

# What is Agriculture all about in San Diego?



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# There is more to San Diego than Shamu....

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- San Diego is the southwestern-most county in the US and is approximately the size of Connecticut
- Our wide ranging topography and climate zones allow us to grow over 200 commodities in areas from the beach to snowy mountains to the desert.
- San Diego has the 6th highest urban population among counties in the US
- We also have the 16th largest agricultural economy in the US!



# San Diego farming statistics

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- Agriculture covers 312,766 acres
- Farming is a major contributor to the San Diego economy-5th behind Defense, Manufacturing, Tourism and Biotechnology
- San Diego has the most farms of any county in the nation-6,687 farms
- The average farm size is 4 acres
- Approximately 27% are run by women



# More statistics...

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- San Diego County ranks #1 in both California and the nation in the production of nursery, floriculture and avocados
- Statewide, San Diego County is in the top five in the production of avocados, oranges, lemons, grapefruit, tangerines, floriculture, nursery, eggs, fresh market tomatoes, mushrooms and honey
- We produce the highest dollar value per acre (\$4,963/acre) of any county in California
- San Diego has the largest community of organic growers in the state and nation (343 farms-150 crops)



## So, its not all good....

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- It is expensive to be a grower in San Diego
- Proximity to the border brings numerous issues
- We grow labor-intensive crops, labor is often a difficult issue
- Water, water, water



# How expensive is San Diego?

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- There is really no land that can be considered “new” farmland, or land that is really only priced for agricultural purposes. Most farmland is “estate home” priced. (land is priced from 45k-300k/acre)
- All inputs are very expensive
- Permitting for any construction, building costs, labor are all very costly
- Water is extremely costly-most growers use district/city water. There is very little groundwater in San Diego County, and the quality is not very good. Cost of water is approximately \$700/acre foot and going up 10-15% by next year, and more after that. Crops we grow use about 3-4 acre feet per year.



# Proximity to the border brings issues...

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- Numerous pest issues
  - We generally call it the “Pest of the Month Club”
  - Numerous quarantines (Medfly, Asian Citrus Psyllid, Diaprepes weevil etc.)
  - Many of these are extremely detrimental, have caused great losses to the growers of avocados, citrus, persimmons, other specialty fruits, as well as the nursery industry
- Border/labor issues
  - Agriculture gets the blame for numerous illegal immigrant issues, but they are actually widespread throughout the economy in southern California



# More on labor issues:

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- Sufficient labor is very difficult to find
  - We grow very labor-intensive crops, not much is mechanized
  - Many farm laborers are very concerned about their status, and are no longer in this country
  - If you have a farm that requires seasonal labor, it is even more difficult
  - Growers who have a year-round labor need tend to fare better





# Water, water, water

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- Probably the most difficult issue at the time.
- Water will determine the fate of agriculture in San Diego County
- Water pricing continues to escalate, and most growers are already quite efficient



# San Diego water supply:

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- In the state of California, ag uses about 80%, and urban uses account for about 20%
  - San Diego is just the opposite-80% is urban, 20% is ag
- San Diego relies on the Colorado River coming from the east, and the State Water Project from the north.



# Status of water from the State Water Project:

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- Issues with the Delta Smelt and other species have taken precedence over other uses of water, and less water is being pumped to the southern half of the state.
- We are under a mandatory 30% overall reduction, with more to come in the near future
- Our water districts are receiving approximately 5-15% of the amount needed by each district
- Growers have cut back just about all they can. Water has been so expensive already that they are efficient in their water use.



# Water Quality is a prominent issue also:

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- Agriculture is highly scrutinized for its contribution to water quality issues
- Numerous TMDL's are affecting the way agriculture does business, often requiring numerous changes and expensive retrofitting



# But there are some very good things too...

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- San Diego has a very engaged, knowledgeable and highly educated agricultural sector
- There are some excellent agency efforts, a very effective Farm Bureau and also a highly staffed Cooperative Extension that assists the growers in solving problems
- San Diego County ag is holding its own-and it should be really clear why we grow the high-cash crops we do here in the county!

