

# Gov. Jerry Brown defends agriculture's water use amid drought

By David Siders  
dsiders@sacbee.com

Gov. Jerry Brown defended the agriculture industry's heavy water use in an interview aired Sunday, but he said historic water rights are "probably going to be examined" if the drought persists.

"Some people have a right to more water than others," [Brown said of senior water rights holders on ABC's "This Week."](#) "That's historic. That's built into the legal framework of California. And yes, if things continue at this level, that's probably going to be examined."

Brown has faced criticism about agricultural water consumption since issuing California's first-ever statewide order to reduce water use last week. A mandatory 25 percent reduction in water use in cities and towns does not apply to agriculture.

The Brown administration views the agricultural and urban water systems as fundamentally different, with farmers already having been battered by diminished state and federal water allocations.

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"The farmers have fallowed hundreds of thousands of acres of land," Brown said. "They're pulling up vines and trees. Farmworkers who are at the very low end of the economic scale here are out of work."

According to the Public Policy Institute of California, about 9 million acres of farmland in California are irrigated, representing about 80 percent of the water used by people.

Asked about that figure, Brown said, "Yeah, you bet it's true. But by the way, they're not watering their lawn or taking longer showers. They're providing most of the fruits and vegetables of America."

Call David Siders, Bee Capitol Bureau, (916) 321-1215. Follow him on Twitter [@davidsiders](#).