

System Indicators

Agricultural Lands and Ranches



**Economic Productivity, Public
Grazing Allotments, and
Number of Farm and Ranch
Operators (2007/2011)**

December 2013

Economic Productivity

Total Agricultural Commodities Sold

As shown in Table 1, the counties fully within the Region contributed over \$317 million to the State's total gross agricultural production (both farms and ranches) of \$43.5 billion in 2011, while the counties partly within the Region produced almost \$21 billion. Lassen, Mono and Mariposa Counties led the total gross value of agricultural products of the counties fully within the Region. Kern, Fresno, Madera and Tulare Counties, all of which extend west into the San Joaquin Valley outside of the Region, made up 95% of the total gross value of agricultural products from the counties partly within the Region. Appendix C provides the leading commodities by county, the Cattle and Calf and Hay and Pasture Sales, Fruit, Nut, and Vegetable Sales, and number of farm and ranch operators.

Table 1. Total Agricultural Production and Statewide County Rank		
	Statewide Rank	Total Agricultural Production
Counties Fully within the Region		
Lassen	39	\$89,539,000
Mono	44	\$53,068,000
Mariposa	48	\$30,975,000
Amador	49	\$28,511,000
Tuolumne	51	\$22,721,000
Plumas	52	\$20,019,000
Calaveras	53	\$19,637,000
Nevada	54	\$14,924,000
Alpine	57	\$5,311,000
Sierra	56	\$6,200,000
Counties Partly within the Region		
Fresno	1	\$6,884,582,000
Tulare	2	\$5,629,264,000
Kern	3	\$5,364,363,000
Madera	12	\$1,569,239,000
Butte	17	\$635,707,000
Tehama	29	\$245,672,000
Yuba	30	\$207,984,000
Modoc	37	\$107,009,000
Shasta	40	\$89,060,000
Placer	43	\$62,304,000
El Dorado	47	\$31,338,000
Inyo	50	\$26,271,000
Source: California Agricultural Statistics Review, 2011		

Fruit, Nut, and Vegetable Sales, and number of farm and ranch operators.

While geography, topography and environmental conditions largely dictate the type of agricultural production that can occur within the Region, irrigation is one of the most important drivers of overall agricultural productivity. Lassen and Mono Counties were the top grossing agricultural counties fully within the Region in 2011, and they also had the highest irrigated water use⁸ in 2005 (Kenny, Barber, Hutson, Linsey, Lovelace, & Maupin, 2009). As shown in Table 1, all of the counties fully within the Region rank at the bottom of counties statewide in terms of total gross agricultural production. The number of irrigated acres in these counties in 2005 was small compared to the rest of the State (194,870-acres for counties fully within the Sierra compared to 9,050,310-acres Statewide) and decreased from north to south. Fresno, Kern, Tulare, and Madera Counties had the highest irrigated water use, respectively, and had the largest crop sales.

⁸ The 2005 irrigated water use data can be fairly compared to the economic production values of 2011 as significant shifts have not occurred in the last ten years regarding irrigated water use in the Sierra.

Leading Agricultural Sales

Key findings include:

- Cattle and Calves and Hay and Pasture operations were the leading agricultural sales in the counties fully within the Region. In these counties, the total sales of these two products was over \$223 million or 74 percent of the total gross agricultural production for counties fully within the Region in 2011. The exception was Amador County where the top grossing crop was wine grapes. Cattle and Calves or overall Livestock Products were one of the top ten grossing commodities for all 22 counties in the Region.
- The number one agricultural commodity for both Lassen and Mono Counties was Hay and Pasture (irrigated) sales, which placed these two counties in the top of all counties fully within the Region in terms of total gross agricultural production. Between 2010 and 2011, the value of Hay sales increased by 69 percent, which significantly benefited the total agricultural production for Lassen and Mono Counties.
- The contribution of fruit, nut and vegetable crops to the total gross value of all agricultural commodities was very low in the counties fully within the Region compared to the counties partly within the Region.
- In the South Subregion, Almond and Milk products were either the first and/or second leading sales in each county. The value of both Almond and Milk products has increased significantly in the last five years due to international demand and exports from California.

Net Farm Income & Government Payments

As shown in Table 2, the difference in total net farm and ranch income between the counties fully within the Region, (\$6,564,000), compared to the counties partly within the Region (\$2,953,987,000) is staggering. All of the counties in the South Central Subregion had negative net cash farm and ranch income based on the 2007 Census data and these counties received the lowest amount of government payments with the exception of Sierra County. They also had the lowest irrigated water use of all the counties within the Region. Lassen and Mono Counties had the largest net cash farm and ranch incomes among counties fully within the SNC Region. These counties also had the highest irrigated water use among these counties in 2005 and were thus able to produce more hay and pasture crops, which contributed to higher crop values and overall improved net cash performance in 2007.

Looking at the counties partly in the Region, Tulare, Kern, and Fresno Counties had the largest net cash farm and ranch income and received the largest government payments. They also had the highest irrigated water use. Placer, Shasta, and El Dorado Counties all had negative net cash farm income and they received the smallest amount of government payments of the counties partly within the Region; they also had the lowest irrigated water use of all the counties partly within the Region. Government payments may make a difference in whether or not the net cash farm income per farm is profitable, but use of irrigation also appears to be an important component of net cash farm income.

Table 2. Net Cash Farm and Ranch Income and Government Payments by County

	Net Cash Income	Average Net Cash Income	Average Government Payment	Total Government Payments
Counties fully within the SNC Region				
Alpine	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
Lassen	\$5,293,000	\$11,531	\$349	\$160,000
Mono	\$3,268,000	\$38,901	Not reported	Not reported
Sierra	\$145,000	\$2,899	\$940	\$47,000
Plumas	\$21,000	\$146	Not reported	Not reported
Mariposa	-\$1,005,000	-\$3,326	\$434	\$131,000
Tuolumne	-\$2,195,000	-\$5,997	\$101	\$37,000
Amador	-\$2,299,000	-\$4,800	\$190	\$91,000
Calaveras	-\$2,731,000	-\$4,328	\$78	\$49,000
Nevada	-\$7,061,000	-\$10,233	\$329	\$227,000
Totals	(\$6,564,000)	\$24,793	\$346	\$504,767
Counties partly within the SNC Region				
Tulare	\$871,303,000	\$166,279	\$3,881	\$20,335,000
Kern	\$869,363,000	\$410,658	\$12,917	\$27,346,000
Fresno	\$798,561,000	\$131,321	\$4,068	\$24,737,000
Madera	\$273,852,000	\$160,335	\$2,698	\$4,608,000
Butte	\$104,630,000	\$51,089	\$7,217	\$14,780,000
Tehama	\$25,791,000	\$14,721	\$608	\$1,065,000
Yuba	\$23,181,000	\$27,997	\$6,233	\$5,161,000
Modoc	\$14,408,000	\$32,161	\$1,842	\$825,000
Inyo	\$3,809,000	\$40,524	Not reported	Not reported
Placer	-\$3,585,000	-\$2,409	\$1,907	\$2,838,000
Shasta	-\$6,084,000	-\$4,130	\$171	\$252,000
El Dorado	-\$10,372,000	-\$8,180	\$118	\$149,000
Totals	\$2,964,857,000	\$1,020,366	\$3,787	\$1,989,376
Source: 2007 Census of Agriculture; USDA 2009				

Public Grazing Allotments

The practice of Sierra ranchers moving cattle from the grasslands and foothills in the winter to the higher elevations of the Sierra in the summer has been occurring since the 1850s (Sualk, 2002). Today, cattle grazing in the higher elevations occurs primarily on public grazing allotments on lands managed by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. In the Region, there are 3,480,198 acres of grazing allotments on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (Bureau of Land Management, 2011).

On lands managed by the US Forest Service, there are 8,648,783 acres of grazing allotments; 6,280,415 acres are active, and 1,394,827 acres are vacant.

In 2002 central Sierra ranchers were surveyed and asked what the economic contribution and importance of public grazing allotments were to their overall production. The majority of respondents stated that half of their income is attributed to having allotments (Huntsinger, 2013). The economic contribution of public grazing allotments to the total agricultural production in the Region is not currently known.

Number of Farm and Ranch Operators

In 2007, there were 14,485 farm and ranch operators in all 22 counties fully and partly in the Region who stated that farming or ranching was their primary occupation, while 13,270 farm and ranch operations identified another occupation as their primary occupation. Sierra County led the counties fully within the Region with the most farm operators with their primary occupation as farming. The majority of farm operators in Alpine, Nevada, El Dorado, Mariposa, and Placer Counties had a different primary occupation other than farming. These Counties also had the lowest net farm income for agriculture and ranches as reported in Table 2.