

## Sacramento County Community Food Guide

Sacramento's Mayor branded the city "America's Farm-to-Fork capital" in 2012 to highlight the thriving culinary scene and the region's diverse agriculture, including unique and local food opportunities as well as the many large-scale growers and processors, like Blue Diamond Almonds, a cooperative headquartered in Sacramento. The Farm-to-Fork concept emphasizes what many people think of as a "community food system", where farms and markets collaborate toward aspirational goals of increasing equity and sustainability in the food system. Often, markets and farms vocally endorse sustainable growing practices and policies that support the most vulnerable, including farmworkers, essential retail workers, and low-income consumers. Because regional pride and mutual support are core values in a community food system, farms and markets often celebrate their partnership. Farms advertise the markets where you can find their food. Similarly, farmers markets, grocery stores, restaurants and institutions proudly showcase the farms that sell or donate food to them.

This guide maps such transparent market connections, providing a food system assessment to help understand how the many farms and markets are connected, which are central to the network, and what types of marketing are dominant. To do so, we gather online information about farms that advertise where their products can be found. While the data we use does not include all farms and markets in the county, the map we have created of Sacramento's community food system draws attention to institutions and farms that at the heart of the regional food system and are well positioned to share knowledge (as well as good food!).

These connections are important not only for Sacramento's regional sense of place, but also its local economy and the many people who work in the food system as well as enjoy its bounty. Importantly, the coronavirus pandemic has disproportionately impacted low-income people and communities of color, increasing overall food insecurity, shifting food supply chains, and challenging farmers, restaurants and local economies. A better understanding of the community food system can help policymakers and eaters learn how to support regional efforts.



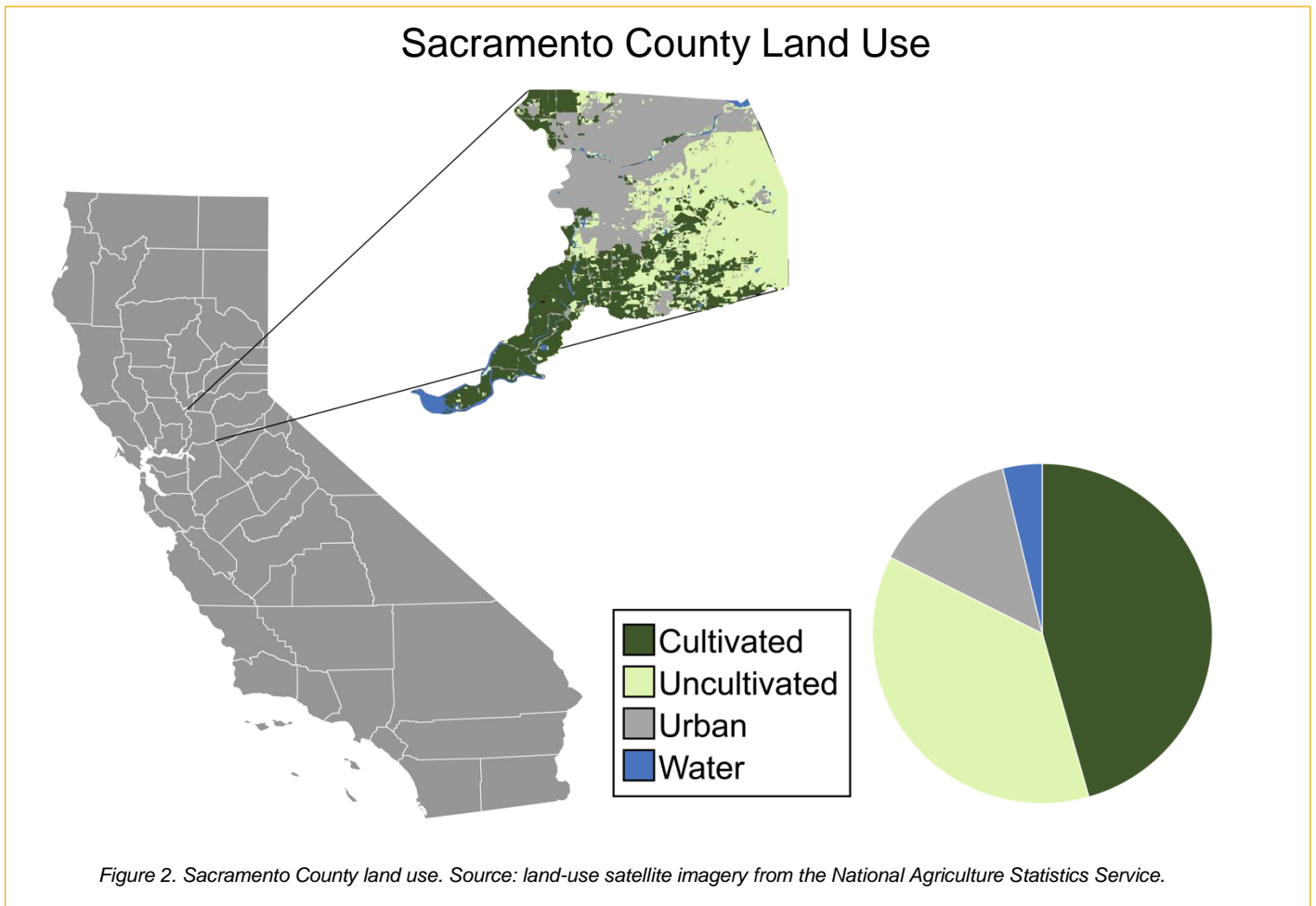
*Figure 1. Mural by Sacramento artist Anthony Padilla for The Food Factory building on K Street in downtown Sacramento*

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

### Land and Population

Sacramento County is home to more than 1.5 million people, its most populous city being the state capitol, Sacramento, with about 500,000 people. The county spans 636,000 acres, with just over 40% of which is farmland. Cultivated land in Figure 2 includes row crops, orchards, pasture and fallowed farmland. Uncultivated land includes working lands that are open space, parks and forests. The top five crops by landcover in Sacramento County are grapes, alfalfa, corn, winter wheat, and rice; and by total sales value are: wine grapes, milk, nursery stock, poultry and pears. According to the USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture, there were 1,161 farms in Sacramento County; 2% (23 farms) grew organically, and 15% (174 farms) sold directly to consumers at roadside stands, farmers’ markets or through CSAs.

Despite this abundance, about 11% of the county population in 2019 was food insecure before the pandemic according to the USDA, and over 115,000 households relying on Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (CalFresh) support, according to the USDA.



**Methods**

To explore the connections between farms and markets (Figure 3) we gathered a novel dataset that includes information from farm websites and their first point of sale or donation for unprocessed fruits, vegetables, eggs, milk and meat. To be included, the farm, market or both needed to be located within the county and advertise their sales or donations online. Notably, many large farm operations grow by contract and do not advertise where their products can be found. Similarly, many small farms sell only through roadside stands or do not have a web presence. The network we show includes 61 farms found within Sacramento County that sell directly to markets, compared to 174 that reported selling directly to markets according to the 2017 USDA Census. As such, the data we present here are not the full cast of farms, markets or many supporting organizations involved in the Sacramento food system, but only the transparent networks that are publicly listed online.

The network we present includes **222 farms and 202 markets with 609 connections between them**. Many farms sell or donate to more than one market, and more than 60% of the farms in the network are outside of Sacramento County and sell or donate food into the county. Most connections are from farms to grocery stores (262), followed by sales to restaurants (100) and farmers’ markets (73). The “other” category type of connections is primarily made up of sales through distributors (94 connections, 15% of connections), and also includes, box schemes (7 connections), catering companies (2 connections), stores other than grocery stores (1 connection) and farm sales to other farms (3 connections); as well as online sales (14 connections), farm stands (26 connections) and u-picks (5 connections).

Next, we highlight the central contributors to the community food system. Farms and markets that are more central to the network offer important meeting spots for both building community and policy coordination. The general principle in understanding a network is that if ‘all paths lead to Rome’, Rome is an important hub that can influence the rest of the system. While some farms may connect with many markets, they may not be as “central” to the community food system. For example, a few Sacramento County farms sell to multiple grocery stores (Figure 3) but are not as central to the overall network because they are not connecting with other contributors, such as restaurants or schools. Network centrality can be measured in many ways, and we use a measurement called “eigenvector centrality” in visualizing the central contributors. This measurement accounts for whether a contributor is connected to another contributor that is more central. For example, if you only know a few people, but one person is the Governor of California, you would be considered more central in a network map of people in California. For more information about how the network was measured and a full list of farms and markets in the Sacramento County community food system, please visit the website link in the citation below.

Next, we highlight the spatial and social orientation of the Sacramento community food network as well as the farms and markets that are central and those that focus on equity and food access.

Contributors	
Farm	222
Grocery Store	105
Restaurant	46
Farmers’ Market	19
Institution	11
Distributor	6
CSA Pickup	7
Other	8

Market connections	
Farmers’ Market	73
Restaurant	100
Grocery Store	262
CSA Pickup	8
Institution	14
Other	152

## Sacramento's Community Food Network

The types of marketing pathways are diverse, ranging from farms that specialize in sales to distributors and farms that sell through a combination of farmers markets, restaurants and other institutions, like schools and food banks. Most market connections are through grocery stores (105 grocery stores, 262 connections, 43% of connections), followed by restaurants (16% of the connections), and farmers' markets (19 farmers' markets, 12% of connections).

The farms and markets that advertise their marketing pathways to and from Sacramento County run the length of the state, and even beyond (Figure 3). As the spatial representation of the network (Figure 3, above) shows, most of the market connections through CSAs, farmers markets and institutions are more local in nature compared to sales to grocery stores and distributors. Identifying the more local markets and connections offers a place to raise awareness about local policy issues, while the wider-reaching networks offer opportunities to connect across the state about shared food system goals.

Importantly, both the far-reaching and local marketing connections are at the heart of Sacramento's community food network (Figure 3, lower image) where marketing pathways to restaurants, farmers markets, distributors and grocery stores overlap.

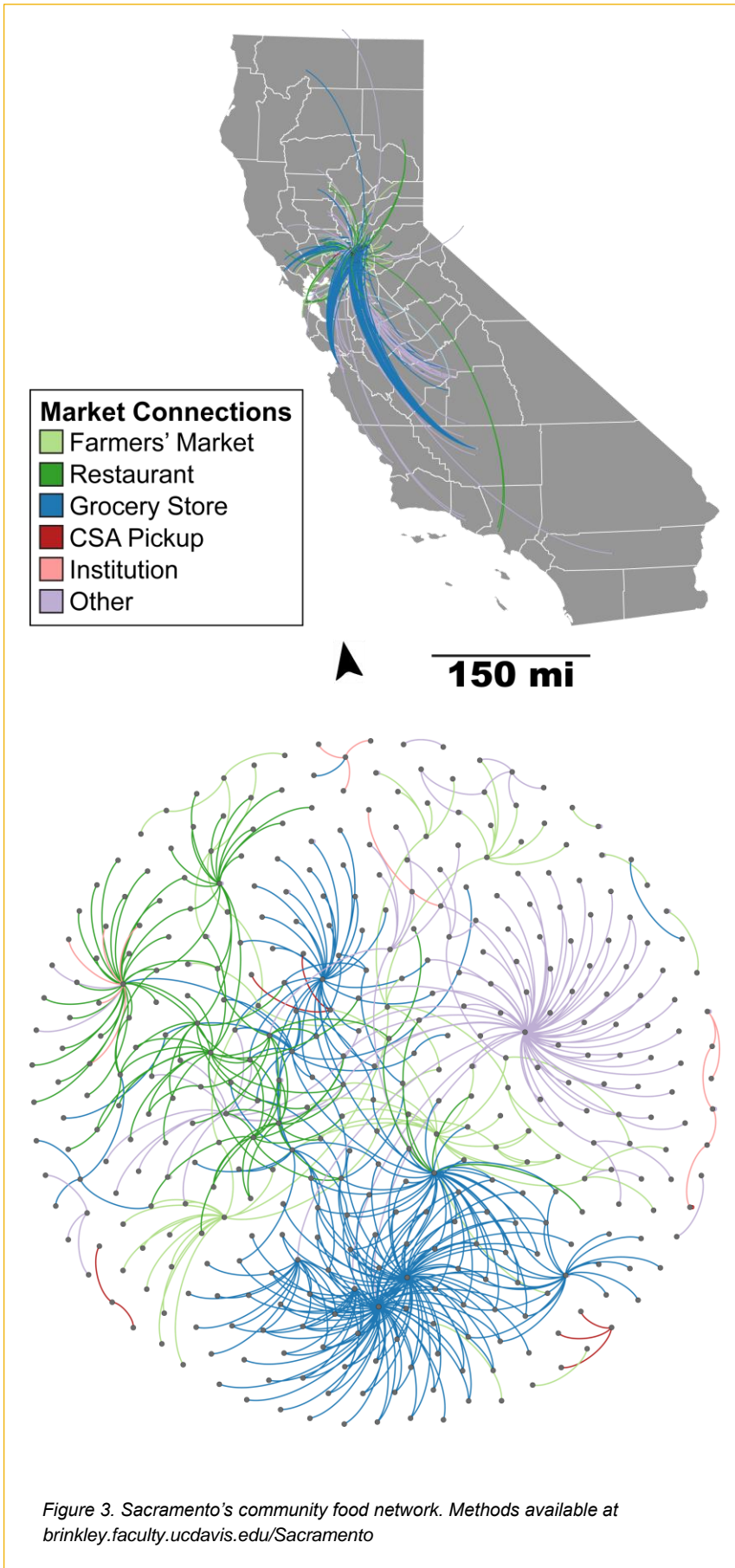


Figure 3. Sacramento's community food network. Methods available at [brinkley.faculty.ucdavis.edu/Sacramento](https://brinkley.faculty.ucdavis.edu/Sacramento)

## Spotlight Contributors

The most central businesses in Sacramento County's community food system range from large scale operations that sell internationally to urban farms with an explicit focus on social justice. For example, **General Produce Company** is a distributor focused on sustainable business practices located within Sacramento County. They source produce from local farms and export fruits and vegetables throughout the west, while also serving many local customers/institutions. **Aldon's Leafy Greens** is a Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) farm that specializes in microgreens. They sell to more than 30 local restaurants and donate to a local addiction rehabilitation center, **St. Johns Program**. **Niman Ranch** is a rancher and wholesaler that sources some of their products from a Sacramento-based company, **Superior Farms**, and sells to several popular Sacramento grocery stores, butcher shops, and restaurants. One such restaurant is **The Kitchen**, a Sacramento restaurant that gained a Michelin star in 2019. The restaurant proudly showcases the regional producers they work with throughout the Sacramento Valley. **Seka Hills**, in neighboring Yolo County, provides smaller-scale Sacramento-based grocery stores with fresh olive oil, nuts, and honey. They are owned and operated by the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation and farm with sustainable practices.

While not as central to the network, we highlight other contributors that emphasize a focus on food access and equity. For example, **Davis Ranch** sells fruits and vegetables at their farmstand in Sloughhouse, CA, and they work with the nonprofit **Helping Hands Produce**. The nonprofit allows volunteers to pick the surplus produce which is donated to food banks in the Sacramento area such as Twin Lakes Food Bank. In addition, **Soil Born Farms** operates several urban farm locations and manages the Harvest Sacramento Edible City Initiative, a collaborative effort of area residents, non-profits, community groups and businesses that harvest surplus fruit and vegetables from backyards and small orchards and donate it to local food assistance agencies.

We also emphasize self-identified growers and market owners of color to highlight racial equity in the food system. For example, **Three Sisters Gardens** is a nonprofit community garden in a largely Latinx neighborhood in West Sacramento that emphasizes engaging youth. They sell a fruit and vegetable CSA out of two locations in Sacramento County. **Yisrael Family Urban Farm** is a Black-owned farm in the city of Sacramento. They provide the community with educational services and sell products through the **African Market Place**, a farmers' market. A Sacramento specialty grower of black diamond watermelons, Takemori Farms, sells their prized fruit to **La Esperanza Supermarket**, a Mexican grocery, restaurant and bakery in South Oak Park. **SK Farm Fresh Produce** grows their vegetables within the county and specializes in Asian heritage vegetables and attends the **Asian Farmers' Market** for Asian American and Pacific Island growers.

## Take Away

While Sacramento's Farm-to-Fork capital campaign is largely focused on local and regional tourism and hospitality experiences, this network analysis of Sacramento's community food system demonstrates how many producers and large-scale distributors are also visibly engaged. We show that while farmers' market connections are central to the Sacramento community food network, so are marketing relationships to restaurants, grocery stores and distributors. We also show how Sacramento's farms and markets connect, not only locally, but across the state and nation, bringing together growers, store managers, chefs, and eaters. All of these marketing opportunities help build flexibility and growth opportunities into the food system, an important consideration as COVID has forced food supply lines to shift rapidly

In addition, a focus on equity is especially important during the pandemic as food insecurity rates have risen and communities of color are especially impacted. We found that many farm and market websites emphasize shared values around preserving farmland, fostering healthier diets, and supporting food charities that offer free distributions. The connections to food banks and pantries are important avenues of food access, particularly for undocumented families and newly arrive refugees.

Further, many local farms and markets identified in this network are working on city- and state-level growing and eating policies. The more far-reaching networks offer opportunities to connect across the state and nation about shared food system goals. Many of the regional farms, distributors, and markets highlighted above are also furthering food system planning and policy conversations, working together with numerous aligned groups, such as the Sacramento Food Policy Council. Such policy efforts can help cement sustainability and social equity goals into public procurement programs, like those of the University of California, Sacramento Unified City School District and the Golden 1 Arena.

Importantly, this guide highlights farms and markets that advertise their connections online. There is room for more markets to and institutional purchasers to celebrate the farms they work with. The more people can see the people behind the food they eat, the more they will be invested in supporting each other through their local food system and beyond.

You can also use your purchasing power to advocate for greater equity in the food system and learn from the network of growers and retailers whose policies can help support the environment, farmworkers, and fellow consumers. Learn more about food safety during coronavirus at

[https://ucanr.edu/Coronavirus\\_and\\_COVID-19](https://ucanr.edu/Coronavirus_and_COVID-19). Also consider supporting organizations like local nonprofits and food banks (including some of those listed above), the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (caff.org) and the California Alliance of Farmers' Markets (farmersmarketsalliance.org) that have a long history of working to preserve California's productive farmland, share its bounty and showcase its beauty.