

Opportunities and Challenges Facing Agriculture

Agriculture Ad Hoc Committee



Today's Goals

- ▶ Hear from staff, ag industry stakeholders, and the public
- ▶ Board Discussion
- ▶ Prioritize short-term versus long-term issues
- ▶ Potential direction to staff for further research and work

Workshop Topics

Part 1: How we use the land

- a. Cultivation and Fallowing
- b. Agritourism
- c. By-Right Land Uses
- d. Ag Employee Housing

Part 2: How we protect the land

- e. Right To Farm
- f. Williamson Act
- g. Conservation Easements
- h. Land Access
- i. Food Security





Cultivation and Fallowing

- ▶ Fallowing is the intentional idling of agricultural land.
- ▶ Valuable tool during times of uncertainty



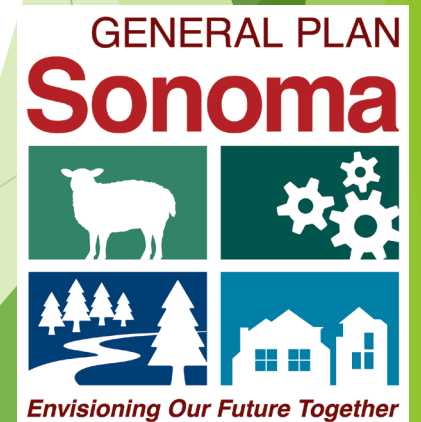
Promoting Agritourism

- ▶ Agritourism: A commercial enterprise on a working farm or ranch conducted for the enjoyment and education of visitors that generates supplemental income for the operator.
- ▶ Focus on visitor experiences connected to agriculture
- ▶ Focus on the economic viability of agriculture



General Plan

- ▶ Guiding document for Land Use in Unincorporated Sonoma County
- ▶ Organized into different chapters (Elements) such as:
 - ▶ Land Use Element
 - ▶ Agricultural Resources Element
 - ▶ Open Space & Resource Conservation Element
 - ▶ Environmental Justice Element
- ▶ General Plan Update in process
 - ▶ Upcoming Board of Supervisors Workshop on April 14



Zoning & Permitting

- ▶ ***By-Right*** - Allowed
 - ▶ Ex: planting crops
- ▶ ***Ministerial Permit*** - Allowed with an Administrative Approval
 - ▶ Ex: Farmstay, Farm Retail Sales
- ▶ ***Discretionary Permit*** - Allowed with a Public Hearing Process
 - ▶ Ex: Winery
- ▶ ***Prohibited*** - Not Allowed

Land Use	LIA Zone	LEA Zone
Agricultural and Resource-Based Land Use Category		
Agricultural Crop Production and Cultivation	P	P
Agricultural Processing	C	C
Agricultural Processing, Small Scale	P*	P*
Agricultural Support Services	P*/C	P*/C
Animal Keeping: Beekeeping	P	P
Animal Keeping: Confined Farm Animals	P/C	P/C
Animal Keeping: Farm Animals	P	P
Animal Keeping: Livestock Feed Yards	C	C
Animal Keeping: Pet Fancier	P	P
Aquaculture	-	C



Ag Employee Housing

- ▶ Housing Element Program
15g Code Updates
completed in October 2025
- ▶ Administrative approval
pathway when agriculture
is by right

Industry Speakers

- ▶ Tyler Klick (Partner/Principal, Redwood Empire Vineyard Management): Vineyard Agriculture Following
- ▶ Joe Belli (Owner, Belli Vineyards and Westec Tank & Equipment): Winery permitting and Agritourism
- ▶ Chris Herrera (Owner, Deep Roots Farm): Vegetable U-Pick Agritourism



Right to Farm

- ▶ State Right to Farm versus Local Right to Farm
- ▶ Properly conducted ag operation not a nuisance
- ▶ Doesn't exempt the operation from regulation



Property Tax Incentives & Williamson Act

- ▶ The California Land Conservation Act (CLCA) of 1965, aka the Williamson Act
- ▶ Helps keep agriculture economically viable and reduces pressure to convert lands to non-agricultural or non-open space uses
- ▶ Offers property tax reduction in exchange for voluntarily restricting land to only agricultural and/or open space uses, and uses that are compatible with those uses



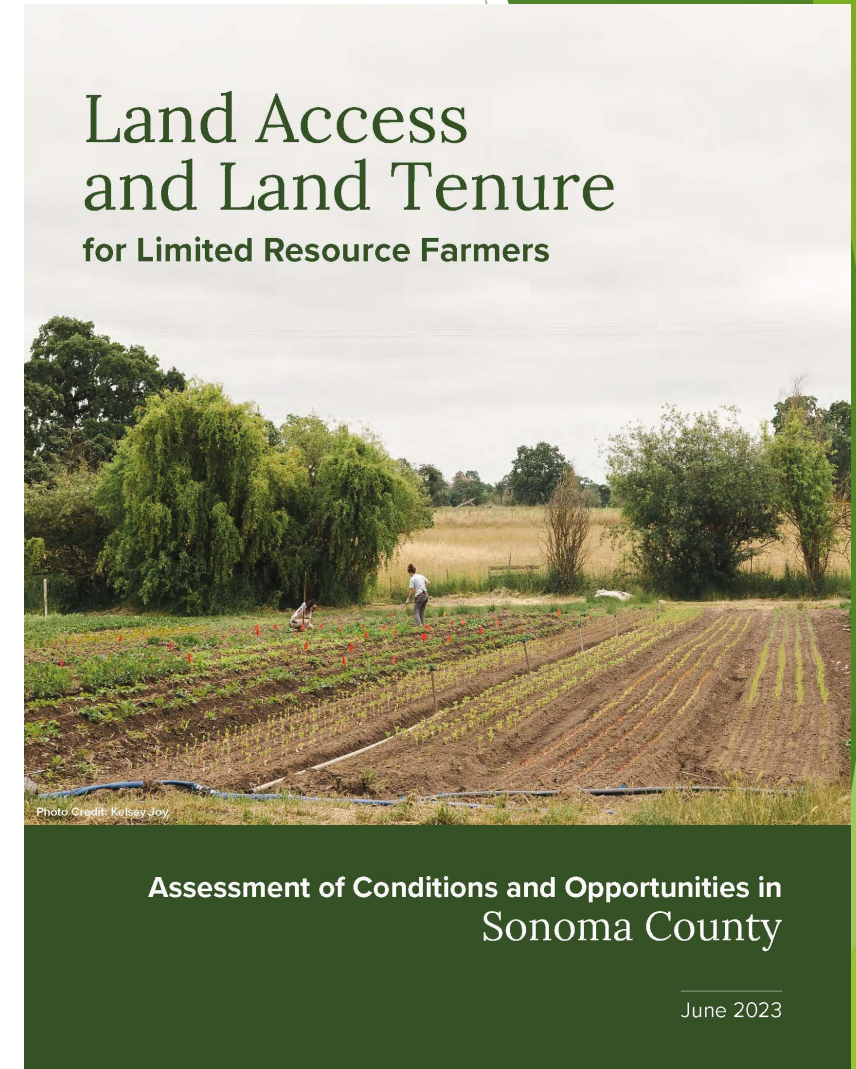
Other Property Tax Incentive Programs

- ▶ Farmland Security Zone contracts
- ▶ Conservation Easements & Agricultural Conservation Easements
- ▶ Urban Ag Incentive Zones

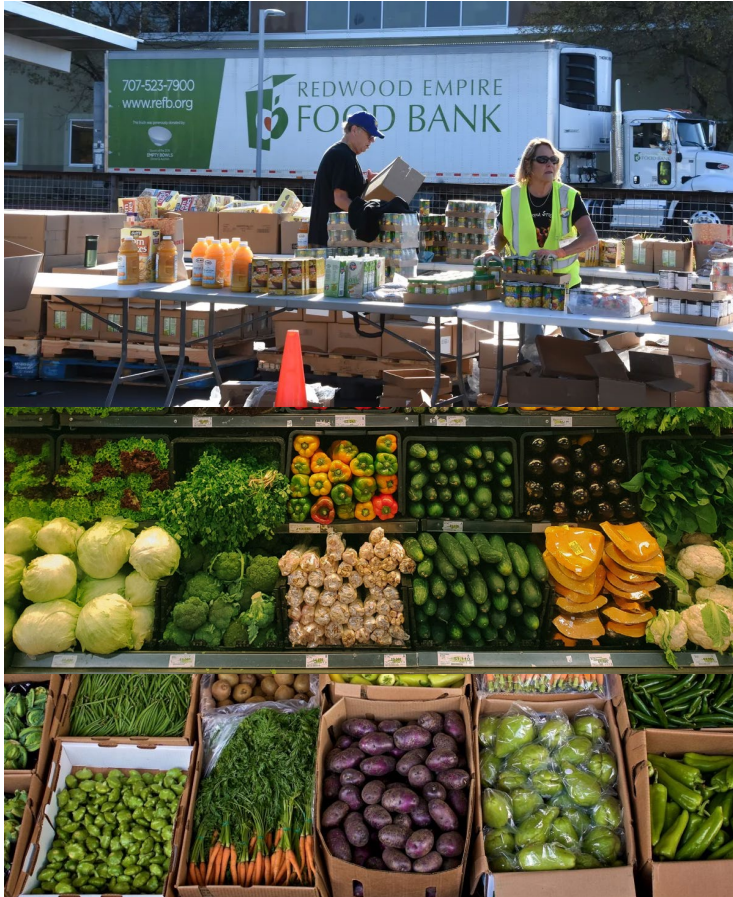


Land Conservation and Access

- ▶ Conservation Easements
- ▶ Land Access Models
- ▶ Assessed Farmer Needs
- ▶ Recommendations/Efforts
 - ▶ Buy Protect Sell
 - ▶ Lease Connections
 - ▶ Incubator Farm
 - ▶ Ag Park



Why Prioritizing Local Food Security Matters



- ▶ Coordination & Partnerships
 - ▶ Sonoma County Food System Alliance
 - ▶ Farmers Market LIFE
 - ▶ Sonoma County Food Recovery Coalition
 - ▶ Healthy School Meals Coalition
- ▶ Community-Based Food Networks (CBFNs)
- ▶ Food System Infrastructure & Mapping
- ▶ Policy Alignment Opportunity
 - ▶ SB 444 - State Healthy Food Access Policy

Industry Speakers

- ▶ Zeke Guzman
(Director/Founder, Jardin Del Pueblo): Farmworkers and Training, Land Access, Food Security
- ▶ Will Holloway (Owner, Longer Table Farm): Land Access and Farmer Training
- ▶ Lucy O'Day (Founder/Director, FEED Sonoma Cooperative): Food Security and Food Procurement



Review of Policy Areas and Options

How we use the land

- ▶ Cultivation and Fallowing:
 - ▶ Define cultivation needs for longer term fallowing
 - ▶ Review current policy for potential changes
- ▶ Agritourism:
 - ▶ Expand By-Right visitor serving uses
 - ▶ Review events holistically
- ▶ By-Right Land Uses:
 - ▶ Review during General Plan Update
 - ▶ Review potential shifts in zoning
- ▶ Ag Employee Housing:
 - ▶ Monitor recent changes to assess impacts and opportunities

Review of Policy Areas and Options

How we protect the land

- ▶ Right To Farm:
 - ▶ Research potential expansion to other zoning designations as part of General Plan Update
 - ▶ Clarify ag operations and activities
- ▶ Williamson Act:
 - ▶ Consider amending Uniform Rules
 - ▶ Study other county practices/pilots
- ▶ Land Access and Conservation:
 - ▶ Identify opportunities for public/private partnerships, incubator farms, farmworker training, and tenant farming models
- ▶ Food Security:
 - ▶ Continue food network/food access efforts, monitor legislation toward future county policy development

Questions?

