



# 2021 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan

November 2021

Prepared by Valley Vision  
In Partnership with the Sacramento Region Community Foundation







# About / Acknowledgements

## About

The 2021 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan (Regional Action Plan) identifies prevailing challenges, opportunities, best practices, priorities, and recommendations to advance the region's food system for the communities of El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, and Yolo Counties. The goal of the Regional Action Plan is to increase the vitality of the region's food system and to identify financing strategies and mechanisms to support a more health-promoting, resilient, equitable, prosperous, and accessible food system for all residents of the Greater Sacramento region. It is an update of and builds upon the original 2015 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan, recognizing that in the ensuing six years, there have been both good progress and significant unforeseen challenges, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Acknowledgments

The 2021 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan was prepared by Valley Vision through the generous support of the Sacramento Region Community Foundation (Foundation). We are very grateful to the many dedicated food system partners - nonprofits, public and private agencies,

community stakeholders, farmers, local elected officials, restaurants, retail and food distributors, healthcare and educational institutions, family services institutions, associations, philanthropic organizations, and many others across the region - who gave their valuable time, expertise and ideas to the project. A full list of participating individuals and organizations is included in Appendix 1.



Thank you also to Dr. Catherine Brinkley and Jordana Fuchs-Chesney of the University of California, Davis for preparing the project's County Community Food Guides, and to the students of Dr. Brinkley's class of Spring 2021 Community & Regional Development (CRD) 200, Health and Place for their Food System Health Impact Assessment. Thank you to the various partners who contributed photos seen throughout the report. We are grateful to Shawn Harrison, Founder and Co-Director of Soil Born Farms and Valley Vision Board member, for his enduring vision and support. Lastly, we thank our colleagues at the Sacramento Region Community Foundation for their deep commitment to an equitable food system and their dedicated support and engagement throughout the project.

We take this moment to acknowledge the land on which we are gathered. This land acknowledgment was guided by the Sacramento Native American Health Center and Native Land Digital. For thousands of years, this land has been the ancestral home of the Nisenan People and a gathering place for many local tribes. We acknowledge the Southern Maidu People to the north, the Valley and Plains Miwok/Me-Wuk Peoples to the south of the American River, the Patwin Wintun Peoples to the west of the Sacramento River, and the Washoe People of the Lake Tahoe area. They have remained committed to the stewardship of this land over many centuries. It has been cherished and protected, as elders have instructed the young through generations. We are honored and grateful to be here today on their traditional lands.



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# Letter to the Community

Creating and supporting an equitable and resilient regional food system is vital to the health and well-being of communities and individuals across the region. That is why the Sacramento Region Community Foundation and Valley Vision have partnered to create the 2021 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan (Regional Action Plan). The Regional Action Plan is an update of the 2015 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan, which supported the Foundation's Strategic Initiative, "Connecting the Regional Food Economy," and served as a road map for regional investment, focused especially on strengthening the capacity of the nonprofits integral to the food system. It was organized around four key goals, specifically to: 1) Ensure the viability of the food and agricultural economy at all scales; 2) Increase the amount of locally grown food distributed to the regional food system; 3) Increase access to fresh, healthy produce, especially in underserved communities; and 4) Increase consumption of healthy foods through access to food education and knowledge.

There has been good progress made on these goals, especially related to the emergency food system. But as the Farm to Fork Capital, the Sacramento region should be the model for a viable and sustainable food system that provides healthy food for all and supports wide-ranging and equitable economic opportunities. While we have much to be proud of, there remains an unacceptable level of food insecurity and inequity across all aspects of the food economy, which became even more apparent during the pandemic and is exacerbated by the impacts of climate change.

The Foundation and Valley Vision are partnering once again to develop this Regional Action Plan, a two-phase report, which builds on the earlier plan and focuses on six Strategic Focus Areas including the: 1) Viability of Agriculture; 2) Environmental Sustainability; 3) Food Economy; 4) Careers in Food and Agriculture; 5) Food Security, and 6) Health and Nutrition. Priorities, challenges, opportunities, and assets are identified for each Strategic Focus Area, culminating in a series of cross-cutting recommendations for further action and

investment. Phase Two of the Regional Action Plan will identify funding models and strategies to achieve these recommendations and will inform the Foundation's work as well as other funders and stakeholders both inside and outside the region.

We would like to thank the hundreds of people and organizations who directly contributed their time and expertise to the development of this phase of the report (please see Appendix 1) and acknowledge that there are many others striving daily to advance an equitable food economy. Therefore, this will be a living document, residing on Valley Vision's website, so that it can be updated and expanded, and thus have ongoing and real-time relevance. The Regional Action Plan was also enriched by the results of the Food System Resilience poll, conducted by Valley Vision this year in partnership with the Institute for Social Research at California State University, Sacramento, and Capital Public Radio. Nearly 900 respondents offered their perspective on a wide range of topics related to the food system and the findings are integrated into this report.

A viable, sustainable, and equitable food system is vitally important to all of us. We hope that the issues and recommendations presented here, bolstered by the forthcoming funding strategies, will be a blueprint to assuring the Sacramento region becomes a national model and the Farm to Fork Capital for all.



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# Executive Summary:

# 2021 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan

## Why a Food System Action Plan?

The Greater Sacramento region is at the heart of one of the world's largest agricultural economies, producing products for people at home and around the globe. With its renowned food and agricultural assets, the region produces a large diversity of high-quality crops and products and values its agricultural heritage, while looking to the future as a global innovator and leader in sustainable agriculture, food, and health.

Yet, in spite of our great abundance, the region experiences persistent levels of food insecurity, lack of access to healthy affordable foods, and lack of equitable access to economic opportunities, among other conditions. For the Sacramento Region Community Foundation (Foundation) and Valley Vision, this has been a long-held focus. In 2015, the Foundation enlisted Valley Vision to assess the Sacramento region's food system and to formulate an action plan that would align a broad network of community leaders, partners, and stakeholders around common strategies for the communities of El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, and Yolo Counties.

The 2015 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan (2015 Action Plan) was organized around four key goals: 1) **Ensure the viability of the food and agriculture economy** at all scales; 2) **Increase the amount of locally-grown food** distributed to the regional food system; 3) **Increase access to fresh, healthy produce**, especially in underserved communities; and 4) **Increase consumption of healthy foods** through access to food and nutrition education and knowledge. The 2015 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan served as a roadmap for local and regional action and focused on strengthening the nonprofit sector that is so crucial to the regional food system.

As a result of the 2015 Action Plan recommendations, the Foundation focused its investments on expanding the efficiency and capabilities of the emergency food system, which serves hundreds of thousands of our community members facing hunger and food/nutrition insecurity. Many other accomplishments and positive outcomes have occurred since that time as well, especially as several nonprofits deepened their capabilities and the region's food and agricultural economy grew. The



Picture of Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services



Foundation was poised to update the 2015 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020. The pandemic caused immediate, massive disruption to this process, the regional economy, and the entire food system.

The food system had to pivot quickly to meet this new reality. The groundwork laid in earlier years in investments, facilities, partnerships, and capacity building helped prepare agencies, institutions, and nonprofits for rapid response and adaptation, despite strains on the system overall. Even with these supports, the pandemic magnified many of the deep, persistent gaps and disparities in the food system and ramped up incredible new demands. The region lacked a systemic response to the emergent needs – demonstrating the need to increase food system resilience and strategic approaches to food access

and supply. In addition, the devastating impacts of environmental crises such as rainfall variability, extreme heat, poor air quality, and the threat of fires have only heightened the need for action in the region.

Reflecting these new realities, the Foundation engaged Valley Vision to prepare the 2021 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan (Regional Action Plan). As a result of changing priorities, policy landscape, and environment, Valley Vision expanded upon the four original goals in the 2015 Action Plan by incorporating six Strategic Focus Areas to address emerging needs and opportunities. This approach also integrates evolving best practices in how communities in other regions are addressing food system challenges. The report is organized around these six areas (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Strategic Focus Areas for the Regional Action Plan**





In developing the Regional Action Plan, Valley Vision engaged more than 200 stakeholders in six listening sessions related to the Strategic Focus Areas, as well as through individual and group interviews. Additionally, Valley Vision conducted research and analysis, consulted with subject area experts, engaged state and federal funders, and partnered with the University of California, Davis Environment, Land and Food Systems (ELFS) Lab on county community food guides. This work was produced in collaboration and coordination with many entities across the region involved in various food system initiatives to ensure alignment and synergy (see Appendix 1 for participants and contributors, and Appendix 2 for methodology). In addition to Regional Action Plan engagement, Valley Vision also conducted a public opinion poll, the [Food System Resilience Poll](#), in partnership with The Institute for Social Research at California State University, Sacramento and

Capital Public Radio in July 2021. The poll offers a community perspective on the food system. All of these activities have contributed greatly to the development of the Regional Action Plan, which is intended to serve as a living document.

### Key Findings and Recommendations

The Regional Action Plan process identified key assets, challenges, and opportunities for action to strengthen the resilience, sustainability, and inclusiveness of the regional food system. Below is a summary of key metrics and recommended actions for investment and capacity building to attain progress in the six Strategic Focus Areas.

While the 2021 Regional Action Plan is structured differently than the 2015 Action Plan, it builds from and advances the goals that were presented in the 2015 Action Plan. For comparison, the goals from the 2015 Action Plan are as follows.

#### GOALS IDENTIFIED IN 2015 SACRAMENTO REGION FOOD SYSTEM ACTION PLAN



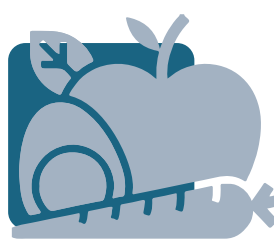
##### Goal 1:

Ensure the viability of the food and agriculture economy



##### Goal 2:

Increase the amount of locally-grown food distributed to the regional food system



##### Goal 3:

Increase access to fresh, healthy produce, especially in underserved communities



##### Goal 4:

Increase consumption of healthy foods through food and nutrition education and knowledge



## 2021 SACRAMENTO REGION FOOD SYSTEM ACTION PLAN STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

2021 Strategic Focus Area	Selected Metrics	Recommended Investment and Capacity Building Actions	2015 Goals Advanced
<b>1. Viability of Agriculture</b> <i>With changing economic, regulatory, and environmental conditions, future practices, policies, and investments must ensure that farmland, farm products, and farmers and workers are supported, celebrated, and resourced.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Across the region, 29% of all farmers are new and beginning farmers; 95% are white</li> <li>- Average size of farms is 196 acres; access to land is a major barrier</li> <li>- Up to 17% of farmers have no broadband access</li> </ul>	<p>Increase funding mechanisms and investment for access to capital, land, equipment, and broadband, especially for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), women, small, and economically challenged farmers and food businesses.</p> <p>Increase technical assistance capacity to help farmers and small entrepreneurs reach local markets and to assist farmers in adapting to climate change impacts and changing crop patterns.</p>	 
<b>2. Environmental Sustainability</b> <i>Climate change and development pressures resulting in the conversion of agricultural land have serious implications for the viability of the agricultural sector, as well as the health of the region's crops, water resources, supply chains, workforce, and more. New state mandates call for edible food recovery and reduced waste, but capacity and infrastructure lag.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 83% of Food System Resilience Poll respondents are concerned or very concerned about climate threats to the food system</li> <li>- 30-40% of food is wasted along the food supply chain</li> <li>- The summer of 2021 was the driest on record in more than 100 years</li> </ul>	<p>Increase funding to implement more conservation easements; increase understanding of the benefit to the environment that farming provides.</p> <p>Adopt regenerative agricultural practices, including improving soil health and water efficiencies; assist with access to new funding and technical capacity resources.</p> <p>Identify a sustainable funding stream for edible food recovery/ waste reduction program operating costs and capital expenditures (e.g., refrigerated trucks, warehouses, and refrigeration).</p>	



2021 Strategic Focus Area	Selected Metrics	Recommended Investment and Capacity Building Actions	2015 Goals Advanced
<b>3. Food Economy</b> <i>The region has competitive advantages to grow an innovative food economy by leveraging the local purchasing power of institutions, supporting next-generation food entrepreneurs and foods of the future, and increasing new business opportunities. Increasing enrollment for eligible food assistance programs like CalFresh will bring millions of dollars in revenues for farmers and establishments.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Every dollar spent on local institutional purchasing can add up to \$2.16 to the local economy</li> <li>- Gaps in enrollment of CalFresh-eligible residents leave \$146 million on the table for farmers, distributors, and retailers</li> <li>- Every CalFresh dollar spent at a farmers market contributes \$1.79 in local economic activity</li> </ul>	<p>Organize and expand institutional purchasing and local procurement, including farm to school and farm to hospital programs.</p> <p>Invest in a network of food hubs and other food system infrastructure, including incubators, public markets, and school central kitchens to get more local foods to local markets, and to support BIPOC, low-income, veterans, women, and other entrepreneurs.</p> <p>Expand urban agriculture (e.g., urban farms, farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), compost hubs, and nurseries) and other enterprise models in urban and rural areas.</p>	  
<b>4. Careers in Food and Agriculture</b> <i>Growing and maintaining careers, career pathways, and skills-building in the food and agriculture cluster is foundational to building a thriving food economy in the region. Projected agrifood tech job growth is soaring as the food system transforms.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Average age of farmers is 57.5 years; average age of skilled food and beverage processors is 56 years</li> <li>- Numerous skills gaps are documented across the food and agriculture system; more than 70% of jobs overall need some level of digital skills</li> </ul>	<p>Invest in next-generation farm and manufacturing apprenticeship programs.</p> <p>Invest in food and agriculture career pathways, including for agrifood tech skills and hospitality/tourism; promote career awareness to grow the pipeline.</p> <p>Support immigrant, refugee, and adult workforce development programs to meet current skills gaps and provide a career pathway.</p> <p>Invest in farmworker skills development and address other challenges, such as immigration and health status.</p>	 

2021 Strategic Focus Area	Selected Metrics	Recommended Investment and Capacity Building Actions	2015 Goals Advanced
<b>5. Food Security and Healthy Food Access</b>  <i>Despite its reputation as America's Farm-to-Fork Capital, the region suffers from extensive food insecurity and inequitable access to nutritious, healthy, and culturally appropriate foods. The emergency food system is under great stress. Enrollment in eligible food support programs lag, leaving an estimated \$146 million in funding behind that would benefit both food insecure residents and local farmers and establishments.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- About 300,000 residents in the four county region are food insecure; Food System Resilience Poll respondents report even higher levels of food insecurity, with one in six residents being food insecure</li> <li>- The number of monthly Food Bank participants in the region increased by at least 50% since the start of COVID, from 287,000 to more than 430,000 on average</li> <li>- CalFresh enrollment levels are between 40-50% in El Dorado, Placer and Yolo counties. Sacramento County is 93%</li> </ul>	<p>Support the emergency food system with sustainable multi-year operations and expanded infrastructure/facilities and staffing.</p> <p>Increase funding for counties to enable CalFresh enrollment for all eligible residents.</p> <p>Scale-up use of CalFresh at farmers markets throughout the region by ensuring the infrastructure is in place for vendors to accept the benefits.</p> <p>Provide funding for increased CalFresh market match programs, through county pilots that can be brought to scale.</p> <p>Expand local access to food through urban farms, farm stands, mobile markets and other portable food solutions for underserved neighborhoods, as well as online local marketplaces operated by nonprofits.</p>	  
<b>6. Health and Nutrition</b>  <i>People who are exposed to food and nutrition literacy - in school, on farms, in their communities, or at home - can substantially reduce their chances of developing health-related conditions connected to diets, such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. As a relatively new concept, there is a need for additional resources to help youth and adults understand how food and nutrition impact health.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 61% USDA National Survey respondents report the cost of healthy foods as a barrier to access</li> <li>- More than half of Food System Resilience Poll respondents think community gardens are important but many have no access; communities of color and lower income residents are most impacted and interested in garden access</li> </ul>	<p>Increase investment in food and nutrition literacy programs, gardening and cooking programs and classes, and marketing and outreach, including investments in healthy foods and healthy lifestyles that are culturally appropriate.</p> <p>Increase investment in community garden programs across the region, including investment in land access and operating costs.</p> <p>Support food literacy and urban agriculture partnerships in K-12, and document the resulting health outcomes.</p>	





The Regional Action Plan provides the roadmap to change the trajectory of the current food system. In a second phase of the plan, Valley Vision will continue to work with the Foundation and collaborate with partners who are exploring financing strategies and mechanisms that advance the Regional Action Plan. In related work, efforts are also underway to build upon the lessons learned and the food system assets that were developed through The California Endowment's major 10-year investment in Sacramento's Building Healthy Communities initiative, now coming to a close.

The region is well-positioned to grow an inclusive, sustainable, innovative, and prosperous food economy, but there is much work needed to create this reality. Despite ongoing disruptions

across the food system, such as fires, drought, extreme heat, and the COVID-19 pandemic, the network of dedicated organizations and institutions working to improve food security and access, health, resiliency, and economic opportunity in the Greater Sacramento region is highly encouraging. New resources and policy support at the state and federal levels will enable stakeholders in the food system to take advantage of the emerging opportunities identified in the Regional Action Plan. Now is the time to scale and truly be America's Farm to Fork Capital in all aspects. This plan is a call to action for funders, elected officials, and planners - including local governments, philanthropic organizations, and other private and public entities - to bring attention to and invest in this essential work for the benefit of all.

# 2021 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan:

## For a Resilient, Sustainable, and Prosperous Food System

### Introduction

As America's Farm to Fork Capital, the region's food and agriculture economy is a major economic engine. Pre-pandemic, this industry cluster generated more than \$12 billion in economic impact, with more than 55,000 workers across the value chain in areas including growing (production), processing, distribution, packaging, and support services.<sup>1</sup> This impact was spurred by 6,700 farms and ranches in the region - covering 1.5 million acres - that supply local, regional, state, national, and global markets with a wide range of high value, high-quality crops and products.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the direct impact of the food and agriculture sector, the retail, hospitality, and tourism industries benefit greatly from and support the food and agriculture economy.<sup>3</sup> These industries generated more than \$17 billion in annual economic activity and 118,000 jobs pre-pandemic. Food and agriculture also have a great influence on the research and innovation assets of the Sacramento region's educational institutions, including the University of California, Davis (UC Davis) as one of the world's leading agricultural institutions. The food and agriculture sector is a driver of the region's economy, especially as one of the target, high growth industry clusters

contained in the [Sacramento Region Prosperity Strategy](#)<sup>4</sup>, the region's roadmap to inclusive economic growth. The 2021 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan (Regional Action Plan) provides an updated blueprint for collaboration, capacity building, and investment to strengthen the health and resilience of our food system and seeks to leverage the food system as a pathway to inclusive economic and community development.

The region was making progress toward the goals of the 2015 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan when the pandemic hit in 2020. The pandemic led to a massive, well-documented disruption of the region's economy and health status, resulting in skyrocketing levels of food insecurity and job dislocation, supply chain shortages, and many other impacts. It exacerbated the structural and racial/ethnic disparities that exist within our food system, and greatly strained the capacity of the nonprofit sector – especially the emergency food system. Institutions including schools and hospitals, restaurants, farmers, ranchers, retailers, distributors, and local governments struggled to meet the food, nutrition, health, and economic needs of the community.

1 California's Working Landscape, prepared by the California Community Colleges Center of Excellence for the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources., November 2019.

2 U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2017, for number of farms/ranches; farmgate value from 2019 County Agricultural Commissioner Crop Reports for the 6-county region: El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba counties.

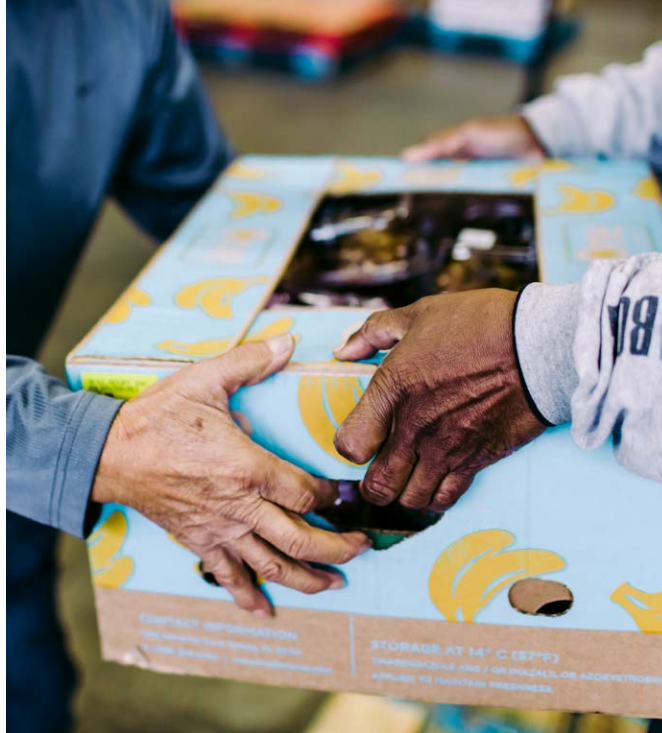
3 Hospitality, Leisure, and Tourism: Economic and Workforce Performance and Needs Assessment, Greater Sacramento Region, prepared by the North/Far North Center of Excellence, California Community Colleges, et. al., April 2019.

4 Greater Sacramento Region Prosperity Strategy, prepared by Valley Vision and RW Ventures for the Prosperity Partnership, 2020.



Food system leaders and stakeholders pivoted rapidly and have risen to meet the challenges before them, bringing forth new partnerships and innovative approaches that will continue as we move forward. Resources are becoming available to support a more equitable and inclusive recovery, not just in response to the pandemic, but also to address worsening threats such as climate change impacts.

The Regional Action Plan was developed in coordination with several regional planning activities underway which are summarized below. Specific activities and partnerships are referenced in the individual Strategic Focus Area discussions. These include:



Picture of Placer Food Bank distribution

- The assessment related to the conclusion of the 10-year, \$6.3 million investment by The California Endowment in its Building Healthy Communities initiative/Healthy Food for All Collaborative (HFAC). This assessment is being conducted by Soil Born Farms to identify possible approaches and governance structures to more systematically align and advance regional food system activities and outcomes and support food system stakeholders.
- The initiatives of the Sacramento Food Policy Council, including collaboration with Sacramento County and other partners on the Sacramento County Food System Assessment and Environmental Justice Element, and other policy and implementation projects, along with advocacy for publicly funded food system financing.
- Various food security coalitions in El Dorado, Placer and Yolo Counties with nonprofit partners, the food banks, libraries, and hospitals systems, among others.
- Numerous sustainable agricultural lands conservation planning efforts, such as the Sacramento Area Council of Governments Coordinated Regional Opportunities Plan (CROP) to strengthen rural agriculture infrastructure; the Yolo County sustainable agricultural lands project; and the Delta Protection Commission's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy; among others.
- The regional economic Prosperity Strategy which includes a focus on food and agriculture cluster initiatives, providing an umbrella for several of the Regional Action Plan priorities.
- The City of Sacramento's Food Justice Task Force, which builds upon the work of its Food Access Collaborative, and the Local Foods, Local Places project to develop resilient neighborhood food hubs in partnership with U.S EPA, USDA, and nonprofit partners.

These efforts are illustrative of the momentum that is building and the strong network of partners working to advance our regional food system. See Appendices 1 and 2 for the full list of participants and contributors, and report methodology.

# NAVIGATING THROUGH CRISIS: THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON THE FOOD SYSTEM

## Food Insecurity/Emergency Food System Through Crisis

There are many indicators and metrics regarding the status of the regional food system, but one overarching area of importance is the level of food insecurity confronting the region and how well the region is accessing resources to address healthy food access. These are two key issues that affect many aspects of the food system and reflect the need and opportunity to make sure that no one goes hungry in the Sacramento region. This section provides a snapshot of how the region is doing, especially given the impact of the pandemic, as a point of reference for the discussion of the six Strategic Focus Areas.

Food insecurity has been a pervasive challenge to the region's social, moral, and economic fabric. Levels of food insecurity saw consistent improvement from 2015 until the pandemic hit. The improvement resulted from an improving economy, as well as concerted efforts by the food banks and other nonprofits to strengthen the emergency food system. The pandemic led to skyrocketing levels of food insecurity. Reaching those in need was further complicated by disruption in supply chains; loss of food distribution sites, partners, staff and volunteers; and increasing costs to obtain food. Table 1 shows overall food insecurity rates in 2019 and estimated rates in 2021 for each county and the region.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 1: Estimated Overall Food Insecurity Rates by County, 2019-2021**

County	Overall Rate 2019	# of Food Insecure Residents	Projected Overall Rate 2021	# of Projected Food Insecure Residents 2021
El Dorado	9.8%	18,550	11.7%	20,170
Placer	8.6%	32,980	9.8%	37,710
Sacramento	12.4%	187,630	13.4%	204,460
Yolo	10.7%	23,357	12.1%	26,300
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>262,417</b>	<b>12.4%</b>	<b>286,640</b>

Source: *Map the Meal Gap*, 2021, Feeding America; analysis by Valley Vision



Picture of Sierra College Foundation Student Drive Thru

<sup>5</sup> Gundersen, C., Strayer, M., Dewey, A., Hake, M., and Engelhard, E. (2021). *Map the Meal Gap 2021: An Analysis of County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Costs in the United States in 2019*. Feeding America. Includes census tract level data.





Picture of Yolo Food Bank food distribution

Overall, more than 11.3% of the region's residents were food insecure pre-pandemic, higher than the national rate of 10.9%. Rates of food insecurity varied by county and were higher for certain populations, including children, seniors, people with disabilities, and Black and Hispanic headed households.<sup>6</sup> One often overlooked population is higher education students, who experience high rates of food insecurity.<sup>7</sup>

Food insecurity rates rose in 2021 in all counties, averaging 12.4% for the region, or one out of every eight residents. **The projected number of food insecure individuals in the four counties was almost 287,000, an increase of 9% from 2019.** More than 70% of the food insecure individuals in the region reside in Sacramento County. See Appendix 3 for maps of food insecurity for the region overall and Valley Vision's website for detailed maps of each county.

National and California research shows that food insecurity levels improved over peaks in 2020 due to the positive impacts of state and federal

social safety net benefits and economic impact payments.<sup>8</sup> As these income and other supports come to an end, great uncertainty remains about the implications for both residents and the emergency food system. Respondents in the Food System Resilience Poll conducted by Valley Vision in July 2021 affirmed the benefit of these direct payments on their ability to purchase healthier foods. **But the poll also found food insecurity to be at even higher levels than the Feeding America data - at 16%, or one in every six residents.**<sup>9</sup>

Many institutions and partners mobilized to address the impacts of the pandemic on food insecurity, but the region's food banks are the backbone of the emergency food system. They manage a large network of food bank partners, including food pantries/closets, churches, nonprofits, food delivery providers, growers, and volunteers. The food banks also manage a sophisticated logistics system for gathering,

6 "Health Impact Assessment for the Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan," Authors Olutola Akande et al, University of California, Davis, June, 2021.

7 Promoting Food Security for UC Davis Students, by Francine Steinberg, Chancellor's Task Force on Food Security, July, 2018.

8 "Material Hardship and Mental Health Following the COVID-19 Relief Bill and American Rescue Plan Act," by Patrick Cooney and H. Luke Shaefer, M Poverty Solutions, University of Michigan, May 2021, p. 3, and Pandemic Aid Helped Lower Poverty in California," Caroline Danielson, Public Policy Institute of California, September 24, 2021.

9 Sacramento Food System Resilience Poll, prepared by Valley Vision in partnership with The Institute for Social Research at California State University, Sacramento and Capital Public Radio, July 2021.



storing, packaging, and distributing millions of pounds of food to hundreds of thousands of food insecure residents. Primary food and funding sources include: donations from Feeding America; food retailers, growers/producers, and manufacturers (including through food recovery programs); USDA (federal commodities); and individual and corporate philanthropic donations.<sup>10</sup> There is comparatively little local and state government investment in the emergency food system.

Since 2015 the food banks have invested millions of dollars in the physical infrastructure, trucking, staff, and institutional capacity needed to reach the food insecure, reduce hunger, and assist

clients on the path to health and economic self-sufficiency. The food banks and the entire emergency food system pivoted quickly when the pandemic led to shelter in place orders and unemployment levels increased almost overnight. Table 2 shows the increase in demand on the emergency food system in terms of the number of pounds of food distributed and individuals served. For the region's three major food banks, the amount of food distributed has increased by more than 43% compared to pre-pandemic. The number of individuals served increased over the same period between 48%-57%, with some months reaching a 100% increase.

**Table 2: Sacramento Region Food Bank Service Levels, Pre-COVID and 2021**

Food Bank	Lbs. of Food Distributed		# of Individuals Served/mo.	
	Pre-COVID	COVID-19	Pre-COVID	COVID-19
Placer Food Bank	6.5M	8.2M+	92,000	105,800 – 110,400
Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services	28.0M	38.0M	150,000	260,000 - 280,000
Yolo Food Bank	6.0M	12.0M	45,000	60,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>40.5M</b>	<b>58.2M+</b>	<b>287,000</b>	<b>425,800 – 450,400</b>

Note: Placer Food Bank serves, Placer, El Dorado, and Nevada counties

Source: Placer Food Bank, Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services, Yolo Food Bank, analysis by Valley Vision



Picture of Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services

10 Feeding America is a national network of 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries and other meal programs, and is the nation's largest hunger relief program.



# Providing Aid in a Time of Crisis: Capturing the Benefits of CalFresh

CalFresh, the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in California, is the nation's most important anti-hunger program. Yet, analysis by Nourish California shows that a large number of eligible Californians are not receiving benefits, depriving those in need of nutrition assistance and resulting in major dollars lost to the economy. Table 3 shows the additional federal dollars that would be available to the region if CalFresh reached all eligible individuals, the economic activity that would result from

these additional benefits, and the food retailers and farmers markets that would benefit from the additional business. USDA has shown that every dollar in federal SNAP/CalFresh expenditures generates \$1.79 in economic activity.<sup>11</sup> With 100% enrollment in CalFresh, almost an additional \$150 million dollars would be available for nutrition assistance, with an estimated economic impact of \$225 million.

**Table 3: Estimated Benefits of Increased CalFresh Enrollment, June 2020**

County	Additional Federal Dollars if CalFresh Reached All Eligible Individuals	Economic Activity Resulting From Additional Federal Benefits	Food Retailers and Farmers Markets that Would Benefit from Additional Business
El Dorado	\$ 8,800,000	\$13,600,000	112
Placer	\$27,300,000	\$42,100,000	219
Sacramento	\$58,800,000	\$90,500,000	1,011
Yolo	\$51,200,000	\$78,800,000	145
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$146,100,000</b>	<b>\$225,000,000</b>	<b>1,297</b>

Source: Nourish California, Lost Dollars, Empty Plates, County Estimates, June 2020

CalFresh enrollment rates varied widely by county in 2019, with Sacramento County at 93%, El Dorado County at 50%, Placer County at 43%, and Yolo County at 40%.<sup>12</sup> Enrollment for Yolo County is complicated by federal eligibility requirements which create barriers for enrolling food insecure higher education students.<sup>13</sup> Other eligibility requirements affect seniors and mixed immigration status families across the region. Increasing enrollment should be a major priority for the region.

For further analysis of the region's food insecurity, the emergency food system, and the CalFresh program in the region, including food insecurity maps and the numerous adaptations of the food banks and partners, please see [Valley Vision's website](#).

*"The Food Bank network was meant to be temporary, to deal with emergencies. Food insecurity is now part of normal life, with many of those affected being the working poor. In addition to the pandemic, we are also dealing with the effects of fires."*

Dave Martinez, Placer Food Bank

<sup>12</sup> CalFresh Dashboard, CA. Dept. of Social Services, Sept. 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Per interview with Nolan Sullivan, Yolo County Dept. of Social Services, Aug. 2021.

# REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS

*“Whether it be establishing project based learning and career technical education programs like the GEO Academy at Grant High School, or enfranchising community gardens like the International Garden of Many Colors in Northgate-Gardenland, or adopting SB1000 Environmental Justice Food Access policies, there is great opportunity to center equity and food justice in the region’s food system”*

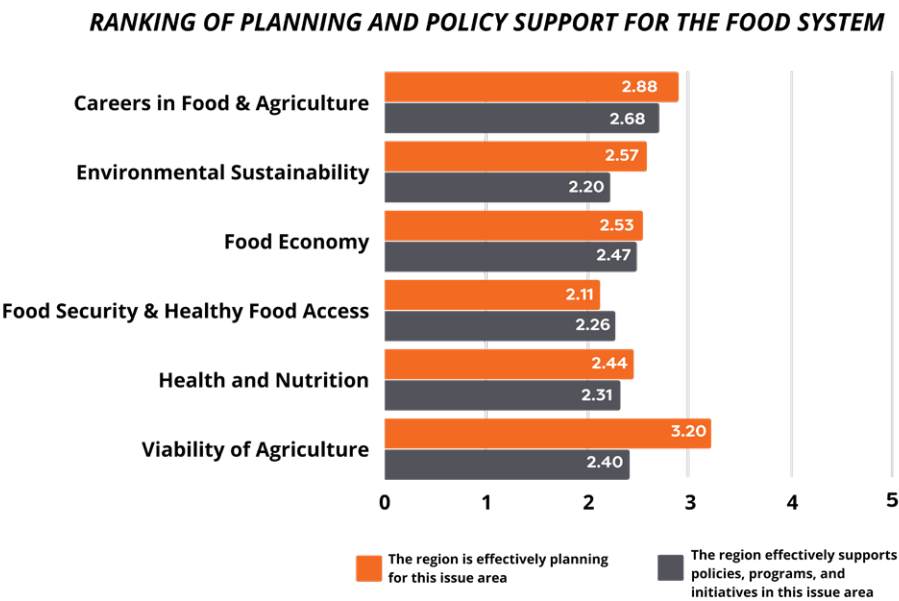
Brenda Ruiz, Sacramento Food Policy Council

This section of the Regional Action Plan presents the key findings and recommendations for each of the six Strategic Focus Areas. It provides a summary of priority recommendations, followed by a synthesis of stakeholder and other input and findings describing the assets, challenges, and emerging opportunities that guided the development of the recommendations. Case studies are provided that highlight innovations and opportunities for partnerships, replication, and scaling. The recommendations for each Strategic Focus Area are brought together in a summary matrix of strategies and implementation actions in the following section of the Regional Action Plan.

Figure 2 provides an overall perspective from the Regional Action Plan listening session participants on (1) the degree to which “the region is effectively planning in each strategic focus area”

and (2) the degree to which “the region effectively supports policies, programs, and initiatives in each focus area.” Participants were asked to rate each of the two statements with a scale from one, equaling “strongly disagree,” to five, equaling “strongly agree.” The insights gathered are meaningful because they are provided by people who are involved closely with the food system. Most categories received less than a rating of three, except for the viability of agriculture. In almost all cases the planning was considered to be better than the actual support for policies, programs, and initiatives, suggesting a lag in implementation. The Strategic Focus Area which ranked the lowest was food security and healthy food access, perhaps reflecting the magnitude of the impact from the pandemic. The biggest gap between planning and policies, programs, and initiatives was related to the viability of agriculture. The rankings suggest improvement is needed across all areas.

Figure 2.





# 1 Strategic Focus Area: Viability of Agriculture

*As the Farm to Fork Capital of the nation, the Sacramento region is an agricultural gem. But with changing economic, regulatory, and environmental conditions we cannot take agriculture for granted. Practices, policies, and investments must ensure that farmland, farm products, farmers, and workers are supported, celebrated, preserved, and resourced. Further, there must be access to opportunity for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC); women; under-resourced; small-enterprise; and other diverse farmers and food entrepreneurs to ensure that they have the tools they need to thrive.*

*"Most farmers in the region lease the land - they don't own it. If you don't own land, you can't make investments if you don't know you have a future with it. How are you building up enough wealth to exit the work? Farmers have no nest egg to rest on and it's a real fundamental challenge."*

Paul Towers, Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF)

Through stakeholder engagement, community surveys, research, and data analysis, Valley Vision developed the following key action priorities to support the viability of agriculture in the Greater Sacramento region.



Picture of  
Fiery Ginger Farms





## Regional Action Plan Priorities for Viability of Agriculture

**Food and Agriculture Business Start-Up and Ongoing Support:** Increase funding mechanisms and investment for access to land, capital, appropriate equipment, and broadband for those who want to enter the food and agriculture pipeline. Emphasis should be given to women and BIPOC farmers, food businesses, and BIPOC and women-led organizations, as well as small or otherwise economically challenged farmers and food entrepreneurs.

**Technical Assistance Capacity:** Increase organizational capacity of nonprofits, farm advisors, and others to help small farmers, food entrepreneurs, and distributors reach expanded local markets, deal with climate change impacts, and other needs. (The Food Economy Issue Area includes strategies for expanded market opportunities.)

**Drought Assistance:** Provide drought assistance, especially to small growers.

**Update local General Plans and Planning Elements:** Local planning and policy documents should be updated by local governments to ensure support for agriculture and food-related activities, including farmland protection.

Valley Vision assessed regional assets and challenges to address key action priorities that support the viability of agriculture. The following themes emerged.

### Regional Assets to Support Action Priorities

**Agriculture innovation** is evolving and well-supported in the region, including from UC Davis agriculture-related research institutes and departments, other clusters of nearby colleges, and AgTech entrepreneurs, labs, and incubators.

**We have an abundance of prime farmland,** a long growing season, and are close to major food markets. There is an opportunity for market expansion through institutional procurement, with some strong programs underway.

**We are the Farm to Fork Capital** of the nation. It is a popular brand, with 82% support from respondents in the Food System Resilience Poll and more than 60% supporting farmland preservation as a top priority for our region.

**There are many farmer programs and technical/capital assistance programs,** including the [Community Alliance for Family Farmers \(CAFF\)](#), [Kitchen Table Advisors](#), [Center for Land-Based Learning](#), [Soil Born Farms California Capital](#), the [Capital Region Small Business Development Center](#), and [UC Davis institutes](#). Models like [Growing the Table](#) also offer potential.

**There are many grant opportunities** for small farmers, including The State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEET) grant program that has money to help fund the development of program applications for those in need of support.

**Existing partnerships** between farmers, academia, restaurants, grocery stores, food distributors, nonprofits, food banks, schools, hospitals, and other institutions and businesses provide a network for collaboration, innovation, and support. The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) supports the agricultural economy through the Rural-Urban Connections Strategy (RUCS) and its set of planning tools.

## Regional Challenges to Advancing Action Priorities

**Cost of farming/access to land and other resources:** The real estate market in California is expensive, which makes farming expensive. Lack of access to land is especially challenging for small, women and BIPOC farmers. Other challenges include short land leases, inability to build equity, lack of water access, and lack of broadband access.

**Farmland conversion pressure:** There is economic pressure to convert historic farmland areas to housing and other development, especially with the need for more housing in the region.

**Environmental changes:** Water scarcity, extreme heat, air quality, and other impacts from climate change will make farming more challenging and affect long-term crop patterns. Poor air quality during fires is an additional health burden.

**Regulatory environment:** Regulatory requirements are complicated, changing, and a burden, especially on small farmers.

**Food distribution and sourcing constraints:** Various food distribution and marketing practices can make sourcing local food challenging for institutions, farmers, and distributors, as well as other consumers.

**Supply chain disruption:** The pandemic has impacted supply chain channels and markets. Smaller-scale farmers are more vulnerable to market disruption.

**Workforce needs:** The workforce needs upskilling to remain relevant and competitive, given pervasive skills gaps and the acceleration of technology adoption in the agriculture sector.

**Access to capital and technical assistance:** Funding assistance is difficult to access and the application process is arduous for small farmers. Technical assistance programs are needed to provide support.

**Lack of land use policy and planning alignment:** Planning documents, such as city and county General Plans, are often out of date and do not align with current priorities that would support farming viability in today's environment.<sup>14</sup>

**Regional collaboration on cross-cutting issues:** Many issues farmers face are regional, but there are few mechanisms for coordination and collaboration on shared priorities.

There is a lack of understanding of the quantitative value of agriculture beyond food production, such as open space and carbon sequestration. There isn't good information that can easily help people understand the value of ag beyond the food production aspect. If more people understood that, it would support the preservation of agricultural land. (CROP/RUCS planning session, SACOG).

<sup>14</sup> An assessment of local planning documents by the U.C Davis Spring 2021 CRD 200 class found many gaps in local plans.

Finally, we found numerous emerging opportunities based on current conditions, policies, and programs.

### Emerging Opportunities for Action

**Supportive public policies and practices:** The pandemic has brought an increased focus on the food system and the need to strengthen supply chains; increase access to locally grown foods; support local growers, distributors, processors, and businesses; and align policies to support the food system. These include: increased institutional procurement, such as farm to school, farm to hospital, and local purchasing by local governments; land use policies that protect agriculture and natural resources; and policies that support the health and wellbeing of workers.

**New state and federal resources:** There are historic levels of investment forthcoming. Examples include: new food incubator programs that help farmers get products to new markets; expanded existing programs like SWEEP; and multiple programs addressing climate change impacts, including the California Climate Investment Plan. The Connected Capital Area Broadband Consortium is assisting communities and institutions on broadband infrastructure and access for rural connectivity. Effective coordination and capacity building will be needed to leverage these opportunities.

**Urban agriculture innovations:** The expanding urban agriculture scene - urban farms, community gardens, farm stands, Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), farmers markets, and mobile markets - can help residents see the connection between agriculture, eating in season, and the overall importance of agriculture in the region. These opportunities also increase healthy food access, especially in underserved neighborhoods.

**Conservation easements and other models:** The SACOG Coordinated Regional Opportunities Program (CROP) project can help identify and advance successful models and tools for working landscapes and revenue generation to keep agriculture in production. This and other efforts will foster opportunities to build upon models, such as conservation easements, ecosystem services, and community land trusts that will help keep land in agriculture and increase land access for next generation farmers.

**Best practice models:** Models such as food hubs will build the capacity of farmers to access local markets and increase institutional procurement. Some examples include: Capay Valley Farm Shop, Next Generation Foods, SPORK Food Hub, and the planned Yolo Food Hub. Adoption of sustainable farming practices such as regenerative agriculture will increase the sustainability of agriculture and help farms adapt to climate change impacts.

**Marketing programs:** Programs such as PlacerGROWN, Yolo Grown, Capay Valley Grown, Delta Grown, Apple Hill, Farm to Fork, and others generate great economic impact for the region through agritourism and food and agriculture-related experiences. These efforts increase the economic viability of food and agriculture operations.

**Foods of the future:** The Sacramento region, long a hub for value-added food processing, is becoming a location for new food products and companies. Expanded food production/processing increases the market for local crops.

**Regional coordination/coalition building:** Increased regional coordination and robust coalitions are needed to coalesce around regional needs and spur policy action.



## CASE STUDY

Capay Valley Farm Shop is a farmer and community-owned food hub and for-profit social enterprise in Yolo County in which 40 farms and ranches work together to get their products to market. A large amount of the food grown for the Farm Shop goes to the Bay Area, however, there is great interest



among farmers to sell the produce closer to home and serve the region. A Yolo Food Hub is being developed that will bring partners together, building on the work of the Farm Shop, and create processing capacity to serve the region

better. Yolo County's Board of Supervisors is investing in the hub as a transformative food system initiative. Additional funding is being sought as part of the regional Prosperity Strategy.

Thomas Nelson,  
Kitchen Table Advisors





## 2 Strategic Focus Area: Environmental Sustainability

*Environmental sustainability cuts across the entire food system. Climate change and development pressures resulting in the conversion of agricultural land have serious implications for the viability of the region's crops, water resources, soil health, supply chains, workforce, and much more. Increased resilience must occur through regenerative and climate-smart agriculture policies, investments, and practices. The region must increase local procurement and local market channels; adopt agricultural technologies; and encourage easements and other ecosystem mechanisms. The region must also develop infrastructure, capacity, and sustainable funding streams to support food recovery strategies. A coordinated approach and coalitions will increase the resilience of the food system.*

*"What are we doing to ensure we have local food production? What are we doing to ensure our local environment is restored and our soil is healthy for future generations? We need investment to train entrepreneurs and current and future employees in the skills and knowledge that ensure that this region is able to feed itself, improve health outcomes, increase biodiversity, sequester more carbon, and be a thriving place to live and work."*

Mary Kimball, Center for Land-Based Learning

Through stakeholder engagement, community surveys, research, and data analysis Valley Vision developed the following key action priorities to support environmental sustainability in the Greater Sacramento region.





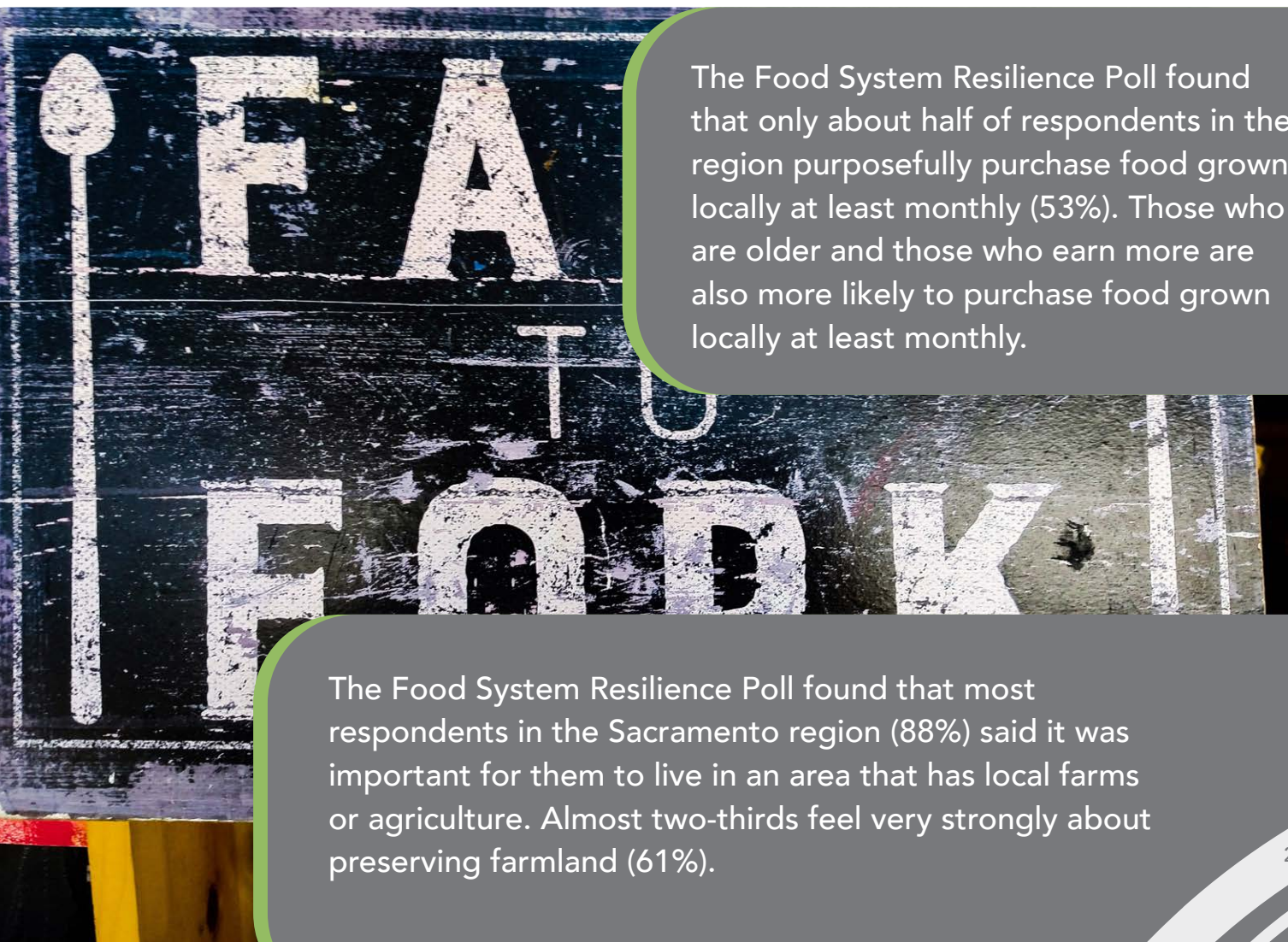
## Regional Action Plan Priorities for Environmental Sustainability

**Conservation Easements:** Develop a strategy to increase Conservation Easements consistent with conservation and development plans so that the land is preserved and farmers have the financial benefits of farming without the pressure to develop. Increase funding to implement more easements; establish the value of ecosystem services or the benefits that farming provides to the environment, such as carbon capture, improved water quality and supply, improved biodiversity and habitat, and flood and disease control. Explore emerging models such as community land trusts.

**Soil Health:** Support adoption of regenerative agricultural practices to improve soil health and water efficiencies. Transition to compost, natural fertilizers, and other practices, such as crop rotation, to reduce reliance on ammonia and nitrogen-based fertilizers. Seek additional resources to assist farmers.

**Food Recovery Capacity and Facilities:** Identify a sustainable funding stream to implement California SB 1383, a state law which requires the recovery of 20% of edible food by 2025 that would otherwise go to landfills. Funding is needed to cover food recovery and waste reduction operating costs and capital expenditures such as refrigerated trucks, warehouse space, and refrigeration. Options may include incentivizing local jurisdictions to include funding for food recovery through solid waste fees and rate structures.

Valley Vision assessed regional assets and challenges to address key action priorities that support environmental sustainability. The following themes emerged.



The Food System Resilience Poll found that only about half of respondents in the region purposefully purchase food grown locally at least monthly (53%). Those who are older and those who earn more are also more likely to purchase food grown locally at least monthly.

The Food System Resilience Poll found that most respondents in the Sacramento region (88%) said it was important for them to live in an area that has local farms or agriculture. Almost two-thirds feel very strongly about preserving farmland (61%).



## Regional Assets to Support Action Priorities

**There are many resources to help farmers, ranchers, food producers, and others in the food system transition to sustainable practices.** The California Climate Investment program is a statewide initiative that allocates Cap and Trade dollars to various state agencies. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) is developing an updated state climate investment plan that includes opportunities for programs such as healthy soils, food waste prevention, Sustainable Ag Lands Conservation (SALC), energy efficiency and solar, SWEEP (State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program), and more. Nonprofits such as the California Rangeland Trust are providing research and financial resources that many local ranchers are using toward habitat improvement and setting up easements. The California Rice Commission is a leader in environmental sustainability. The Business Environmental Resource Center (BERC) assists businesses across the region to adopt environmentally friendly practices. UC Davis is a leader in sustainable agriculture and the region's AgTech entrepreneurs are developing tools to support an environmentally sustainable food system.

**Food producers are close to major markets, and there is a demand for local food.** The region has numerous access points for food producers, such as farmers markets, urban food stands, food distributors, grocery stores, and restaurants. Some schools and hospitals are sourcing more food products locally. New local distribution methods, including mobile farmers market trucks, are emerging. As the number of food hubs increases in the region, the capacity for local processing, packaging, and distribution also will increase. The City of Sacramento is working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and USDA to create three Food-Anchored Resiliency Hubs in disadvantaged neighborhoods which could be a strong model of sustainability practices along with increased food access.

**Several local food recovery and gleaning programs operate in the region.** These programs help reduce food waste, methane emissions, and food insecurity and will help the region meet the goals of SB 1383. Some examples include: [Yolo Food Bank's Edible Food Recovery Program](#), [find out farms](#), [Community Harvest of Davis](#), [Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services](#), and [Harvest Sacramento](#). Several residents and food producers use [AmpleHarvest.org](#) to donate surplus produce to local food banks and pantries.

**There is a strong demand for local food and gardening activities, and the region has a network of nonprofits to support it.** Many stakeholders and community members are committed to a sustainable food system. There is a strong informal network of urban gardeners and mutual aid networks. There is also enthusiasm for small-scale and local agriculture, including backyard gardening, composting, and community gardens. Some examples of organizations and farms that provide gardening, composting, and related classes include: Soil Born Farms, Yisrael Family Urban Farm, Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services, UCCE Master Gardeners of Sacramento and Placer County, and the Fair Oaks Horticulture Center. The city of Sacramento has the region's largest community garden program.

**There is moderate agricultural land conversion.** Agricultural lands provide essential ecosystem services and quality of life amenities in addition to crop production. Agricultural lands help capture carbon, preserve wildlife habitat and biodiversity, support flood control, and emit fewer greenhouse gases than urban areas of the same size. While the information on the level of agriculture land conversion is not up to date, most recent data indicates the levels are relatively moderate. Pressure for conversion could increase with the strong demand for increased housing production and given the large amount of farm and ranch lands that developers are holding for future growth.



## Regional Challenges to Advancing Action Priorities

**Water access and availability:** The drought has greatly affected surface and groundwater levels, and well levels are declining. Small farmers are less likely to have access to lower basins of groundwater through their wells, and there is no system for equitable distribution of water for these farmers.

**Climate change adaptation and mitigation:** Crop adjustment, extreme heat, poor air quality, and water scarcity are ongoing challenges, and efforts to adapt and respond are siloed. It will be costly to manage this process, and farmers need resources along with capacity support to be able to access needed resources and implement needed changes.

**Calculating the value of farms to include ecosystem services:** The value that farmers provide to the environment, such as carbon capture and nutrient density, are not currently well quantified or understood. Farmers should be rewarded for adopting practices that support these “ecosystem services” or environmental benefits that help reduce greenhouse gases, improve soil health and water retention, support biodiversity, and increase pollination.

**Food waste and community composting:** About 40% of food is thrown away along the supply chain. When that food is thrown into landfills instead of composted or recovered, methane gas is produced. There are limited composting facilities in the region. Most jurisdictions are not ready for mandated food recovery and waste requirements (like SB 1383, which will come into effect in 2022, with targets for edible food recovery by 2025). A sustainable funding stream is needed to cover local government operating costs and capital expenditures.

**Local procurement and market channels:** Food grown in the region is mostly exported to other areas, while most food consumed locally comes from outside the region.

**Transitioning from traditional to regenerative agriculture:** Practices such as cover cropping, reducing tilling, and spreading compost reduce the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides and improve soil health. It will require coalitions and organized effort and investment to support this transition.

**Cosmetic restrictions on produce:** Produce that is deemed “imperfect” because it is not uniform or attractive contributes to food waste and is another lost resource for reducing food insecurity. This challenge is related to a cultural and marketing norm.



The Food System Resilience Poll found that 83% of residents were very concerned or somewhat concerned about the impact of climate change on regional food production. Those who are younger (18 to 34 years old) were most likely to be concerned.





More than half of the Food System Resilience Poll respondents (52%) said they throw away food at least occasionally. More than three-fourths (78%) of poll respondents said they are willing to pay at least one dollar, and almost half (49%) said they are willing to pay at least \$5 through their garbage or utility bills to support food recovery programs.

Finally, we found numerous instances of emerging opportunities based on current conditions, policies, and programs.

### Emerging Opportunities for Action

**State and federal resources:** Resources such as the Cal Recycle Food Waste Prevention and Recovery Program, the Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation Program (SALC), Air District incentives, and USDA's Conservation Reserve Program are examples of resources that can assist the region to meet food waste recovery goals; preserve agricultural land for food production and capture the benefits of ecosystem services; and support the transition to regenerative agriculture. These can include: providing the infrastructure to handle significantly increased levels of food (cold storage, refrigerated trucks, etc.), reduce food waste, and promote sustainable practices.

**Precision agriculture and improved irrigation technologies and practices:** Technological tools and adapted practices can reduce water and energy consumption; reduce air and water pollution associated with agriculture; and improve soil health. Incentives will help with adoption. Collaboration with UC Davis and the region's network of AgTech entrepreneurs, including through the AgStart Incubator, will facilitate the adoption of these technologies, which also require broadband as an enabling technology.

**Conservation easements:** Easements and other tools offer effective and flexible protection of agricultural lands for farmers and ranchers. With easements, the land is preserved and farmers and ranchers can continue operations without pressure to develop. This is often of interest to farmers and ranchers but more funding resources are needed.

**Partnerships:** Industry, farmer/rancher, and nonprofit groups including environmental organizations are successfully partnering to address shared challenges and pursue solutions. Examples include Delta Protection Commission's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, the California Rangeland Trust's sustainability initiatives with local ranchers, and the California Rice Commission's partnerships with farmers and environmental organizations on conserving water resources and providing habitat for flyways.

## CASE STUDY

Yolo Food Bank (YFB) recognized several years ago that Senate Bill 1383 edible food recovery mandates represented an unparalleled strategic opportunity to address both hunger and sustainability. Within two years, YFB had increased its countywide SB 1383 edible food recovery and distribution program from two million to six million pounds diverted from the landfill to kitchen tables per year. The success of the program enabled and sustained YFB's swift and robust pandemic food assistance response. However, the program's future now is in jeopardy, as government pandemic relief funding applicable to program costs has ceased, and local public funds have not yet been identified to support the effort.

Michael Bisch  
Yolo Food Bank







Picture of Sacramento City Unified School District Central Kitchen

### 3 Strategic Focus Area: Food Economy

The region is well-positioned to grow an innovative food economy by leveraging the purchasing power of our institutions, supporting next-generation food entrepreneurs, and increasing new business opportunities. Successful food economy growth will capture additional value beyond the field and keep food and dollars circulating in the region to create the food products of the future. The region will likely continue to experience ongoing levels of disruption across the food system, but with new resources, policy attention, and collaboration, we have strong opportunities to build on our many assets. The opportunities within the region's food economy can be a pathway to jobs and economic opportunity, food security, and health for all.

*"There is a real need for accessible funding for startup capital, space to produce products, and market access. We need to make it easier for small food entrepreneurs to start off and gain resources to help them grow. People can make the leap from dreaming about starting a food business to implementing it - it takes a network"*

Sam Greenlee, Alchemist CDC



Through stakeholder engagement, community surveys, research, and data analysis Valley Vision developed the following key action priorities to support the food economy in the Greater Sacramento region.



## Regional Action Plan Priorities for Food Economy

**Institutional Procurement:** Organize and expand institutional purchasing and local procurement agreements and partnerships with schools, hospitals, governments, event centers, and others to serve health-promoting, locally grown foods. Restructure the USDA school nutrition funding program to promote local purchasing and Farm to School Programs.

**Food Hub/Food System Infrastructure Funding:** Invest in a network of hubs and other food system infrastructure across the region to connect local growers to local institutions and other markets and increase farmer capacity. These include: incubators, public markets, school central kitchens, storage and processing facilities, community kitchens and meat processing facilities.

**Urban Agriculture Projects:** Expand urban agriculture, such as urban farms, farmers markets, farm stands, mobile markets, community compost hubs, Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), and nurseries to increase access to fresh and nutritious produce/products. Explore new enterprise models.

**Assistance for Small Farmers/Food Entrepreneurs:** Provide technical, financial, and other support to small farmers and food entrepreneurs, especially BIPOC, economically disadvantaged, small-enterprise, and other diverse farmers and entrepreneurs.

Valley Vision assessed regional assets and challenges to address key action priorities that support the food economy. The following themes emerged.

### Regional Assets to Support Action Priorities

**Institutional procurement is growing in the region.** Several strong examples show the potential for other institutions to adopt local procurement strategies. Leaders include Sacramento City Unified School District which has a new state of the art Central Kitchen for scratch cooking and a large warehousing facility; UC Davis Health which has greatly scaled-up local purchasing from sustainable food farms, ranches, and producers and is dedicated to healthy food as medicine; Davis and Winters Farm to School Programs; and the Golden 1 Center which has been a leader in developing regional supply chains. Sacramento City Unified School District is exploring partnerships with UC Davis Health and others for joint procurement to strengthen purchasing power.

**There is an emerging network of food hubs that can support local purchasing and processing.** The region has several food distribution companies that serve many types of clients, work with local growers and food producers, and support Farm to Fork efforts. Many grocery stores, restaurants, and institutions have good direct partnerships with farmers. However, food hubs help support the capacity of smaller farmers to participate, aggregate food at the right levels, and connect with new customers and markets more efficiently. Several food hubs are emerging out of urban agriculture programs and farm to school partnerships, such as Fiery Ginger Farms and Center for Land-Based Learning in West Sacramento, and a nonprofit food hub partnership is moving forward in Yolo County with support from the County.

**There are resources for food and agriculture entrepreneurs.** UC Davis has programs like [Venture Catalyst](#) that partner with labs and incubators, such as [AgStart](#) and the CoLaborator, to build capacity and help companies to grow. Nonprofits such as [Alchemist CDC](#) and [Center for Land-Based Learning](#) have incubators for small business farmers and food entrepreneurs, and several such as [CAFE](#), [Kitchen Table Advisors](#), [California Capital](#), [BERC](#), and the [SBDC](#) provide business planning and financial assistance.

## Regional Assets to Support Action Priorities

**The region's Farm to Fork identity and branding is strong and agritourism is an economic driver.**

Agritourism offered a bright spot during the pandemic and the overall Farm to Fork brand is a continuing opportunity to build support for local sourcing and experiences.

**CalFresh increases demand for local food and products.** A network of jurisdictions and nonprofit partners is working to expand CalFresh enrollment and increase the purchasing power of the benefit, including at farmers markets and retail establishments. **\$146 million is lost to the region due to the under-enrollment of eligible residents.**

**The Prosperity Strategy's food and agriculture cluster initiatives:** Valley Vision is working with the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources and many partners including nonprofits, local jurisdictions, and food and agriculture businesses to catalyze federal and state funding for priority projects including food hubs and markets, a Food/Ag/Health Innovation Institute, food system financing, and a Smart Farm through UC Davis.

**Local and regional grocery stores provide potential market entry points for new products.** Local grocery store chains and markets such as Nugget Markets, Raley's, and the co-ops, along with the Golden 1 Arena, feature produce, food, and beverage products from local growers and producers and are supportive of market testing for these businesses.

## Regional Challenges to Advancing Action Priorities

**Funding and capacity for food system infrastructure and operations:** Food system infrastructure includes food hubs, food incubators, school central kitchens, commercial shared kitchens, public markets, farmers markets, warehouses, and storage facilities. These projects are often costly and need public funding. They also require dedicated capacity and resources to bring to fruition and take a long time to move through the pipeline. It is difficult for farms, producers, food banks, schools, and nonprofits to develop and nurture projects, including fundraising, while trying to serve their missions.

**Lack of local market connections:** Farmers - especially smaller farmers - need assistance to connect with market opportunities, including for institutional procurement which requires large scale and consistent amounts of food to meet large scale needs. They also need capacity building and technical assistance for market planning, budgeting, food safety compliance, and market aggregation to reach the needed scale. A network of food hubs would help address this challenge. SACOG's numerous food hub studies documented the market feasibility and need for local food hubs.

**Federal requirements for school purchasing:** USDA's commodity food program supplements school district food programs with food purchased by the federal government, but this limits the ability for local purchasing and can be out of alignment with local priorities. A priority is to secure a policy change from USDA for "Cash in Lieu of Commodities."





## Regional Challenges to Advancing Action Priorities

**Cost prioritized over local sourcing/health benefits:** Lack of scale puts small farmers at a disadvantage for institutional purchases and contracts with schools, hospitals, and other institutions. Large companies – many from outside the region – have competitive pricing advantages. Pricing contracts which award bids for lower costs rather than other benefits (such as healthier foods and buying local) limit the market opportunity for smaller, local growers and food producers. Most jurisdictions and other food purchasers do not have local sourcing criteria.

**Limited resources and support for many small farms and food entrepreneurs:** Access to capital, land, facilities, cold and dry storage, equipment, trucking, and more is needed for small farms and food-related businesses to produce, process, and distribute products locally. These resources are often allocated to or owned by larger, well-resourced businesses. The challenges in accessing these resources are even more pronounced for BIPOC farmers and businesses.

**Lack of alignment between state, county, and city requirements on permitting of food services:** Policy disconnects among jurisdictions present barriers to innovation and scaling, hindering potential business growth.

**Farm to Fork brand is not equally embraced:** While 82% of respondents think Farm to Fork is a positive brand, it is rated more positively by small-town/rural (89%) and suburban (84%) residents compared to urban residents (77%), according to the Food System Resilience Poll (other residents stated they were not sure). Those who are AAPI (99.6%), Black/AAs (96%), and white (95.7%) are more likely to identify Farm to Fork as a positive brand for the region, compared to Latinos (86.5%).

Finally, we found numerous emerging opportunities based on current conditions, policies, and programs.

## Emerging Opportunities for Action

**Joint sourcing and procurement:** Institutional partnerships to source food will increase market power, improve control over supply chains, achieve economies of scale, lower costs, and improve access to local healthy foods. For example, Sacramento City Unified School District Nutrition Services is working with UC Davis Health to serve as a vendor for the health system. Opportunities to partner and scale across the region must be further explored.

**An increase in the number of food hubs:** Food hubs can help organize small businesses and growers, help aggregate food, and help manage the market connections. Expansion of these networks will have far-reaching benefits for local farmers, ranchers, and food producers, as well as communities.

**Support for models and partnerships to grow entrepreneurs:** Several models and pilots underway in the region are a good foundation to grow food and agriculture entrepreneurs. Pilots such as [Growing the Table](#) in Sacramento were successful in purchasing from BIPOC producers for the community. The Alchemist CDC food incubator program has helped launch several new businesses and the Center for Land-Based Learning's Farm Academy and incubator has helped launch several new farming enterprises. Several jurisdictions have economic development priorities to support the growth of the food and agriculture cluster which are showing success.

**New state and federal resources.** New resources will support many of the region's priorities including expansion of Farm to School programs, food hubs and incubators, inclusive entrepreneurship innovation projects, and more. A mechanism is needed to ensure the region is aligned and coordinated to be able to access these resources.

## CASE STUDY

Sacramento City Unified School District: "The Central Kitchen Farm to School program has a huge economic impact, but it all started with one farmer. Over time, we found more growers and stuck to one grower per product because there are strict regulations around procurement. Small farmers are not going to do formal bids which are required for federal programs. We have to keep the produce under the small purchasing threshold. Some of the challenges have been - where are our farmers, who are they, and are they willing to do business with a school district? It takes a lot of time to create a local food purchasing program and system. We started several years ago with two trucks and now we have thirteen. We had a vacant warehouse with no food, and we started buying our own food directly from farmers and local distributors. Today, we buy all of our food directly, and with our savings we are able to buy better quality fresh foods for our students. The warehouse now supports our beautiful new Central Kitchen, with funding provided by Measure R, passed by the residents in 2012. Pre-pandemic, the District served 43,000 meals a day – or 8 million meals in a year. We have infrastructure issues at our 80 school sites, also a challenge, and need to ensure they can create fresh healthy meals and have the equipment to make higher quality food more than in the past. We had to pivot during the pandemic, to reach our children and families with healthy meals, and our Central Kitchen was a great resource. We are exploring being a vendor for UC Davis Health, to strengthen our joint purchasing power."

Diana Flores, Director, Nutrition Services,  
Sacramento City Unified School District.



Picture of Sacramento  
City Unified School  
District Central Kitchen





Picture of Alchemist Kitchen Entrepreneurs

## 4 Strategic Focus Area: Careers in Food and Agriculture

Growing and maintaining careers in the food and agriculture cluster is foundational to building a thriving food economy in the region. New technologies and growing opportunities in agrifood tech innovation can invite new entrants but we must increase awareness of these workforce opportunities; support the development of and investment in pathways, apprenticeships, youth programs, and programs for high-barrier adults, veterans, refugees, and immigrants; and ensure protective policies for frontline workers.

*"We have to find a way to reach youth before they reach the criminal in-justice system - even during (probation), and we have to show them we care. I can't watch these youngsters drown and not do anything about that. Growing food is a full-time job. Caring for people is a lifetime commitment."*

Alfred Melbourne, Hunkpapa Lakota, Three Sisters Gardens

Through stakeholder engagement, community surveys, research, and data analysis Valley Vision developed the following key action priorities to support careers in food and agriculture in the Greater Sacramento region.



Picture of the International Rescue Committee, New Roots Farm



# Regional Action Plan Priorities for Careers in Food and Agriculture

**Apprenticeships:** Invest in apprenticeship programs to grow the next generation of farm managers and skilled food and beverage manufacturing workers.

**Youth Workforce Development:** Increase opportunities for youth agriculture training, including career awareness and career readiness programs.

**Workforce Development/Upskilling:** Support long-term career pipeline investments and technical assistance for generational farmers, farm managers, and food processors to ensure the workforce is resilient and resourced to weather economic and supply chain disruptions. Address health status concerns and immigration challenges.

**AgTech Workforce Skills:** Support development of agrifood tech workforce skills training to address emerging skills gaps in high-demand occupations across the spectrum of the food and agriculture industry cluster.

**Immigrant and Refugee Workforce Development:** Fund immigrant and refugee settlement groups and adult education organizations to help train workers to meet the food and agriculture skills gaps in the region and provide pathways to opportunity.

**Local Hiring Policies:** Encourage businesses to hire locally to ensure there are investments and opportunities for residents in the surrounding community.

Valley Vision assessed regional assets and challenges to address key action priorities that support careers in food and agriculture. The following themes emerged.

## Regional Assets to Support Action Priorities

**The food and agriculture cluster is growing and diversifying, especially as technology and innovation accelerate.** There are significant career pathways in food and agriculture and associated occupations. High-demand occupations and skill areas include sales and marketing; equipment inspections, maintenance, and repairs; manufacturing technicians; robotics; drone operations; soil quality, pest management, and water management technicians; animal sciences; testing and lab technicians; food and nutrition services; logistics; and food and agricultural technologies. Many of these technical skills can be applied to other sectors of the economy, as well.

**New technologies are paving the way for additional career opportunities,** with the increased adoption of agricultural and food-related technologies (agrifood tech) by farmers, companies, and institutions. Opportunities include precision farming which enables farmers to increase profitability, safety, and sustainability through lower use of inputs such as water, energy, and pesticides, while using technologies to improve soil and crop health, food safety, and efficiency of supply chains. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Internet of Things (IoT) applications are increasing. These opportunities show the changing face of agriculture.

Picture of  
Twin Peaks Orchards,  
Placer County



## Regional Assets to Support Action Priorities

### **The region is home to several strong food and agriculture apprenticeship and workforce programs**

for youth and aspiring farmers and food entrepreneurs that introduce people to the variety of careers and opportunities in the food system. Programs include: Alchemist CDC food entrepreneur training program; the Center for Land-based Learning farm apprenticeship and incubator programs; High School CTE (career technical education) programs, including the Woodland High School/Woodland Community College Ptech Program, Future Farmer of America (FFA), other Community College career pathways programs in Agriculture, Water and Environmental Technologies (AgWET) and Manufacturing; and urban agriculture programs such as Soil Born Farms, Yisrael Family Urban Farms, Three Sisters Gardens, and Green Tech Education.

### **The Sacramento Region is home to diverse agriculture and agrifood tech innovators that are supporting cluster growth.**

UC Davis is one of the world's leading agricultural and food sustainability institutions, supporting an innovation cluster that includes many collaborative labs, incubators, and programs that are catalyzing job growth and providing internship and pathway opportunities. This innovation ecosystem is helping farms, food and beverage manufacturing firms, retailers, and distributors with the adoption of new technologies.

## Regional Challenges to Advancing Action Priorities

**Career awareness and perception:** Food and agricultural jobs are often unappealing, stigmatized, higher risk, or not well understood. Many jobs are low-paying and do not have opportunities for advancement.

**The workforce is aging:** the average age of an experienced farmer is 57.5 years old and the average skilled manufacturer (food processing) is 56 years old.

**There is a known labor shortage:** The systemic workforce shortage is exacerbated by the pandemic, immigration laws, enduring skill gaps, and competition for workers. The food-related hospitality and tourism sector has been particularly hard hit.

**The pathway to farming careers can be long:** Training programs might last for three years but it takes a longer commitment, up to 15 years (or more), to make a Farm Manager.

**There is a lack of diversity in the career field:** The current lack of diversity makes it harder to attract up-and-coming workers of diverse backgrounds into the food and agriculture sector.

**Market competition:** Top agricultural students in our community college and university systems are often recruited out of the region.

**Food and agriculture workers are frontline workers who risk severe health challenges:** Farmworkers, in particular, have suffered greatly from environmental challenges like extreme heat and poor air quality (in addition to chronic challenges such as safe housing and working conditions); frontline workers in food processing, distribution, retail, and food prep, and restaurants also face pandemic-related health challenges including virus and mental health risks.



Finally, we found numerous emerging opportunities based on current conditions, policies, and programs.

### Emerging Opportunities for Action

**Workforce development/talent retention:** Long-term investment into K-12, community college, and higher education career pathways programs are needed to meet skills gaps and raise youth career awareness. Similarly, directing resources to apprenticeship programs for next-generation farmers and food producers, as well as programs to support immigrant and refugee settlement groups and adults with high barriers to employment would help address labor and skills shortages. Short-term solutions such as On the Job Training (OJT) resources are needed, along with effective branding and marketing. New state and federal programs and resources should be leveraged for food and agriculture workforce development.

**Evolving technology and digital skills:** Investing in technology and STEM skills can provide upskilling opportunities to help current workers move out of lower-wage/lower skill/repetitive jobs and into higher-skill pathways.

**Emerging business models:** Models like Controlled Environment Ag (CEA), including vertical and indoor farming, aquaponics, and urban agriculture can create additional jobs and year-round procurement opportunities for locally grown food.

**Food/agriculture/health nexus:** Increased understanding and partnership of food, agriculture, and health partners will provide a competitive advantage and increase the potential for new jobs and skills.

**Shift to higher-value specialty crops:** Responding to market demand and climate changes with a shift to higher-value specialty crops can strengthen the sustainability of the sector, increase local markets, and create new workforce opportunities.

## CASE STUDY

“The Center for Land Based Learning’s apprenticeship program is a strength for the region. Training incumbent workers to be farm managers has been overlooked for far too long. It’s encouraging to see farm workers be brought into management positions and be involved in the legacy they spent a lifetime working towards. There is a huge opportunity to capitalize on the knowledge these folks already have and it allows them to grow their careers and acquire new leadership skills and management.”

Sri Sethuratnam, Center for Land Based Learning



Picture of  
Three Sisters Gardens





Picture of Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services food distribution

## 5 Strategic Focus Area 5: Food Security and Healthy Food Access

Despite its reputation as America's Farm to Fork Capital, the region suffers from extensive food insecurity and inequitable access to nutritious, healthy, and culturally appropriate foods. While the pandemic catalyzed collaboration among food system partners, it also greatly challenged the capacity of the emergency food system, school districts, and others to meet needs. Securing sustainable sources of funding for food banks and supporting nonprofits is essential to ensure that everyone has access to fresh, healthy, and local food. With increased CalFresh enrollment and education, creative and adaptable local distribution, and continued collaboration, the region can help bridge the existing gap between all our farms and all our forks.

*"Food Insecurity is a pandemic in itself. The pandemic led to a partnership between the Sacramento Food Bank, Sacramento City Unified School District, Paratransit, local restaurants, and nonprofits that was effective. There is a lot of work we need to do together. The demand for food resources has exploded and will continue to be in high demand. The emergency food system's partner agencies have suffered, including through the loss of volunteer workers. The Food Bank is focused on the system that we are in now, and how we navigate the future demand and challenges that lie ahead. It will take an enormous investment and all of us working together. The distribution of food is huge. It's important we support the partnerships and infrastructure needed to get food to people across the region. We're exploring new partnerships - the door is wide open."*

Blake Young, Sacramento Food Bank, and Family Services

Through stakeholder engagement, community surveys, research, and data analysis Valley Vision developed the following key action priorities to support food security and healthy food access in the Greater Sacramento region.



## Regional Action Plan Priorities for Food Security and Healthy Food Access

**Sustainable Funding for Food Banks/Emergency Food System:** Provide sustainable, multi-year funding to food banks. Consistent and sustainable funding will reduce reliance on volunteers who are subject to high turnover; expand infrastructure and facilities required to meet the needs of an increasing number of food insecure residents; and support administrative costs to allow for additional fundraising and systems management.

**CalFresh Enrollment:** Increase state resources for counties to enroll more CalFresh (SNAP) eligible residents, including higher education students. Results will improve food and nutrition security; increase consumer purchasing power and revenues for growers and food establishments; and keep food dollars in the local economy.

**Food Security Resources:** Expand the capacity to use CalFresh at farmers markets across the region. This will require putting in place the infrastructure needed for vendors to be able to accept the benefits, and providing public funding to support staff, administrative, and other programmatic costs.

**Market Match Programs:** Increase access to new state Nutrition Incentive Program (CalNIP) and federal Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) funding for expanded “Market Match” programs which match CalFresh benefits at farmers markets, grocery stores and other establishments. These match programs provide extra funding to CalFresh participants for purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables.

**Local Market Support for Underserved Communities:** Support local markets and producers that can reach food insecure populations, such as farmers markets, mobile farmers market trucks, farm stands, and portable food solutions.

**Local Market Capacity:** Create an online local marketplace for excess products from growers, farmers markets, and restaurants that can bolster food recovery initiatives.

Valley Vision assessed regional assets and challenges to address key action priorities that support food security and healthy food access. The following themes emerged.

### Regional Assets to Support Action Priorities

**The food banks have met the COVID-19 challenge.** The food banks rapidly scaled up operations and shifted nearly all aspects of their business practices to meet the hugely expanded needs of the food insecure. They continue to innovate.

**Institutional procurement keeps the money for food purchasing local and increases healthy food access.** There are several successful programs including Sacramento City Unified School District’s Nutrition Services efforts, which include a new Central Kitchen and preparation of 43,000 healthy meals a day; Winters School District and Davis School District which procures from local farmers; and UC Davis Health, which has greatly increased its percentage of locally sourced foods and expanded its focus on food as medicine.

*“We had to get innovative in the COVID-19 pandemic. When school was no longer in person, we partnered with several schools to organize ‘bus runs’ where we delivered food at a number of bus stops.”*

Wendy David, Bread and Broth, El Dorado County First 5



## Regional Assets to Support Action Priorities

**Multiple collaborative efforts that bring food system partners together and strengthen food access and the emergency food system.** Many collaborative efforts resulted from the pandemic and the partnerships formed have remained strong. Some examples include: Placer County Food Stakeholder Meeting (Health Education Council), the city of Sacramento Food Justice Task Force and bi-weekly Food Access calls, and Yolo County Nutrition Action Partnership (CNAP). Additionally, restaurants have partnered with a wide network of organizations to prepare meals for the food insecure through programs like Great Plates for seniors and the Family Meal program for school children and families. Local grocery stores have provided millions of dollars of product to food banks through food rescue programs and programs. The grocery stores are also engaged with Farm to School Programs and food education programs.

**Continued efforts to increase CalFresh enrollment across the region.** For example, Yolo County has a CalFresh support employee at the UC Davis pantry to help students apply for CalFresh and a county-wide 211 service that helps residents find food distribution centers. Placer County created a QR code for CalFresh applications that can be placed on mailers, newsletters, etc., which allows residents to fill out the application at their convenience.

**Mobile markets, drive-up distributions, and food box delivery services help reach underserved areas** that do not have access to healthy fresh food. Variations of this model have been supported by a wide range of interests, including all the food banks in the region, the West Sacramento urban farms, Health Education Council, First 5 El Dorado, the health systems, corporate sponsors, and others.

**Direct access to healthy fresh produce from local food producers.** There are many ways to buy fresh food from local growers through farm stands, urban farms, pick-your-own farms, etc. Some farms, such as Three Sisters Gardens, hosts a free farm stand once a week during the growing season where they give a box of food to anyone interested and the UC Davis Farm donates 10% of its food to the community.

**CalFresh access and Market Match programs.** Several certified farmers markets in Sacramento and Yolo Counties have the capacity to enable use of CalFresh benefits. These markets can then utilize the Market Match incentive programs which provide additional benefits for CalFresh participants to purchase fresh produce. The farmers market program is operated by Alchemist CDC, through a partnership with the Ecology Center. Yolo County has partnered with Nugget Market and other partners to leverage \$1 million in GusNIP funding for fresh produce access at retail establishments (the program will officially launch in 2022).



The Food System Resilience Poll found that 16% of respondents self-reported that they have low/very low food security. A fourth of respondents participated in some kind of food assistance program in the last 12 months; almost half (47%) used a portion of their economic stimulus money to buy groceries or food that they could not previously afford.



Picture of Yolo Food Bank Distribution

## Regional Challenges to Advancing Action Priorities

**Systemic hunger and food and nutrition insecurity:** Almost 300,000 residents in the Sacramento region are food insecure – 12% of the population. Income/poverty is often a primary cause with individuals forced to choose which of life's basic necessities to direct their limited budgets to. But other contributing factors, such as mobility or isolation, poor transit, and limited retail access must be taken into account.

**Disparities in food insecurity:** Seniors, BIPOC, and households with children are more likely to experience food insecurity. The mapping of food insecurity shows geographic differences that correlate with other indicators such as economic disadvantage. See Appendix 3 for more detail.

**Huge demand/lack of sustainable funding sources for the emergency food system:** Insufficient and unstable funding limits the food banks' abilities to properly support infrastructure and capacity improvements, including staffing and equipment. The challenge has amplified with the huge increases in clients served and food distributed. Lack of knowledge about the level, characteristics, and impacts of food insecurity among local elected officials and the public contributes to the lack of any kind of sustained public investment. The number of food insecure residents increased by 50% (on average) from pre-COVID to present levels and the amount of food distributed increased by more than 40%. (See [Valley Vision's website](#) for more detailed analysis of food insecurity and the emergency food system).

**Low CalFresh enrollment levels:** Only Sacramento County has a high level of CalFresh enrollment; El Dorado, Placer, and Yolo Counties' enrollment rates range from 40-50%. Barriers include long-term lack of adequate state-funded resources for counties; lack of cultural competence in food and support services; and misinformation. Mixed-immigration status families are discouraged from accessing services for fear of deportation. CalFresh is not available to undocumented individuals, DACA recipients, individuals with Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and individuals with a student, work, or tourist visa. There are barriers to enrolling higher ed students, which especially affects Yolo County's CalFresh enrollment levels, related to UC Davis students.

**Labor shortages:** Food banks, pantries, and other emergency food services experienced a huge reduction in volunteers due to COVID-19. In addition to the loss of volunteers, food banks have shortages of paid workers in areas such as logistics, warehousing, and trucking, making it hard for food banks to meet increased demands. Other food and agriculture-related organizations and businesses are facing labor shortages, disrupting supply chains for schools, food distributors, and others.



Finally, we found numerous emerging opportunities based on current conditions, policies, and programs.

### Emerging Opportunities for Action

**State and federal investments for the emergency food system, edible food recovery, CalFresh, and nonprofit partnerships:** New sources and levels of funding approved in the [2021-2022 state budget](#) - including \$3 million for food waste prevention and recovery - will help meet the capacity needs of the emergency food system, such as upgrading infrastructure, equipment, cold storage, food and other supplies, and staff resources. Funding will also be available to help support food recovery efforts, Market Match programs, and the nonprofit sector working to improve food/nutrition security. Continued investments in the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs, Universal School Meals Program, and Farm to Community Food Hubs Program will help ensure people have access to affordable and fresh produce in their communities.

**Increased CalFresh enrollment:** Increased state funding is needed to enable counties to enroll all eligible individuals in CalFresh, which could bring an additional \$146 million into the region, helping to support local farmers, and greatly improving nutrition security for low-income residents. New and expanded initiatives, including the Food For All initiative, will provide food for those who were ineligible due to immigration status. Public funding could expand use of CalFresh at farmers markets through infrastructure support for vendors, also increasing the opportunity for use of Market Match (GusNIP and CalNIP) programs which are dependent on CalFresh benefits being accepted.

**Innovative food distribution models:** New models are proving successful, including mobile farmers markets, produce delivery services, drive-up distributions, and online distribution channels. These models can facilitate access to fresh produce for households who cannot obtain fresh produce easily. One example is the new West Sacramento Mobile Farmers Market operated by the Center for Land-Based Learning.

**Collaboration among nonprofit organizations and elected officials:** Increased collaboration, coordination, and commitment is needed to reduce silos and truly address the challenge of food insecurity across the region. Efforts to work across governmental systems to jointly leverage and/or invest in resources and opportunities is greatly needed.

*El Dorado's library system rapidly transformed to help with food distribution during the pandemic. As a community meeting area and family resource center, libraries are seen as a safe gathering place. The libraries opened up to distribute food when COVID-19 hit, but they also distributed other basic supply items, such as diapers. Since libraries are one of the only services without plexiglass (during COVID), having food distribution there was very natural and comforting.*

Kathi Guerrero, First 5 El Dorado



SCAN ME

Picture of  
CalFresh QR code,  
Placer County

Picture of Placer Food Bank distribution

## CASE STUDY

Elk Grove Food Insecurity Pilot Project: The Food Insecurity Pilot Project is a partnership with Elk Grove Food Bank (EGFB), Dignity Health, and Methodist Hospital. The pilot program began in September 2020 to address and assess the food-related needs of hospital patients. Hospital social workers and patient navigators refer patients to the EGFB if they interact with them and discover they are experiencing food insecurity and/or need more basic needs services. A number of these patients are inpatients, while others are in outpatient skilled care facilities, or are admitted to the emergency department with low acute care levels. The EGFB offers case management to assess the patient's eligibility for services. The services include food deliveries, CalFresh application assistance, food wellness programs, and extra clothing and adult diapers.

Phoua Moua, Manager, Community Health and Outreach, Dignity Health.







## 6 Strategic Focus Area 6: Health and Nutrition

Food and nutrition literacy focuses on linking food-related knowledge and skills with a healthy diet, healthy lifestyle, and positive health outcomes. Throughout the region, nutrition and food education programs aim to build awareness and skills in agriculture, gardening, cooking, and nutrition that encourage local food consumption and healthy eating. In the absence of dedicated funding, the capacity to reach more individuals and have sustained, measurable impact is limited. People who are exposed to food and nutrition literacy - in school, on farms, in their communities, or at home - can substantially reduce their chances of developing health-related conditions connected to diets, such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. There is a need for additional resources to help youth and adults understand how food and nutrition impact health.

*"By the time you get to a hospital, there is a problem - if we could be proactive about nutrition education, that knowledge is empowering to the child and will help keep them healthy over the long-term."*

Chef Santana Diaz, UC Davis Health



Through stakeholder engagement, community surveys, research, and data analysis Valley Vision developed the following key action priorities to support health and nutrition in the Greater Sacramento region.

## Regional Action Plan Priorities for Health and Nutrition

**Food and Nutrition Literacy and Marketing:** Expand food literacy and taste education programs in both K-12 schools and for adults. Bolster marketing and educational efforts for where to access healthy foods and encourage residents to be active consumers of fresh and local produce. Incorporate culturally appropriate education.

**Local Food Access:** Increase healthy food access in communities through expansion of local food access points, including community garden programs, mobile farmers markets, urban farms, CSAs, standing farmers markets, and school gardens. Support development of food-anchored resiliency hubs. Investment is needed for this infrastructure.

**Local Market Support for Underserved Communities:** Support local markets and producers that can reach food insecure populations, such as farmers markets, mobile farmers market trucks, farm stands, and healthy corner store programming. Such efforts establish accessible and affordable pipelines to healthy foods for residents and also benefit local producers.

**Food Access Communications Support:** Expand Yolo County Fresh Text - which connects residents to local food distribution - to the rest of the region (<https://www.211sacramento.org/211/2-1-1-yolo-county-fresh-text/>). Increase 211 partnership with local nonprofits and health systems through a new referral platform – **the Unite Us Portal** - to help connect patients with access to healthy foods and nutrition.

Valley Vision assessed regional assets and challenges to address key action priorities that support health and nutrition. The following themes emerged.

Picture of: Center For Land  
Based Learning

The Food System Resilience Poll found that less than half of respondents in the Sacramento region (46%) have their own garden or access to a garden to grow food. But about half of respondents (53%) think that community gardens in the neighborhood are important. Those who are Black/African American are significantly more likely to think that community gardens are important, followed by Asian American and Pacific Islanders, Latinos, and those who are white.





## Regional Assets to Support Action Priorities

**Collaboration is rich in this field across sectors.** Nonprofit organizations, school districts, food banks, farmers, health systems, restaurants, grocery stores, and others have many existing partnerships and work together to improve food and nutrition literacy. For example: Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) Nutrition Services Department has been an instrumental partner with the Food Literacy Center, the Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services, Soil Born Farms, Fiery Ginger Farm and others. The partners have been critical to embedding nutrition literacy programs within the SCUSD.

**The region has strong programs that expose youth to food and nutrition literacy and agriculture.** Food and nutrition education and culinary programs have increased demand for a wider variety of fresh fruits and vegetables at school meal programs. Examples of programs include: El Dorado County's Ag in the Classroom; 4-H programs; Future Farmers of America clubs in Placer, Davis, El Dorado, Elk Grove, Sacramento Shelton, Pleasant Grove, and others; Farm to School programs (Davis, Sacramento, Winters and others); UC Cooperative Extension programs; urban farms including Soil Born Farms, Center for Land-Based Learning, Yisrael Family Urban Farm, Fiery Ginger Farm, We Grow Urban Farms, and Three Sisters Farm; and career pathway programs in Rocklin, Bryte, Sacramento, Woodland and others. The Food Literacy Center will be operating the new Broccoli Center in collaboration with Floyd Farms to expand food literacy programs in SCUSD schools, using healthy food from the farm.

**Hospitals, community health centers, and colleges place an emphasis on food literacy and its relationship to health.** The region's health systems directly deliver nutrition and education services and also support a wide network of community partners through community benefit programs and other funding.

**Urban agriculture is growing, with increasing demand for farms and community gardens.** The city of West Sacramento has one of the most notable urban agriculture programs, bringing several vacant lots to life through a partnership with the Center for Land-Based Learning. Hansen Garden by CommuniCare offers health and nutrition education and is located in an area that was once a parking lot. Similarly, Three Sisters Gardens in Broderick, West Sacramento sits on a plot of land that was originally intended to be a parking lot. The County of Sacramento provides land for Soil Born Farms, and the City of Sacramento has a large community garden program, with more than 20 gardens and more than 450 plots. Several other cities in the region have community garden programs but they are limited in scale.

**Food and nutrition education programs sent program materials home with students during the COVID-19 pandemic.** This allowed entire families to access food and nutrition literacy materials.

The Food System Resilience Poll reported that stores for traditional/cultural food are geographically accessible to most residents, but 13% still reported having difficulty obtaining cultural or traditional food. One-fourth of those who are AAPI said it is difficult for them to get some of the traditional/cultural foods that they want, compared to only 10% of those who are white. Those who speak a language other than English as their first language or in their household and those with low/very low food security are also more likely to have difficulty.



## Regional Challenges to Advancing Action Priorities

**Lack of sustainable funding sources:** Food literacy, health, and nutrition education programs are not permanently integrated into all schools nor fully funded with long-term, multi-year funding. These efforts cannot survive on volunteers and need to be staffed by trained individuals and experts. Additional training programs, more standardized training, and dedicated support at the state and local levels are needed.

**Need for more food and nutrition education programs for adults:** Without a full understanding of food and nutrition among the entire household, it is difficult to address food literacy, eating habits, and healthy lifestyles.

**Affordability of and access to healthy foods:** A recent USDA study found that 88% of SNAP participants encountered some type of hurdle to a healthy diet. Most notably, 61% reported that the cost of healthy foods was a barrier. Other barriers included the time to prepare meals from scratch, transportation to and distance from a grocery store, and knowledge about healthy foods.<sup>15</sup>

**Lack of sufficient community gardens and local food access:** The number of plots available in community gardens is inadequate to meet demand. Several existing community gardens have long wait lists. It is expensive to prepare and sustain community gardens, given requirements for land, improvements (i.e., soil remediation, irrigation systems), utilities and operating expenses, and staffing.

**Lack of sufficient food literacy measures:** Food literacy and education is a young field. It is sometimes difficult to draw conclusions, inform policy, and find funding without a mechanism to measure the success of implementation and outcomes. However, there are several programs that are showing success in changing eating habits, especially with school children.

**Culturally appropriate education:** Given the diversity of the region's population and the concentration of certain immigrant and refugee populations, there must be greater focus on delivering culturally appropriate education and solutions.

*"The Auburn Interfaith Food Closet is working with several churches on a new program to provide culturally appropriate foods to families at a school in Auburn that has a high percentage of economically disadvantaged households. Members of the community were asked what kinds of foods they would like to receive and the partners are providing food boxes to 100 families once a month with requested items. The Food Closet is assessing the program to see if it could be scalable to other schools in Placer County."*

Andy Hayes, Auburn Interfaith Food Closet



Picture of  
Soil Born Farms

15 "Barriers that Constrain the Adequacy of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs," USDA, June 23, 2021. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/barriers-constrain-adequacy-snap-allotments>



Finally, we found numerous emerging opportunities based on current conditions, policies, and programs.

### Emerging Opportunities for Action

**New funding resources:** Expansion of CDFA's Farm to School program will provide some financial sustainability for health and education programs. Additional funding for food and nutrition literacy programs from state, federal, and philanthropic agencies will provide additional capacity for successful food literacy and nutrition programs and partnerships to grow and to strengthen the nonprofit and education sectors.

**Community gardens/local food access:** New approaches to identify parcels of land to be gifted, converted, put into land trust, etc. will help meet the demand for more community gardens. Food hubs, mobile food trucks, urban farms, and other facilities can help secure a steady supply of affordable food year-round for residents in need.

**Investment in taste education:** Investing in programs that teach eating habits and education regarding taste in early childhood are essential for healthy living. Oftentimes, dietary habits acquired in early childhood remain with people throughout their lives, and early habits ultimately affect adult health. This requires long-term investment and institutional changes within the school system to prioritize nutrition education, food literacy, and culinary skill-building.

**Innovative collaborations:** Partnerships between community-based programs, food and nutrition scientists, health systems, and other agencies can help link health and nutrition to health efficacy outcomes. Further knowledge of these factors will drive further innovation and improvement.

*"Consistent funding to sustain successful programs, plus educating community leaders about our food system is important. Elected officials don't always realize the nuances of funding food nutrition and healthy foods. The emergency food system is on the front line, but there are other investments that we need for long-term resilience."*

Amber Stott, Food Literacy Center



Picture of Sacramento City Unified School District Central Kitchen





## CASE STUDY

Fiery Ginger Farm, West Sacramento. Fiery Ginger Farm will build upon existing programs in food education and literacy to partner with several school districts and farm to school programs to expand efforts through a new CDFA Farm to School grant. Partners include the Davis Joint Unified School District, Natomas Unified School District, Western Placer Unified School District, Davis Farm to School, and The Bee Charmers. Fiery Ginger Farm will build upon five years of farm to school work connecting children to local, high-quality, sustainably-grown, and nutrient-dense produce, as well as introducing children to potential careers in agriculture. The Farm will collaborate with new and existing school district partners to expand their procurement of local fruits and vegetables for school meals, making several farm infrastructure improvements and creating a food hub to aggregate produce from local farms and deliver to schools. Fiery Ginger Farm will tailor its existing farm to school education programming, which includes taste tests in school cafeterias; student and kitchen staff field trips to the farm; and classroom and garden lessons about agriculture, nutrition, and food systems.


Source: CDFA Farm to School Summary, Project Grant Narrative, 2021.





# Regional Action Plan Recommendations

This section of the Region Action Plan provides a summary matrix of the overall cross-cutting strategies and recommended implementation actions for the six Strategic Focus Areas that were presented in the section of the report. Due to the interconnected nature of the food system, the recommended actions support one another across the Strategic Focus Areas. This plan is a road map and call to action for many different food system partners, stakeholders, and funders, with priorities identified by all those who participated. It is also an investment agenda that will require a large amount of funding, supportive policies, and other resources such as technical assistance or capacity support to meet current challenges and potential opportunities before us. This is a living document. Should you have any recommendations or implementation actions to add, please contact us at [FoodAndAg@ValleyVision.org](mailto:FoodAndAg@ValleyVision.org).

Overall Cross-Cutting Food System Recommendations		
Strategy		Implementation Action
		Viability of Agriculture 
1	Food and Agriculture Business Start-Up and Ongoing Support	Increase funding mechanisms and investment for access to land, capital, appropriate equipment, and broadband for those who want to enter the food and agriculture pipeline. Emphasis should be given to women and BIPOC farmers, food businesses, and BIPOC and women-led organizations, as well as small or otherwise economically challenged farmers and food entrepreneurs.
2	Technical Assistance Capacity	Increase organizational capacity of nonprofits, farm advisors, and others to help small farmers, food entrepreneurs, and distributors reach expanded local markets, deal with climate change impacts, and other needs. (The Food Economy Strategic Focus Area includes strategies for expanded market opportunities.)
3	Drought Assistance	Provide drought assistance, especially to small growers.
4	Update local General Plans and Planning Elements	Local planning and policy documents should be updated by local governments to ensure support for agriculture and food-related activities, including farmland protection.

Strategy		Implementation Action
		<b>Environmental Sustainability</b> 
5	<b>Conservation Easements</b>	Develop a strategy to increase Conservation Easements consistent with conservation and development plans so that the land is preserved and farmers have the financial benefits of farming without the pressure to develop. Increase funding to implement more easements; establish the value of ecosystem services or the benefits that farming provides to the environment, such as carbon capture, improved water quality and supply, improved biodiversity and habitat, and flood and disease control. Explore emerging models such as community land trusts.
6	<b>Soil Health</b>	Support adoption of regenerative agricultural practices to improve soil health and water efficiencies. Transition to compost, natural fertilizers, and other practices, such as crop rotation, to reduce reliance on ammonia and nitrogen-based fertilizers. Seek additional resources to assist farmers.
7	<b>Food Recovery Capacity and Facilities</b>	Identify a sustainable funding stream to implement California SB 1383, a state law which requires the recovery of 20% of edible food by 2025 that would otherwise go to landfills. Funding is needed to cover food recovery and waste reduction operating costs and capital expenditures such as refrigerated trucks, warehouse space, and refrigeration. Options may include incentivizing local jurisdictions to include funding for food recovery through solid waste fees and rate structures.
		<b>Food Economy</b> 
8	<b>Institutional Procurement</b>	Organize and expand institutional purchasing and local procurement agreements and partnerships with schools, hospitals, governments, event centers, and others to serve health-promoting, locally grown foods. Restructure the USDA school nutrition funding program to promote local purchasing and Farm to School Programs.
9	<b>Food Hub/ Food System Infrastructure Funding</b>	Invest in a network of hubs and other food system infrastructure across the region to connect local growers to local institutions and other markets and increase farmer capacity. These include: incubators, public markets, school central kitchens, storage and processing facilities, community kitchens and meat processing facilities.
10	<b>Urban Agriculture Projects</b>	Expand urban agriculture, such as urban farms, farmers markets, farm stands, mobile markets, community compost hubs, CSAs, and nurseries to increase access to fresh and nutritious produce/products. Explore new enterprise models.
11	<b>Assistance for Small Farmers/Food Entrepreneurs</b>	Provide technical, financial, and other support to small farmers and food entrepreneurs, especially BIPOC, economically disadvantaged, small-enterprise, and other diverse farmers and entrepreneurs.



Strategy		Implementation Action
		Careers in Food and Agriculture 
12	<b>Apprenticeships</b>	Invest in apprenticeship programs to grow the next generation of farm managers and skilled food and beverage manufacturing workers.
13	<b>Youth Workforce Development</b>	Increase opportunities for youth agriculture training, including career awareness and career readiness programs.
14	<b>Workforce Development / Upskilling</b>	Support long-term career pipeline investments and technical assistance for generational farmers, farm managers, and food processors to ensure the workforce is resilient and resourced to weather economic and supply chain disruptions. Address health status concerns and immigration challenges.
15	<b>AgTech Workforce Skills</b>	Support development of agrifood tech workforce skills training to address emerging skills gaps in high-demand occupations across the spectrum of the food and agriculture industry cluster.
16	<b>Immigrant and Refugee Workforce Development</b>	Fund immigrant and refugee settlement groups and adult education organizations to help train workers to meet the food and agriculture skills gaps in the region and provide pathways to opportunity.
17	<b>Local Hiring Policies</b>	Encourage businesses to hire locally to ensure there are investments and opportunities for residents in the surrounding community.




Picture of Sacramento City Unified School District Central Kitchen

Strategy		Implementation Action
		<b>Food Security and Healthy Food Access</b> 
18	<b>Sustainable Funding for Food Banks/ Emergency Food System</b>	Provide sustainable, multi-year funding to food banks. Consistent and sustainable funding will reduce reliance on volunteers who are subject to high turnover; expand infrastructure and facilities required to meet the needs of an increasing number of food- insecure residents; and support administrative costs to allow for additional fundraising and systems management.
19	<b>CalFresh Enrollment</b>	Increase state resources for counties to enroll more CalFresh (SNAP) eligible residents, including higher education students. Results will improve food and nutrition security; increase consumer purchasing power and revenues for growers and food establishments; and keep food dollars in the local economy.
20	<b>Food Security Resources</b>	Expand the capacity to use CalFresh at farmers markets across the region. This will require putting in place the infrastructure needed for vendors to be able to accept the benefits, and providing public funding to support staff, administrative, and other programmatic costs.
21	<b>Market Match Programs</b>	Increase access to new state Nutrition Incentive Program (CalNIP) and federal Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) funding for expanded "Market Match" programs which match CalFresh benefits at farmers markets, grocery stores and other establishments. These match programs provide extra funding to CalFresh participants for purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables.
22	<b>Local Market Support for Underserved Communities</b>	Support local markets and producers that can reach food insecure populations, such as farmers markets, mobile farmers market trucks, farm stands, and portable food solutions.
23	<b>Local Market Capacity</b>	Create an online local marketplace for excess products from growers, farmers markets, and restaurants that can bolster food recovery initiatives.





Strategy		Implementation Action
		Health and Nutrition 
24	<b>Food and Nutrition Literacy and Marketing</b>	Expand food literacy and taste education programs in both K-12 schools and for adults. Bolster marketing and educational efforts for where to access healthy foods and encourage residents to be active consumers of fresh and local produce. Incorporate culturally appropriate education.
25	<b>Local Food Access</b>	Increase healthy food access in communities through expansion of local food access points, including community garden programs, mobile farmers markets, urban farms, CSAs, standing farmers markets, and school gardens. Support development of food-anchored resiliency hubs. Investment is needed for this infrastructure.
26	<b>Local Market Support for Underserved Communities</b>	Support local markets and producers that can reach food insecure populations, such as farmers markets, mobile farmers market trucks, farm stands, and healthy corner store programming. Such efforts establish accessible and affordable pipelines to healthy foods for residents and also benefit local producers.
27	<b>Food Access Communications Support</b>	Expand Yolo County Fresh Text - which connects residents to local food distribution - to the rest of the region ( <a href="https://www.211sacramento.org/211/2-1-1-yolo-county-fresh-text/">https://www.211sacramento.org/211/2-1-1-yolo-county-fresh-text/</a> ). Increase 211 partnership with local nonprofits and health systems through a new referral platform – the Unite Us Portal - to help connect patients with access to healthy foods and nutrition.

## Summary/Next Steps

The identification of the Regional Action Plan priorities comprises the first phase of this planning effort. Now that priorities have been clarified, the next phase of the Regional Action Plan project will consider various funding strategies, sources, and mechanisms to set the course for increased systemic investments, including a mechanism such as a healthy food financing fund, which has long been a regional priority. Valley Vision will work with the Foundation and other partners to explore possible models and to align the priorities with major new and potentially transformative funding opportunities that have emerged during the pandemic. An initial resource list is included in [LINK](#) and we will continue to build upon this inventory and identify additional project funding matches and opportunities in the second phase of the project.

The research clearly revealed four different themes that must be emphasized and prioritized for action. The first is that levels of food insecurity are high across the region. Food insecurity is a difficult fact of life for hundreds of thousands of residents, yet is often thought of as a temporary or emergency phenomenon to be addressed by the emergency food system (the network of food banks and their hundreds of community partners). We need to acknowledge the reality that food insecurity is a pervasive, systemic condition in our community, and build a food system investment agenda that provides a more sustainable source of support for those operating in the emergency food system.



Picture of Soil Born Farms

Second, as noted throughout the Regional Action Plan, the many aspects of the food system are highly interconnected. Actions in one Focus Area will benefit another. As an example, if there is a strongly concerted effort to increase CalFresh enrollment for eligible residents, those who are food insecure will benefit from increased access to healthy foods; simultaneously, farmers, distributors, retailers, and others will benefit economically which will keep the community strong. There are numerous examples of these beneficial intersections which make for an even greater investment case.

Third, in so many of the areas identified for action, it is the nonprofit sector that carries the major lift. Recognizing the critical importance of these organizations is vital for the focus and scope of an investment agenda. They must have sufficient funds to deliver programming and sustain their operations.

Fourth, the food system is fragmented. While there are many strong partnerships and collaborative efforts, much greater cohesion and focus is needed so the region is better prepared for a more resilient and equitable future.

To this end, Valley Vision will continue to collaborate with community partners to explore possible avenues. This includes the assessment being conducted by Soil Born Farms, to build upon the lessons learned and the food system assets that were developed through The California Endowment's investment in Sacramento's Building

Healthy Communities initiative, now coming to a close. The assessment will identify what would benefit the region from a structural standpoint to ensure there is the competency, capacity, and focus to fully realize the opportunities before us, leveraging the Regional Action Plan as the guide.

Through the 2015 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan process, Valley Vision began to inventory specific projects and programs with estimated budgets that could be initiated or scaled with appropriate resources. We will continue to work with partners across the region to obtain their input and develop a more refined list of investment opportunities aligned with the priorities identified in the Regional Action Plan, and anticipate presenting a recommended food system funding strategy by early 2022. The Regional Action Plan priorities and funding strategy will be used to inform the Foundation's approach to its own work in this space, as well as other funders and stakeholders within and outside of the region.

The Regional Action Plan is intended to elevate the vital importance of investing in a sustainable, resilient, and equitable food system. With strategic investments, policies, programs, and collaboration, our regional food system can truly be a path to inclusive economic opportunity, health and well-being, and environmental sustainability for generations to come. Should you have any questions, ideas, or resources to share, or if you want to stay informed about the Regional Action Plan and the funding strategy, please contact us at [FoodAndAg@ValleyVision.org](mailto:FoodAndAg@ValleyVision.org).



# Appendix 1

## List of Participants and Contributors

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# Appendix 2

## Report Methodology

The 2021 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan (Regional Action Plan) update was initiated in May 2021. The development of the Regional Action Plan was informed by multiple data sources, tools, and techniques organized around the framework of six Strategic Focus Areas identified for the project. Multiple food system-related activities occurring across the region were an additional valuable source of networks and information that enhanced the development of the Regional Action Plan. The following summarizes the key aspects of the project methodology.

**Research Activities.** The project team reviewed the 2015 Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan (2015 Action Plan) to determine appropriate data sources and methodologies for addressing the regional priorities that have changed since 2015. Using national data sources, such as Feeding America, core data sets are used in the Regional Action Plan to estimate and project food insecurity levels in the region. State agencies and nonprofit sources provided estimates of CalFresh enrollment levels and associated economic impacts. Through interviews and annual reports, the three major food banks that serve El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, and Yolo counties provided a significant amount of information on the local emergency food system. Several sources of information about food insecurity efforts were also reviewed, including from school districts, hospitals, health systems, and nonprofit and for-profit organizations.

Valley Vision used census tract-level data from Feeding America to map food insecurity rates in 2019 (historical) and 2021 (projected), as well as changes over time. The [maps of each county's food insecurity rate](#) provide a spatial display of disparities across the region and areas where food insecurity is increasing. This information was provided in lieu of the food deserts/food access analysis in the 2015 Action Plan. A more detailed analysis of the state of food insecurity and the emergency food system in the region can be found on Valley Vision's website.

Other research activities included a review of national and state policy findings related to the impact of food payments on food security and poverty; a review of state and federal funding and policy initiative, particularly those resulting from the pandemic; research on emerging issues that will affect the food system in the near future, including the implementation of SB 1383 for required food recovery and food waste reduction efforts; an analysis of land-use trends and the conversion of farmlands to other uses; and a review of state policy analyses and plans related to climate-smart agriculture and environmental sustainability.

Valley Vision's research included a review of many food system studies from across the state; reports and data on specific issues such as food system financing, food hubs, and food procurement strategies; and identification of successful models, pilots, and lessons learned in the region and elsewhere. Several of the new funding and policy initiatives will be resources for the Regional Action Plan investment and financing strategy. A summary of the resources and funding opportunities can be found at <https://bit.ly/2021foodresources>.

Valley Vision also drew upon its many years of experience working across key aspects of the food system, including co-management of the Greater Sacramento Region Prosperity Plan's Food and Agriculture Cluster strategy; expertise in rural connectivity and broadband-enabled agriculture technologies; and convening of regional industry advisory meetings with food and agriculture cluster employers and education and workforce partners to promote career pathways; and other projects related to food hubs, natural and working lands, school wellness, and institutional fresh produce procurement strategies. This experience, along with a strong network and ongoing collaboration with key regional food and agriculture partners, including food banks, nonprofits, elected officials, K-12 and higher education, state and federal partners, businesses, and others provided a strong understanding and grounding for the Regional Action Plan.

Additionally, Dr. Catherine Brinkley and Jordana Fuchs-Chesney of the University of California, Davis prepared detailed [County Community Food Guides](#), and Dr. Catherine Brinkley's Spring 2021 Community & Regional Development (CRD) 200 Health and Place class prepared a Food System Health Impact Assessment; both of these efforts shaped implementation actions and recommendations in the Regional Action Plan.

**Listening Sessions/Interviews.** Primary data was gathered through a series of individual and group interviews with stakeholders and leaders involved in the regional food system, as well as six virtual listening sessions held during the summer of 2021. Approximately 200 persons participated in the listening sessions (many attended more than one). These sessions included participation by state and federal agency partners who provided updates on funding and policy initiatives and opportunities. The sessions involved an overview of some key food system metrics, with input solicited from participants using the Mentimeter tool to identify

issues, challenges, opportunities, assets, best practices, and replicable models. Approximately 1,000 pieces of input were received, along with discussion during the sessions. This information was synthesized and provides the basis for a large part of the assessment contained in the Regional Action Plan.

Additional information was obtained through numerous individual and group interviews with community leaders and stakeholders, along with consultation with subject matter experts and funders. See Appendix 1 for a list of those who participated or contributed to the development of the Regional Action Plan.

**Food System Resilience Poll.** The Regional Action Plan was informed by the nearly 900 people who participated in the [Food System Resilience poll](#), conducted by Valley Vision this year in partnership with the Institute for Social Research at California State University, Sacramento, and Capital Public Radio.

**Regional Collaborative Planning Activities.** Valley Vision participated in or obtained input from numerous local and regional collaborative planning activities that brought in the perspectives of hundreds of local community organizations, food system stakeholders, government entities, and school and hospital systems. These ongoing activities represent collective approaches to addressing numerous food system issues, challenges, and opportunities. Generally, these activities involve organizations that work on food system issues at various levels of scale, including some which work directly with community members. Participants include a wide range of nonprofit partners.

Some of the ongoing planning activities include:

- City of Sacramento Food Access Bi-Weekly calls/Food Justice Task Force
- The Healthy Food for All Collaborative network meetings
- Placer Food Insecurity Taskforce
- Invest Health Roseville
- Sacramento Food Policy Council
- Yolo County Food Security Coalition
- Feeding El Dorado Collaborative
- Food System Partnership (Sacramento Food Policy Council, Soil Born Farms, Food Literacy Center, CAFF, Valley Vision, and Sohl Resolutions International)

In addition, Valley Vision reached out to numerous organizations and entities working on prospective food system projects covering the Strategic Focus Areas to gain valuable insight into the scope and scale of investments needed. Through the process, many organizations also engaged their networks, bringing more input into the planning process. Valley Vision will seek feedback from community partners on funding and priorities to inform Phase II of the project.

Further, Valley Vision participates with many partners and state and federal agencies to advance regional food system initiatives, including support for major new Build Back Better economic recovery projects. Through collaboration with the Sacramento Metro Chamber's Cap to Cap program, Valley Vision also has the opportunity to meet with federal agency officials to raise awareness of and promote the Regional Action Plan's recommendations.

All of these activities helped inform the development of the Regional Action Plan and its recommendations. Should you have any questions, please contact us at [FoodAndAg@valleyvision.org](mailto:FoodAndAg@valleyvision.org)



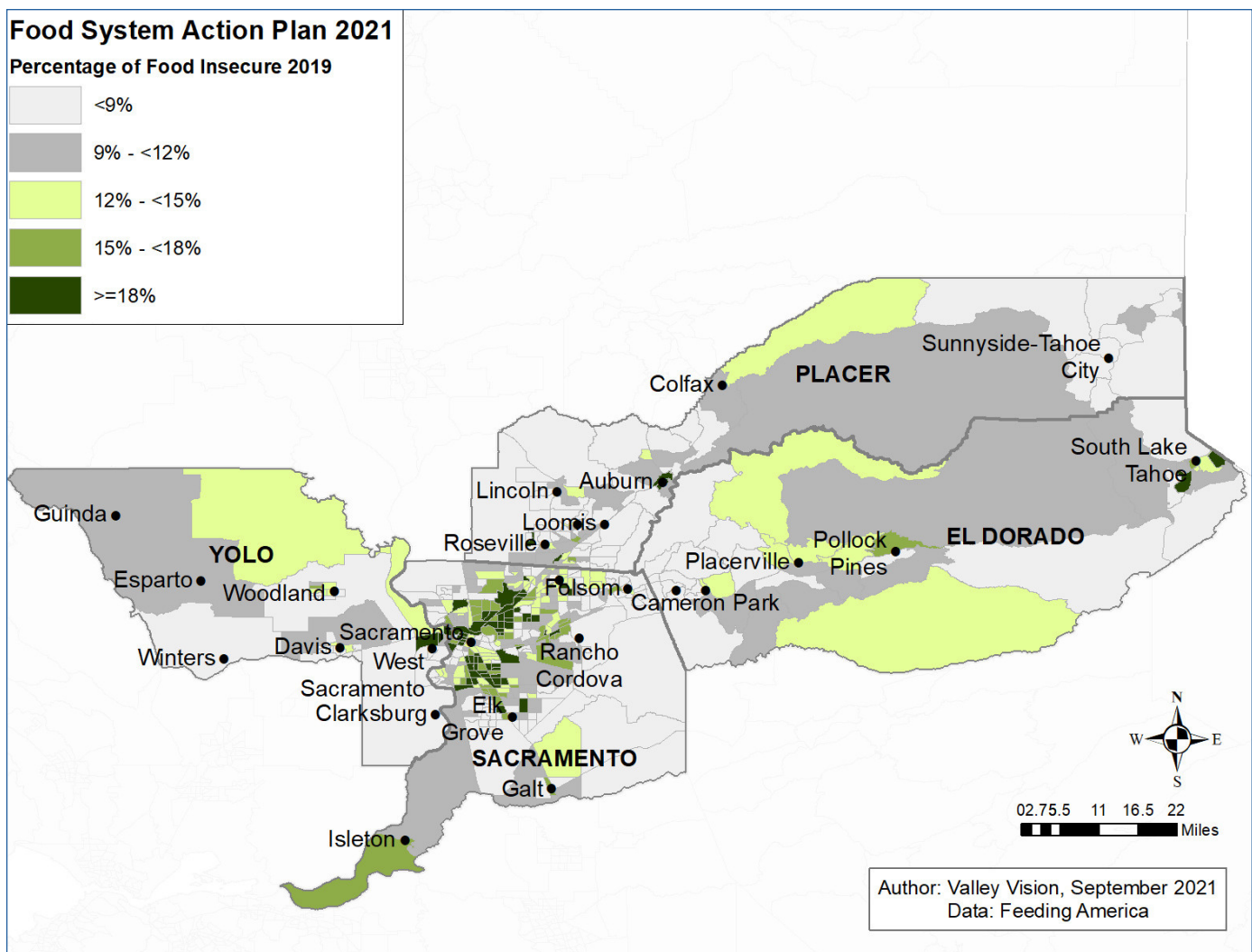


# Appendix 3

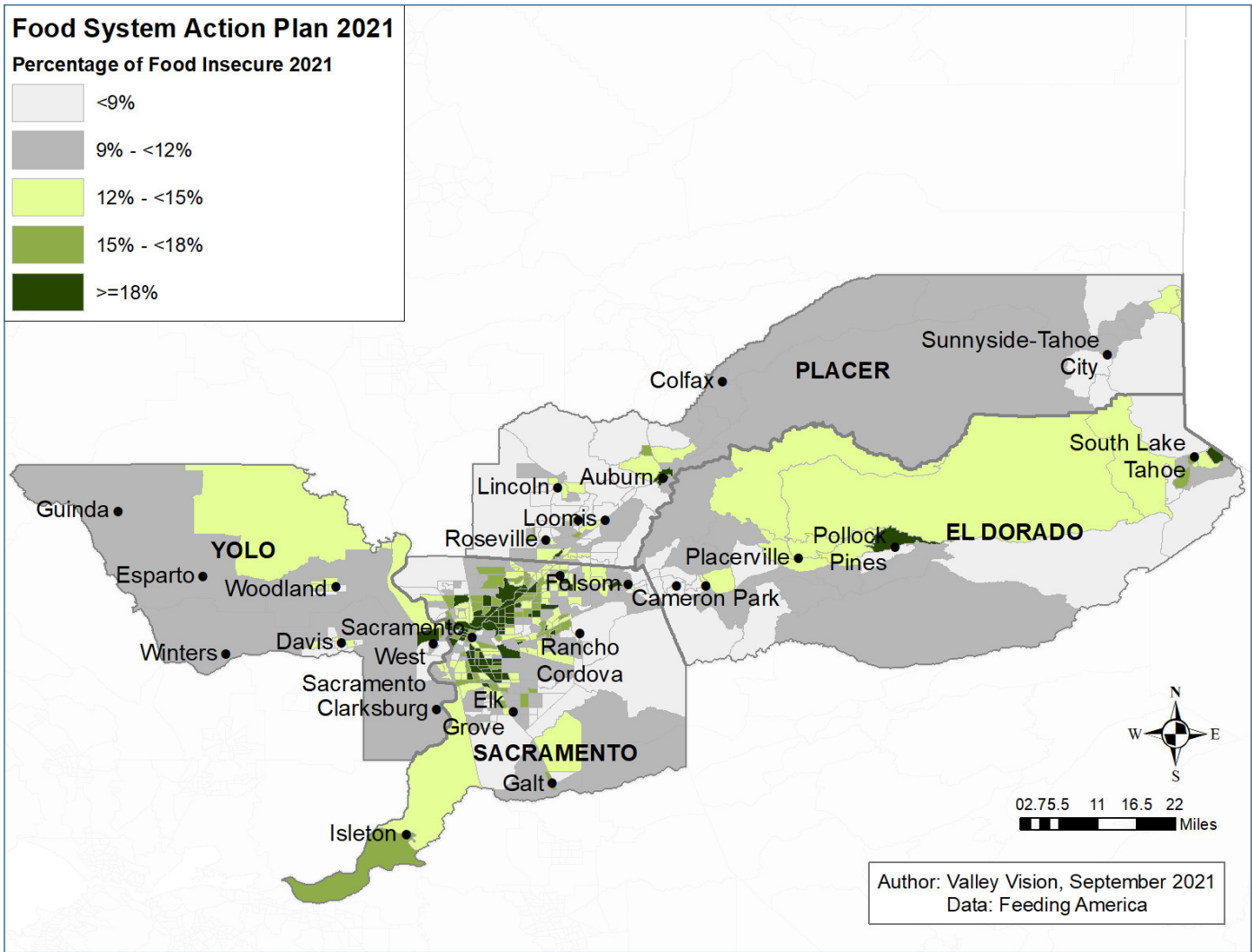
## Regional Food Insecurity Maps

Appendix 3 shows the level of food insecurity by census tract for each county in the Greater Sacramento region in 2019 and in 2021. The data was provided by Feeding America and analyzed by Valley Vision. The 2019 (historical) levels and 2021 (projected, March 2021) levels are the percentage of total persons in food-insecure households. Food insecurity is also projected for 2020, but is not included in this analysis as major spikes in 2020 were moderated in 2021 by economic recovery income supports, increasing employment, and other factors.

To learn more about food insecurity in the Greater Sacramento area, visit [Valley Vision's website](#).



# Appendix 3: Regional Food Insecurity Maps



Additional maps showing county-level food insecurity rates can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2021FoodInsecurityMaps>



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