



CAFF
COMMUNITY ALLIANCE
with **FAMILY FARMERS**

2026

FARMER POLICY PLATFORM

POLICY PRIORITIES:

- 1  Building a Just Agricultural Economy

- 2  Equitable Opportunities for Land

- 3  Market Access and Financial Stability

- 4  Fair and Reliable Water Availability

- 5  Climate Resiliency and Disaster Relief

California’s family farmers are essential to our state: they ensure access to good food, sustainably manage our natural resources, and form the backbone of our rural economies. Despite their importance to a thriving California, family farms often struggle to make ends meet. This precarity comes from **consolidation across the industry**, making it harder to access land, markets, and water needed for success, and from **increased climate chaos** as farmers navigate fire, flood, extreme heat, and drought. In the last year, **cuts in critical programs and resources by the Federal Administration have greatly worsened this situation**. Given this context, we’ve added federal priorities to this year’s policy platform.



Andrew Walker, Farmboy Organics | Photo Credit: Christine La

82% of surveyed farmers operate on 50 acres or less

45% of surveyed farmers leased some or all of their farm land

46% of respondents to survey and attendees at listening sessions are BIPOC

At Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF), we represent over 8,000 of California’s smallest and most vulnerable family-scale farmers and have worked for over 48 years to preserve family-scale agriculture and promote environmental sustainability. The policies we advocate for come directly from farmers through our annual fall listening process, where we engage more than five hundred farmers to hear their concerns and most pressing challenges. **Farmers around the state are saying loud and clear that they want action to ensure that family farmers can thrive despite the challenges they face.**

2026 PRIORITIES FOR CALIFORNIA LAWMAKERS

1 Build a just agricultural economy



Cheetah Tchudi, TurkeyTail Farm

ACTION

- Ensure protections and just processes for farmers and farmworkers at risk of federal immigration action.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Ensure state resources such as the Prop 4 (Climate Bond) funding are used effectively, and to farmers who need the resources most. This includes investments in urban agriculture, food hubs, land access, equipment sharing, and farmer cooperatives.

RESEARCH

- Investigate opportunities to improve access to insurance for farmers and farmworkers, particularly for small-scale farmers who are experiencing skyrocketing costs.
- Identify opportunities to engage in broader efforts to address fundamental rights, including access to food, healthcare, and housing for farmers and farmworkers.

2 Enable equitable opportunities for land for California's small-scale, beginning, & underserved food producers



Antonia Vega, Dulce Organic Farms

ACTION

- Advocate for the creation of a first-of-its-kind state-level land access program and corresponding funding through Prop 4.
- Establish a California Land Observatory to clearly evaluate land ownership trends in California.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Encourage adaptation of new policies and programs based on the Ag Land Equity Task Force recommendations.

RESEARCH

- Identify opportunities to transition land through strategies such as cooperative land use and equipment sharing models.
- Investigate ways to mitigate the rapid and ongoing consolidation of agricultural land by private equity firms and hedge funds.

3 Support market access and financial stability



Hannah Hartley, Bless'd Blossom

ACTION

- Pay farmers fair market price to provide local food to hungry Californians, particularly at food banks, amidst federal divestment of LFPA.
- Support pathways for family farmers to successfully sell to California schools, hospitals, and other institutional purchasers.

RESEARCH

- Identify ways for CalAIM (California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal) to better support family farmers.

4 Protect fair and reliable water availability for producers committed to sustainable water use



Lee Callander, GRUB CSA Farm

ACTION

- Pass policies to stop large-scale groundwater pumpers from using adjudications to use more than their fair share and overpump groundwater basins.
- Ensure that demand management actions in groundwater subbasins do not disproportionately impact family farmers. This includes fee structures, allocation approaches, methods of groundwater measurement, and potential markets.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Ensure Prop 4 investments for Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) provides technical assistance for farmers to understand and adapt to SGMA. Support strong engagement, outreach, and education to farmers most impacted by rules established by their Groundwater Sustainability Agency.

5 Bolster climate resiliency and disaster relief for family farmers



Benancio Perez, Cali-Dad Farms

ACTION

- Ensure the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) prioritizes the needs of farmers who lead practices that both reduce carbon emissions and increase biodiversity.
- Ensure that compost legislation supports the ability of family farms to access contamination-free compost and/or develop scaled on-farm composting solutions.
- Ensure ongoing resources for climate adaptation and mitigation programs, especially CDFA's California Underserved and Small Producer Program.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Identify ways to support farmers facing steep energy costs, particularly for pumping water, or to transition energy sources.

IMPACT OF FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION DECISIONS AND FUNDING CUTS

The escalating challenges from the Federal Administration have compelled us to add national priorities to this year's policy platform. Since early 2025, billions in USDA funding—including over \$330 million in California—have been cut or frozen, leaving farmers and organizations without critical reimbursements and support. These cuts to funding programs are accompanied by cuts to food access and food assistance programs, threatening livelihoods and local economies.

CAFF has been closely tracking the impacts of these cuts on California's family farmers. Of the farmers that we surveyed,

- 69% said **federal programs were essential or important** for the financial stability of their business
- **34% were directly impacted** by cuts to federal agriculture programs in 2025
- 18% estimated financial loss of **greater than 31%** to their operation from the federal cuts
- **Spanish-speaking farmers saw the worst impacts**, with 66% of respondents experiencing financial losses of more than 21% as a result of federal cuts



Soul Food Farm

Urgent action from Congress is needed to restore funding to and protect the security and health of our food system. We call on our legislators to address these cuts that impact the economies of rural and urban communities and the fundamental well-being of millions of Americans. These cuts fall hardest on small and midsize farms, accelerating the loss of family farms. Specific cuts include key programs that enable market access for family farms, support agricultural economies, and ensure conservation of our natural resources.

Federal Policy Recommendations:

FUNDING STABILITY & EQUITABLE ACCESS:

- Restore cuts and ensure reliable program funding for key programs that impact food access for all, financial stability for farmers, and support agricultural economies through initiatives like Regional Food Business Centers and beginning farmer programs.

CONSERVATION SUPPORT:

- Protect soil, water, and climate programs and simplify access for farmers through programs like Environmental Quality Incentives Programs and Conservation Stewardship Program.

MARKET ACCESS & BUSINESS GROWTH:

- Help farmers cost share, reach local markets, and sell value-added products through programs such as Local Food Purchase Assistance Program and Local Food for Schools.

CLIMATE RESILIENCY & DISASTER RELIEF FOR FAMILY FARMERS:

- Make insurance and disaster programs work for small and midsize farms, and include more options for specialty crop growers.

BACKGROUND ON KEY PRIORITIES

1 Building a Just Agricultural Economy

In 2026, building a more just agricultural economy is more pressing than ever. Family farmers face increased difficulty finding housing for themselves and employees, skyrocketing insurance costs (for business needs and healthcare), and rising costs of doing business, especially for electricity to pump water from wells. **CAFF believes that a just agricultural economy must include housing, healthcare, and coverage of basic needs for farmers and farmworkers.**



Taylor Johnson, Jelly's Ferry Ranch

In 2025, many farmers and farmworkers were impacted by federal immigration actions. CAFF stands in firm opposition to any violations of constitutional rights or due process for immigrants in California. Immigrants are key to Californian communities, including agricultural communities. CAFF calls on State and Federal Policymakers to **support fair and just processes for those facing immigration action**, and pathways to citizenship for these essential community members.



Profitable farming in California is harder every year. Cost of insurance, housing, and electricity to pump the well seems to just keep going up.”

—Bryce Loewen, Blossom Bluff Orchards, Fresno County

2 Equitable Opportunities for Land

Land access continues to be a key issue faced by small and underserved farmers in California. Family farmers are competing with hedge funds and private equity firms for limited farmland available with sufficient water access. Our state faces increasing farmland consolidation, with 50% of cropland owned by 5% of the total landowners. Family farmers consistently communicate the difficulty of finding long-term, secure leases for land to rent or affording the purchase of land. **45% of the farmers CAFF surveyed reported leasing some or all of the land that they farm.** Without reliable land access, it becomes impossible for farmers to invest in long-term projects for their businesses, such as infrastructure improvements or conservation practices. **Equitable opportunities to farmland are critical for the continued success of small-scale and underserved farmers in California.**



Benancio Perez, Cali-Dad Farms



As of now, I am looking for land to buy so we can farm organically but [it's] hard to find and very expensive.”

—Fam Lee, F&N Farm, Sacramento County

BACKGROUND ON KEY PRIORITIES

3 Market Access and Financial Stability

While access to reliable market channels is a perennial challenge for small-scale farmers, this problem has significantly increased with recent federal program cuts. In particular, the loss of the Local Food Purchase Assistance Program (LFPA) is hitting family farmers hard. This critical program has facilitated sales of over 25 million pounds of locally grown produce directly to regional food banks across California since 2023. Its loss creates a sudden cliff in food access for hungry Californians and in sales channels for family farmers. **Enabling food banks, schools, and institutions to buy directly from local farms is key to supplying high-quality food to those who need it while investing in agricultural communities.** CAFF calls on the State Legislature to step in amidst federal divestment to ensure that procurement policies continue to support Californian family farms.



Consistent purchasing from small farms is instrumental in capacity building. This steady demand not only provides financial stability, but also encourages expansion and innovation. By working together, we are building a more robust, diverse, and resilient local food system that benefits everyone in our communities.”

—Chris Fields Sr., African American Farmers of California, Fresno County



Farmboy Organics | Photo Credit: Christine La Photography



Antonia Vega, Dulce Organic Farm | Photo Credit: Lan Ngo

4 Fair and Reliable Water Availability

While California has received adequate rainfall in the past two years, groundwater scarcity for sustainable agriculture remains a present challenge. With **53% of surveyed farmers relying on wells for irrigation**, fair and reliable groundwater access is a necessity. Implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) means that new actions to track and curtail water usage are now starting to be felt. Depending on where you are in the state, farmers are looking at new fees, allocations for water use, and an entirely different way of thinking about what you can pump from your well. **CAFF is committed to working with family farmers and state agencies to reach sustainable groundwater use while ensuring equitable water access for small-scale farmers.** We strongly support efforts to sustainably manage groundwater resources, since many family farmers have dealt with wells going dry or lowering their pumps as the water table drops. However, **it's essential that those efforts do not disproportionately impact the farmers most vulnerable under SGMA.**



Drought and access to water are the biggest issues that we face everyday. We have already lowered the pumps on 5 of our 6 wells in the past 3 years.”

—Craig McNamara, Sierra Orchards, Solano County

5 Climate Resiliency and Disaster Relief

Family farmers continue to be on the frontlines of California's climate extremes. **96% of surveyed farmers reported being impacted by climate chaos including extreme temperatures, drought, wildfire, wind events, flooding, and increased pest pressure.** Small-scale farmers face both direct and secondary climate impacts. These direct impacts hurt the ability to safely plant or harvest and can destroy entire crops, with long-lasting effects on soil, air, and water quality. After the devastating Los Angeles wildfires in 2025, key farmers markets and restaurant sales dried up, a secondary climate impact that hurt farmers even if they were out of the direct fire danger. Small-scale and underserved farmers need programs and policies that offer both immediate disaster relief and long-term climate mitigation. The farmers that CAFF represents prioritize sustainable farming practices to improve climate outcomes, reduce carbon emissions, and increase biodiversity. California needs to view small-scale farming as a climate solution and shape program priorities accordingly.



Caiti Hachmyer, Red H Farm, Sonoma County | Photo Credit: Brooke Porter



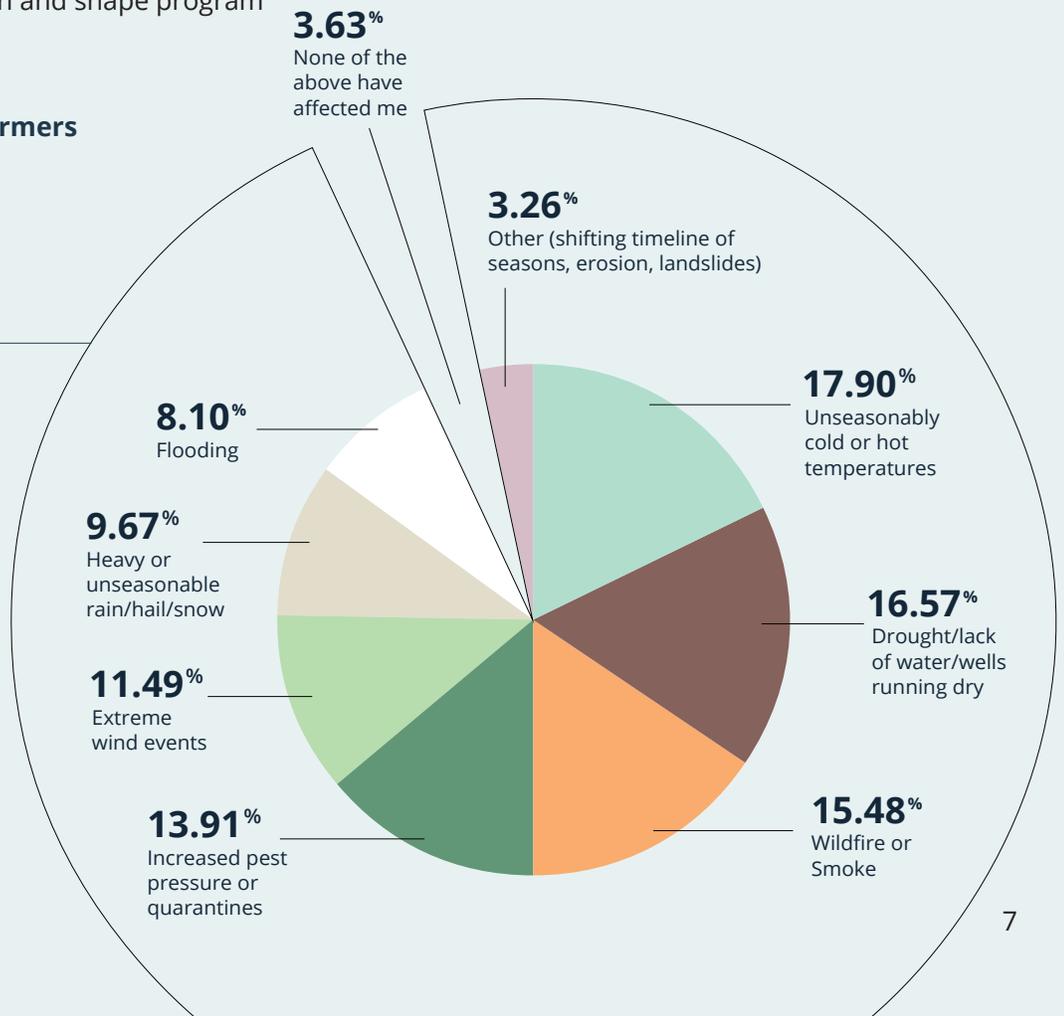
Extreme heat and climate change were a big factor in having to change my farm model, and some of the extreme and later rains are impacting my ability to get into my fields."

—Caiti Hachmyer, Red H Farm, Sonoma County

Climate impacts to surveyed farmers over the past five years:

96%

of survey respondents had faced climate extremes





ABOUT CAFF

Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) currently represents over 8,000 small and mid-scale family farmers in California and has worked for over 48 years to preserve family-scale agriculture and promote environmental sustainability. We work to build sustainable food and farming systems through policy, advocacy, and on-the-ground programs that create more resilient family farms, communities, and ecosystems.

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