

THE QUIET INDUSTRY: Western Agriculture Fuels a Strong Economy

Prepared by the Washington State Water Resources Association

The following report and associated data was produced by Darryll Olsen, Ph.D. of the Pacific Northwest Project in Kennewick, Washington and Houshmand Ziari, Ph.D. of IRZ Consulting in Hermiston Oregon. The report was prepared for the Family Farm Alliance. The following information is a summary of the report, prepared by the Washington State Water Resources Association. If you would like a copy of this report, contact the Family Farm Alliance at (541) 850-9007.

Irrigated Agriculture and related industries--agricultural services and food processing--serve as the nation's "**quiet industry**," steadily and reliably producing tens-of-billions of dollars worth of state and regional income. The industry affects almost all economic sectors of the Western States' economy, purchasing billions of dollars of good and services.

The Western states host about 34 million acres of irrigated croplands composed of private irrigators using water pumped from rivers and reservoirs, irrigators served by the US Bureau of Reclamation projects and irrigators pumping from deep or shallow wells.

This irrigation activity creates an annual farm-gate production value exceeding \$31 billion. The growing of fruit and vegetables, alone, represents a \$15 billion annual production industry. From the irrigated agriculture industry, the US exports about \$10 billion annually in commodities and value-added products.

Irrigated Agriculture Production and Estimated Value

Working its way through state and regional economies, agricultural production creates about \$60 billion in annual income, the bulk of which can be attributed to Western irrigation production. Overall, the irrigated agriculture industry--consisting of the direct agriculture production sector, agricultural services, and the food processing sector--is one of the largest employers in the West.

[State Production Exports and Irrigated Agriculture Productivity](#)
[State Economic Impacts](#)
[Regional Economic Impacts](#)
[State and Regional Economic Impacts](#)

Moreover, Western irrigated agriculture is an efficiency success story, reflecting careful use of water resources. For the past thirty years irrigated agriculture has substantially increased production per acre for all crops while decreasing water use per acre.

Today, the number one agricultural issue for federal and state policy decision-makers should be maintaining the country's present standard for low-cost, 24-hours-a-day (every day) accessible, high-quality food products--particularly the fruits, vegetables, and processed food products made available by Western irrigated agriculture.

[Observations/Recommendations for Decision Makers](#)

So the next time you pick up a package of carrots or bag of apples at the store, bear in mind that it represents billions of dollars of economic income and prosperity, while contributing to a quality of life that is envied throughout the world.

The "Quiet Industry" makes a significant difference to our well-being and should not be taken for granted.

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