

# Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC 2.0)

## Community Input Summary

### Strategic Plan Public Review Period

January 2026

**Prepared for:**



County of San Diego  
5510 Overland Avenue, Suite 210  
San Diego, CA 92123



San Diego County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)  
2550 Fifth Avenue, Suite 725, San Diego CA 92103

**Prepared by:**



**RICK**

RICK Planning + Design  
5620 Friars Road, San Diego, CA 92110

## Table of Contents

1.0	Project Background .....	2
1.1	Project Outreach Schedule .....	2
2.0	Forum for Cultivating Solutions .....	2
3.0	Input Summary.....	3
4.0	Strategic Planning Takeaways.....	4

## 1.0 Project Background

The Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) is a program funded through the California Climate Investments Program, a statewide program that provides cap-and-trade funds through agricultural conservation easement acquisitions, planning grants, and capacity grants for programs intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Initiated in 2020, SALC 1.0 assessed the needs of producers in San Diego County and identified how local jurisdictions and non-profits can support local agriculture to address three key concerns: land availability, water access and affordability, and workforce development. SALC 1.0 identified a need to build on the findings from the first phase of work through a quantitative analysis of costs and benefits of small farms.

SALC 2.0 (the Project) is a collaboration between the San Diego County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) and the County of San Diego Planning & Development Services Department (County). LAFCO, supported by consultant Agricultural Impact Associates, is tasked with analyzing the present and emerging market conditions in the local agriculture industry and identifying the gaps between marginal and economically sustainable farms. The County, supported by consultant RICK, is responsible for outreach and education throughout the Project, gathering best practices for local governments and regional entities to consider. The resulting final report will be a collaborative effort between LAFCO and the County.

### 1.1 Project Outreach Schedule

Outreach Phase	Timing	Outreach Events
<b>Project Kickoff/Crop Selection</b>	Fall 2023	Project Introduction Virtual Workshop
<b>Market Analysis</b>	Summer 2024	Market Analysis Open House
<b>Gap Analysis</b>	Spring 2025	Gap Analysis Report - Public Review Period
<b>Strategic Plan Final Report</b>	Winter 2024/2025	Internal Working Group Meetings
	Spring 2025	Forum for Cultivating Solutions
	Fall 2025	Strategic Plan - Public Review Period
<b>Final Report</b>	Spring 2026	Strategic Plan Workshop

## 2.0 Strategic Plan Public Review Period

The draft SALC 2.0 Strategic Action Plan was released for public review on November 10, 2025, to provide stakeholders and community members with an opportunity to review the proposed

framework, strategies, and implementation tools, and to submit written comments by December 10, 2025 to be incorporated into the Final Report.

During the public review period, the draft Strategic Action Plan was made available online and interested parties were invited to submit comments via email. Outreach for the public review period emphasized awareness among agricultural producers, partner agencies, advocacy organizations, and regional stakeholders who had participated earlier in the process, as well as members of the broader public with an interest in agricultural sustainability and land conservation.

### 3.0 Input Summary

This section summarizes the comments received during the public review period for the SALC 2.0 Strategic Action Plan and highlights the key themes expressed by stakeholders. Input was reviewed and organized by topic to capture recurring priorities, areas of alignment, and suggested refinements to the proposed Seeds, Tools, and Implementation approaches. The key themes represented through stakeholder comments were as follows:

- 1. Support for the Strategic Action Plan Direction:** Stakeholders expressed broad support for the Strategic Action Plan's emphasis on economic sustainability, regional coordination, and practical implementation. Comments indicated that the Plan reflects challenges identified earlier in the process and provides a useful framework for moving from analysis to action.
- 2. Economic Pressures Facing Small and Mid-Scale Producers:** Stakeholder comments emphasized and reiterated the financial challenges facing agricultural operators, particularly smaller and mid-scale farms. Input further underlined the rising costs related to land access, water, labor, and regulatory compliance, as well as competitive pressures from foreign agricultural imports that limit local producers' ability to compete on price. Comments supported strategies that improve operational flexibility, diversify revenue streams, and expand market access.
- 3. Regulatory Frameworks and Local Ordinances:** Stakeholders noted that outdated or inconsistent local regulations create barriers for agricultural operations. Their input highlighted the need for clearer permitting pathways, departmental coordination, and more consistent approaches across jurisdictions.
- 4. Regional Coordination and Technical Assistance:** Stakeholders emphasized the importance of collaboration among local governments, regional agencies, and non-profit partners. Comments supported shared technical assistance, coordinated education

efforts, and regional alignment to reduce duplication and improve implementation effectiveness.

5. **Education, Outreach, and Awareness:** Stakeholders emphasized the importance of education and outreach efforts targeted to both the general public and agricultural producers. Comments highlighted the need to strengthen regional marketing/branding and consumer awareness of San Diego–grown products, while also improving communication to producers about available programs and resources.

In addition to overall support for the Strategic Action Plan and reiterating many important concepts, commenters identified several areas where additional clarity would improve usability and implementation of the Final Report. These included:

- Clarifying implementation roles among local governments, regional agencies, and partner organizations to better distinguish responsibility for near-term actions versus longer-term strategies.
- Incorporating equity considerations by prioritizing support for disadvantaged, underserved, and historically under-resourced producers.
- Refining tool descriptions to provide clearer guidance on how proposed programs, incentives, or technical assistance efforts could be accessed or advanced by local jurisdictions and partners.
- Expanding discussion of regulatory pathways, particularly for small-scale, boutique, or diversified agricultural operations, to better reflect on-the-ground permitting challenges.
- Emphasizing flexibility in implementation, recognizing that agricultural conditions, market dynamics, and local regulatory contexts vary across the county.
- Strengthening connections between economic viability and land conservation, including clearer articulation of how proposed strategies support both producer sustainability and long-term agricultural land preservation.

## 4.0 Strategic Planning Takeaways

Input received during the public review period will be incorporated into the Final Report through targeted refinements that improve clarity, usability, and implementation readiness. Refinements will focus on clarifying implementation roles and responsibilities, strengthening the description and accessibility of proposed Tools, and more clearly articulating regulatory pathways relevant to small-scale to mid-scale farmers and diversified agricultural operations. The additional

information will aim to reinforce flexibility in implementation to reflect varying local conditions across the county.