



California Drought Statement (September 2022)

California's drought crisis and unstable water supply has altered harvest across the Sacramento Valley, leading to a loss in seasonal jobs, taking a toll on rural agricultural economies and will have dire implications for wildlife.

With the 2022 estimated rice harvest to be slightly higher than half of a typical season, 250,000 acres, the loss in production will continue to directly impact California's rice workforce as harvest approaches. A report by the University of California, Davis titled "*Continued Drought in 2022 Ravages California's Sacramento Valley Economy*" estimates the region will lose an estimated \$1.3 billion in economic income, with California's rice industry facing more than \$703 million in impacts and 14,300 ag-workers out of a job due to drought.

"To maintain California's rural agricultural economies, keep paychecks and jobs for ag workers within disadvantaged communities, and to protect multigenerational family farms and businesses, we must work together toward a solution that stabilizes the future of rice farming in the Sacramento Valley," said President & CEO of the California Rice Commission Tim Johnson.

Long after this year's rice crop is harvested, the trickle-down impacts from drought will continue to stretch far beyond the farm. From the local trucking companies that transport the harvested rice, to less work to be done at the dryers, storage facilities and mills across eight rice growing counties in the Sacramento Valley, the impacts from drought are widespread and will be long-lasting.

"What's unknown is the long-term effect drought will have on the millions of migratory waterfowl that rely on the rice straw leftover from harvest. Half the production of rice means half the nourishment and food source locations available for shorebirds, ducks, geese and other migratory birds after their long, exhausting journey along the Pacific Flyway," said Johnson.

Rice fields in the Sacramento Valley provide more than 60% of the fall and winter diet for upward of 10 million migratory waterfowl. The nutrient-rich rice straw from the fields is also currently being harnessed to produce "fish food" to help support struggling salmon runs.