



**AB 1961 – Sustainable Farmland Strategy Act**

**SUMMARY**

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AB 1961 would require counties to develop a Sustainable Farmland Strategy (SFS), which includes maps of agriculturally-zoned lands and local goals, policies and ordinances for the retention and mitigation of agriculturally-zoned lands. The Sustainable Farmland Strategy Act creates opportunities at the county level to discuss and plan for the long-term retention of farmland, while maintaining flexibility and local control of land use planning decisions.

**BACKGROUND**

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California is the nation’s leader in food production and contributes significantly to our food security and our economy. California agriculture is also positioned to provide climate benefits by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Research funded by the California Energy Commission’s Public Interest Energy Research (PIER) program found that an acre of urban land emits 70 times more greenhouse gas emissions than an acre of irrigated cropland.

Over the past 30 years, an average of approximately 30,000 acres of California agricultural land was permanently converted to non-agricultural uses annually.

The conservation of a maximum amount of the limited supply of California’s agricultural land is necessary for the maintenance of the agricultural economy of the state, climate change mitigation, enhancement of the state’s natural resources and the assurance of an adequate, healthy and nutritious food supply for the residents of this state and nation.

Counties have jurisdiction over the majority of the state’s agricultural land and play a vital role in regulating the use of land, including the development and conservation of agricultural lands through appropriate zoning and planning activities, as well as determinations of the potential environmental impacts of proposed land use changes.

**THIS BILL**

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This proposal recognizes the importance of agricultural land, a finite resource that’s critical for our economy and food security. The bill creates opportunities at the county level to formalize and strengthen efforts to conserve agriculturally-zoned land.

AB 1961 would require that, by January 1, 2018, counties develop a Sustainable Farmland Strategy (SFS), which inventories agriculturally-zoned land, describes the local goals, strategies, and related policies and ordinances to retain agriculturally-zoned lands where practical, and mitigate the loss of agriculturally-zoned lands. The SFS will be posted on the county’s website. Counties with less than 4 percent of their land base in agriculture are exempt. Counties will have the option of complying with the SFS requirement by relying on existing inventories and maps of agricultural lands and existing goals, strategies and related policies and ordinances that substantially comply with the provisions of the bill.

**Co-sponsors**

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American Farmland Trust  
California Climate and Agriculture Network  
Community Alliance with Family Farmers

**Supporters:**

Agricultural – Natural Resources Trust  
American Planning Association, California Chapter  
California Association of Resource Conservation Districts  
California Center for Rural Policy, Humboldt State University  
California Farm Bureau Federation  
California Farmers Union  
California State Grange  
Catholic Charities Diocese of Stockton  
Farmland Working Group  
Friends Committee of Legislation of California  
Greenbelt Alliance  
Knoll Farms  
Land Trust of Santa Cruz County  
LandWatch Monterey County  
Marin Agriculture Land Trust

Peninsula Open Space Trust  
Potrero Nuevo Farm  
Rich Rominger, Rominger Brothers Farms  
Rincon-Vitova Insectaries  
San Mateo County Farm Bureau  
San Francisco Urban Agriculture Alliance  
Sequoia Riverlands Trust  
Sierra Nevada Alliance  
Sierra Orchards  
Silicon Valley Land Conservancy  
Sonoma Land Trust  
Supervisor Don Horsley, San Mateo County  
Supervisor Louis Calcagno, Monterey County  
The Nature Conservancy  
Trust for Public Land  
Valley Land Alliance

Plus, a sign-on letter from 40 farmers in 20 counties

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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