

THE LAND ACCESS MEMBERSHIP ACTION TEAM - LAMAT -

A MEMBERSHIP ACTION TEAM OF THE CALIFORNIA FOOD AND JUSTICE COALITION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is LAMAT?

The Land Access Membership Action Team is a committee of the California Food and Justice Coalition and was created to look at issues of land access for food production. LAMAT envisions a California where land tenure is equitable, and where everyone who wants to grow food can have access to farmland in rural and urban areas.

What do we mean by Land Access?

The fair opportunity to gain tenure of land for food production; regardless of ethnic background, gender, or class.

What do you mean by land tenure?

The right to occupy, own, or steward land. LAMAT is interested specifically in land tenure for the purpose of producing food.

Why does past land ownership matter?

Because historic land ownership patterns inform the current patterns of land ownership that we are trying to make more equitable.

What is happening to traditional farmland in CA?

A 1998 report by the California Department of Conservation (DOC) indicates that in the approximately 43 million acres of land studied, there has been a 13% increase statewide in the amount of land reported as committed to non-agricultural use, between the 1992-94 survey and the 1994-96 survey. In the Central Valley alone, between 1984 and 1994, 120,000 acres of farmland were converted to non-agricultural uses; over 70% of these acres were originally irrigated cropland (from www.california-farmlink.org).

Why is saving farmland important?

Maintaining sustainable farms in California is good for our environment, provides opportunities for Californians who wish to farm the land, produces the freshest food for our tables, and maintains our cultural heritage and scenic beauty.

Why does LAMAT promote small family farms?

Family farms are the collective enterprise of a family unit connected with the products of their labor and usually with their customers. Many small farmers desire to keep the land in the family for future generations and have a vested interest in preserving the quality of the earth and its resources. Family farmers are often dedicated to good stewardship of their land, and find innovative ways to protect water, soil, and provide better habitat for native plants and animals.

Why is land access an issue for rural small-scale farmers?

Available land is being purchased by monopolistic interests, either for development or for agribusiness. This "land grab" has depleted the acreage available to small farmers who wish to grow food to feed their communities. The concentration of land ownership California has also greatly increased the price of arable land and made land ownership unaffordable to many would-be small scale farmers.

Why do you want to make urban land available for food production?

To provide affordable locally grown produce, to create green spaces that beautify the urban setting and cool the environment, to re-connect urban dwellers to the sources of their food and to bring together communities in the act of growing food.

Why should local food production be included in rezoning decisions?

This is one way that local government can assist community driven, non-profit efforts to bring the benefits of urban farming to urban communities.

What do you define as monopolistic ownership of land?

A type of ownership that combined with other factors has led to a sharp decline in the number of family farms in the United States. At the same time there has been a sharp increase in the amount of farmland owned and controlled by corporate agribusiness.

What is corporate agribusiness?

The monopolistic ownership of land and resources used to grow, process, distribute and sell food that concentrates financial profit to a few companies while shutting out small farmers and businesses. These corporations pursue maximum profit regardless of the impact on the health of humans or the planet.

Why should I get involved in LAMAT?

If you want in anyway to help build our vision of making land tenure equitable you should get involved with LAMAT.

**For more information about
LAMAT and the CFJC
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