UC Cooperative Extension
University of California
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Spotlight on Sonoma County

Located at the northernmost edge of the San Francisco Bay Area, Sonoma County is known for its rolling vineyard-covered hills, redwood and oak forests, fertile valleys, and coastal watersheds that shape both its environment and economy. Our local UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE) brings research and expertise to these landscapes through demonstrations, education, and collaborative projects, delivering practical, science-based solutions that strengthen agriculture, natural resources, and community well-being. We work in partnership with natural resource managers, community organizations, and volunteers.

Our programs serve growers, livestock producers, watershed and fire-preparedness stewards, 4-H youth and families, and residents engaged in nutrition and home gardening—ensuring Sonoma County continues to thrive both agriculturally and across all communities.



Our Clientele
- Agricultural Producers
- Ag processors and ag businesses
- Rural and Urban Residents

Our Team
- 13 Academic Advisors
- 10 Program Staff
- 6 Community Educators

Volunteer Programs
- 4-H Youth Development
- Master Gardeners
- Master Food Preservers

Research and Extension
- 4-H Youth Development
- Climate Smart Agriculture
- Community Health and Nutrition
- Dairy
- Food Systems
- Forestry
- Fire Science
- Human-Wildlife Interactions
- Integrated Pest Management
- Integrated Vineyard Systems
- Livestock & Natural Resources
- Soil & Water
- Specialty Crops

UC ANR Mission

UC ANR cultivates thriving communities, sustainable agriculture, resilient ecosystems, and economic prosperity in California through development and sharing of equitable and collaborative science-based solutions that have national and global impact.

The Economic Power of Working Landscapes

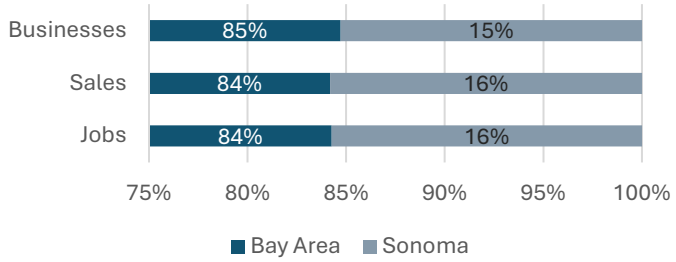
Sonoma County's farms, ranches, vineyards, dairies, and diverse agricultural operations are cornerstones of the regional economy, supporting thousands of jobs and businesses across production, processing, distribution, and tourism. From winegrapes and dairy to livestock, specialty crops, and local food production, agriculture contributes far beyond the farm gate, sustaining rural communities, agricultural businesses, and local food systems. These working landscapes also provide important environmental benefits, including wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, and wildfire resilience, underscoring the interconnected economic, environmental, and cultural value of sustaining Sonoma County's agricultural lands for future generations.

33,796 jobs

$10.7B sales

1,930 businesses

Sonoma County's Share of the Bay Area's Working Landscape Economy



Source: Dompka, A., Hill, A. E., & Wilcher, A. (2025). California's Working Landscapes: Evolving Contributions to National, State, and Regional Economies. UC Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Volunteer Program Impact

Volunteers are the heart of our work, strengthening communities across Sonoma County through service, education, and outreach. From home gardening and food preservation to youth development, environmental stewardship and food preservation, their time and expertise build meaningful local connections, expand access to University resources, and multiply our collective impact.

678 volunteers

58,243 hours donated

$2.2 mil volunteer service hours

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Practical. Connected. Trusted.

4-H Youth Development Program

Sonoma County 4-H gives youth opportunities to learn by doing, explore new interests, build confidence and leadership skills through hands-on experiences. From fishing, photography, and beekeeping to cake decorating, woodworking, food preservation, and livestock projects, youth develop knowledge, and discover new passions, that they can carry into the future.

Beyond community club projects, 4-H expands learning through STEM programs and community outreach. Tinker Academy MINI introduced middle school students to coding, robotics, and 3D printing, encouraging creativity, problem-solving, and collaboration. Through events like North Bay Science Discovery Day, 4-H also connects youth and families with hands-on science and exploration.

Youth leadership and community involvement are central to the 4-H experience. Our Youth County Ambassador team appeared on KRUSH radio in partnership with the Sonoma County Farm Bureau to share how 4-H has strengthened their confidence, leadership, and commitment to giving back.

From project showcases and fairs to summer camps and soccer, 4-H creates opportunities for youth to build friendships, practice teamwork, and develop a sense of belonging. Together, these experiences help youth grow, lead, and contribute to their communities.

4-H inspires young people to give back. 87% said 4-H strengthened their desire to engage in their communities.

UC Master Food Preserver Program

This program connects residents with research-based food preservation education, practical kitchen skills, and resources to support safe food handling and reduce food waste. In 2025, 32 trained volunteers contributed more than 2,130 hours of service and supported approximately 1,800 educational interactions with adults and youth through demonstrations, presentations, and community outreach. Through its partnership with the Redwood Empire Food Bank, the program also brings food preservation knowledge, recipes, and practical kitchen resources directly to community members, expanding access to research-based education and strengthening local food systems.

UC Master Gardener Program

During the 2025 program year, the UC Master Gardener Program of Sonoma County hosted more than 300 educational events, reaching over 10,000 residents through farmers' markets, library lectures, demonstration gardens, public workshops, school field trips, and community events. Volunteers contributed 17,635 hours of service, extending the reach of research-based horticultural education throughout the county.

Through these outreach efforts, UC Master Gardeners shared practical knowledge and inspiration to help residents conserve water, create fire-smart landscapes, support wildlife habitats, and grow their own food. By connecting communities with University of California research and resources, volunteers continue to promote sustainable gardening practices and more resilient landscapes throughout Sonoma County.

Supporting the Future and Viability of Sonoma County Agriculture

Sonoma County's Agricultural Ombuds program provides individualized technical assistance to farmers, ranchers, and agricultural businesses navigating regulatory requirements, land-use questions, and evolving business opportunities. In 2025, the program responded to approximately 150 inquiries, reflecting sustained demand for individualized technical assistance and trusted guidance amongst Sonoma County's agricultural community. Topics ranged from agritourism regulations, farmworker housing, and agricultural land access to grant opportunities, small-scale processing, business diversification, and succession planning.

As agricultural markets, climate conditions, and land-use needs continue to evolve, the program also helps producers explore opportunities to strengthen the long-term viability of their operations. This includes evaluating new revenue streams through agritourism and direct-to-consumer sales, considering alternative crops and agricultural enterprises as producers explore transitioning land out of grape production, expanding local value-added processing, and supporting pathways for the next generation of farmers and ranchers. Through technical assistance, education, and collaboration with regional partners, the Agricultural Ombuds program helps producers adapt to changing conditions while sustaining productive agricultural lands and Sonoma County's diverse working landscapes.

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