

Farm Water Update

AT THE CROSSROADS OF WATER & GROWING FOOD



MARCH 2023

Food Insecurity and Inflation are Major Concerns for Californians

Images of empty produce shelves in Europe, like the photo seen here from Glasgow, Scotland, are not yet common in California, however, supply chain disruptions as late as January 2022 led to more empty shelves in U.S. grocery stores. Global food supply has already shrunk and if we force more and more farmland out of production at home, we'll be putting ourselves in a position of having to compete with the rest of the world for scarce supplies and higher prices from countries with less safe food production.

Global grain supplies have hit a 10-year low due to reduced shipments from war-torn Ukraine, smaller harvests, and poor weather in the U.S., France, and China.

**Today's world is full of uncertainties.
Our food supply shouldn't be one of them.**

Henry Martinez, general manager of the Imperial Irrigation District: **"You don't want to get to the point of creating a food crisis to solve a water crisis."**

A recent survey by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) voiced the very real concerns Californians have about pocketbook issues.

"Solid majorities (61%) also say that rising prices are causing financial hardship, with half of lower-income residents saying that rising prices are causing serious financial hardship."

Source | bit.ly/3ZGdAes

Food Prices Are Forecast to Continue Rising, Adding to Consumer Concerns, Especially in Lower-Income and Minority Communities.

In 2022, food-at-home prices increased by 13.5 percent, 48.3% higher than the average for all consumer goods.

All food categories grew faster than their historical average rate, and the 20-year average inflation rate increased for all food categories.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), "food prices are expected to grow more slowly in 2023 than in 2022 but still at above historical average rates," with as much as another 8% increase in food we buy at the grocery store.

Source | bit.ly/2FejBGP



Cllr Andrea Cowan
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I'm sorry, @tesco this is not good enough in your Dalmarnock store on a Friday afternoon 😞 Lots more shelves with empty boxes throughout the store. Rising prices are bad enough but lack of basic foodstuffs is unacceptable.

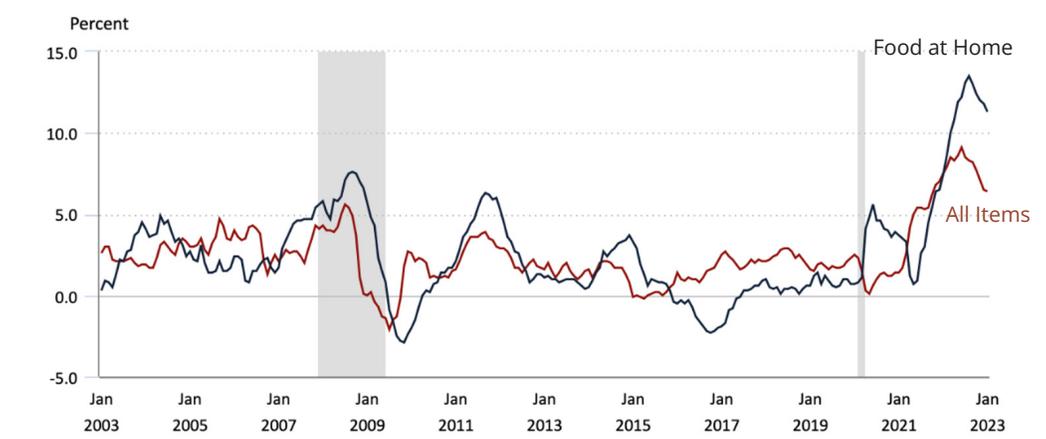


Minimizing Disruption to California's Farm Production Should be a Top Priority in Order to Protect Consumers

Excellent soils and a Mediterranean climate make California one of the most productive agricultural centers in the world, allowing the state to produce two-thirds of the nation's fruits and nuts, and one-third of its vegetables. Because of this unique Mediterranean climate, one of only five in the world and the only one in North America, what we grow here cannot be easily transferred elsewhere.

Keeping the state as a reliable source of food provides many benefits to Californians.

- Keeps prices affordable.
- Provides a diverse source of healthy food. California's safety standards are much higher than many other countries.
- Delivers most of our winter vegetables when growing is literally impossible in most of the country.
- Reduces shipping and greenhouse gas emissions, helping California to more easily meet our climate goals.



The rate of change in food prices on a monthly basis Source: [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)



Mediterranean climate regions exist in only five main locations across the globe.

Farm Production is Threatened on Many Fronts

Much of the impact could be decreased through legislative leadership.

Lack of Water Storage

Lack of water storage impacts every single water user in the state. We all know that we must capture more water in wet years like this one, yet already-approved projects remain undone. Making new storage a reality removes much of the conflict between farms, cities and towns, and the environment.

More water storage would also help mitigate the impacts of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) which is already affecting [water users](#). It would also contribute to the recovery of underground aquifers by reducing groundwater dependence.

More storage also negates any need for PPIC's suggestion to renegotiate CVP and SWP contracts. PPIC recommends this step because contractors "may" have received more water in 2021 than they would have under pre-contract conditions. This fails to acknowledge that regulatory changes have caused the system to be operated differently today than it was 20 years ago. The solution to this is to increase the state's surface and groundwater storage and conveyance capacity to be able to meet BOTH environmental and water supply demands.

Out-of-Date Rules

Inflexible, calendar-based rules contained in Federal Biological Opinions and State permits have prevented our state from capturing much of the water from near-record storms in January during the winter's series of atmospheric rivers. In order to cope with climate change, we must be able to capture water during wet years to save for the inevitable future dry years, helping support the Governor's recent executive order for State agencies to streamline groundwater recharge projects.

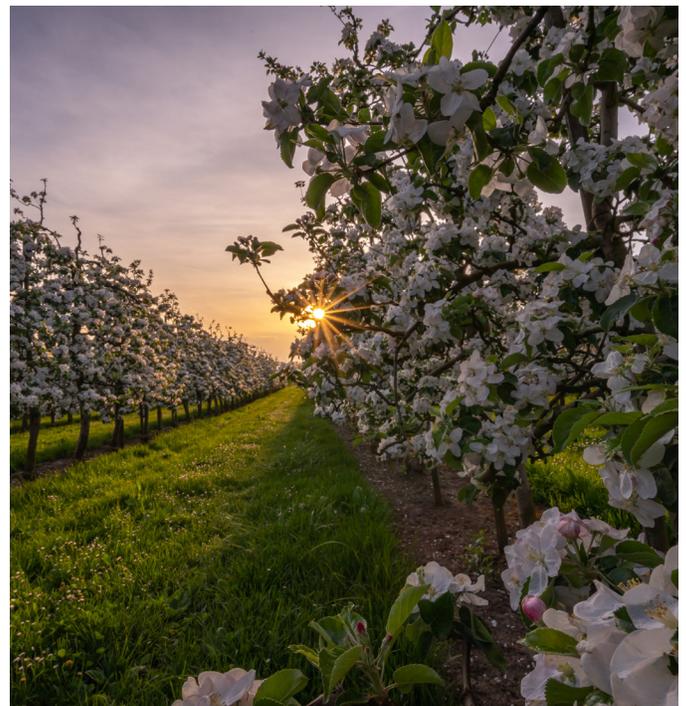
Threats to Water Rights

While the administration and enforcement of our existing water rights system require modernization to protect legal users of water and the environment, throwing out existing water rights to reallocate water

supplies strikes at the very foundation of California's economy and raises serious constitutional questions at both the state and federal level. Reallocating water rights would further impact food supply by forcing even more farmland out of production.

Our system of water rights supports some predictability across all water year types and not only in times of scarcity. Cities, businesses, and rural communities in addition to farms need a better idea of available supply during every water year type in order to plan and adjust. Water supply reliability—the foundation of which is the State's water rights system—is necessary for cities and counties to approve new housing under the "Show Me the Water" laws.

Upending California's long-standing water rights system in the name of "equity" would create considerable chaos. And California consumers would once again be the ones paying the price as our domestic food supply shrinks, more farmworkers are unemployed, rural economies crumble, and we're forced to rely on scarce, higher-priced, and often less-safe food supplies from other countries.



Valley Ag Water Coalition | Bob Reeb bobr@water-warrior.com

The mission of the Valley Ag Water Coalition is to represent the collective interests of its San Joaquin Valley member agricultural water companies and agencies in California legislative and regulatory matters by providing leadership and advocacy on issues relating to the development and delivery of a reliable farm water supply.

California Farm Water Coalition | Mike Wade mwade@farmwater.org

CFWC is a non-profit, educational organization that provides fact-based information on farm water issues to the public.