Table of Contents

Executive Summary, 2006-2008			1
1	The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program		3
	Important Farmland Map Categories.....		4
2	2006-2008 Improvements		7
3	Understanding the Data		9
4	Land Use Conversion, 2006-2008		11
	Urbanization		12
	Other Changes Affecting Agricultural Land.....		15
	Counties with Rural Land Mapping Enhancements		18
	Net Irrigated Farmland Change.....		19
	1984-2008 Net Land Use Change.....		19
APPENDIX A 2006-2008 County Conversion Tables			23
APPENDIX B 2006 and 2008 County Acreage Tallies			71
APPENDIX C County and Regional Conversion Summaries			75
APPENDIX D Rural Land Use Mapping Tables			79
APPENDIX E Farmland of Local Importance Definitions			91
FIGURES	Figure 1	Urbanization in the Brentwood Area, Contra Costa County, 1984-2008.....	3
	Figure 2	2008 Important Farmland Survey Area.....	5
	Figure 3	2008 Mapping Additions.....	7
	Figure 4	Conversion Table Structure	9
	Figure 5	Regions Used for FMMP Analysis	10
	Figure 6	Statewide Important Farmland Conversion Summary	11
	Figure 7	Sources of Urban Land 2006-2008	15
	Figure 8	Conversions to Irrigated Farmland 2006-2008	16
	Figure 9	Conversions Out of Irrigated Categories 2006-2008.....	17
TABLES	Table 1	2008 Important Farmland Survey Area Additions and County Boundary Adjustments.....	8
	Table 2	Urbanization from All Categories.....	12
	Table 3	Regional Urbanization Ranking.....	12
	Table 4	California Farmland Conversion Summary 2006-2008 ..	13
	Table 5	Irrigated Farmland to Urban Ranks	14
	Table 6	Decreases of Irrigated Land.....	19
	Table 7	Net Important Farmland Conversion 1984-2008	21

Appendix A: 2006-2008 County Conversion Tables

Table A-1	Alameda	24
Table A-2	Amador	25
Table A-3	Butte.....	26
Table A-4	Colusa.....	27
Table A-5	Contra Costa	28
Table A-6	El Dorado.....	29
Table A-7	Fresno	30
Table A-8	Glenn.....	31
Table A-9	Imperial.....	32
Table A-10	Kern	33
Table A-11	Kings	34
Table A-12	Lake	35
	Lassen (see Sierra Valley)	60
Table A-13	Los Angeles	36
Table A-14	Madera.....	37
Table A-15	Marin	38
Table A-16	Mariposa	39
Table A-17	Mendocino.....	40
Table A-18	Merced.....	41
Table A-19	Modoc	42
Table A-20	Monterey	43
Table A-21	Napa	44
Table A-22	Nevada.....	45
Table A-23	Orange	46
Table A-24	Placer	47
	Plumas (see Sierra Valley).....	60
Table A-25	Riverside	48
Table A-26	Sacramento	49
Table A-27	San Benito.....	50
Table A-28	San Bernardino.....	51
Table A-29	San Diego.....	52
Table A-30	San Joaquin.....	53
Table A-31	San Luis Obispo.....	54
Table A-32	San Mateo.....	55
Table A-33	Santa Barbara	56
Table A-34	Santa Clara.....	57
Table A-35	Santa Cruz.....	58
Table A-36	Shasta.....	59
Table A-37	Sierra Valley (Lassen/Plumas/Sierra).....	60
Table A-38	Siskiyou	61
Table A-39	Solano	62
Table A-40	Sonoma	63
Table A-41	Stanislaus.....	64
Table A-42	Sutter	65
Table A-43	Tehama	66
Table A-44	Tulare	67
Table A-45	Ventura	68
Table A-46	Yolo.....	69
Table A-47	Yuba	70

Appendix B: 2006 and 2008 County Acreage Tallies

Table B-1	Important Farmland Acreage Summary 2006	72
Table B-2	Important Farmland Acreage Summary 2008.....	73
Table B-3	Important Farmland Acreage Summary, By Region, 2008	74

Appendix C: County and Regional Conversion Summaries

Table C-1	Sources of Urban Land 2006-2008 and Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use	76
Table C-2	Irrigated Farmland Changes 2006-2008	77
Table C-3	Net Change in Irrigated Land 2006-2008	78

Appendix D: Rural Land Use Mapping Tables

Table D-1	Rural Land Use Conversion Summary	80
Table D-2	Rural Land Mapping Changes 2006-2008.....	81
Table D-3	Fresno	82
Table D-4	Kern	83
Table D-5	Kings.....	84
Table D-6	Madera.....	85
Table D-7	Mendocino	86
Table D-8	Merced.....	87
Table D-9	San Joaquin.....	88
Table D-10	Stanislaus	89
Table D-11	Tulare	90

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