Demand and Supply

- The most important market for California agriculture is in the United States, accounting for about 81 percent of sales, the remaining 19 percent is exported to international markets.
- Export markets typically take between one-third and two-thirds of the almonds, cotton, walnuts, rice, dried plums and pistachios. Exports are less important for livestock products, fresh vegetables and ornamental horticulture.
- In 2001 international exports were valued at about $6.5 billion. Together tree nuts, cotton, wine, table grapes, raisins, dairy products, and citrus accounted for more than 50 percent of exports. The other 50 percent was spread across dozens of commodities.
- The top six export destinations in 2001 were Canada, the European Union, Japan, Mexico, China/Hong Kong and South Korea.

- In 2001 Americans spent 10 percent of their disposable personal income on food, compared with 21 percent in 1952. Meals away from home now represent 40 percent of expenditures on food, compared to 17 percent in 1952.
- Between 1970 and 2000, the largest increases in U.S. per capita consumption were in fruits and vegetables (24%), and tree nuts (47%)—important categories for California.
- More than half of the state's 2001 agricultural cash receipts were from fruits, tree nuts and vegetables.
- Dairy is the top agricultural commodity in California with $4.6 billion in 2001 cash receipts. California is the nation's largest dairy producer with 19 percent of national production value.
- Grapes are the second most important commodity group in California with $2.6 billion in 2001 cash receipts. Winegrape acreage has increased dramatically from 300,000 acres in 1995 to almost 500,000 acres in 2002.

- In 2002 registered organic growers in California reported more than $263 million in gross sales on about 180,000 acres. Organic sales increased by 350 percent during the last decade but in 2002 still represented only 1 percent of the state's total agricultural sales.

Land and People

- More than one-quarter of California's land mass is used for agriculture—about 27.7 million acres, including 5 million acres of federal grazing land. About half of this total is pasture and range, another 39 percent is cropland, and the remainder is divided between woodland and other land.
- About 30 percent of California's harvested cropland is planted to orchards and vineyards, 20 percent to hay and 14 percent to vegetables.
- Roughly 1.5 percent of the state's total agricultural land (including a similar percentage of its cropland) was converted to urban uses between 1988 and 1998.
- About 97 percent of California's farms are family or individually operated, with 76.6 percent organized legally as proprietorships, 14.6 percent as partnerships, and 6 percent as family owned corporations.
- In 2002 there were about 88,000 farms in California with an average size of 315 acres.
- About 10.7 percent of California farms have annual sales of more than $500,000, while about 44 percent have less than $10,000. The 5,000 largest farms (those with over $1 million in sales) account for 75 percent of sales of agricultural products.
- Roughly 20 percent of the state's farm operators are less than 45 years old and another 20 percent are older than 70.
- The number of female farm operators almost doubled from 7.6 percent in 1978 to 13.6 percent in 1997.
- California has a greater share of farm operators of Hispanic origin (6%) than the United States as a whole (1.4%). Those with Asian or Pacific Islander origins represent 4.5 percent of California farm operators.
- The hired farm labor workforce in California is almost entirely foreign-born (95%) and largely young (63% under 34 years old) and male (82%).
- Two-thirds of all hired farm workers were hired for less than 150 days on farms in 1997.

Resources and Farm Productivity

- 2001 California farm assets totaled $91 billion (more than $1 million per farm). The average value of machinery and equipment per farm is approximately $52,000.
- Pesticide use in California agriculture has grown gradually, while the types of pesticides have changed to meet new pests and environmental demands.
- On average, agriculture accounts for about 43 percent of the total annual ground water and surface water use in California. Environmental uses account for 46 percent and urban uses account for 11 percent.
- Surface supplies provide 70 percent of the water for agriculture and urban consumption in a normal year. The remainder comes from groundwater.
- The number of University of California Agricultural Experiment Station scientists decreased from 490 to 393 between 1990 and 1998, and funding per scientist was roughly constant (after accounting for inflation).

- The share of California farms with computer access increased from 51 percent to 63 percent between 1997 and 2001, while those with Internet access increased from 23 percent to 51 percent, and those using computers for their business increased from 30 percent to 36 percent.
- Average yield per acre increased significantly for California crops between 1975-77 and 2000-02. For example, strawberry yields grew by 38 percent, rice by 42 percent, processing tomatoes by 57
- Cash receipts (in constant dollars) per acre-foot of applied water increased by 35 percent between 1960 and 1995.
- California accounts for 12.8 percent of national cash receipts from agriculture, but receives only about 3 percent of direct government payments to agriculture.

Broad Economic Impacts

California farm-related employment increased by 15 percent between 1977 and 1997; aggregate state employment increased by 73 percent.

Through multiplier effects:

1. Farmers generated about 6.6 percent of the state's total annual personal income.
2. Agriculture supported 1.1 million jobs in California, accounting for about 7.4 percent of all employment.
3. Fresh and processed fruits, tree nuts and vegetables have the greatest impact of any commodity group, leading to $30 billion in personal income and 567,000 jobs.
4. Agriculture is especially significant to the economy of California's Central Valley where it accounts for 21 percent of all income and 25 percent of all employment.

University of California
Agricultural Issues Center

The University of California Agricultural Issues Center serves as a forum where important and often controversial trends and issues involving food, fiber, agriculture, and rural areas are identified, studied and debated.

The Center documents the industry and its relationships to the rest of the economy by providing statistical details and an overview of unifying forces and trends.

Since 1985 the Center has made its research findings available to individuals, industry, policymakers, government agencies, and stakeholders through conferences, workshops, academic and popular publications, as well as on its website.

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The Measure of California Agriculture

California agriculture is large, diverse, complex and dynamic. Its agriculture generated about $26 billion in cash receipts in 2001. 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 2001.

California accounts for more than 99 percent of the almonds, artichokes, dates, figs, raisins, kiwis, olives, pistachios, dried plums, and walnuts grown in the U.S. and leads in production of asparagus, broccoli, carrots, grapes, hay, lemons, lettuce, milk, peaches, strawberries, processing tomatoes, and many other commodities.