California agriculture is large, diverse, complex and dynamic. It generated nearly $36.6 billion in cash receipts in 2007. California has been the nation’s top agricultural state in cash receipts every year since 1948 and has gradually increased its share of U.S. farm cash receipts from 9.5 percent in 1960 to 12.8 percent in 2007.
Average yield has increased significantly for important California crops in the past two decades. For example, almond yields grew by 64 percent, processing tomato yields by 30 percent, and cotton yields by 22 percent. Broccoli and cauliflower increased by over 50 percent. Milk production per cow increased by 33 percent (2007).

California accounts for about 13 percent of national cash receipts from agriculture, but receives only about 4 percent of direct government payments to agriculture depending on the year (2007).

Harvested cropland covers about 7.6 million acres. About 37 percent of California’s harvested cropland is planted to orchards and vineyards, 23 percent to hay, and 15 percent to vegetables (2007).

Roughly 844,500 acres, or 2.9 percent of the state’s total agricultural land available was converted to urban uses between 1988 and 2004.

In 2007 there were 81,033 farms in California, with an average size of 313 acres. Farms that have annual sales of more than $500,000 accounted for 10.6 percent of the total, while 47 percent have sales at less than $10,000. The 5,642 largest farms (those with over $1 million in sales) account for 84 percent of California’s agricultural sales (2007).

Roughly 18 percent of the state’s farm operators are less than 45 years old. About 26 percent are older than 65 (2007).

Women accounted for more than 18 percent of total principal farm operators in the state in 2007, up from 16 percent in 2002 and 11 percent in 1987.

About 11 percent of California principal farm operators are of Hispanic origin while about 4.5 percent have Asian or Pacific Islander origins (2007).

About 57% of all hired farm workers in the state were hired for less than 150 days (2002).

The most important market for California agricultural production is the United States. The domestic market accounts for about 70 percent of California farm cash receipts. The remaining 30 percent is exported (2007).

Export markets typically take between one-third and two-thirds of California almonds, cotton, walnuts, rice, dried plums and pistachios.

In 2007, international exports were valued at about $10.9 billion. Together, the top six, almonds, wine, dairy products, cotton, table grapes and walnuts accounted for close to 50 percent of exports. The other 50 percent was spread across dozens of commodities.

The top export destinations in 2007 were Canada (24%), the European Union (23%), Japan (10%), Mexico (7%), China/Hong Kong (7%), and South Korea (4%).

Americans spent about 12 percent of their income on food in 2007, compared with 23 percent in 1947. Meals away from home represented 43 percent of expenditures on food, compared to 26 percent in 1970.

Over the past three decades per capita consumption has grown rapidly for fresh fruits (26%), fresh vegetables (36%), and tree nuts (90%). These are important categories for California as more than half of California agricultural cash receipts are from fruits, vegetables, and tree nuts (2007).

Dairy is the top agricultural commodity in California, with more than $7.0 billion in cash receipts. California is the nation’s largest dairy producer, with 21 percent of national production value (2007).

Greenhouse and nursery products are the second most valuable group of commodities, with sales of about $4 billion (2007).

Grapes (all types combined) produced $3.1 billion in cash receipts (2007). Winegrape acreage increased dramatically, from 300,000 acres in the early 1990s to 480,000 in 2007.

In 2007, registered organic growers in California reported almost $940 million in gross sales on about 402,333 acres. Organic sales more than doubled since 1997, but still represent only about 1 percent of the state’s agriculture.

July, 2006, revised March 2009