

Drought's lessons for food security

By Ken Sofer, Slate

Despite the arrival of increased rain and snow from El Niño this winter, California enters the fifth straight year of its worst drought in 1,200 years. The drought has been especially acute in the state's Central Valley, which ranges from extreme to exceptional drought.

With its fertile soil, moderate climate, and unparalleled irrigation system, the Central Valley is one of the most productive agricultural regions on the planet, producing nearly all of America's almonds, olives, walnuts, and pistachios; the vast majority of its grapes, strawberries, avocados, carrots, tomatoes, and lettuce; and \$13.1 billion worth of milk and cattle. As a result of the drought, California's 39 million residents are competing for fewer available water resources. Water prices have spiked, increasing tenfold in some areas.

The drought and the subsequent increased cost of water have led to declines in agricultural production across the state.

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