



**LOCAL FARMS • LOCAL FOOD**

# A Stronger Central Valley



[f3local.org](https://f3local.org)

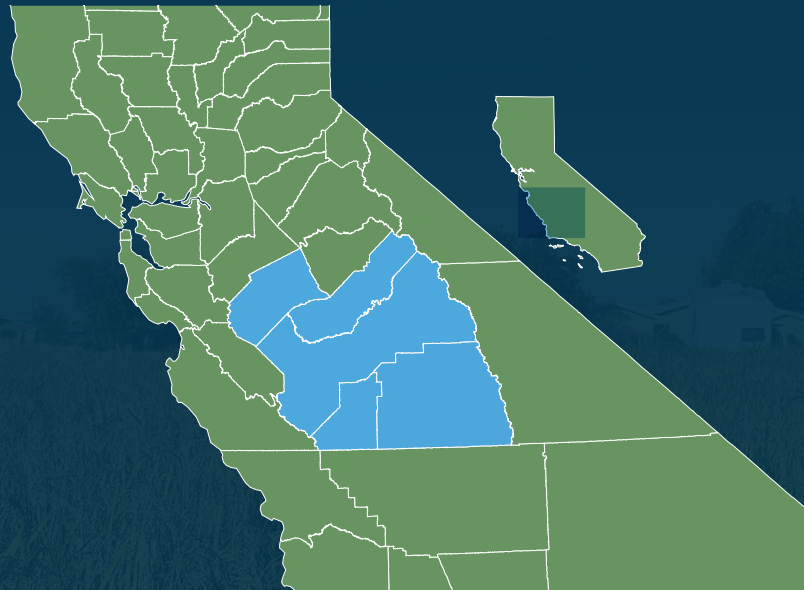
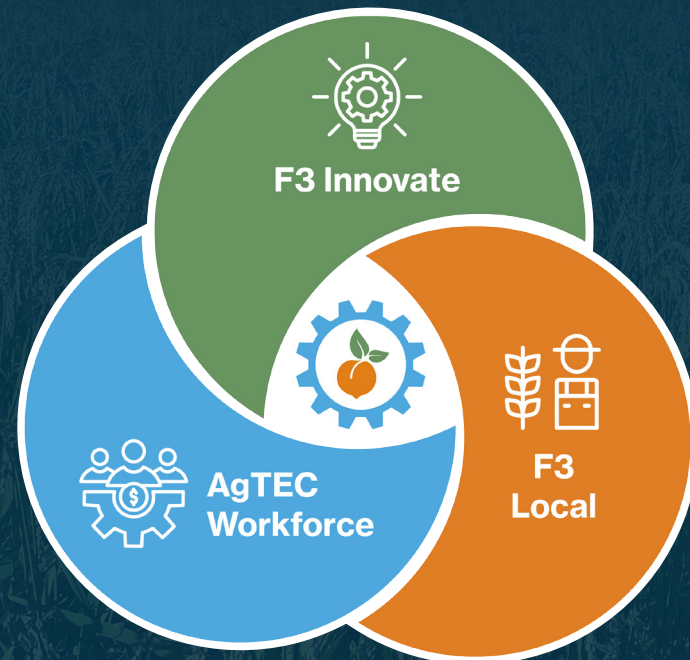


# F3 Initiative

FARMS • FOOD • FUTURE

## Regional Economic Development in the Central Valley

The F3 Initiative is a Central Valley-focused effort that strengthens the region's farm and food economy by accelerating innovation, supporting entrepreneurship, and building the partnerships and infrastructure needed for long-term resilience and growth.



## F3 Local - Local Farm and Food Innovation

F3 Local turns the broader F3 vision into practical support for small farmers and food businesses. Across communities and counties, we connect them to training, equipment, technical assistance, resources, and market opportunities so they can start, adapt, and grow. Our goal is a more inclusive, resilient regional food system that supports business growth, producer-informed innovation, and sustainable technology adoption.

## Why the Valley?

Over 13,650 farming enterprises producing 350 commodities annually worth \$70B, including 60% of the nation's fruits and nuts and 30% of its vegetables.

## Farm Outreach, Research, & Innovation

Supporting productive, sustainable, and resilient San Joaquin Valley farms through education, outreach, and practical problem-solving. This program brings growers, researchers, and developers together to solve on-farm challenges.

Our multi-discipline approach focuses on solving small-farm challenges. Our Appropriate Technology principles emphasize farmer-centered, affordable, practical solutions that mitigate risk and strengthen farm economics.

Learn more in our Small Farm Technology Needs Assessment:



## Appropriate Technology

We engage small-scale farmers in appropriate technology development.



### The Small Farm Alliance to Develop Appropriate Technology (SF-ADAPT)

A network of farmers, developers, students, and technical assistance providers creating practical solutions for small-scale farmers.



### The Small Farm Tech Expo

The annual Tech Expo features affordable, accessible technology for small farms, with live demos, local resources, and workshops.

Our research responds directly to farmers' urgent challenges. We work with ag-tech startups, researchers, and farmers to test new tools in the field, validate performance, and improve product development. Our research responds directly to farmers' urgent challenges.



# Equipment Lending Program

Shared tools and equipment that help small-scale farmers start, adapt, and grow.

Small-scale agricultural producers in California's Central Valley often encounter structural and financial barriers to acquiring specialized farm equipment. High capital costs, limited storage capacity, and infrequent equipment use can make ownership impractical for many operations.

The Equipment Lending Library reduces barriers by providing affordable, short-term access to farm equipment and essential tools. Based at Kearney in Parlier, it supports small-scale and beginning farmers with practical, flexible access without the full upfront cost. It helps farmers launch, expand, or try new practices with less financial risk.



## How it Helps:



### Lower costs and risk:

Borrow equipment when you need it and avoid major capital purchases.



### Try before you buy:

Test tools in real field conditions to make confident decisions.



### Save time and labor:

Access the right equipment to improve efficiency during key windows of the season.



The equipment inventory includes compost spreaders, front-end loader tractors, plastic mulch layers, bed shapers, drill seeders, flail mowers, and BCS tractors with a range of attachments, including topdressers, power harrows, bed shapers, and utility carts, and more to come.

# Sustainability & Agroecological Practices

Through research and collaborations, we highlight ecological and sustainable farming practices that contribute to resilient small farms in a changing San Joaquin Valley.

Water regulations, extreme weather, and groundwater limits will shape farming's future. Sustainable, agroecological practices help protect the San Joaquin Valley's social, ecological, and economic future.



Drought-tolerant crops like jujubes offer San Joaquin Valley small farmers a sustainable, water-efficient option for adapting to water and climate challenges.

Through local research, we study practices like intercropping, whole orchard recycling, and cover cropping to identify resilient, sustainable farming strategies for the Central Valley.

A collaborative project between UCANR, F3 Innovate, and UC Merced engineering students culminates in a user-friendly jujube pitter for small-scale jujube processing.

## Agritourism in the Central Valley

We support local farmers start or grow agritourism, creating new income opportunities and stronger connections to the local food system.

Training includes farm tours, an Agritourism Intensive, and networking opportunities.

## Food Business & Market Development

The Central Valley is home to a vibrant network of small- and medium-sized farms, specialty crop growers, and food entrepreneurs. While the region produces an abundance of agricultural products, opportunities to strengthen local food supply chains have often been overlooked. When raw products are sold outside the Valley, the economic value generated through processing, branding, and distribution is captured elsewhere.



Our work keeps that value local by supporting value-added food production in the Valley. We assist farmers and food entrepreneurs with practical guidance to help their businesses succeed. Our teams support all levels of the local food system, from mobile food vendors, to food hubs.

# Food and Farm Business Support for Processing and Value-Added Production

## Wrap Around Services and Workshops

Provides free, one-on-one, needs-based support and workshops for food entrepreneurs and farmers across the Valley, with a focus on reducing barriers for underserved businesses.

- **Startup & Compliance Support:**  
Licensing, permitting, legal structure, and food safety certifications.
- **Product Development:**  
Recipe scaling, food safety, packaging, and labeling.
- **Market Access & Marketing:**  
Channel identification, branding, pricing, and outreach.
- **Funding Navigation:**  
Guidance on loans, grants, and other capital sources.
- **Networking & Workshops:**  
Peer connections and workshop training for topics like Cottage Food Operations and business scaling.

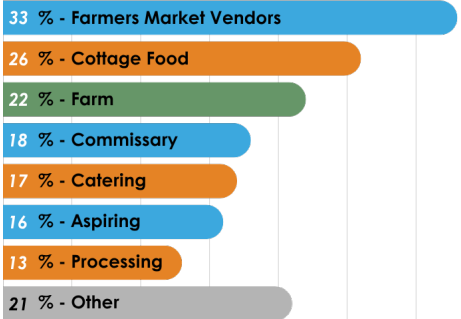
## Assessing Priorities for Food Businesses and Infrastructure

- **Needs Assessment:**  
F3 Local Food conducted a regional needs assessment across diverse food business types, identifying key challenges and priorities
- **Feasibility Study:**  
Working with New Venture Advisors to assess regional produce aggregation, distribution, and processing infrastructure.

## Priority Assessment



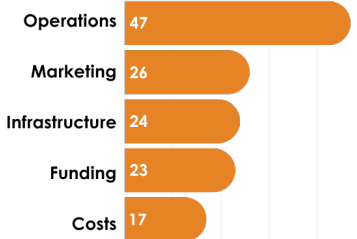
### Respondents



### Top Needs (%)



### Top Challenges (%)



### Vision - Respondents want to:

- 40% Expand In General
- 30% Expand their Locations
- 29% Expand their Offerings
- 11% Start a Business
- 8% Improve their Operations
- 3% Improve their Brand or Marketing



# Food Businesses & Sensory and Consumer Science

## Research Focus

Explores how local food products, people, and markets interact to create community value and strengthen local food systems.

- **Product Appeal & Quality:**  
Investigates product quality and attributes such as taste that influence consumer preference and behavior.
- **Consumer Insights:**  
Studies consumer expectations, purchasing behavior, and demand for local foods.
- **Market Trends & Producer' Empowerment:**  
Analyzes how market dynamics affect local farmers and food businesses and contribute to improving competitiveness.
- **Applied Research Activities:**  
Conducts pop-up taste tests and provides training for local food businesses.
- **Knowledge Sharing:**  
Shares findings with producers and the broader community to support local food systems



# Small Farm Food Aggregation Hubs and Marketing Assistance

Supports small-scale farmers and food businesses in reaching larger, more reliable markets through aggregation, infrastructure planning, coordinated marketing, and stronger connections among producers, aggregators, and buyers.



## Mobile Vendor Support

Advances health equity by supporting mobile food vendors in low-income communities and food deserts through business training, food safety and permitting support, shared kitchen access in Fresno, mentorship, and nutrition and cooking workshops.



## St. Rest Food to Share Hub

The St. Rest Food to Share Hub distributes over 1 million pounds of nutritious food annually in Southwest Fresno, offers cooking and nutrition classes, and reduces food waste and emissions.



Central to the Valley is a new regional brand designed to amplify connection to Central Valley agriculture, highlight the farmers at the heart of our food system, and make buying local easier and more visible for our communities.

Powered by a unique collaboration among partners at Farms Food Future (F3 Local), this campaign centers the voices of the Valley through intimate interviews and community building, sharing the many stories of our family farmers, buyers, chefs, community members, and local leaders– the core village behind our hero statement, “Everything we grow. Everyone we feed.”

One might ask, “What is Central to the Valley?”

Is it food? Family? Culture? Resilience? Pride?

Our foremost hope is that this brand is all encompassing and will inspire you to support, purchase, and consume the amazing food and produce grown right here in the Valley.

**Social Handle:**  
**@centraltothevalley #CentraltotheValley**

Scan to learn more • [centraltothevalley.com](https://centraltothevalley.com)





F3 Local is a University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) initiative, powered by a regional coalition of partners working together to strengthen small farms, food businesses, and community economic development.



UC ANR brings together UC research and local partnerships to share trusted, science-based information and support thriving food systems, working landscapes, and communities across California.

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**  
Agriculture and Natural Resources



## CONNECT WITH US



Learn more and get support at [F3local.org](https://F3local.org)

## FOLLOW US



@F3LOCAL



F3 LOCAL



F3 LOCAL