



Important Farmland Categories

FMMP's study area is contiguous with modern soil surveys developed by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). A classification system that combines technical soil ratings and current land use is the basis for the Important Farmland Maps of these lands. Most public land areas, such as National Forests and Bureau of Land Management holdings, are not mapped.

The minimum land use mapping unit is 10 acres unless specified. Smaller units of land are incorporated into the surrounding map classifications. Beginning in 2000, SSURGO digital soil information was phased into the Important Farmland data and the 2016 data began to incorporate the new NRCS Gridded Soil Survey (gSSURGO). Data subsequent to 2000 may have acreage and soil line differences due to incorporation of newer NRCS-SSURGO or gSSURGO editions. Prior to the availability of SSURGO or gSSURGO, soil information was hand-transferred from the paper soil surveys. Older versions of the data have not been modified. The land use minimum mapping unit of ten acres has not changed, but digital soil units of less than one acre occur in the gSSURGO-enhanced Important Farmland data. The data between 2000 and 2014 incorporates SSURGO and the interaction of land use and soil components resulted in units of less than ten acres for categories such as Other Land (or Nonagricultural and Natural Vegetation). The 2016 data incorporates gSSURGO and will no longer merge resulting polygons less than one acre for any map category.

Government Code Section 65560 subd. (c) defines agricultural land as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Grazing Land. The remaining categories are used for reporting changes in land use as required for FMMP's biennial farmland conversion report. For environmental review purposes under CEQA, the categories of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland constitute 'agricultural land' (Public Resources Code Section 21060.1).

[Prime Farmland \(P\)](#)

Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long term agricultural production. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date. More information on the [definition of Prime Farmland](#) the [soils qualifying for Prime Farmland](#) is also available.

Farmland of Statewide Importance (S)

Farmland similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date. Download information on the [soils qualifying for Farmland of Statewide Importance](#).

Unique Farmland (U)

Farmland of lesser quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include nonirrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

Farmland of Local Importance (L)

Land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee. In some counties, [Confined Animal Agriculture](#) (PDF) facilities are part of [Farmland of Local Importance](#) (PDF), but they are shown separately.

Farmland of Local Potential (LP)

Farmland of Local Potential is a subcategory of Farmland of Local importance and aggregated with Farmland of Local Importance acreage in the land use conversion table. Four counties include Farmland of Local Potential, see definitions below.

Definitions:

- Glenn County: All lands having Prime and Statewide soil mapping units which are not irrigated, regardless of cropping history or irrigation water availability.
- San Luis Obispo County: Lands having the potential for farmland, which have Prime or Statewide characteristics and are not cultivated.
- Santa Clara County: All lands having Prime and Statewide soil mapping units which are not irrigated, regardless of cropping history or irrigation water availability.

- Yolo County: Prime or Statewide soils which are presently not irrigated or cultivated.

Grazing Land (G)

Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. This category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen's Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups interested in the extent of grazing activities.

Urban and Built-up Land (D)

Land occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.

Other Land (X)

Land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry or aquaculture facilities; strip mines, borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than forty acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.

The [Rural Land Mapping Project](#) provides more detail on the distribution of various land uses within the Other Land category in eight FMMP counties, encompassing all the San Joaquin Valley counties. The Rural Land categories include:

- Rural Residential Land (R)
- Semi-Agricultural and Rural Commercial Land (sAC)
- Vacant or Disturbed Land (V)
- Confined Animal Agriculture (CI)
- Nonagricultural or Natural Vegetation (nv)

Water (W)

Perennial water bodies with an extent of at least 40 acres.

Area Not Mapped (Z)

Area which falls outside of the NRCS soil survey. Not mapped by the FMMP.

OPTIONAL DESIGNATION

Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use

This category was developed in cooperation with local government planning departments and county boards of supervisors during the public workshop phase of the FMMP's development in 1982. Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use information is available both statistically and as an overlay to the important farmland information. Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use is defined as existing farmland, grazing land, and vacant areas which have a permanent commitment for development.

Important Farmland Categories Links

[Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance](#)

[California Prime and Statewide Soils](#)

[Rural Land Mapping Project](#)

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