



NEWS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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2023 Irrigation and Water Management data for California now available

SACRAMENTO, CA, Nov. 5, 2024 –There were 38,033 farms with 7.8 million irrigated acres, which included 22.6 million acre-feet of water applied in California, according to the 2023 Irrigation and Water Management Survey results, published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). In 2018, the irrigation survey results showed that there were 41,431 farms with 8.4 million irrigated acres, which included 24.5 million acre-feet of water. The results show that the number of farms irrigating, the amount of land irrigated, and the total water used for irrigation decreased between 2018 and 2023.

“The 2023 Irrigation and Water Management Survey, conducted every five years, expands on the data collected in the 2022 Census of Agriculture,” said NASS Pacific Region Director, Gary R. Keough. “This report offers up-to-date information on California’s use, management, and investment of agricultural water supplies and irrigation systems.”

Data highlights from the 2023 Irrigation and Water Management Survey for California include:

- The total amount of water used in 2023 was 22.6 million acre-feet, down 7.7% from 2018.
- The average acre-feet applied per acre was 2.9, which was the same as the 2018 irrigation survey. (An acre-foot is the amount of water required to cover one acre to a depth of one foot.)
- Farmers irrigated 7.4 million acres of harvested cropland acres in the open in 2023.
- Fruit and tree nut farms irrigated the most acreage with 3,874,244 acres followed by vegetables farms irrigated 1,300,981 acres.
- Off-farm water from all suppliers accounted for 52% of irrigation water applied to acres in the open.
- The irrigation results show 56% of acres were irrigated using drip, trick, or low-flow micro sprinklers.
- Labor costs were the leading irrigation expenditure with farmers and ranchers spending \$1.2 billion followed closely by energy costs for pumping well and surface water which amounted to \$1.1 billion.
- Irrigated area of horticulture under protection was 363 million square feet in 2023. This compares with 329 million square feet in 2018.
- Irrigated horticulture grown in the open was 38,776 acres in 2023. This compares with 74,259 acres in 2018.

The 2023 Irrigation and Water Management Survey followed up with approximately 4,700 producers who indicated in the 2022 Census of Agriculture that they irrigated or had irrigation equipment. Producers provided information on water sources and amount of water used; acres irrigated by type of system; irrigation use by crop; and system investments and energy costs.

“Water use is critical to California agriculture” said Keough, “The 2023 Irrigation and Water Management Survey data provide valuable information that producers, farm organizations, businesses, state departments of agriculture, elected representatives and legislative bodies at all levels of government can use to make agriculture water use more efficient.”

To access the results of the 2023 Irrigation and Water Management Survey,

visit www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus or view in NASS's online [Quick Stats](#) database.

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NASS is the federal statistical agency responsible for producing official data about U.S. agriculture and is committed to providing timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to U.S. agriculture.

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