



SACRAMENTO REGION

Coordinated Rural Opportunities Plan

March 2024

Placer County Profile





Introduction

The Coordinated Rural Opportunities Plan (CROP) is funded by the Department of Conservation's Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) Program and is a joint effort between the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) and Valley Vision. CROP is part of the [Rural-Urban Connections Strategy](#) (RUCS) to enhance rural economies

and the natural assets that drive them. CROP will result in comprehensive profiles of each county in the Sacramento region, in addition to a region-wide profile. The profiles will serve as valuable resources for identifying priority areas for infrastructure investments and programs that will strengthen the region's food and agricultural cluster. Furthermore, CROP will provide county and regional leaders the opportunity to address infrastructure investment challenges and collectively come together to find solutions that will add to the region's agricultural sustainability and long-term economic health and resiliency.

Agriculture is deeply rooted in the rich history of the Sacramento region and continually contributes to its unique identity. Leading America as the Farm to Fork Capital, the Sacramento region provides \$2.2 billion in farmgate output value, and the agricultural economy is valued at more than \$12 billion¹. The food and agriculture cluster consists of crop production, packaging and processing, distribution, and related operations and industries. Although the agricultural sector sustains the region's robust economy, infrastructure challenges are impeding the ability of the six counties to advance sustainable food production and supply chains, statewide and globally.

FOOD SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE



Improves the efficiency, sustainability, and productivity of the local food system



Increases and access to nutritious, local, and seasonal foods in historically disinvested communities



Supports the viability of agriculture, addresses climate challenges, and helps preserve valuable farmlands



Creates new jobs, supports food and ag-related businesses, spurs innovation, and provides economic opportunities



Background: Placer County

Placer County has a diverse and complex landscape, including mountainous areas and forest-covered, oak tree-covered, and grass-covered lands that are home to many rare and sensitive plant and animal species. Placer County spans the Sierra Nevada foothills from the West Slope over the mountains into the Lake Tahoe Basin. The county has an abundance of fertile soil drained by numerous rivers and streams including the American River. Grassy plains on the western side of the county are partially developed or are in active ranching or agriculture. Prior to European settlement, this area was home to numerous Native American communities that embarked on seasonal migrations between the Sacramento valley in the winter and the foothills and mountains to the east in the summer. Several rivers and historic gravel drainages provided resources for Native Americans, nineteenth-century gold miners, and more recently, farmers and ranchers.

The earliest agriculture in Placer County began nearly a decade before the Gold Rush with the growth of wheat farms, which led to a reduced need for imported grain for California. While the county's initial agriculture activities consisted primarily of wheat production, the transition to nuts and fruits proved to be a path for economic growth for farmers, particularly in 1864 when the Transcontinental Central

Pacific Railroad was built, connecting South Placer County (Roseville) to Utah in 1869.²

By 1886, Placer County ranked among the top counties in California for citrus production. Agriculture continued to flourish in Placer County into the mid-1900s as the invention of canning increased the efficiency of preserving the county's fruits and vegetables for export to the rest of the United States. Changes in land use patterns due to population growth, development, and other economic changes have resulted in changes in the agricultural sector. Technology advances have enabled small operations to be viable. Today, 86% of farms in Placer County are less than 50 acres, which is the highest percentage of small farms in the region.³ As well, 97% of farms in the county are family-owned which is the second highest in the region, just behind El Dorado County at 98%.

The Agricultural and Forestry Services section of Placer County's General Plan includes several goals that relate to agriculture and economic development. While the agricultural section was last updated in 1994, the General Plan anticipated a fast-growing housing sector, and balanced that growth with progressive policies that help preserve agricultural land in the county. From 1969-2022, Placer County's overall population growth was 451.93% compared to 98.01% for California and 65.57% for the United States. This

2 <https://www.placer.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/67622/Cultural-Resources-Mangement-Plan>

3 https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/California/cp06061.pdf

makes Placer County the fastest-growing county in the region and one of the fastest-growing in the state. The county's [total population](#) is 410,305. Even with the exponential growth, the county continues to balance fast growth with aggressive conservation of agricultural land.

Variability in climate presents an ongoing challenge for farmers, as each year brings its own set of conditions. Placer County's 2022 crop report highlights rice as the highest-grossing crop, valued at \$32.2 million. Despite a decrease in rice acreage, the market price rose. Freeze events in January and April 2022 significantly affected stone fruits and grape production, leading several wineries to purchase additional grapes to fulfill demand. In 2023, heavy rainfall impacted mandarin crops in the county. However, even with these challenges, the unique topography, soil conditions, and headwaters of Placer County put farmers and ranchers at an advantage; new almond trees have shown higher productivity compared to those planted in the Central Valley.

In 2021, Placer County's Department of Agriculture released a Crop Plus report that quantifies agriculture's total economic contributions through production, local processing, employment, and economic multiplier effects. The report concludes agriculture contributed \$242.4 million to the county's economy, which is a 24% increase compared to the 2020 Crop Plus report. The continued investment in the Crop Plus report helps demonstrate the importance of the sector to the overall economy, and this is reflected in County policies that support food and agriculture.⁴ Agriculture in Placer County occurs on various scales across many jurisdictions, but most of the production occurs in the unincorporated area. Each county has an Agricultural Commissioner's office appointed by its Board of Supervisors to administer county-wide activities in support of agriculture. Given this nexus, many of the examples and recommendations in this profile focuses on the County of Placer as a potential lead, while also highlighting the role of additional partners such as other local jurisdictions, regional agencies, special districts or conservation entities.

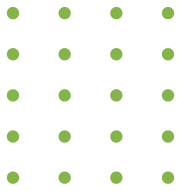
Placer County's Top Five 2022 Commodities

- | | |
|--------------------|------------|
| 1. Rice | 4. Poultry |
| 2. Cattle | 5. Walnuts |
| 3. Nursey Products | |

The top 5 commodities in Placer County were valued at \$64,762,910 in 2022, down 12% from \$73,700,193 in 2021.



4 <https://www.placer.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/74115/2021-Crop-Report>



Water Infrastructure

Water is at the heart of Placer County's history. Unlike other counties in the region, all of Placer County's water is sourced locally - largely from rain and snow in the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range, which collects in the Middle Fork American River Project and Spaulding Lake Reservoir. The County's water infrastructure was first constructed in the 1800s when miners built dams and canals to extract gold from the foothills using hydraulic mining. In the early 1900s, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) constructed Spaulding Reservoir in Nevada County and installed a system of hydroelectric generators across western Placer County that supplied water and electricity to the surrounding areas.

In 1961, in an effort to improve water and energy reliability, residents voted for a bond measure to finance the Middle Fork American River Hydroelectric Project (MFP). In 1967, PG&E asked Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) to take over the responsibility of its water infrastructure, and shortly after, the canals that supplied water to agricultural users and residents from Rocklin, Lincoln, Auburn, Colfax, and Alta were owned and maintained by PCWA.

Today PWCA is the main water resource agency for Placer County. PWCA is responsible for water management and resource planning for retail and wholesale supply of drinking water and irrigation water, and producing hydroelectric energy. The Gold Rush-era canals are still operational and provide water to residents in Western Placer County. PWCA maintains 170 miles of canals, serving irrigation water for pastures, orchards, rice fields, farms, ranches, golf courses, and landscaping. PCWA also owns the Middle Fork Reservoir, which stores up to 340,000 acre-feet of water from rain and snow during the fall and winter months and releases water all year to meet the municipal, industrial, and agricultural demands for western Placer County. The Spaulding Lake Reservoir, now also owned by PCWA, is used for agricultural purposes, including irrigation for crops such as rice, and provides recreational opportunities such as for boating and fishing. PCWA also has a Water Shortage Contingency Plan (WSCP) to respond to foreseeable and unforeseeable water shortages.⁵ Together, these infrastructure projects provide a reliable water supply to Placer County agricultural producers and feed into the Folsom Reservoir that serves Sacramento County.

5 <https://water.ca.gov/Programs/Water-Use-And-Efficiency/2018-Water-Conservation-Legislation/County-Drought-Planning>



Other irrigation districts, such as the Nevada Irrigation District (NID), have their own reservoirs that supply irrigated water, mostly for pastures. However, because there is increased fragmentation of rangeland in the county, NID is losing customers, causing the price of water to increase for remaining customers and the economies of scale to decrease for the district.

Though Placer County has a reliable water supply, climate variability, aging infrastructure, and new regulatory requirements could threaten this supply, especially for rural and agricultural communities. As temperatures rise, the Sierras are expected to experience a shift in precipitation from snow to rain, increasing flood risk and reducing the snowpack that fills the county's reservoirs. Even with improvements in technology that have decreased the water demand, oftentimes - even in wet years - dirty surface water can impact the efficiency of the irrigation system, which has led to a demand for additional on-site wells and groundwater pumping.



The increased flood risk, combined with decreased spring runoff, presents challenges for flood control and water reliability in the county's reservoirs, which can impact both power generation and forest health.⁶ The American River Basin Study identified several adaptation strategies to address climate challenges and improve water supply reliability for the Sacramento Region, including River Arc and the Sacramento Regional Water Bank. The River Arc project, which recently received \$5,000,000 from the Wildlife Conservation Board, will convey water from the Sacramento River - which has surplus water more frequently than the American River - to a new water treatment plant to be treated for residential and commercial use. The River Arc project will relieve pressure upstream by reducing the environmental flows required for downstream uses and will allow PCWA to access water for which they have the water rights that they're presently not able to access. Another strategy, the Sacramento Regional Water Bank, will utilize conjunctive use, increasing groundwater storage and relieving upstream water demand which will make it easier for water to get to the agricultural industry in Placer County.

Due to its construction during the 1800s and early 1900s, the water infrastructure in Placer County has aged significantly. Because PCWA only has authority over the public infrastructure they own, PCWA cannot improve the private systems. The cost of improving water infrastructure and delivery systems can be particularly challenging for small farmers, leaving them in a vulnerable position if the infrastructure fails. Adding to the complexity, there are over 100 public water systems in the county, many of which are small and whose infrastructure is inadequate for sustained operations.⁷ PCWA has received funding to purchase and improve these systems, but it is a costly and slow process as many of the smaller systems are not up to code at the time of purchase. More funding is needed for PCWA to absorb and improve additional small water systems, which will improve the reliability of water supply for agricultural customers in the Placer County corridor.

⁶ https://rwah2o.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/ARBS_Factsheet22_2-FINAL.pdf

⁷ <https://www.placer.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/9035/Active-Regulated-Water-Systems-PDF>

Water Infrastructure Recommendations for Placer County

CATEGORY	RECOMMENDATION
Moore Canal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct a new wet well to lift water from the Auburn Ravine into the canal; includes pump and power.⁸ The project is estimated to cost \$2,000,000.
Canal and Irrigation Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gates and automated systems and monitors will help optimize the canals and save water.
On Farm Water Efficiencies and Storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider a rebate program that incentivizes efficient on-farm water use.
Small Public Water Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase and upgrade water systems so that they are up to code and support applications for agency mergers.
SGMA - Groundwater Recharge Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locations for groundwater recharge have already been identified in West Placer County by GEI consultants. The County is actively seeking project funding.

Additionally, Placer County stakeholders noted that the construction of Sites Reservoir in Glenn and Colusa counties would have a beneficial impact on the region’s overall water system and reliability. Construction is slated to begin in 2024.⁹



8 https://cdns5-hosted.civiclive.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_7964838/File/Government/Departments/Environmental%20Utilities/Water/Final_Groundwater%20Recharge%20Assessment_REDUCED22.pdf
 9 <https://www.capradio.org/articles/2023/11/24/sites-reservoir-project-finally-gets-green-light-construction-expected-to-begin-in-2024/>



Land Use and Housing

The General Plan provides guidance and vision for protecting open space and Placer County's rich agricultural history by incorporating several land use policies and goals that support the continued viability of the county's agricultural lands and economy. While the General Plan is explicit in its support for ag land preservation, amendments have allowed agricultural and working lands to be subdivided to accommodate housing demand and Placer County's growing population. For example, Bickford Ranch, which is currently a large cattle ranch, was approved to be zoned as a master-planned community in 2001.¹⁰

While Placer County experiences strong population growth, applications for the Williamson Act still remain strong. County officials support conservation easements and the preservation of agricultural land. In addition to its General Plan and the Williamson Act, Placer County has several initiatives to support agriculture, including the Placer Legacy Fund, the Right-To-Farm the Placer County Sustainability Plan, the beekeeping ordinance, and Placer County Conservation Program. As an example, in August 2023, Placer County partnered with Placer Land Trust and the Department of Conservation and contributed \$910,000 toward the preservation of 1,169 acres of active farmland in rural Lincoln.¹¹

The [Placer Legacy Fund](#) is a countywide program that began in 1994 after the Board of Supervisors adopted the Natural Resources and Open Space Element of the General Plan. It was created to protect and conserve open space and agricultural lands; since inception, Placer Legacy has successfully leveraged grants for conservation from the valley floor to the Tahoe area. Placer Legacy receives funding through County funds as well as grants and community donations to pursue the purchase of properties and easements.

The [Right-to-Farm](#) Ordinance in Placer County aims to protect and support agricultural operations by limiting circumstances where such operations can be considered a nuisance as a result of non-agricultural activities encroaching on farming areas. It states that any agricultural activity conducted for commercial purposes and in line with accepted standards cannot be deemed a nuisance due to changes in the surrounding area (if it was not a nuisance when it began and has been operating for over a year). The ordinance also mandates informing prospective property buyers and ensuring acknowledgment by property owners intending to build residential structures within the county's unincorporated areas about this ordinance. California has a statewide right-to-farm ordinance, but the agricultural operations must occur for three years, compared to one year for Placer County.

¹⁰ <https://www.placer.ca.gov/8215/Bickford-Ranch-Specific-Plan>
¹¹ <https://www.placer.ca.gov/9310/Land-trust-preserves-1169-acres>



This ordinance holds significance for the viability of agriculture in Placer County by providing legal protection and stability for farming operations. By safeguarding agricultural activities from nuisance complaints arising due to changes in the area, it enables farmers to continue their operations without fear of litigation or forced cessation. This protection fosters an environment conducive to agricultural investments and improvements, and encourages sustained economic viability for farming. As well, by mandating disclosure to prospective buyers and property owners, the ordinance ensures awareness and understanding of the rights and responsibilities regarding agricultural activities, minimizing potential conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses in agriculturally-designated areas. This strengthens county policy in the General Plan.

However, the rezoning of land for residential use and the increasing construction of homes near agricultural operations have an impact on both the quality of life for residents and the agricultural practices of farmers, such as planting, fertilizing, and harvesting. As an example, in order to protect oat and other winter crops, farmers utilize zon guns to prevent snow geese from damaging the crop. The zon guns are loud and can disturb the sleep of residents in neighboring homes, but the potential financial loss from the geese destroying crops can amount to tens of thousands of dollars per night for the farmers. In an effort to mediate such disagreements in the urban-agriculture interface and to increase a shared understanding, several Placer County Supervisors and Roseville City Councilmembers hosted a “crops and cul de sacs” discussion with farmers and residents. As well, Placer County’s Agricultural Commissioner corresponds directly with residents and farmers to mediate disagreements. Some conflicts cannot be avoided. As west Roseville continues to build out near agricultural land, and as county farmland is annexed to cities, collaborative discussions will be needed, and alternative solutions to conflicts should be considered, such as [using canines](#) for geese control.



The [Placer County Sustainability Plan](#) (PCSP) outlines various programs and policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase community resiliency to climate-related hazards. Agriculture and forest management were identified as the third-largest source of emissions with 268,340 MTCO₂e (19 percent). To reduce emissions from agriculture while protecting the agricultural economy and way of life, the PCSP provides a series of reduction strategies to improve crop cultivation efficiency while promoting cleaner operations. The reduction strategies also provide guidance on managing practices that generate energy. These strategies can help preserve and enhance the productivity of local farming and ranching operations, while making them more resilient to climate change.

The [Placer County Conservation Program](#) (PCCP) serves as a comprehensive strategy to safeguard and restore natural resources in specific regions of western Placer County while simplifying environmental permitting for Covered Activities. It comprises three interconnected components: the Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP) for wildlife protection, the Aquatic Resources Program (CARP) for safeguarding water resources, and an In-Lieu Fee Program for compensatory mitigation of impacts on aquatic resources under the Clean Water Act. The PCCP aims to comply with state and federal environmental regulations, protect special status species and habitats, accommodate anticipated growth, and allow for necessary infrastructure development. Because the PCCP details the areas in which the County can develop

and must preserve, the adoption of the PCCP has decreased land use negotiation and development conflicts. While the PCCP plan is critical for habitat conservation, it does not guarantee the preservation of agricultural land or indicate the ecosystem services and economic value that farming and ranching provide to the community.

Complimentary to the General Plan and the PCCP, the Placer County Economic Development Department successfully partnered on a SALC grant with the Placer County's Agriculture Department to create an addendum to the General Plan that is focused specifically on agriculture and will include land use preservation policies, ecosystem services, housing, and economic development that supports the viability and preservation of agriculture in Placer County. As with other counties, housing options that are available to the incomes of the agricultural and food system workforce continue to be a challenge. The median home price in the county is over \$630,000, while rents have also climbed significantly. Agricultural workforce housing faces hurdles from infrastructure costs, while the broader food system workforce faces a shortage of housing options. The Agriculture Plan will also include a comprehensive agritourism ordinance and scenario planning for increased agritourism and transportation planning, as experience from neighboring El Dorado County shows the increased infrastructure burden that can come from a thriving agritourism sector. The Plan would look at impact traffic mitigation fees that would support wineries and other ag-related businesses.

Land Use and Housing Infrastructure Recommendations for Placer County

CATEGORY	RECOMMENDATION
Residential Infrastructure Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek grants for low-income rural residents to replumb treated water delivery from poor performing wells which will benefit the agricultural producers who are dependent on groundwater.
Development of Agricultural Workforce Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide for septic and public well improvements to support housing options for food system workers.



Transportation & Broadband Infrastructure

The Pavement Condition Index (or PCI) measures conditions on regional roadways on a scale of 0 to 100. The California Statewide Local Streets and Roads Needs Assessment estimates that Placer County's PCI is at risk at 64, and the conditions of the roads have been deteriorating at an increasing pace for over a decade.¹² Rural road maintenance and ensuring good access to farms, wineries, breweries, and other food and ag destinations are critical for goods movement and agritourism, especially as many farms sell directly to consumers. The growth in agritourism facilities, while beneficial economically in rural areas, is straining transportation infrastructure; plans to expand the county's agritourism activities will put more strain on primarily rural transportation infrastructure. At a broader level, there are congestion problems in the urban areas that also are farm-to-market routes. Through its transportation plan, the Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA) continues to look at the need both to preserve the existing transportation system as well as investments that serve an expanding population. As with every other part of the state, transportation revenues have not kept up with maintenance needs; the problem is further compounded as many new roads built in the county during the early 2000s now will start facing increased

upkeep and maintenance costs. Yet the County also has a set of identified priority projects such as the Placer Parkway and the expansion of Highway 65 to reduce congestion and improve mobility. PCTPA is working on updating its fiscally constrained regional transportation plan to see how an array of priorities can be advanced, which should include rural roads along with urban core priorities. The Regional Transportation Plan is expected to be complete in late 2025.

In addition to road maintenance and access, the County is tasked with building Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure to meet state mandates. The Placer County [Electric Vehicle Readiness Guide](#) (EVRG) is a comprehensive road map to facilitate and plan for the increasing adoption of EVs in Placer County, however there is a challenge working with utilities to get power to where it is needed for the charging stations, including the costs to reach "last mile" locations. Placer County Transportation Planning Agency is in preliminary discussions to pursue a grant for a Countywide EV Charging Study that could help to address some of these issues. PCTPA is also working on a Comprehensive Operational Analysis of Placer County's transit network that will identify potential connections to rural areas of the county, such as Sheridan and Foresthill.

¹² <https://www.savecaliforniastreet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Statewide-2020-Local-Streets-and-Roads-Needs-Assessment-Final-8-4-21.pdf>

Placer County is committed to ensuring that all residents and businesses have access to reliable, high-speed broadband services. Expanding broadband access is a top priority and the County has been working for several years to bridge its digital divide, through annual countywide surveys; assessment and mapping of gap areas; identification of project priorities; and investing in three broadband expansion projects thus far with Internet service provider (ISP) Astound. Since 2021, more than \$35 million in funding has been allocated across three grants, using collective funding from several sources including the CARES Act, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the County, and ISP investment. The largest and most recent project is to be completed by the end of 2026, reaching several of the county's rural priority areas, which include some agriculture.

The low density of rural areas and agricultural and ranching operations will continue to impact efforts to reach all unserved/underserved areas. Wireless technologies can be part of the solution, even while some of the state and federal funding programs are more geared to fiber to the premise, which provides faster and more reliable service. The County submitted applications to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) in the fall of 2023 through the Federal Funding Account (FFA) for \$30.2 million in additional projects, which is the funding amount allocated by the State to the County. Proposed projects include rural and agricultural-related locations and provide a resource for additional needs as well, including for public safety such as for evacuations due to fires.



The County has coordinated with Caltrans on transportation projects, and the deployment of the State's new Middle-Mile Access Network will provide an additional opportunity for collaborative joint-use, dig once/dig smart transportation and broadband infrastructure projects, including with SACOG. The County also is planning for new federal funding that will be allocated to the State through the BEAD program (Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program), likely late in 2024. This funding would be a resource for the County to implement the next range of its priority projects. It will be important for the County to address the project permitting side of the deployment process, along with challenges in leasing of poles for infrastructure that are owned by utilities, etc., and working with new technologies.



Transportation Infrastructure Recommendations for Placer County

CATEGORY	RECOMMENDATION
<p>Agritourism Feasibility Study</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is currently no public transportation or shuttle that services agricultural or agritourism areas. Shuttle services that begin in populated areas such as Roseville, Rocklin, or Lincoln could help reduce traffic impacts and congestion on roads that lead to wineries and other food system activities, as an expanded agritourism sector may strain a primarily rural transportation network. Pavement maintenance, EV charging stations at end destinations, bicycle tourism, and parking facilities at trailheads should all be addressed in the study.

Broadband Infrastructure Recommendations for Placer County

CATEGORY	RECOMMENDATION
<p>Improving Permitting and Coordination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with telecommunication companies to install fiber-optic infrastructure allowing for faster and higher-capacity broadband internet, including telecommunication systems that can be used to more effectively distribute emergency communications and alerts to members of the public. • Coordinate broadband infrastructure installation with roadway repaving, utility pole replacement, and other construction and maintenance projects to minimize public disruptions.





Food System and Governance

Placer County has a collaborative culture. Supported by the mantra “One Placer” or “One Voice,” the County, cities, businesses, education institutions, water and transportation agencies, the agricultural community, and others work together to streamline communication, improve economic development, maintain Placer County’s quality of life, and provide protection for resources. This collaborative network has an important role to play in supporting the reduction of permitting burdens and regulatory barriers for farmers, ranchers, and food producers. This would include updating ordinances to reduce permit costs for agricultural events and agritourism. This partnership can also help producers and ranchers navigate new regulatory requirements.

The General Plan supports the economic development and viability of Placer County’s agricultural operations. It states the County shall ensure that land use regulations do not arbitrarily restrict potential agricultural-related enterprises that could provide supplemental sources of income for farm operators, such as farm stands or special events. The County allows permit stands for the sale of agricultural products in any agricultural land use designation, which allows producers to directly sell to their customers. Initiatives such as PlacerGROWN have helped Placer County farms, ranches, breweries, wineries, and nurseries market their product. However, even

with branding support, small farmers have limited opportunities to reach markets beyond county boundaries. There is an interest in increased opportunities for agritourism and farm tours; however, the impact on the roads and increased traffic are a major concern.

Similar to other counties in the region, Placer County ranchers face a shortage of meat processing facilities. In 2015, in partnership with local ranchers, Placer County received a USDA Grant to conduct a feasibility study and develop a business plan for a producer-owned, USDA-inspected animal processing facility. The facility would fill a major, long-standing need for harvest and cut/wrap services for producers from Placer and Nevada Counties and throughout the greater Sacramento Region. While Placer County officials are supportive of a meat processing facility, the initial and sizable investment needed to construct the facility has been a barrier to development, even though a site was identified.

In addition to meat processing, Placer County has a gap in commercial pressing facilities for olive producers. As a result, the olive producers must transport their fruit to olive oil presses located outside the county, which leads to increased transportation and production costs for producers, and challenges given the time-sensitive nature for pressing after harvesting.¹³ Wine producers

¹³ <https://www.placer.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/74079/2022-Crop-Report?bidId=>



lack sufficient storage facilities, and currently travel out of the county to store wine. Placer County also needs local walnut and almond processing operations to meet the demand coming from an increase in orchards. Some areas of the county such as the Sunset area have been designated for manufacturing and could be a possible location. If there were increased mobile or stationary facilities for these crops in the county, it would reduce vehicle miles traveled, cut transportation costs for producers, reduce the cost of road maintenance for the County, and improve the economic viability of producers. These facilities would also support economic development for the County and support the region's greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Placer County needs more agriculture and forest biomass processing capacity. A biomass processing facility can play a crucial role in fuel reduction by converting biomass materials such as forest residues, agricultural waste, and invasive plant species into energy. Such facilities would reduce the accumulation of potential wildfire fuels, provide local energy generation, and provide an additional revenue stream for farmers who sell their agricultural waste products to the facility. In 2012-2013, in partnership with the University of California Berkeley Center for Forestry, the Placer County Air Pollution Control District conducted a biomass waste for energy demonstration at the Center's Blodgett Forest Research Station.

Food System and Governance Infrastructure Recommendations for Placer County

CATEGORY	RECOMMENDATION
Workforce Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the capacity of training for certified water professionals. Currently, people often have to go a state or two away to get trained. Sierra College and Sacramento State have a partnership underway, which could use more voices to support.
Support for Ag Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement traffic fees that support ag businesses, especially those that are starting. A proactive approach from the County would allow food and farm businesses to make additional income from the land.
Biomass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify locations for biomass facilities. As detailed in the Placer County Sustainability Plan, these facilities could store and process bark beetle–infested wood and debris from forest fuel-clearing activities into useful products, including those that can support other Placer County industries and bioenergy. A biomass facility in eastern Placer County should be prioritized. • Create funding strategy to support cost-effective chipping or other large-scale options to reuse forest residue in an economically feasible way, such as for building materials and bioenergy.
Value-added Processing Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify funding sources and site locations for new/expanded mobile and stationary processing facilities for a wide range of products, including meat, wine, olive, and nuts.





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