

My name is Ryan Ferguson, I'm a second-generation family farmer in California and 4th generation to live and work on the Westside of the San Joaquin Valley. I live and farm on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley in Westlands Water District. My father and I grow almonds, pistachios, tomatoes, onions and cotton.

In a typical year when I have adequate water supply I farm 4,000 acres. However, this year due to the terrible 3-year drought and inadequate infrastructure I will be fallowing 1,200 acres of the most productive farm ground in the world on my Ranch. Should that ground be put into production next year with adequate water, just that 1,200 acres could produce enough tomatoes to supply 1.8 million Americans with their year supply of tomatoes.

The combination of the Mediterranean climate and the healthy, fertile soils are ripe for growing hundreds of essential crops. However, this area cannot remain productive without an adequate, reliable supply of water. California is in desperate need of additional water storage and infrastructure to ensure that we can capture and store water in times of excess and move and deliver that water in periods of drought.

For instance, we are in need of critical federal funding to restore conveyance capacity that has been lost due to subsidence. Restoring these canals will not only improve our climate resilience, but will help provide clean drinking water to more than 31 million people, support delivering water to more than 3 million acres of prime agricultural land that can feed our nation, enable these farms and communities to continue providing economic activity in the form of jobs and food, and it will support wetland habitat in the San Joaquin Valley.

A recent report conducted by Dr. Michael Shires, a professor at Pepperdine university, evaluated the economic impacts of Westlands Water District, and the report showed that in Fresno and Kings county- the two counties where Westlands is located and where I farm – the poverty rates are closely tied to the availability of water.

Farming operations in Fresno and Kings county are huge contributors to the economic health of the area. We provide not only jobs through our farming operations – such as creating the market for seeds, fertilizers, and farm equipment as well as providing on farm jobs, but we also support the processing and handling operations by providing product and all of this creates the demand for the support services throughout the community.

A Dr. Shires' showed that in 2019 Westlands water district supported over 35,000 jobs- this was a wetter year in which the District received 75% of their allocation. In his analysis, Dr. Shires showed that had the District received 100% of its allocation, they could have theoretically supported an additional 3000 jobs. These are jobs that cannot easily be replaced.

Additionally, just for comparison, for the last two years, the District has received 0% of its allocation. It's too early to calculate the job numbers for this year, but this only highlights the need for increased water storage and improved water infrastructure so that we can capture water in wet years to ensure a reliable water supply in all years for agricultural operations.

Not only do we need to improve our water infrastructure to ensure a healthy economy, but if we do not protect a reliable domestic food supply, we will continue to push our agricultural production overseas. Shifting our food supply production overseas raises numerous concerns- including increased carbon

emissions resulting from transportation and lower environmental, food quality, and labor standards oversees.

I can tell you that on my farm, we ensure food is grown in compliance with the highest environmental, food, and labor standards. Even though I farm in the most regulated state in the Country with the highest labor wages in the Country, the most regulated in terms of emission standards for our equipment, and the most regulated in terms of Crop Protection Chemicals we are still able to thrive so long as we have one component – water. By not securing water for California agriculture, we are no longer able to guarantee these high standards in the production of our country's food supply and we are in danger of losing the most productive agricultural region in the world and it will be lost to subpar production standards most likely in South America if it can even be replicated.

Without such infrastructure improvements, we will be even more reliant on international food production.