

Community Food Guide for Yolo County

This guide maps the community food systems in Yolo County and discusses how to support them during the economic dislocation caused by coronavirus.

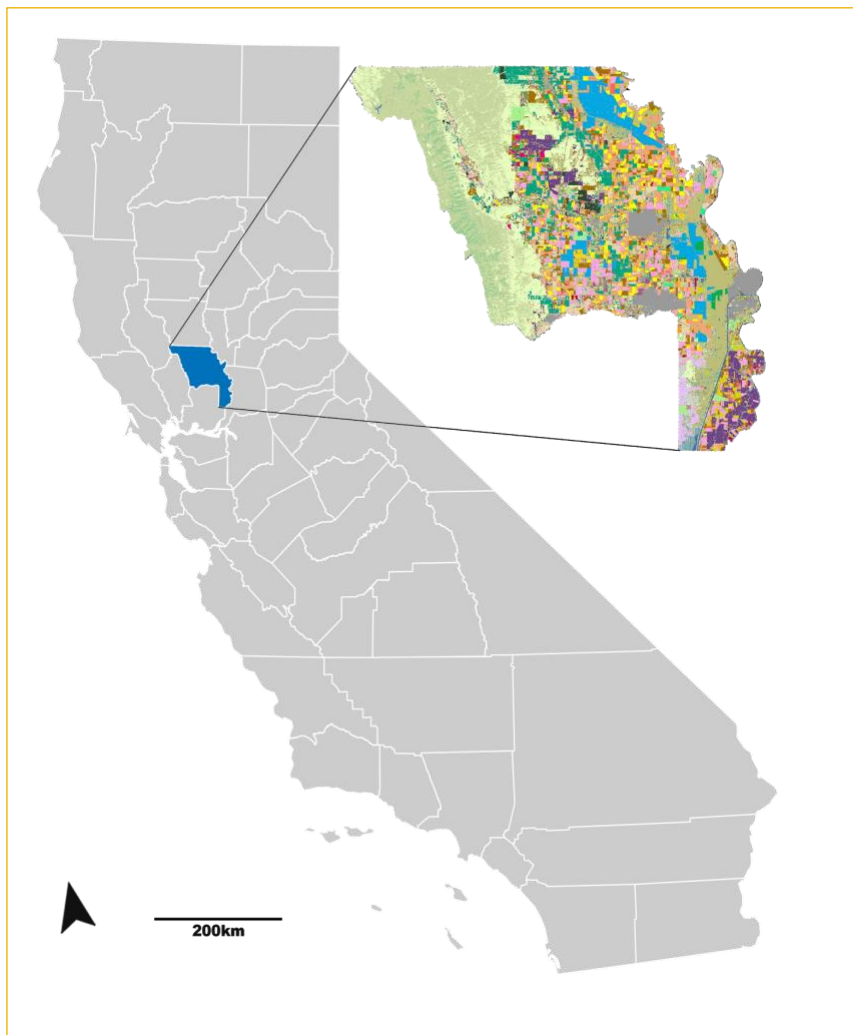


Figure 1. Yolo County land use. Data source: land-use satellite imagery from the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Legend available at NASS and in Figure 2.

A community food system is one in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated to enhance the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of a particular place (Garrett and Feenstra, 1999). Many farms connect directly with their communities at farmers' markets and through Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), and form relationships with local restaurants and institutions committed to supporting the community's combined needs for a healthy diet, soils, and development patterns. These direct connections help make farming practices and consumer needs transparent, building a more just food system that meets the needs of ecosystems, farmers, farmworkers, and consumers. Though California's diverse agricultural sector is the largest in the nation, many small family farms are located near rapidly expanding urban areas, and compete for land against the housing market. Economic downturns and housing policy can lead to urban areas expanding outward onto less-expensive farmland, instead of upward. Such development patterns cut into highly productive soils.

Today, the state grapples with new challenges presented by the COVID-19 crisis, with low income and communities of color impacted most severely. Food insecurity has doubled and is continuing to rise. Many national food supply chains have been disrupted, and local farmers and ranchers more directly connected with consumers are pivoting distribution to fill gaps. The resilience and adaptability of local food systems can be further strengthened with support from consumers like you- when you shop local, vote for farmland conservation, and support policies that benefit farmworkers, the food insecure, and family farmers.

Find out what your community food system looks like and how to support it!

Land and Population

Yolo County is located in Northern California, about an hour north of the Bay Area and 20 minutes from the city of Sacramento. On a flood plain with ample water and home to 220,500 people, **60% of Yolo County is farmland**, with 459,662 acres actively farmed (see Figures 1 and 2). According to the USDA Agricultural Census in 2017, there are 949 farms with an average farm size of 484 acres and median farm size of 50 acres. Yolo County's farmland use runs the gamut from diverse organic one-acre farms to large industrial tomato processing operations. The county's top five crops by income are almonds, processing tomatoes, wine grapes, rice, and 'organic production' (mixed fruits and vegetables). Notably, Yolo County is home to the Capay Valley, a patchwork of small-scale, family-run farms growing a diversity of organic fruits and vegetables. In 2017, nearly 20% of the farms marketed directly to consumers at farmers' markets, through CSAs and farm stands, and to corporate cafeterias in the Bay Area.

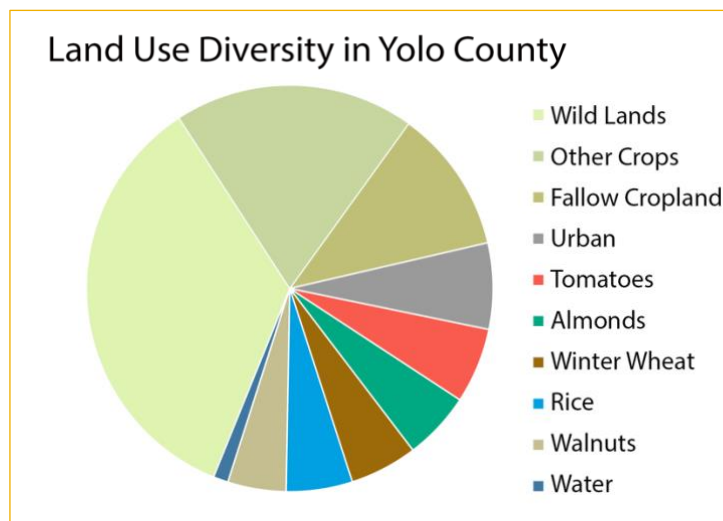


Figure 2. Pie-chart of Yolo County's land-use and top five food crops. Data source: land-use satellite imagery from the National Agricultural Statistics Service

The food system, in general, from land to market ownership is predominantly white. Of the 1,713 total producers in Yolo County, 13% are Hispanic/Latino and 12% are Black, Asian, and Indigenous. In addition 14% of farm owners do not have internet access. When compared to all farms nationwide, those with Hispanic or Latino principal operators tend to be smaller both in terms of size and sales. These operations are also less likely to have Internet access. While many farms with an established online platform are able to pivot product from restaurants to online CSA sales during the COVID-19 restructuring, many farmers of color begin with less access to existing markets and face a greater struggle.

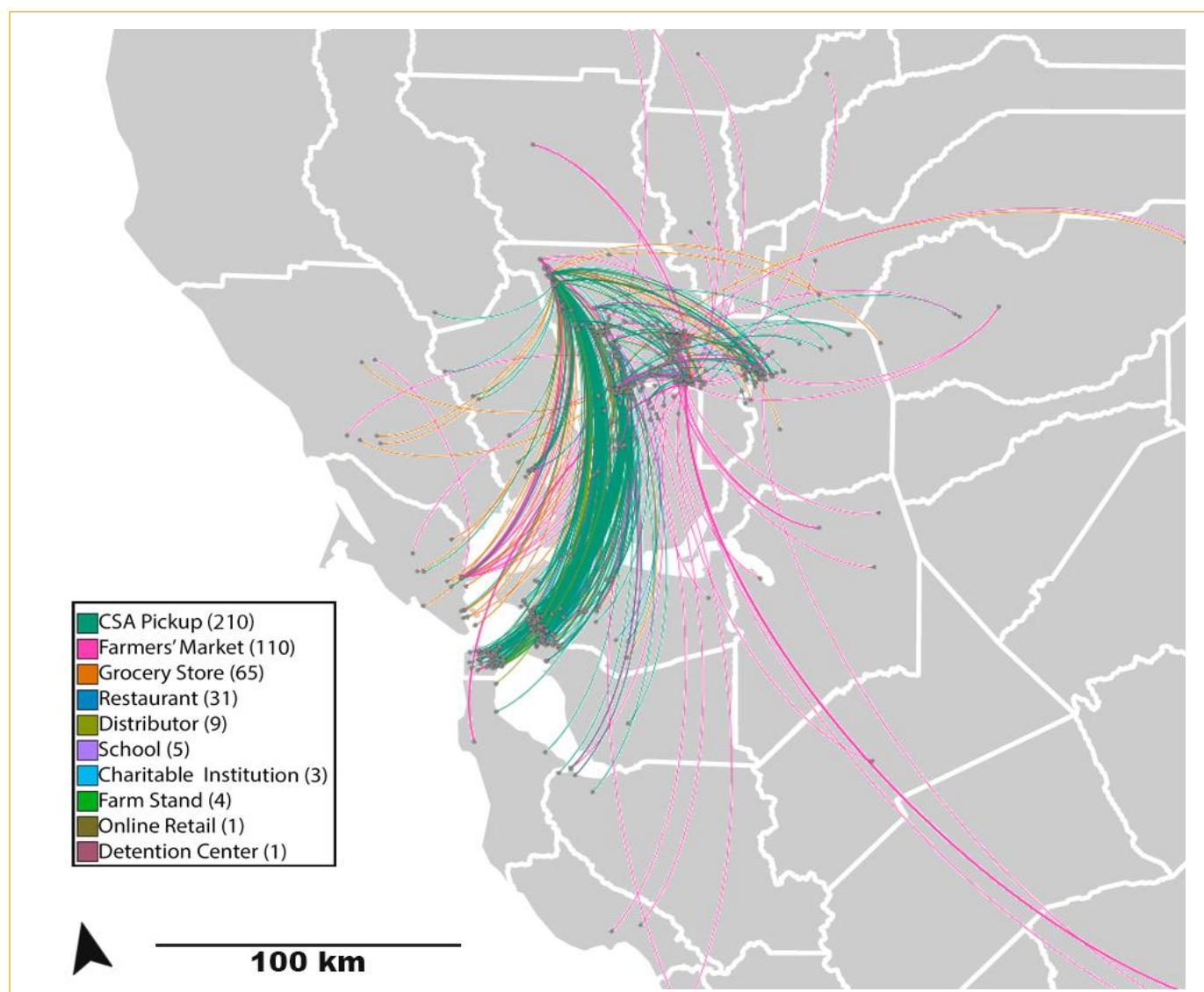


Figure 3. Community food supply network leading into and out of Yolo County. Data source: original dataset compiled by Jordana Fuchs-Chesney and Dr. Catherine Brinkley in 2018. Methods available at <https://brinkley.faculty.ucdavis.edu/yolo/>

Yolo County's community food system is tightly connected with surrounding counties and the Bay Area as shown in Figure 3. This map was created by gathering a novel dataset that includes information from farm websites and their first point of sale or donation for unprocessed fruits and vegetables. The network captures only farms and markets that advertise their connections to one another online with either the farm or the market (or both) located in Yolo County. The network represents 40% of the farms that direct market. Figure 3 shows **77 farms and 439 market connections**.

The majority of Yolo County's community food system is supported through CSA sales and farmers' markets (Table 1). Importantly, many farmers markets are located in the Bay Area, demonstrating the close ties between Bay Area consumers in supporting Yolo County farmers. Grocery stores are the third most prominent market connection for Yolo County farms. Like farmers' markets and CSA connections, Yolo farmers are well connected with outlets in nearby counties, and Yolo County local food outlets similarly connect with farms in surrounding counties.

Spotlight Contributors

	Contributors
Farmers' Market	34
Grocery Store	54
Restaurant	39
Farm	77
Institution	9
CSA-pick up	180
Other	6

While 77 farms sell through many markets and institutions, some contributors are more central to the network based on their market connections. These central hubs bring together products from multiple farms or sell through a variety of markets, sharing food and knowledge across the Greater Bay Area region. These contributors are deeply involved in food and agricultural policy. We list the top five most central organizations in this network, but the full list can be found at <https://brinkley.faculty.ucdavis.edu/yolo/>. **Full Belly Farm** and **Riverdog Farm** are both family-owned farms in Guinda, in the heart of the Capay Valley. They both sell their produce through restaurants, farmers' markets and a CSA that serves Yolo and Sacramento counties as well as the Greater Bay Area. **Terra Firma Farm** is on 200 acres near Winters, in the southwest of Yolo county. They operate a CSA and deliver to cities in Yolo

County as well as throughout the Bay Area. **The Davis Farmers' Market** was established in 1976 and was one of the first markets in the resurgence of farmers' markets in the US. **Rockridge Market Hall**, located in Oakland, is a European-style market hall with a mission to source from family farms within a 150-mile radius.

To grow racial and economic equity within the food system, consumers can support farmers of color and advocate for their inclusion at market outlets. Newer, black-owned farms, like **Black Bicycle Farm** already have an online presence, while other growers of color can be found at network hubs. For example, **Chavez Farms** and **Khang Farm** both sell at the Davis Farmers' Market. Farms with robust online platforms, like **Capay Organic's** online **Farm Fresh to You** are incorporating products from other farms into their home delivery boxes, opening opportunities for partnership with other sustainable growers and farmers of color.

Many farmers may not have any online presence and are not represented in our data. Mien and Hmong farmers offer fresh, affordable fruit at farm stands and produce trucks. Passage of **SB946** in 2019 has legalized roadside food vending across California, but the practice is still illegal in many cities, forcing producers, many of color, to risk arrest in selling their food. You can use public comment to draw attention to the requirement for your city to come into compliance with state code and legalize roadside food vending.

In addressing rising rates of food insecurity, some farms in the network, like **Durst Organic Growers**, donate the food they grow to **Yolo Food Bank**. Food banks provide food regardless of documentation status, making them important for the most vulnerable families, including farmworker families. As food insecurity has more than doubled during COVID-19, continued support for anti-poverty efforts and federal food security programs like, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programming (SNAP) and Women, Infant, Children (WIC) are all the more crucial. The **Davis Farmers Market** offers donation options and pick-up in partnership with the **Yolo Food Bank**, making support for socially and environmentally just food systems possible in one place.

Take Away

Use your purchasing power to advocate for greater equity in your the food system and learn from the network of growers and retailers which policies can help support the environment, farmworkers, and fellow eaters. Learn more about food safety during coronavirus at https://ucanr.edu/Coronavirus_and_COVID-19. Also consider supporting organizations like the Community Alliance with Family Farmers and the California Alliance of Farmers' Markets (more info: farmersmarketsalliance.org) that have a long history of working to preserve California's productive farmland, share its bounty and showcase its beauty.