

## I.2 Farmland Conversion

**C**onversion of agricultural land to urban uses continues to be a public policy issue in the United States and in California. In California between 1988 and 1998, according to the California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), about 420,000 acres (approximately one half of 1% of California’s landmass) were converted to urban and built-up uses. At these conversion rates, about 4.2 million acres would be converted in the next 100 years.

- Of the total acres converted from 1988-1998, 166,000 were formerly cropland (about 1.5% of total cropland) and 76,000 were formerly grazing land. Another 177,000 acres were formerly “other land,” as classified by the FMMP. A significant portion of the “other land” was idled farmland previously removed from agricultural production in anticipation of development. This indicates that the figures for cropland and grazing land conversion may be understated.

TABLE 6

**Acres Converted to Urban and Built-up Land by Region, 1988-1998**

<b>Sacramento Valley*</b>	<b>Cropland**</b>	<b>Grazing Land</b>	<b>Other Land***</b>	<b>Total Acres Converted</b>
1988-90	4,772	3,783	6,535	15,090
1990-92	6,450	3,088	3,421	12,959
1992-94	2,516	1,122	1,935	5,573
1994-96	2,868	2,312	2,186	7,366
1996-98	3,323	3,257	3,649	10,342
<b>Cumulative Total</b>	<b>19,929</b>	<b>13,562</b>	<b>17,726</b>	<b>51,330</b>

<b>San Joaquin Valley*</b>	<b>Cropland**</b>	<b>Grazing Land</b>	<b>Other Land***</b>	<b>Total Acres Converted</b>
1988-90	5,347	1,807	5,373	12,527
1990-92	16,940	442	6,576	23,958
1992-94	6,817	1,369	2,093	10,279
1994-96	7,867	532	2,137	10,536
1996-98	16,680	2,561	6,168	25,456
<b>Cumulative Total</b>	<b>53,651</b>	<b>6,711</b>	<b>22,347</b>	<b>82,756</b>

<b>Central Valley*</b>	<b>Cropland**</b>	<b>Grazing Land</b>	<b>Other Land***</b>	<b>Total Acres Converted</b>
1988-90	10,119	5,590	11,908	27,617
1990-92	23,390	3,530	9,997	36,917
1992-94	9,333	2,491	4,028	15,852
1994-96	10,735	2,844	4,323	17,902
1996-98	20,003	5,818	9,817	35,798
<b>Cumulative Total</b>	<b>73,580</b>	<b>20,273</b>	<b>40,073</b>	<b>134,086</b>

<b>California</b>	<b>Cropland**</b>	<b>Grazing Land</b>	<b>Other Land***</b>	<b>Total Acres Converted</b>
1988-90	40,003	20,863	57,364	118,230
1990-92	39,141	14,729	45,394	99,264
1992-94	23,453	10,464	20,390	54,307
1994-96	25,954	13,303	19,185	58,442
1996-98	37,585	17,057	34,919	89,997
<b>Cumulative Total</b>	<b>166,136</b>	<b>76,416</b>	<b>177,252</b>	<b>420,240</b>

\* Sacramento Valley is Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Sacramento, Shasta, Solano, Sutter, Tehama, Yolo and Yuba counties. San Joaquin Valley is Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare counties. Central Valley is the sum of the Sacramento and the San Joaquin Valleys.

\*\* Cropland is defined here as all agricultural land that is not classified as grazing land by the FMMP.

\*\*\* Other land includes idle land previously removed from agricultural production.

Source: California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2000.

FIGURE 5

**Conversion of All Land to Urban and Built-up Uses, 1988-1998**

(There are about 99,823,000 total acres in California)

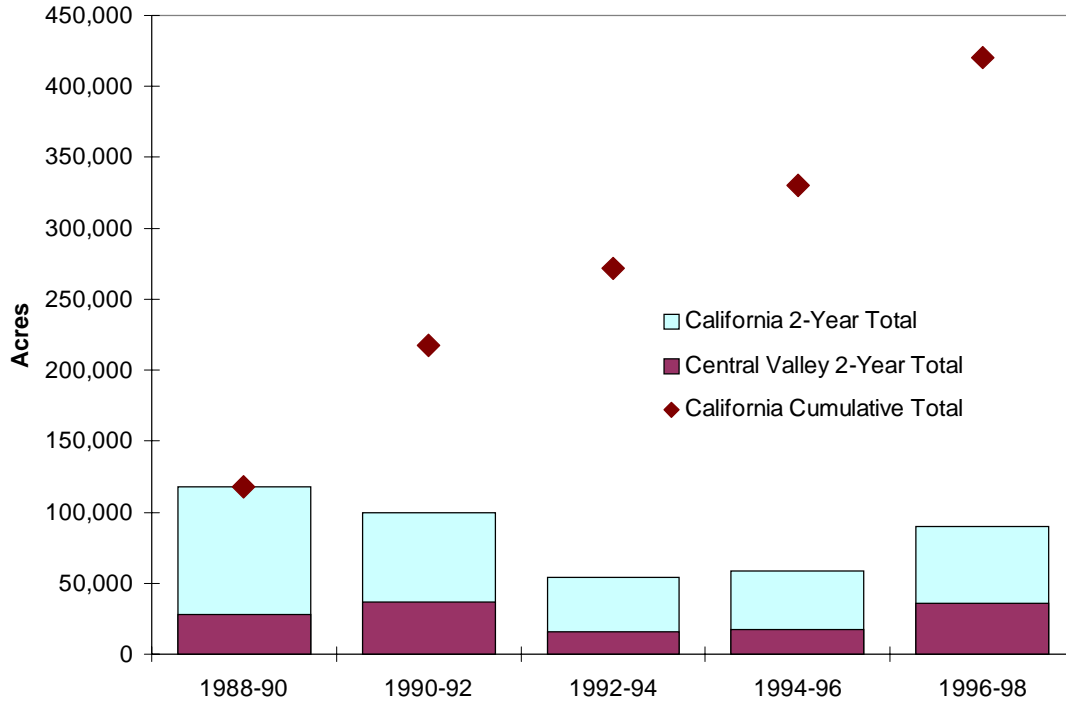
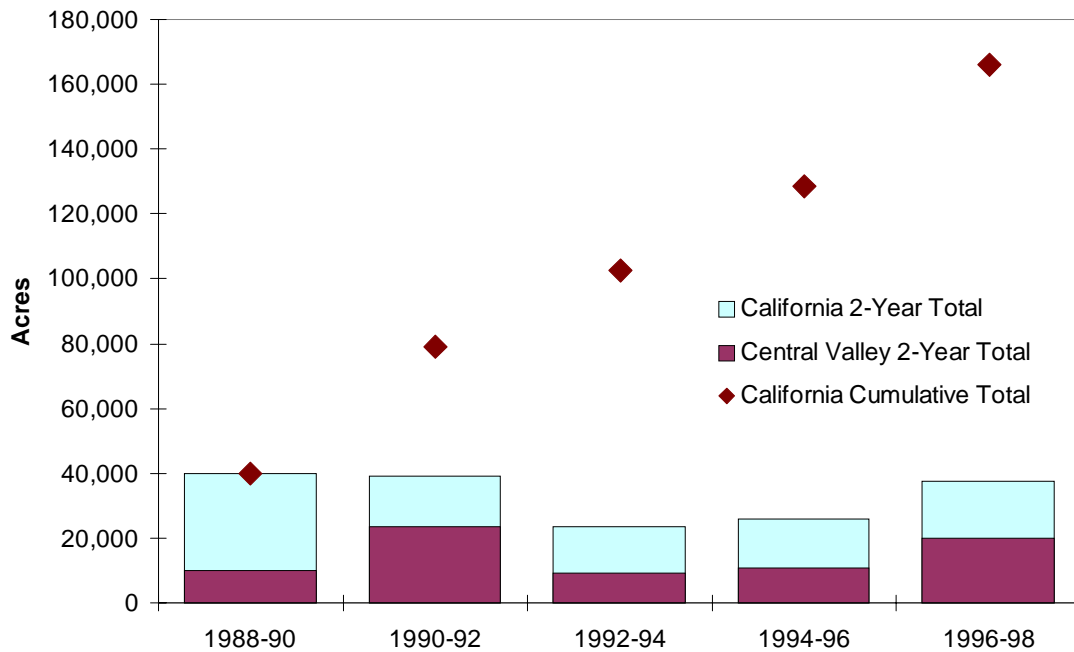


FIGURE 6

**Conversion of “Cropland” to Urban and Built-up Uses, 1988-1998**

(There are about 11,781,000\* acres of cropland in California)



\*The FMMP Reports 11,781,000 acres in 1998. The 1997 Census of Agriculture reports 10,804,000 acres.

Source: California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2000.

- Farmland conversion is a topic of particular interest in the Central Valley, which has over half of the state's agricultural land. The Central Valley has had a lower proportion of its cropland and grazing land converted than the rest of the state. The Valley, with about 64% of California's cropland, recorded 44% of statewide cropland conversion between 1988 and 1998. Similarly, Valley grazing land, about 44% of the state total, contributed only 27% of the total grazing land conversions.

TABLE 7

**Land Use Recorded by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 1998 (1,000 acres)**

	California	Central Valley	Central Valley as a Percent of California
Cropland	11,781	7,496	63.6%
Grazing Land	14,986	6,530	43.6%
Urban and Built-up Land	3,079	788	25.6%
Other Land	13,550	5,305	39.2%
Total Land Inventoried	44,096	20,304	46.0%
Land Not Inventoried	55,727	6,570	11.8%
Total Land in California	99,823	26,874	26.9%

TABLE 8

**Central Valley Land Converted to Urban and Built-up Uses as a Percent of California Land Conversion, 1988-1998**

	Cropland	Grazing Land	Total Agricultural Land	Other Land	Total Land
1988-90	29%	27%	29%	21%	23%
1990-92	48%	24%	42%	22%	37%
1992-94	47%	24%	39%	20%	29%
1994-96	46%	21%	37%	23%	31%
1996-98	53%	34%	47%	28%	40%
Total	44%	27%	39%	23%	32%

Source: California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2000.

■ Farmland conversion to urban uses is associated with population growth. California’s population increased by about 71% between 1970 and 2000, while the Central Valley’s population doubled. There is general agreement that state population growth will continue, but little consensus on projections of future growth rates.

FIGURE 7  
**California Population, 1970-2000**

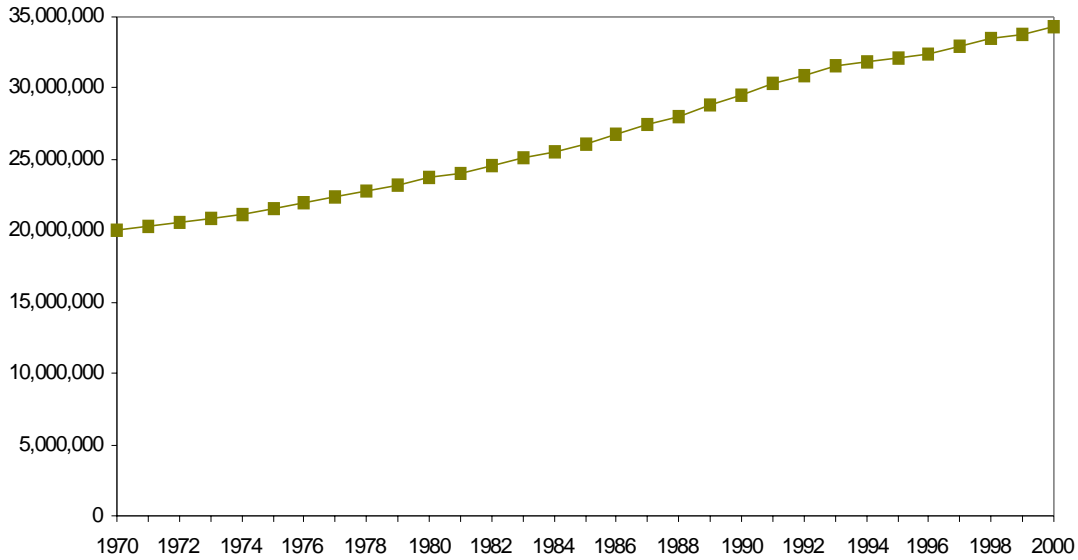
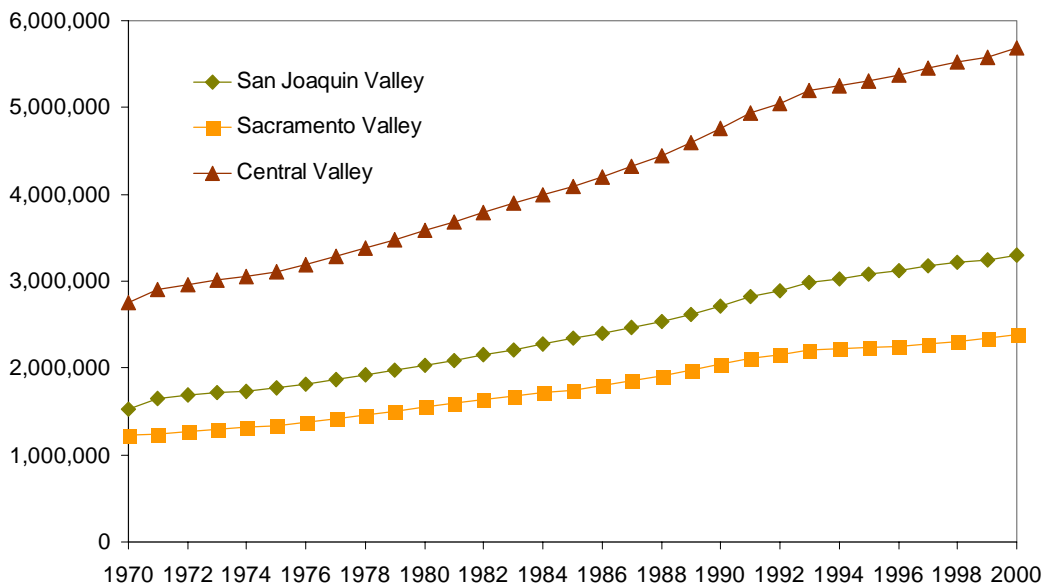


FIGURE 8  
**Population Growth in the Central Valley, 1970-2000**



Source: California Department of Finance, County Population Projections with Race/Ethnic Detail.