

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Definition of Agricultural Land*



Agricultural land:

In areas where lands have been surveyed by the State "Agricultural land" means prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, or unique farmland, as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture land inventory and monitoring criteria, and as modified for California.

*California State Resource Code Division 13, Environmental Protection



LAFCO Policies/Comments

- Land which is currently engaged in the substantial production of food, fiber, or livestock is identified as agricultural land under Williamson Act contract shall not be annexed to a city for the purpose of promoting urban development.
- Development of existing vacant land or non-prime agricultural lands for urban uses within a city's jurisdiction or within city's sphere of influence should be encouraged before any areas outside city's jurisdiction and/or sphere of influence.
- LAFCO strongly encourages the City to develop mitigation measures to address the loss of open space and agricultural land.
- Where appropriate, LAFCO will consider adopted policies advocating maintenance of greenbelts or other open space around cities in reviewing Urban Service Area amendments.

California Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (LESA)

The California LESA Model uses six different factors to rate the relative quality of land resources based upon specific measurable features, rated separately on a 100-point scale:

- **Land Evaluation Criteria (50%)**
 - Land Capability
 - Soil(s) Quality/Type
- **Site Assessment Criteria (50%)**
 - Project Size
 - Water Resource Availability
 - Surrounding Agricultural Land
 - Surrounding Protected Resource Land

Agricultural Land Policy Options

OPTION	MITIGATION	REDUCE SIGNIFICANCE	ADOPT OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS
I	None	No, significant unavoidable	Yes
II	Yes (at least 1:1*)	Yes, less than significant	No
III	Yes (less than 1:1*)	No, significant unavoidable	Yes
IV	Yes (at least 1:1*)	No, significant unavoidable	Yes
V	Yes No Net Loss** (1:1 or greater)	Yes, less than significant	No

* “Existing” - Agricultural land used for mitigation would be land which is currently in agricultural use, agriculturally zoned and or designated on the 2020 General Plan Land Use/Transportation Diagram as Agricultural.

** “No Net Loss” - Agricultural land used for mitigation would be those lands with prime soil but are currently developed with non-agricultural uses or those currently zoned or designated as non agricultural and converted to agricultural uses permanently.

NEXT STEPS

- DEVELOP MITIGATION PROGRAM FOR CONVERTED AGRICULTURAL LAND(s)
 - Meet with stakeholders.
 - Identify appropriate mitigation.
 - Identify implementation techniques.
 - Identify process for ongoing management and monitoring program(s).





Expected Outcomes

- Identify Types of Projects to Mitigate for
- Identify Appropriate Mitigation Areas (inside/outside county)
- Determine Appropriate Amount of Mitigation (i.e., ratios/fees)
- Identify Possible Land Acquisition Mechanisms
- List Program Administration Procedures & Ongoing Administration Funding