



# The San Joaquin Land and Water Strategy

Partnering with Communities and Producers to Conserve Agricultural Land and Natural Resources

For 37 years, American Farmland Trust has worked on the ground in the San Joaquin Valley to protect California's most important farming region and the largest contributor to the nation's food supply. More than 300 crops and livestock products are produced here, accounting for more than half of the state's agricultural output. It also is one of California's fastest growing regions, where permanent protection of agricultural land lags far behind its loss, and the urban sprawl is the worst in the state.

American Farmland Trust's San Joaquin Valley Land and Water Strategy is accelerating the conservation of the valley's precious land and water resources. It is protecting the most valuable farmland and rangeland, scaling up regenerative agricultural practices, protecting surface and groundwater supplies, providing technical training to a diverse group of farmers and ranchers, supporting habitats for fish and wildlife, and advocating for effective local and state policies.

American Farmland Trust has spearheaded several important milestones recently:

- In 2017, American Farmland Trust and the Conservation Biology Institute (CBI) assessed the capacity and resilience of agricultural production in the valley by analyzing the distribution and quality of the region's farmland and water resources while considering future impacts to them. Using the San Joaquin Valley Gateway, part of the Data Basin online mapping platform created by CBI, American Farmland Trust and CBI determined where prime agricultural land and reliable water resources intersect.
- In 2019, this spatial analysis mapping platform began identifying, and finding funding for, the first agricultural conservation easement pilot projects with high groundwater recharge potential. This tool allowed regional stakeholders to have enhanced decision making about land use planning and priority agricultural land acquisition projects. It also helped to target areas for technical assistance and identify on-the-ground projects (like Flood-MAR).

In 2020, American Farmland Trust partnered with diverse stakeholders to create a new \$27 million San Joaquin Valley Land and Water Conservation Collaborative. The funding was provided by a \$10 million Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) grant from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), with an additional \$17 million coming from a variety of state and local partners.

American Farmland Trust will collaborate closely with local NRCS field offices, East Stanislaus, East Merced, Madera/Chowchilla, Sierra (Fresno County) and Tulare Counties RCDs, The Freshwater Trust, Conservation Biology Institute, and California Farmland Trust on the ambitious five-year initiative.

The collaboration focuses on four elements:

- data analysis,
- agricultural conservation easements,
- conservation planning, and
- on-farm conservation practices.

It will deliver conservation plans for increasing groundwater recharge potential and water conservation on lands encompassing at least 100,000 acres with 150 to 200 producers.

It also will demonstrate the economic benefits of regenerative agricultural methods, as well as implement best practices for increasing water infiltration and water conservation on at least 23,565 acres of land with at least 80 producers, including new and historically underserved farmers and ranchers. American Farmland Trust is excited to spearhead this comprehensive program in the nation's most important agricultural region.

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For more information, visit [farmland.org/California](https://farmland.org/California) or call the AFT Sacramento office at 916-448-1064.

