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TO: San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority Board of Directors

FROM: Mike Wade, Executive Director

DATE: May 13, 2024

RE: Program and Activities Update

U.S. Food Imports - Fact Sheet

America's grocery stores may seem brimming with fresh fruits and vegetables year-round, but behind the vibrant displays lies a sobering truth: a significant portion of these products are imported from other countries. According to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), a staggering 60.9% of the fresh fruit and 38.8% of the fresh vegetables consumed in the United States are sourced from abroad.

CFWC's new fact sheet, **"Our Food Supply - Sustainability & Imports,"** opens the door to discussions about the policies and regulations that have made American consumers more dependent on foreign-produced food than ever before. Fresh fruit imports have risen by 228% since 1980, while fresh vegetable imports are up 479% for the same period.

Unsustainable Water Supplies

Mexico's farm production has helped fill the shelves for American consumers, however, the reliance on its produce comes with deeper concerns: unsustainable water supplies. Of total fruit and vegetable imports, Mexico now accounts for 69 percent of fresh vegetables and 51 percent of fresh fruits that make their way to the United States.

Mexico is also one of the world's largest exporters of nuts, with the water-stressed region of Chihuahua a major source of walnut production in the country. During the past 30 years, total nut production has grown significantly, with production increasing over 640% from 47,405 tons in 1992 to 304,747 tons in 2022.

Large swaths of Mexican farmland, including regions around Mexicali and the Baja Peninsula, are irrigated with water supplies that are not sustainable. The new CFWC fact sheet (attached) highlights the rising cost of food in America, UN projections of the growing global food demand, and that overseas producers are not required to meet the same health and safety standards that are common in California.

A CFWC article in the June issue of West Coast Nut magazine goes into greater detail about the causes and effects of our rising dependence on foreign-produced food and the need for elected officials to take the problem seriously for the sake of our food supply and for the California farmers who are forced to compete with overseas producers. In the article, CFWC recommended the following:

"To protect America's food supply, elected officials must consider the long-term effects of their actions. This means making more careful decisions about the policies and regulations that affect farmers who grow our food. More and more regulatory burdens in California often result in transporting problems to other parts of the world instead of avoiding them here in the first place.

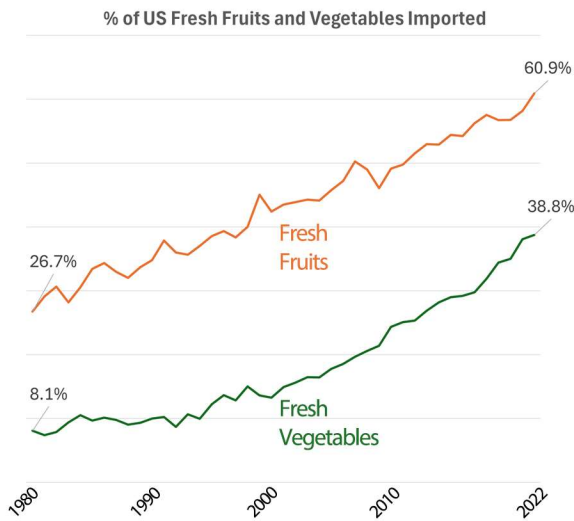
Local examples include things such as investing in water supply infrastructure and technology, more flexible permitting for capturing flood water to use for more groundwater recharge, eliminating regulatory oversight proposals to monitor activities that have yet to pose a problem, and letting local water managers govern groundwater activities because a one-size-fits-all system doesn't work."

Find the fact sheet online here: <https://farmwater.org/fact-sheets/>

Our Food Supply - Sustainability & Imports

Country Profile: Mexico

Families across the country face rising prices at the grocery store, while farmers across the globe experience mounting difficulty producing the fresh fruits and vegetables that are key to a healthy lifestyle.



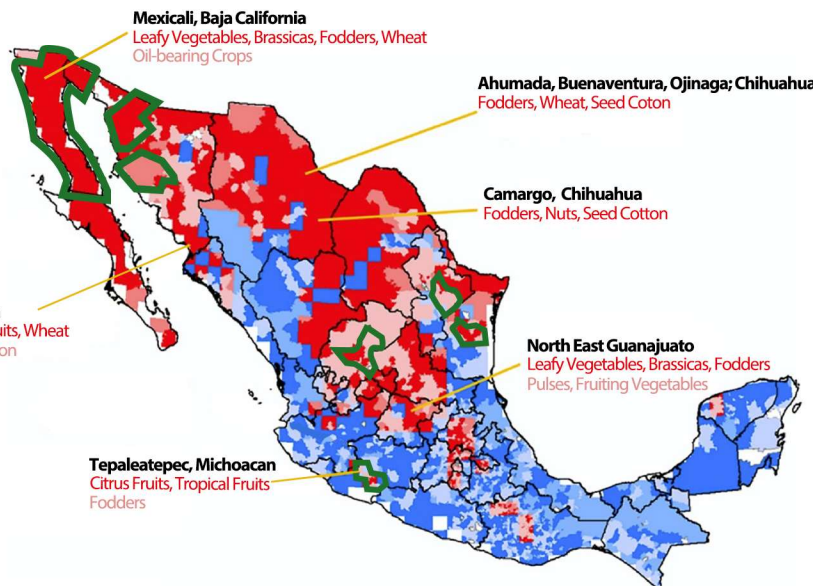
Local Fruit and Vegetable Production is Struggling

California's farms produce nearly 70% of the nation's domestically grown fruits and vegetables, but imports now account for more than 38% of the U.S. supply of fresh vegetables, and 60% of fresh fruits.

Of imports, Mexico accounts for 69% of fresh vegetables and 51% of fresh fruits.

California water restrictions, high business costs, and 30 years of trade policy have pushed domestic food production south of the border to Mexico where water supplies have become largely unsustainable.

At a time when California is projected to lose half a million acres of farmland due to groundwater regulations and inadequate surface supplies, our growing reliance on foreign-produced food is now threatened by widespread overuse of water supplies in Mexico.



■ Sustainable, Decreasing Irrigation
 ■ Sustainable, No Change in Irrigation
 ■ Sustainable, Increasing Irrigation
■ Unsustainable, Decreasing Irrigation
 ■ Unsustainable, No Change in Irrigation
 ■ Unsustainable, Increasing Irrigation
□ No Data
□ Dominant Fruit & Vegetable producing regions

Sustainability and change in irrigation water consumption. The map shows year 2000 sustainability classifications and irrigation requirement trends since then. Select Mexican municipalities and the crops driving irrigation trends are highlighted.

- Americans pay 11% of their income on food, the highest in over 30 years.
- Food production must double by 2050 to meet the demand of the world's growing population.
- Overseas food producers are not required to meet the same health and safety standards that exist in California.

