Farm Water Update

AT THE CROSSROADS OF WATER & GROWING FOOD

AUGUST 2022

CALIFORNIA CONSUMERS ARE WORRIED

But There are Things the State Can Do to Make the Future Brighter

The recent announcement that June's inflation rate had soared to more than 9%, the highest in 40 years, was a sobering reminder of just how difficult times are for Californians. And this striking increase was led by commodities none of us can do without – food, gasoline, and housing.

Food Prices Are Up & Availability is Down

Increased food prices are due to a combination of factors including higher transportation and labor costs, the war in Ukraine, but also reduced availability. Consider these statistics from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA):

- 46% less cantaloupe was available in 2019 than 1999
- 40% fewer grapes were available in 2019 than 1989
- In general, there were nearly 2 pounds less fruit available per person in 2019 compared to 1970

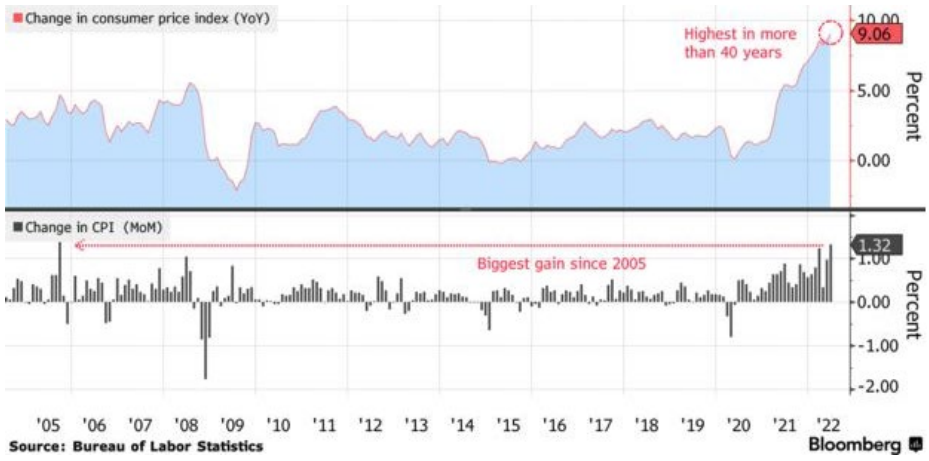
And these figures don't yet reflect the dismal harvest figures expected this year.

Why is This a Problem for California Since We Grow So Much Food?

Many people wonder how Ukraine and high transportation costs can be having such an impact in California because we're such a big farm state. One recent news article asked that question: "But still, it's a bit of a head-scratcher because the Bay Area is in close proximity to farmland." (SF Chronicle 7-20-22)

The fact that California farms produce 60% of our nation's fruits, nuts and vegetables is taken for granted. And our ability to continue functioning as our state and nation's grocery basket has been dramatically impacted, in part because of the drought, but also because we've been slow to adapt to climate change and we have an unbalanced and out-of-date regulatory system.

Relentless Inflation in U.S. Hotter than Forecast as Prices Climb in Broad Fashion



Without changes, more farmland will disappear. And every acre of land removed from production means the equivalent of 50,000 fewer salads.

We can't make it rain, but there are things we can do to improve the situation and relieve some of the pressure on our farms as well as California consumers and the environment.

What Can be Done

1. Prioritize California farming

California needs to make the safe, affordable, domestic food supply that comes from California farms a priority. Food production in California cannot simply be moved elsewhere. Other states do not have our climate, and in some cases actually have too much rain. If we abandon California food production, we will need to rely more on an increasingly unreliable supply from other countries. And even if food from overseas is available it will be more expensive due to high transportation costs. In addition, many countries lack the strict food safety regulations that we have in California, making much of the food imported less safe.

2. Implement PPIC recommendations to increase storage and modernize regulations to achieve long-term water security

We don't have to accept the effects of an ongoing drought when there are things we can do to reduce its impacts. We are in this situation because we've been slow to act on the recommendations of climate scientists who have been telling us for years that our changing weather patterns mean wetter wet years and drier dry ones. It is critical that we capture water in wet years for use in dry ones.

PPIC Survey, July 2022

***What do you think is the most important environmental issue facing California today?**

30% water supply, drought, reservoirs
13% wildfires, loss of forests, forest fires

A recent report by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) estimates increasing storage could allow us to capture between 400,000 and 800,000 acre-feet of additional water each year, enough to serve hundreds of thousands of homes for a year or grow the equivalent of 10.5 billion salads.

Key Excerpts from PPIC Report May 2022

Emphasis added

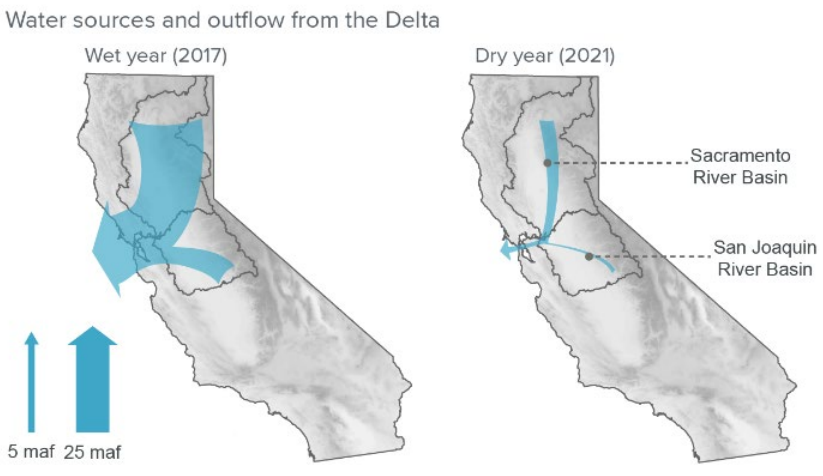
"Wet years are increasingly important for supply. ***Even in extended dry periods, wet years still occur and are vital for supply. During very wet years, a large volume of water is uncapturable,*** and insufficient capacity to store water south of the Delta becomes a limitation on export pumping. Expanding above- and below-ground storage capacity could increase Delta exports without changing current regulations. In such years, more water could also be captured and stored upstream.

"Prepare for wet years. Increasing the amount of water stored during wet periods—whether by taking more water out upstream of the Delta or making the best use of export facilities—has to be done with care

PPIC | PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

We can safely capture wet-year water

Comparing Delta flows in wet and dry years



for the environment and other water users. ***But it is possible to do a better job of storing water during wet years—both above and below ground—without doing harm.*** Improving the management of wet-year supplies is a critical climate change adaptation strategy. This will require identifying cost effective investment options and adapting operations and regulatory approaches to facilitate capturing more water in wet times.

"Modernize and simplify regulations to provide water for the environment. The current mix of state and federal regulations is unnecessarily rigid, not well coordinated, and not always logical."

Explore the full report: https://www.ppic.org/publication/policy-brief-tracking-where-water-goes-in-a-changing-sacramento-san-joaquin-delta/

PPIC Survey, July 2022

Do you think that the state and local governments are doing too much, the right amount, or not enough to respond to the current drought in California?

4% too much
27% the right amount
68% not enough

Conclusion

This is the worst time to put limits on our ability to grow our own food. Global instability, increased transportation costs, and sometimes lax food safety standards elsewhere mean that we must prioritize a safe, affordable, domestically grown food supply. This is all doable. The state had a $97 billion dollar surplus projected for the 2022-23 Fiscal Year, and while some funding was allocated to on-farm water conservation, no funding went to new surface water storage projects, conveyance subsidence repair, or agricultural water supplier efficient water management projects. We also have the science to update our regulations and make our water management system better. We just need to have the political will to get it done. California consumers are hoping we will.



SCAN FOR AN ELECTRONIC VERSION WITH LINKS TO ADDED MATERIAL

**These are among the key findings of a statewide survey on environmental issues conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California from July 8 to 15, 2022. https://www.ppic.org/publication/ppic-statewide-survey-californians-and-the-environment-july-2022/*

Valley Ag Water Coalition | ***Bob Reeb*** *bobr@water-warrior.com*
The mission of the Valley Ag Water Coalition is to represent the collective interests of its San Joaquin Valley member agricultural water companies and agencies in California legislative and regulatory matters by providing leadership and advocacy on issues relating to the development and delivery of a reliable farm water supply.

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CFWC is a non-profit, educational organization that provides fact-based information on farm water issues to the public.