

3.3.7 Agriculture Resources

Introduction

The purpose of the Agricultural Resources section is to determine whether implementation of an LRDP or a project would result in significant environmental impacts to agricultural resources. The analysis should identify the status of agricultural land that could be converted by implementation of the project or the LRDP. See below for Appropriate Standards of Significance, Analytical Methods, and Generally Feasible Mitigation Measures.

Responsible Agencies

- Local counties may be considered Responsible Agencies if they have “Right to Farm” ordinances in place. While the University is constitutionally exempt from such ordinances, campuses may seek to comply with them as much as possible as a “good neighbor” gesture.

LRDP EIR

The environmental setting for the Agricultural Resources section of an LRDP EIR should identify the status of any agricultural land using “Important Farmland Maps” prepared by the California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, as part of the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (See *California Government Code Section 65570* <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/calaw.html>). In addition, the local jurisdiction’s zoning designation and status of Williamson Act contracts must be identified. This information is then used to determine whether implementation of the LRDP would involve changes in the existing environment that could result in the conversion of existing Farmland to non-agricultural use. At the LRDP stage, it may not be possible to prepare more than a general analysis because detailed design plans may not yet have been developed. However, if the LRDP contemplates future development in an area that contains undeveloped land, the agricultural status of the land can be identified in the LRDP EIR.

Project EIR

The Agricultural Resources section of a Project EIR should analyze whether the project would result in the conversion of agricultural land not previously identified in the LRDP EIR, or, if possible, the Project EIR should quantify the number of acres of designated agricultural land (Prime, Unique, or Farmland of Statewide Importance) identified in the LRDP EIR to be converted to non-agricultural uses.

Standards of Significance

Would the project:

- Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

- Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?
- Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in the conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use?
- Exceed an applicable LRDP or program EIR Standard of Significance? (This is used in situations where the campus may have identified an agricultural resource standard that is different from or exceeds the state standards.)

Analytical Methods

- Determine whether there are unique crops grown only in the project region or site. Compare this with regional production.
- Check to see if there is a right-to-farm ordinance that would restrict agricultural activities adjacent to development, such as buffers that would be imposed on the agricultural use, instead of the new development. (This could potentially reduce agricultural productivity.)
- Collect applicable land use plans and ordinances, including “Important Farmland Maps” (city, county).
- Determine whether the project proposes to convert designated agricultural land to non-agricultural uses that could conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.
- Determine if the project (or the LRDP) would involve other changes in the existing environment which could result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or loss of productivity of Important Farmland.
- Identify potential cumulative impacts associated with the loss of agricultural land.

Generally Feasible Mitigation Measures

- Redesign the LRDP or project to avoid development of prime agricultural lands for non-agricultural purposes, to the extent feasible.

Other Considerations

- New development adjacent to farmland could increase nuisance complaints about spraying and agricultural operations (e.g. odor), and decrease crop yields on surrounding land due to restrictions on pesticide or fertilizer use near urban areas.
- All of the considerations above (see Standards of Significance and Analytical Methods), plus development pressure with the rising value of land (for development, not farming) near developed areas may induce growth.