

Why California's Drought is America's Problem

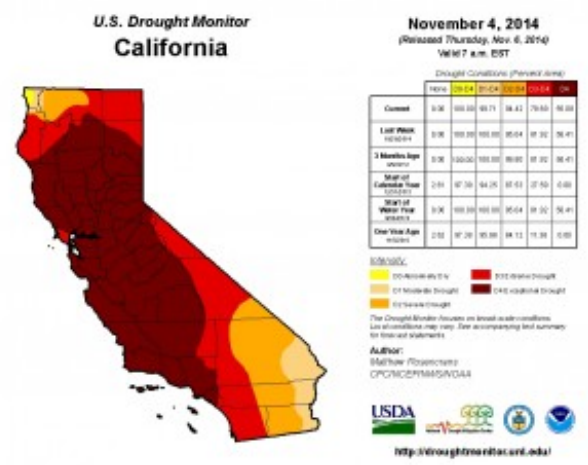
By Matthew Green

Despite a few recent downpours, California remains stuck in one of the most severe statewide droughts on record.

But it's far from just California's problem. The state produces a huge percentage of the nation's agriculture — nearly half of all fruits, vegetables and nuts, by some estimates. And that requires a massive amount of water: farms here use about 80 percent of the state's developed water supply.

Much is riding on the upcoming rainy season. Because if not enough water remains valuable for farmers to adequately irrigate their land, the impact will likely be felt far beyond the state's borders.

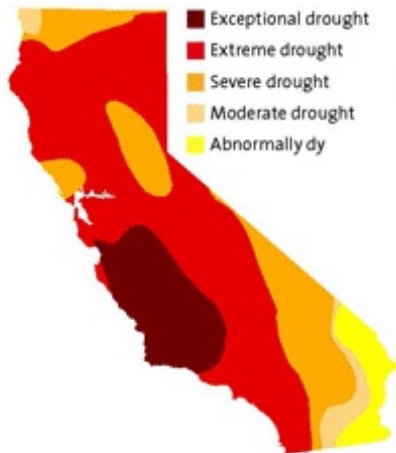
In this audio slideshow, part of a photo essay project in the [New Yorker](#), photographer Matt Black captures powerful images from the thirsty Central Valley, California's breadbasket, and the farmers struggling to keep their crops alive. The excellent infographics below that, by Alex Park and Julia Lurie of [Mother Jones](#) (and re-posted with permission), give a glimpse of just how much agriculture is produced here and the amount of water required to grow it.

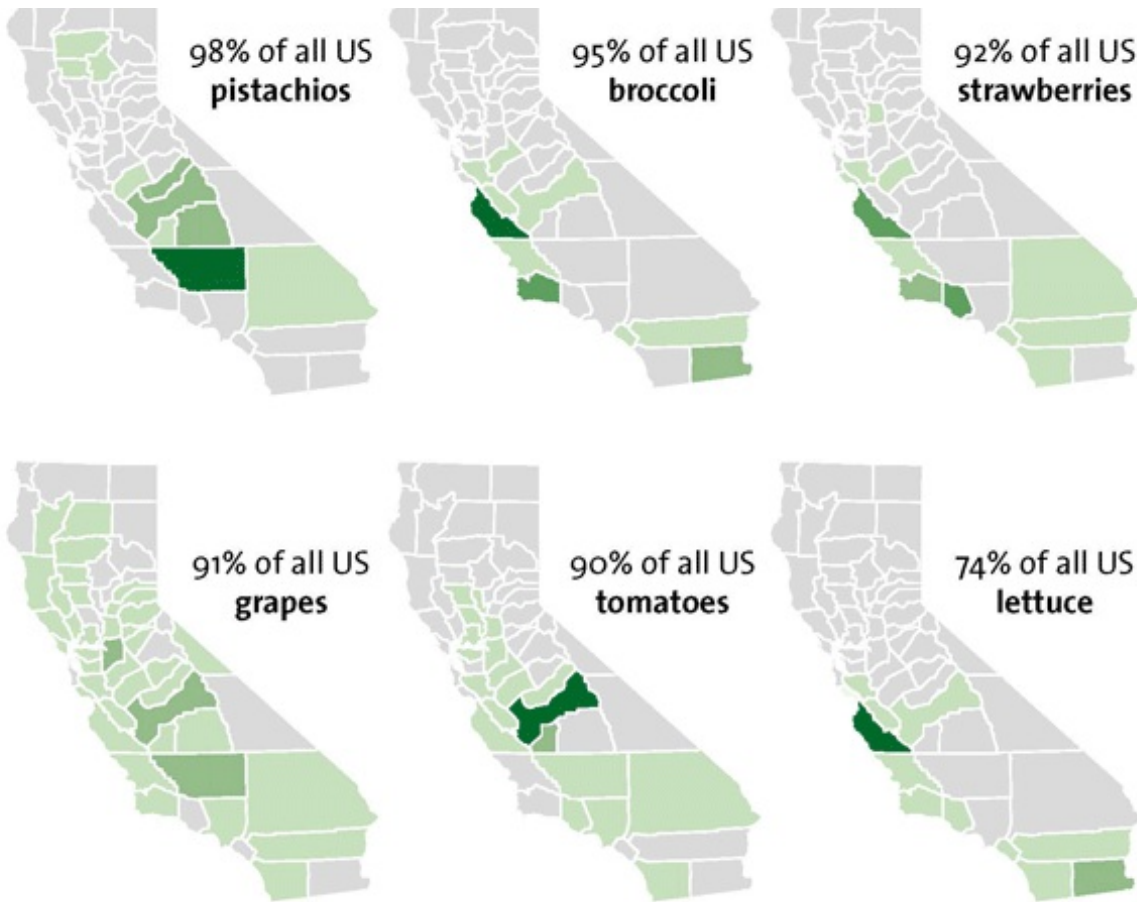


Where Does Your Food Come From?

California's drought affects the whole country's fruits, veggies, and nuts.

Percentage of Total US Production by County





Crop maps based on 2012 figures. Data: US Drought Monitor, California Department of Food and Agriculture, US Department of Agriculture. Art: US Drought Monitor, Wikimedia Commons.

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How Thirsty Is Your Food?



One head of broccoli



5.4 gallons of water




One walnut



4.9 gallons of water



4.0 gallons of water


One head of lettuce 3.5 gallons of water



One tomato 3.3 gallons of water



One almond 1.1 gallons of water



One pistachio 0.75 gallons of water



One strawberry 0.4 gallons of water



One grape 0.3 gallons of water

Figures indicate how much water it takes to bring each crop to maturity in the US, if using only irrigated water. Data: Mekonnen, M.M. and Hoekstra, A.Y., "Water footprints of derived crop products (1996-2005)". Art: Nikiteev_Konstantin, Asya Alexandrova, Igor Zakowski/Shutterstock; Kate Vogel/Noun Project.

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