

CALIFORNIA: "AMERICA'S SALAD BOWL"

California has been supplying over 50% of all of the fruits and vegetables for the United States since the 1850's.

There are many reasons why California is the leading producer of fruits and vegetables: excellent weather, year-round growing season, fertile soil, use of the latest technology to increase crop productivity and availability of water.

California produces many different types of fruits, vegetables and nuts. At different times of the year, California farmers may be harvesting fruits, vegetables or nuts in the great Central Valley, in one of the State's coastal valleys, in the Sierra foothills or in the southern desert.

WHY DO PLANTS USE DIFFERENT AMOUNTS OF WATER?

Some of the reasons plants use various amounts of water are:

- a. Different GROWING TIMES: Some plants have a very short growing period so it takes less water to go from seed to the mature plant. According to the California Farm Bureau, 1 cup of lettuce takes 3 gallons of water for a 60 day growing period compared to one ear of corn at 61 gallons, which takes an average of 80 to 100 days to grow. Since one 7' corn stalk produces only 2 ears of corn, there is a lot of "extra plant material" that requires a lot of water to produce just 2 ears of corn! (Univ. of Calif. Kern County)

Almonds grow on trees that require many years to grow before they are ready to produce the almonds. Trees have many branches and leaves that need water to grow in addition to hundreds of nuts per tree. One ounce of almonds requires 80 gallons of water.

One orange requires 14 gallons, which grows on a tree, compared to 1 tomato at 8 gallons, which grows on a plant and has a much shorter growing period.

- b. Different CLIMATE AND ALTITUDE: Warmer climates cause more rapid evaporation of water from the soil and the fruits and vegetables themselves.
- c. Different TYPES OF SOIL: Fruits and vegetables require many different types of soil to grow. Some plants require soil which allows water to drain through them easily such as sandy soils compared to a clay-type soil which holds water.
- d. Types of IRRIGATION TECHNIQUES: Farmers constantly test various irrigation methods to find the one most suitable to their crops and locations. Throughout California, farmers use management techniques such as computers, soil testing, weather forecasting and laser land leveling to help them improve their irrigation efficiency.



