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Cooperative Extension

Arizona Water and Agriculture

Jeffrey C. Silvertooth

Professor and Extension Specialist
Agronomy & Soil Science

Water & Arizona Agriculture



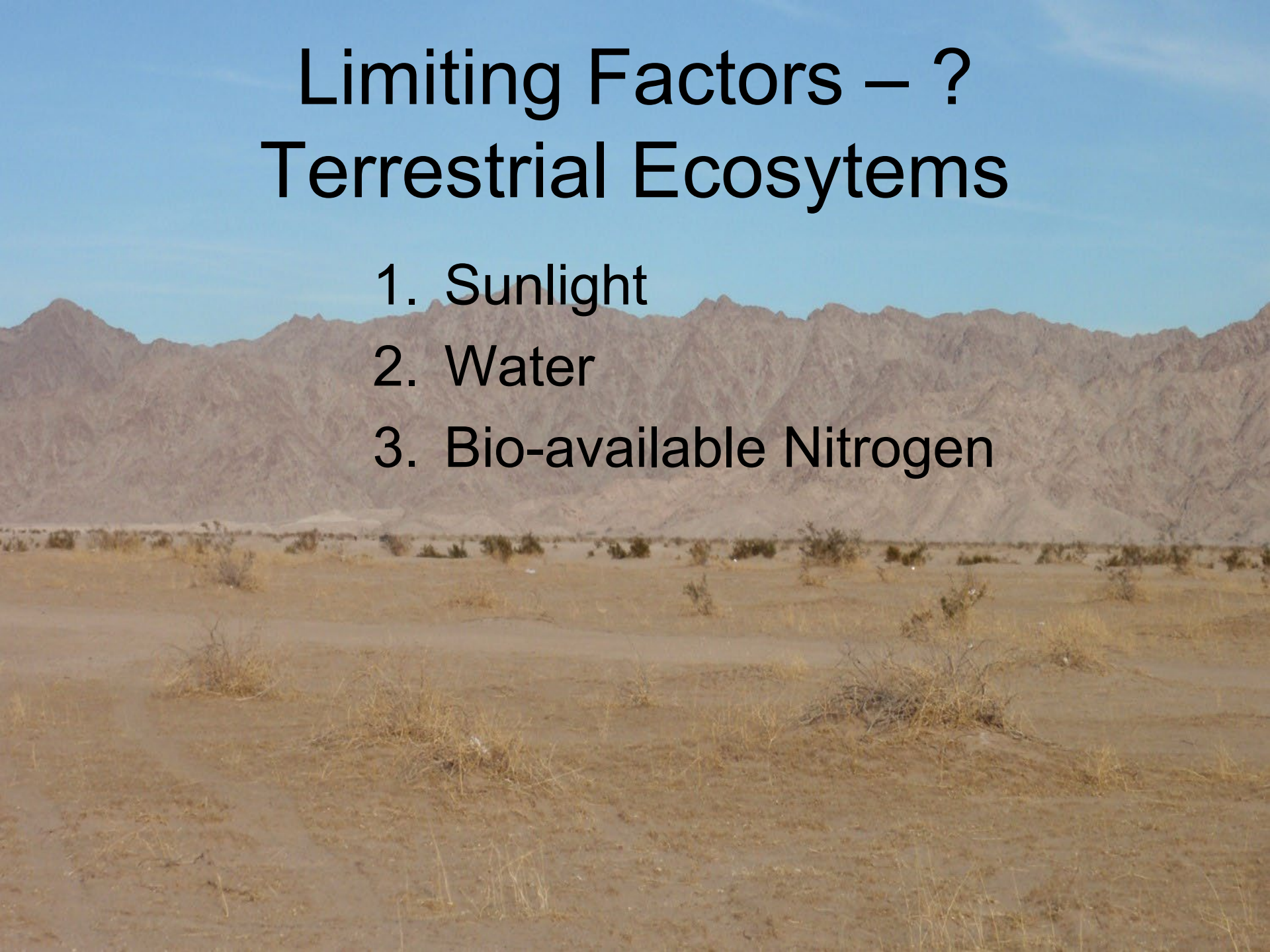
Water & Arizona Agriculture

- **Arizona ag water use**
- **Agricultural production**
- **Ag exportation**
- **Food importation**



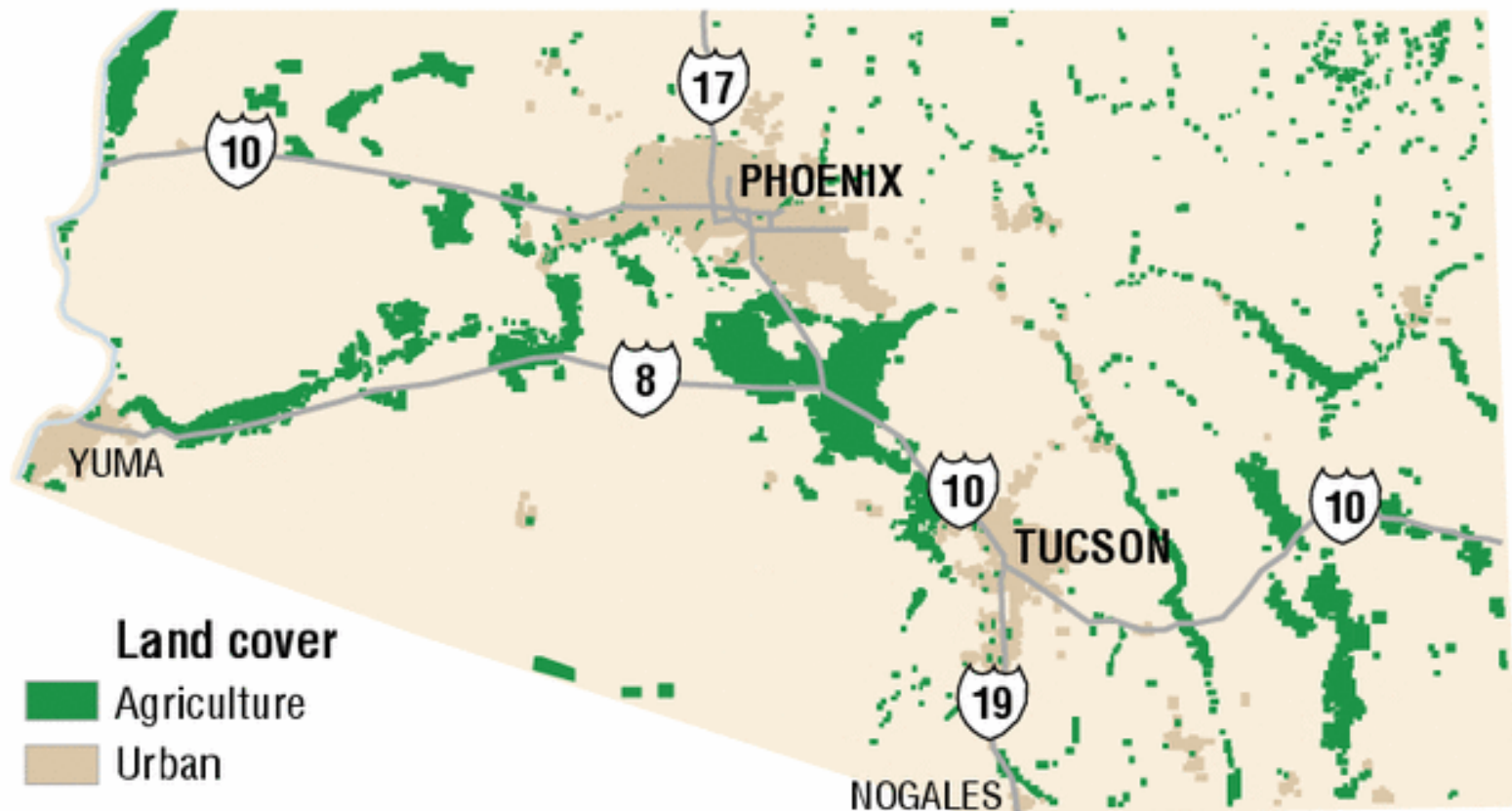
Limiting Factors – ? Terrestrial Ecosystems

1. Sunlight
2. Water
3. Bio-available Nitrogen



Arizona farms and urbanized areas

As Arizona's urban areas gobble up more land, many farmers are getting offers they can't refuse and selling.



SOURCE: Arizona Gap Analysis Project

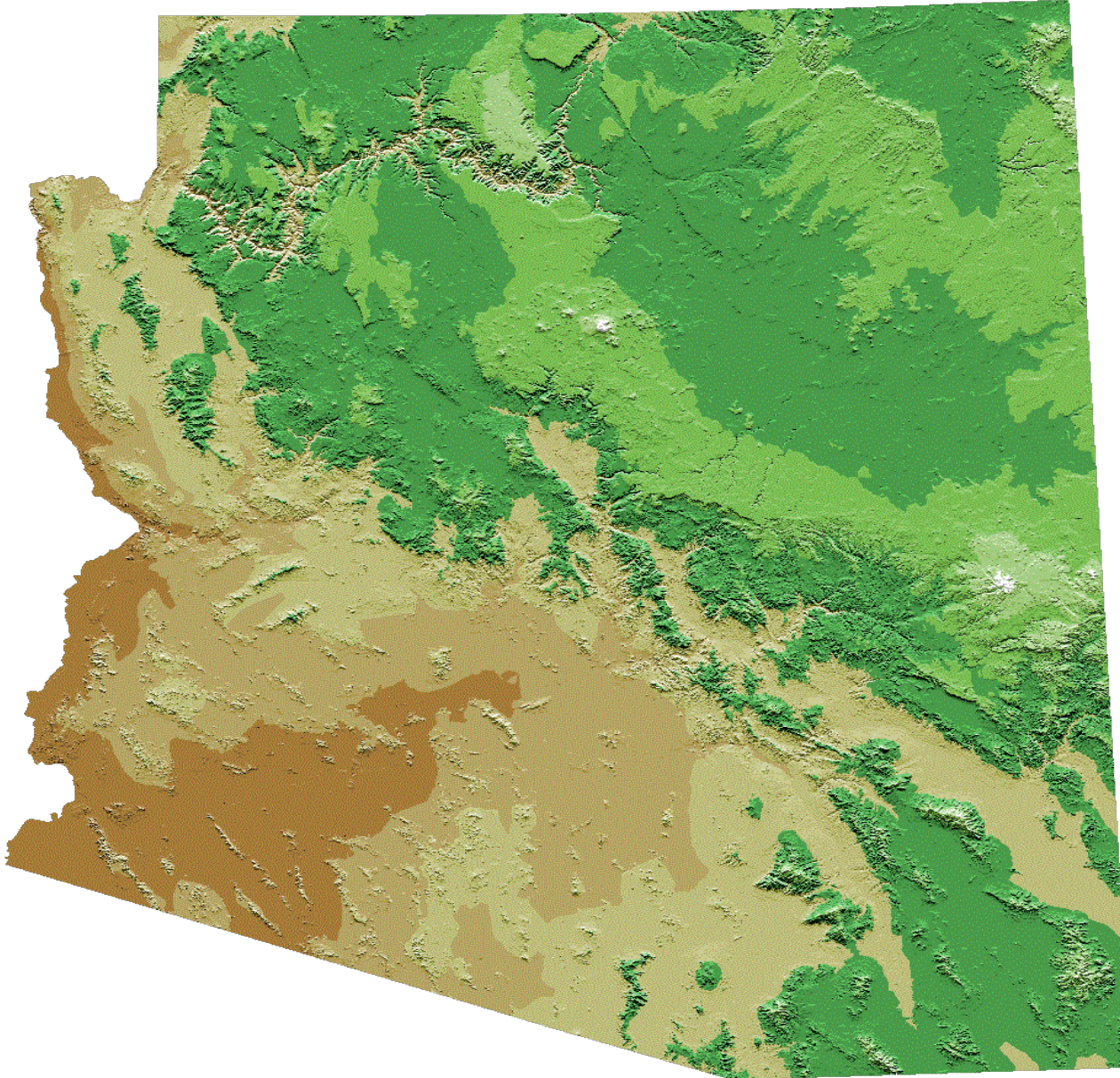
Dave Castelan / Staff

~1,222,000 acres (2022) <https://www.usfarmdata.com>



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The Great State of Arizona



Arizona Ag Water Use

ARIZONA'S WATER USE BY SECTOR (2019)



Source: ADWR, 2 August 2023



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Colorado River Water

70-80%  Agriculture
(conventional estimates)



Water Use – United States

80%  Agriculture

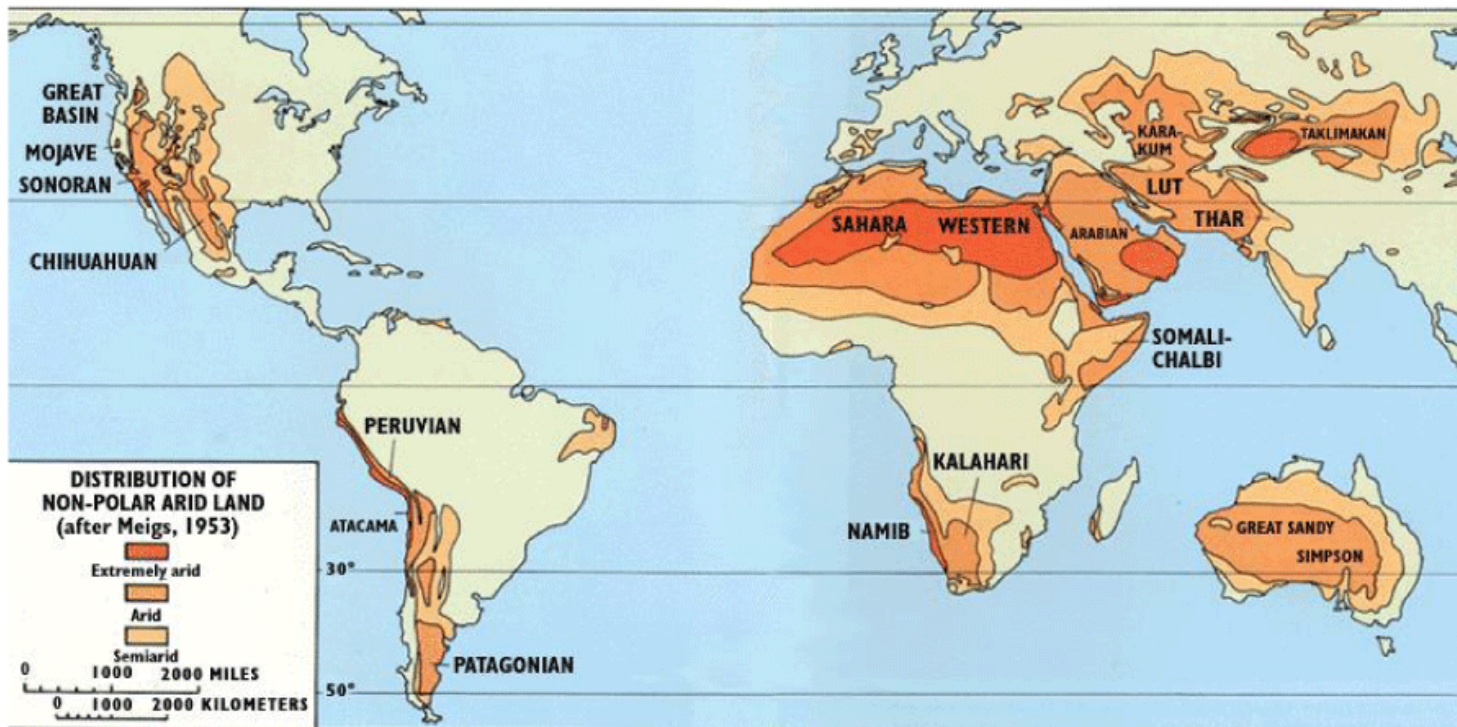


Global Fresh Water Use

70%  Agriculture

**Primarily in arid
& semi-arid regions**





Arid/Semi-Arid Regions

- ~ 40% of total crop production
- ~ 60-65% of grain production
- ~ 40-45% of global population



Increasing Global Demand Food & Fresh Water

- **By 2050**, feeding a planet of **9B people** will require:
 - **50 percent increase - agricultural production**
 - **15 percent increase - water demand**



Arizona Water

- Arizona consumes ~ **7M acre-feet (AF)/year**
- 72% used by agriculture ~ **5 MAF**
- Each Arizonan uses ~
146 gallons water/day*
- 7.6M Arizonans  **1.2 MAF/year**
(wet water)

*ADWR, <https://www.azwater.gov/conservation/public-resources>



Arizona Agricultural Production

- Highest yields per acre (unit area).
- High quality crops
- Maximize genetic potential
 - Crops
 - Animals
- Robust seed industry
 - National
 - International



Arizona Agricultural Economic Production

- **\$30.9B** to the state's economy *
- Includes direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts.
- **Supporting over 126,000 jobs**
 - **\$7.2B in labor income**
 - contributing significantly to stable employment and the state's overall economy.

* Montaña, C., D. Duval, G. Frisvold, J. Quintero. 2024. Arizona's Agribusiness System in the State Economy: An Economic Contribution Analysis for 2022. Department of Agricultural & Resource Economics, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension



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Direct Agricultural Production

- Value of agricultural products sold in Arizona reached **\$5.2B in 2022.**
 - Crop production: 58%
 - Livestock: 42%. } ~ 60/40 Split
- Major agricultural products by value:
 - dairy products,
 - cattle and calves,
 - and vegetables/melons.

* Montaña, C., D. Duval, G. Frisvold, J. Quintero. 2024. Arizona's Agribusiness System in the State Economy: An Economic Contribution Analysis for 2022. Department of Agricultural & Resource Economics, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension



Growth & Diversification

- **\$30.9B 2022 = 35% increase in 5 years**
 - \$23.3B figure reported in 2017
- **Increased diversity of ag production:**
 - Urban specialty crops
 - Greenhouses
 - Alfalfa
 - Dairy farms

* Montanía, C., D. Duval, G. Frisvold, J. Quintero. 2024. Arizona's Agribusiness System in the State Economy: An Economic Contribution Analysis for 2022. Department of Agricultural & Resource Economics, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension



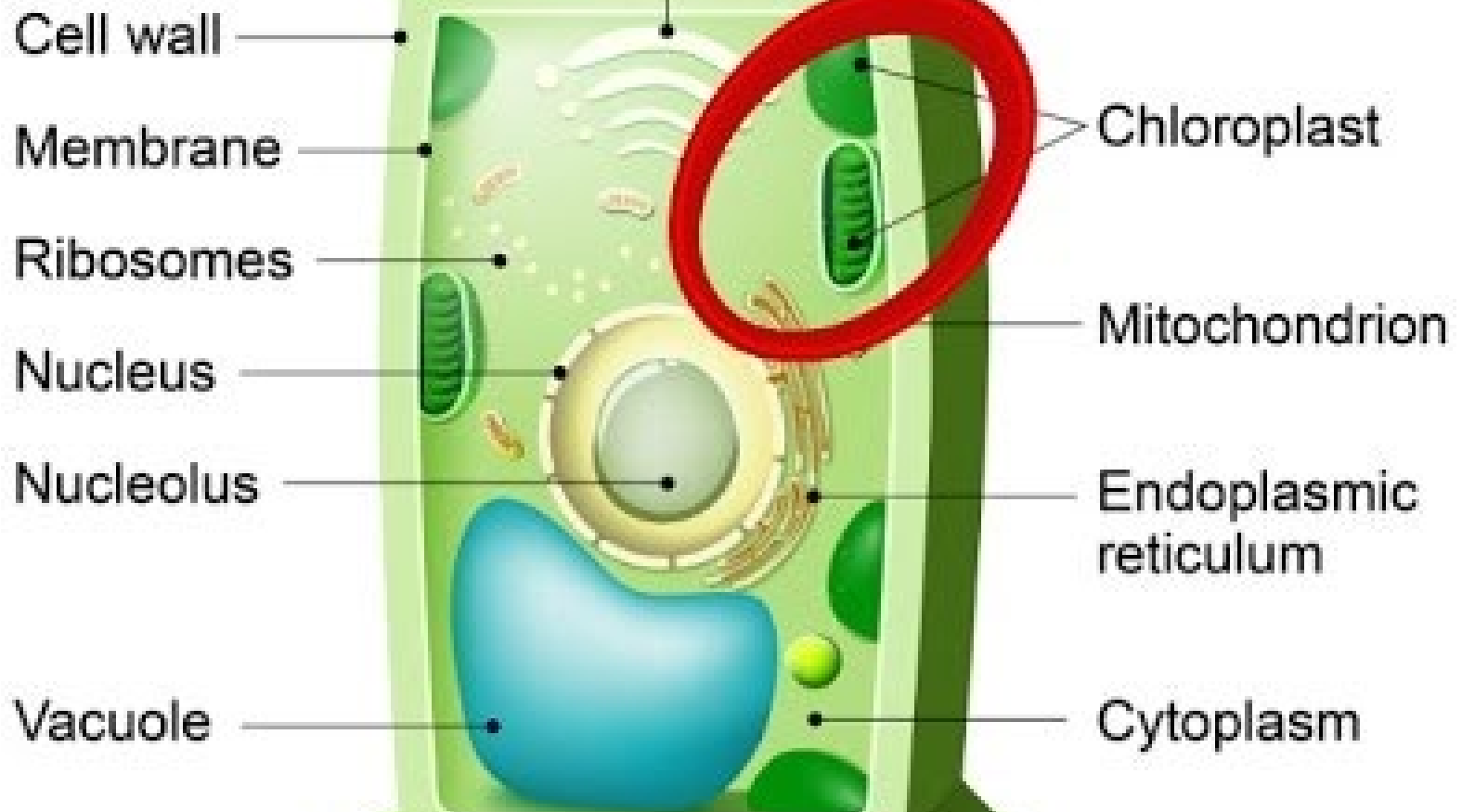
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Crop Water Use

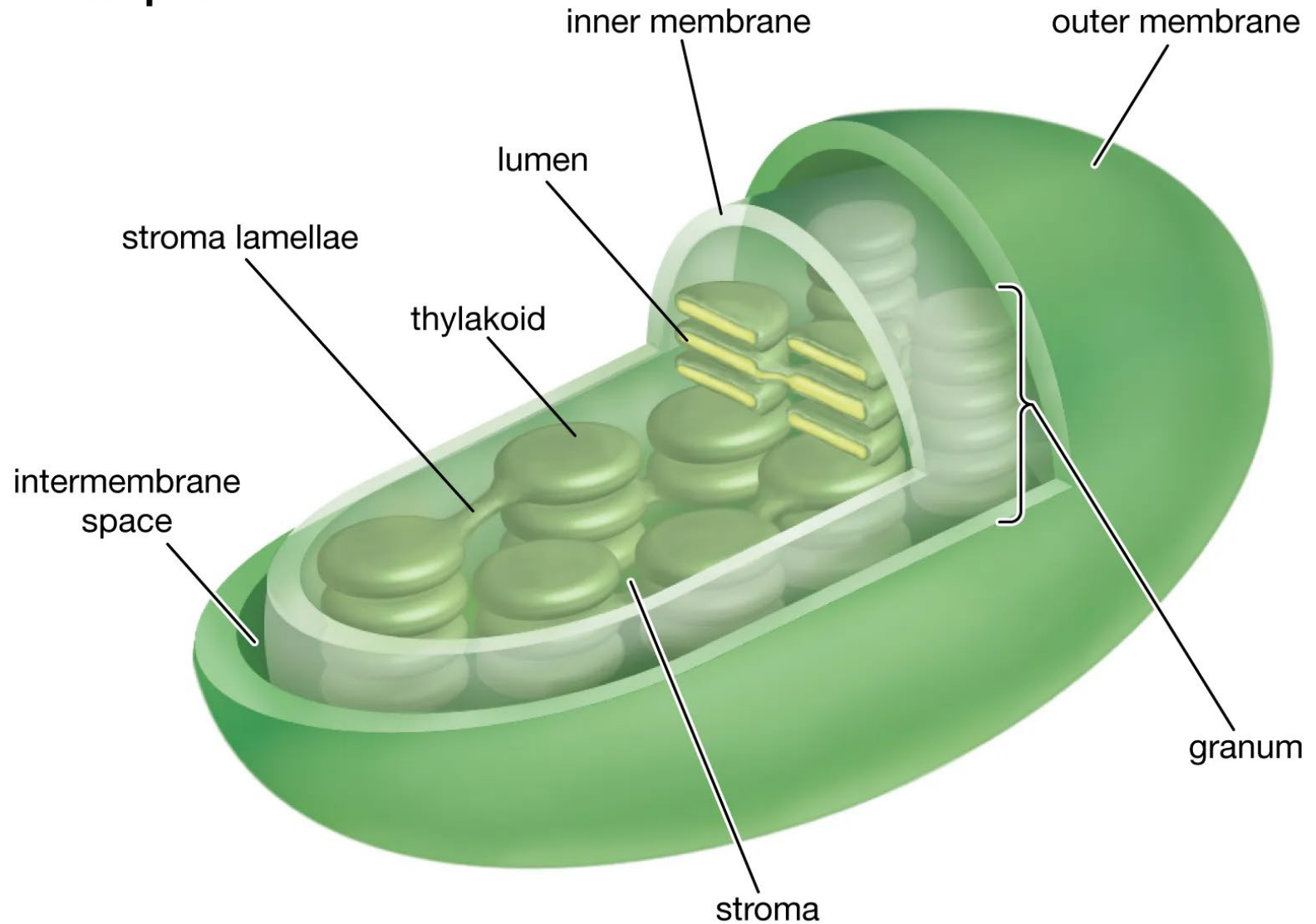
A wide-angle photograph of a vast agricultural field filled with rows of green leafy crops, possibly lettuce or cabbage. The plants are densely packed and stretch far into the distance, creating a strong sense of perspective. The soil between the rows is dark and appears to be cracked, suggesting dry conditions. In the background, a clear blue sky is visible above a distant horizon line with some low-lying hills or mountains. The overall scene conveys a message about agricultural water management.



Chloroplasts



Chloroplast

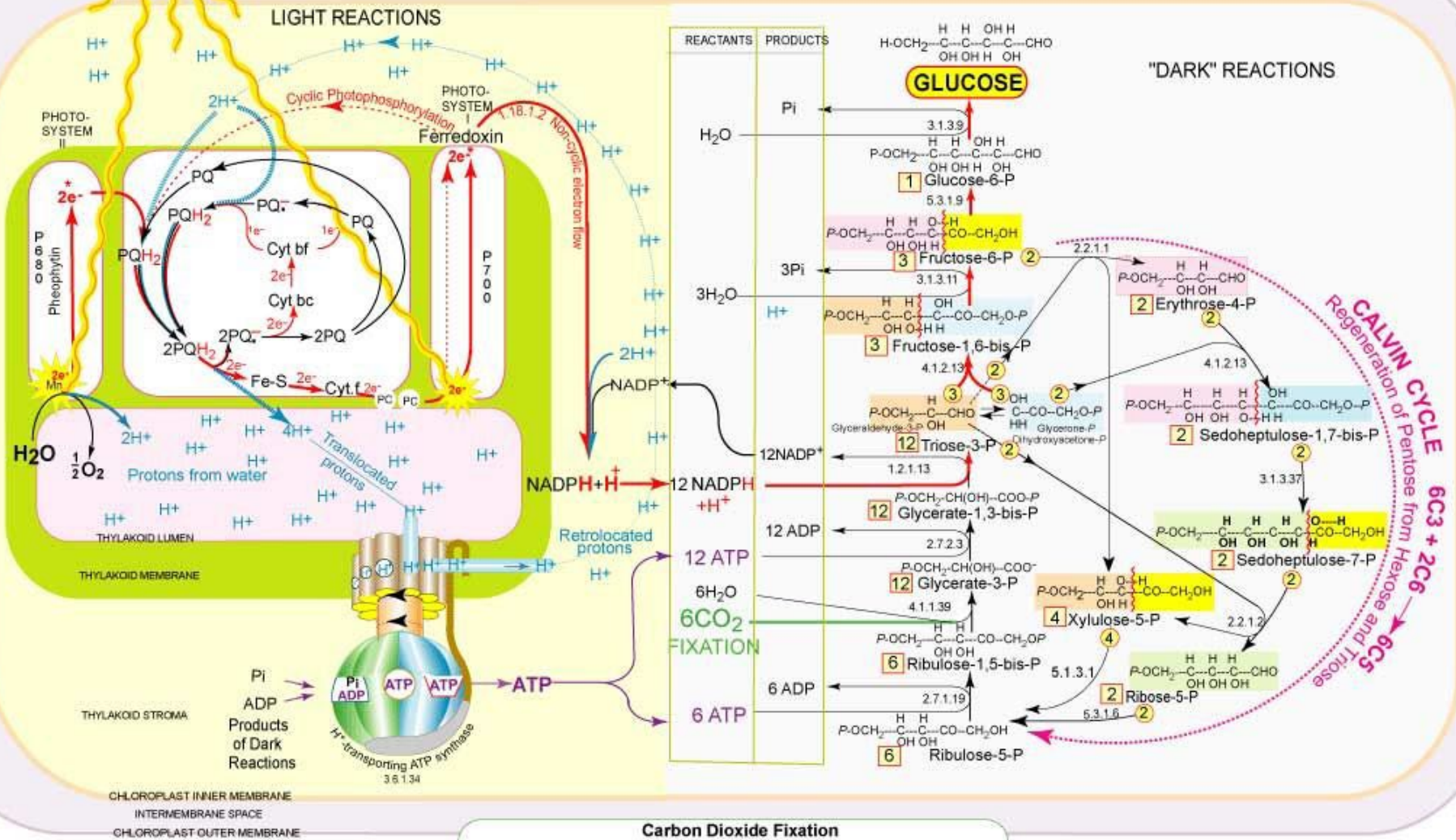


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PHOTOSYNTHESIS IN CHLOROPLAST



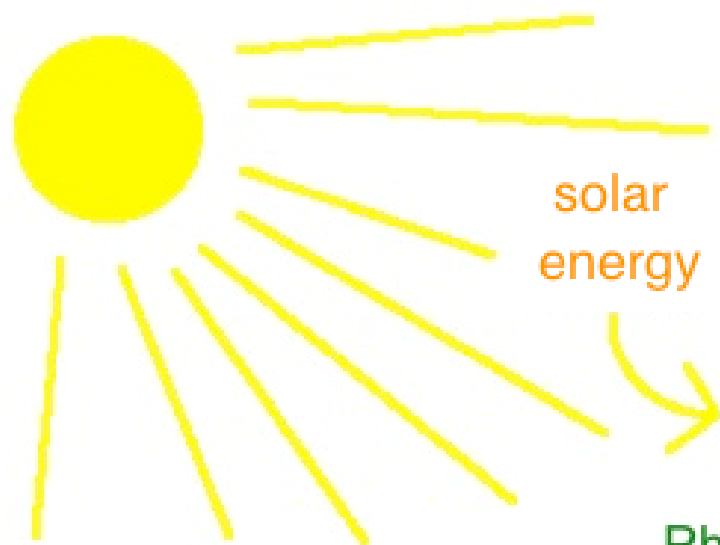
→ **LIGHT-DRIVEN ELECTRON FLOW** (electric current) from H_2O to NADP^+ and thence to Glucose (and starch)

Reduced NADP inhibits **Ferredoxin-NADPH reductase** (1.18.1.2) and thus initiates

→ **CYCLIC PHOTOPHOSPHORYLATION** - a light-driven electron flow that drives

→ **PROTON TRANSLLOCATION** from stroma to lumen. These protons, together with those from water produce a pH gradient that drives ATP synthase to form ATP

ENZYMES			
1.2.1.13	Glyceraldehyde-3-P dehydrogenase	2.7.1.19	Phosphoribulokinase
1.18.1.2	Ferredoxin-NADPH+ reductase	2.7.2.3	Phosphoglycerate kinase
2.2.1.1	Glyceraldehyde-3-P dehydrogenase (Transketolase)	3.1.3.9	Glucose-6-phosphatase
2.2.1.2	Dihydroxyacetone transferase (Transaldolase)	3.1.3.11	Fructose-bis-phosphatase
		3.1.3.37	Sedoheptulose-bis-phosphatase
		5.1.3.1	Triosephosphate isomerase
		5.3.1.6	Ribose-5-P isomerase
		5.3.1.9	Hexose-P isomerase
		3.6.1.34	ATP synthase



solar
energy



+



Photosynthesis



+



carbon
dioxide

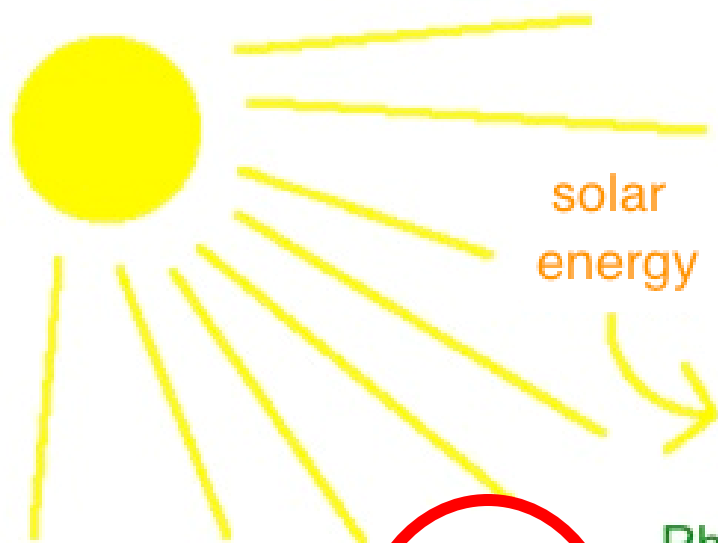
water

glucose

oxygen



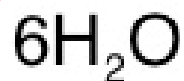
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solar
energy



+



carbon
dioxide

water

Photosynthesis



glucose

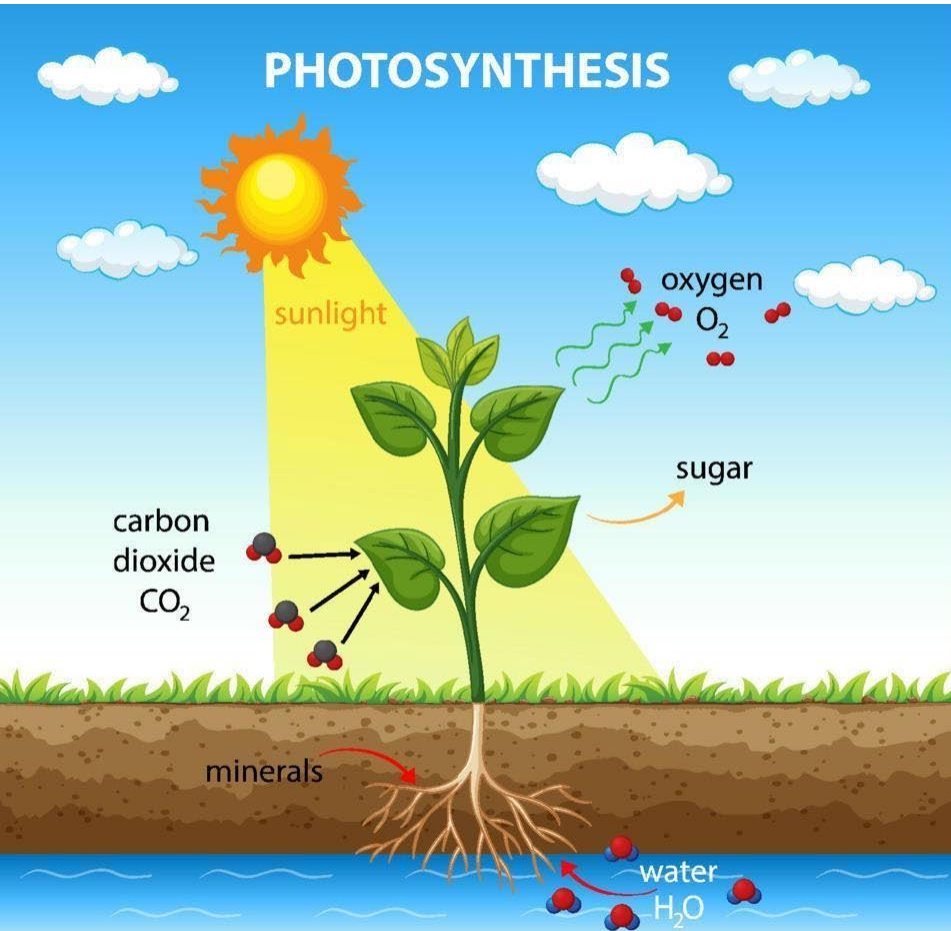


oxygen

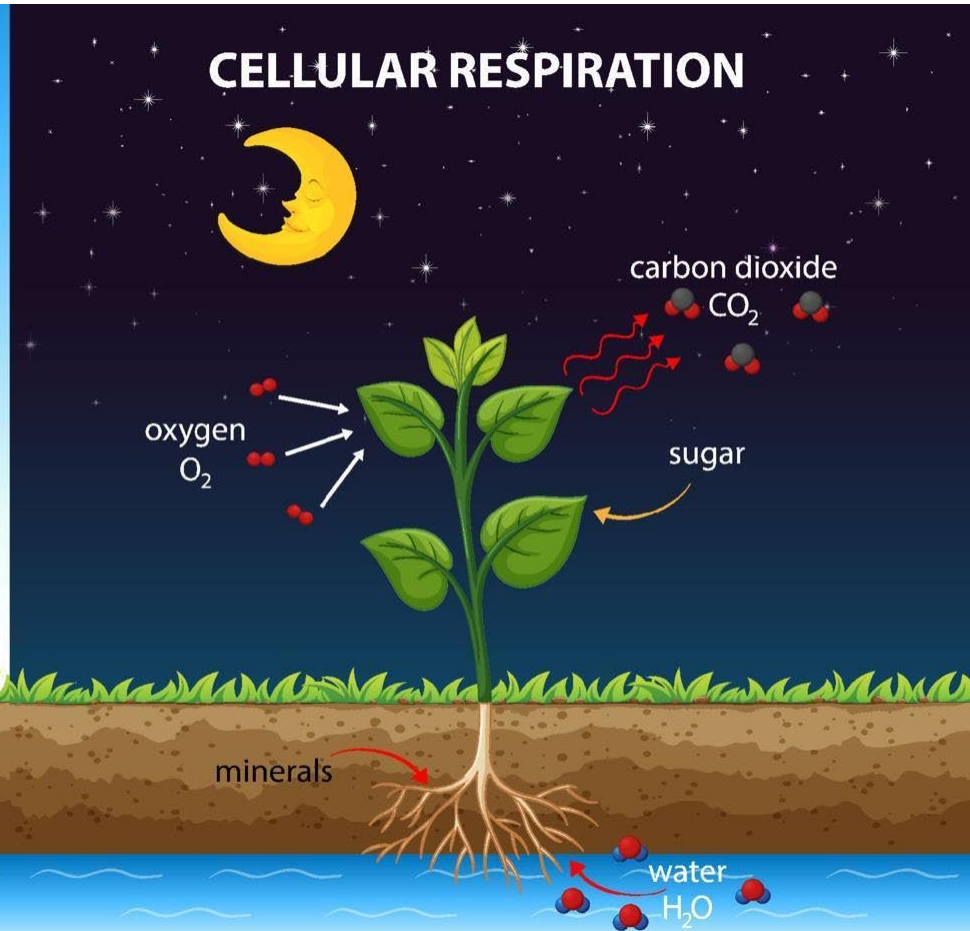


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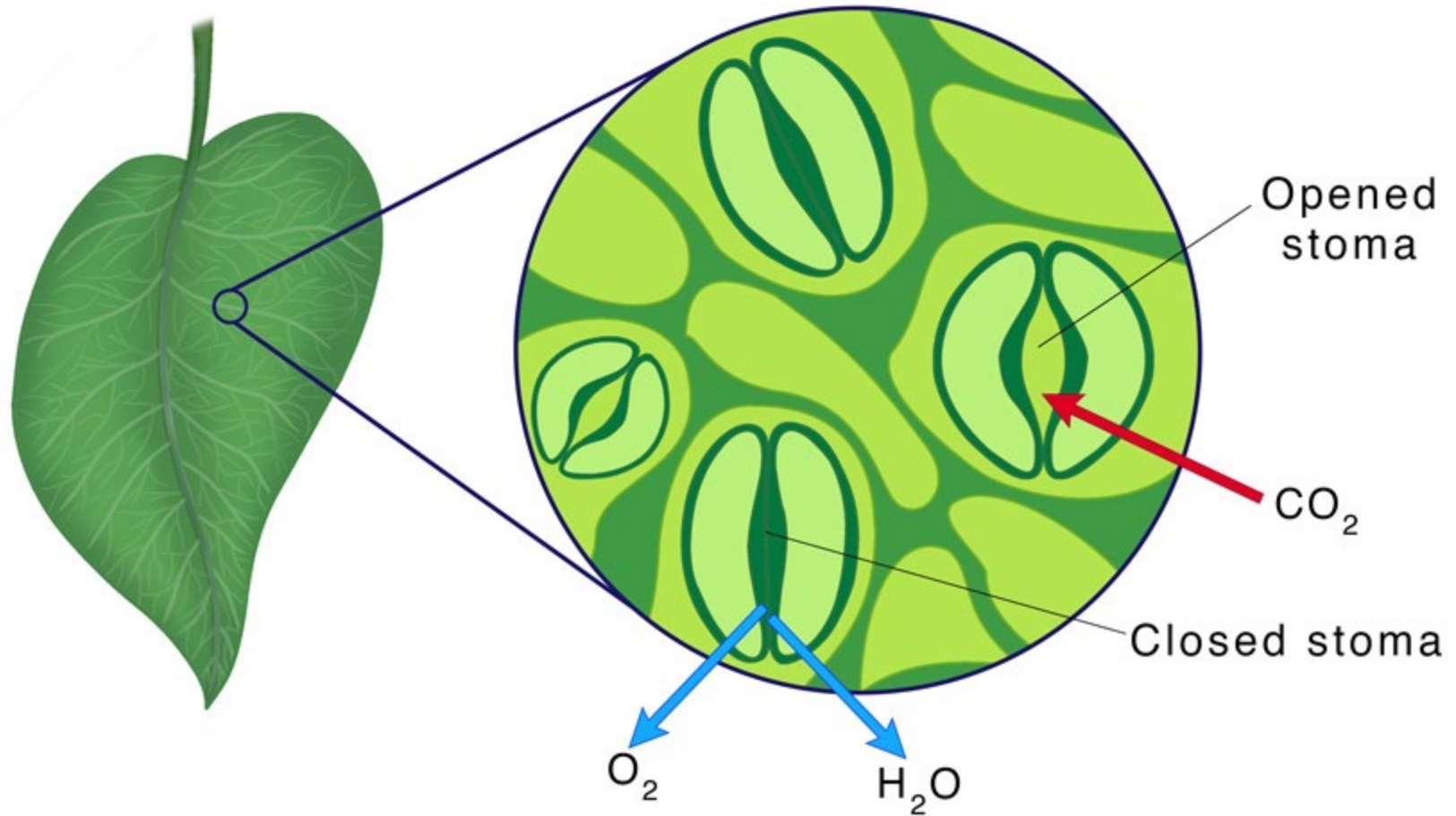
PHOTOSYNTHESIS



CELLULAR RESPIRATION



Stomata



Evapotranspiration



Good Stewards of Arizona Land & Water Resources



Photo Credit: Wayne Connelley Agriculture Photo Collection

Construction wrapped up on the Laguna Dam in 1909 — the same year the Yuma Territorial Prison closed. Coincidentally, Clark owns a restored church in Yuma, built in 1909.



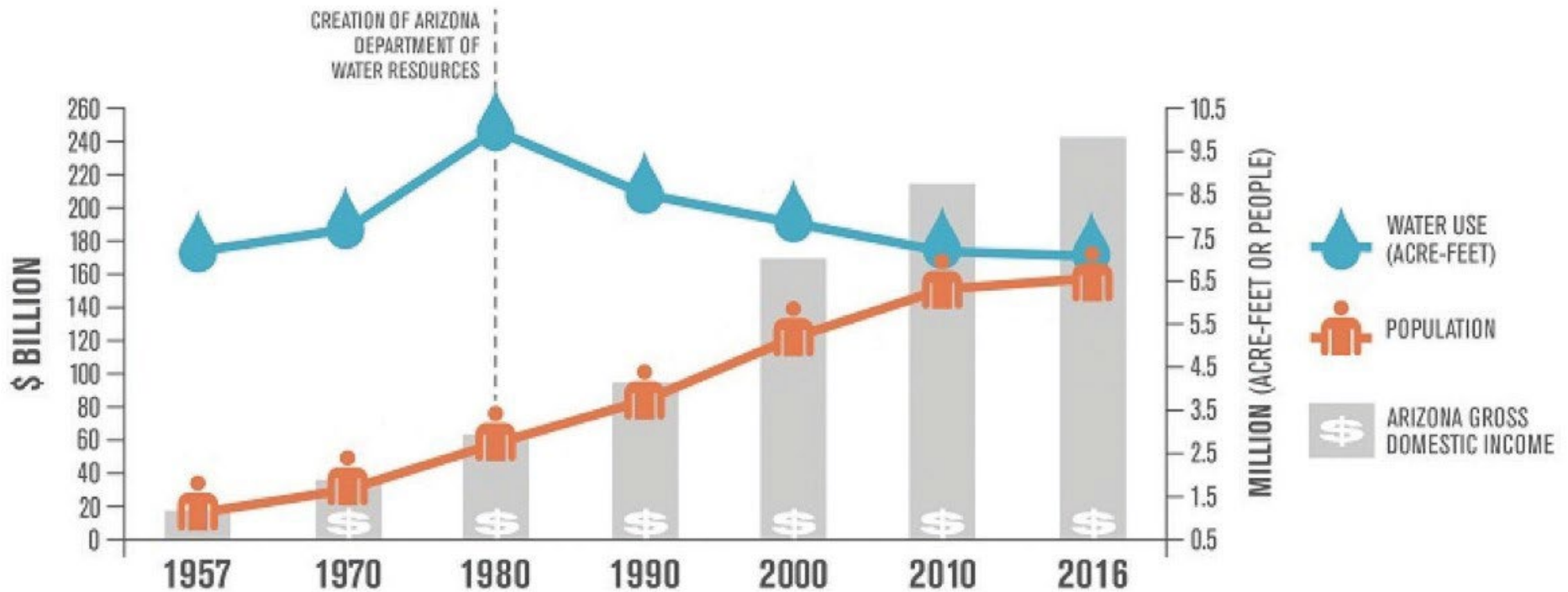


Decades of Improvements

- **Yields and efficiencies of production have increased in Arizona.**
 - **Higher yields**
 - Highest yields and quality of crops in the world.
 - **Less land utilized**
 - **Less irrigation water utilized per acre**
 - Less crop inputs, e.g. pesticides & fertilizers
 - Increased diversification of crops and cropping systems.
 - Including extensive seed production



ARIZONA WATER USE, POPULATION, AND ECONOMIC GROWTH (1957-2016)

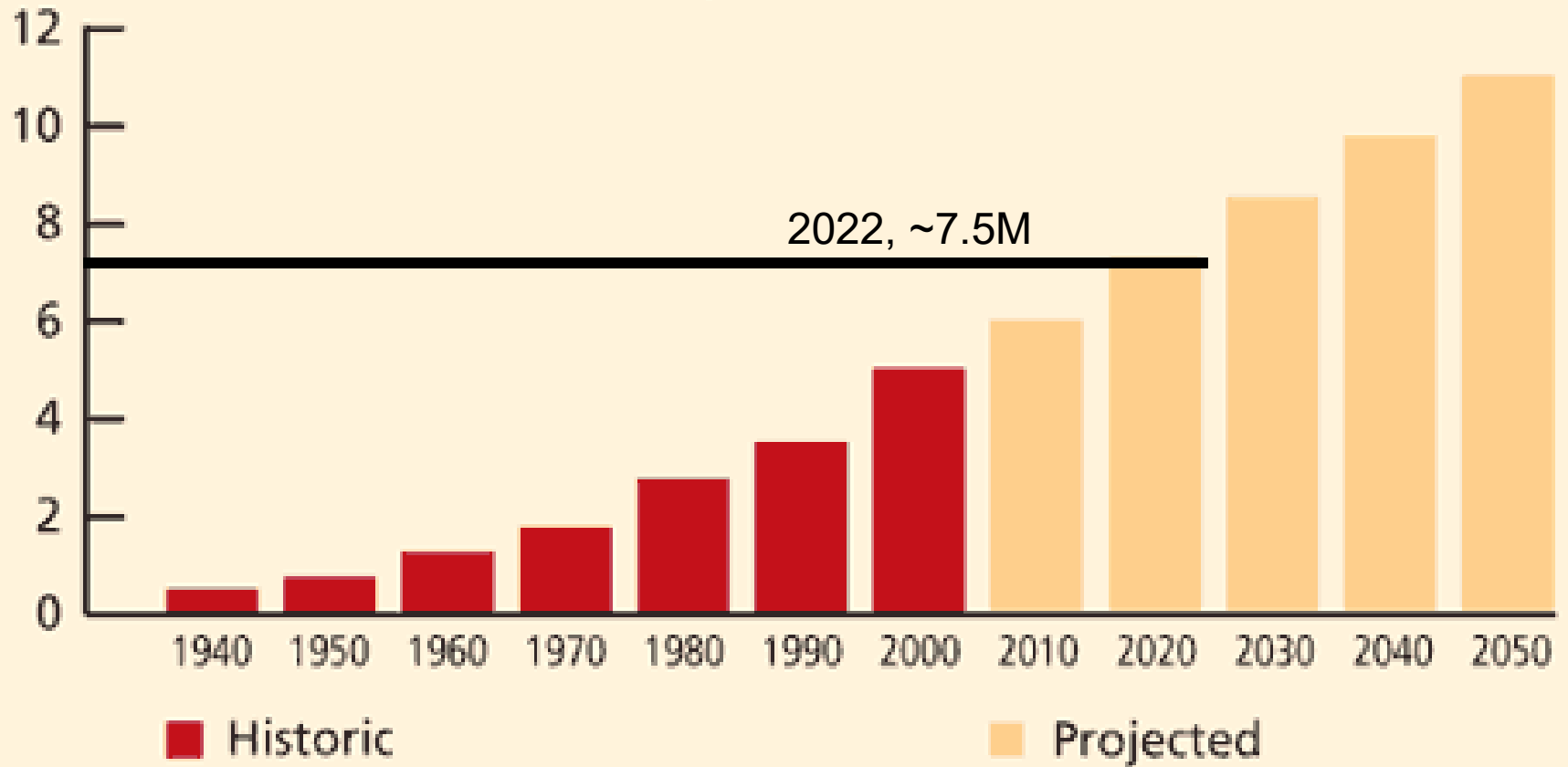


SOURCE: ADWR, 2017



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Arizona's Population (Millions)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and *MoveAZ Plan Phase I Report* (Cambridge Systematics, Inc., Lima & Associates, et. al., 2002).



Urbanization - 2022

Entity	% Urban Residents
Global	57*
U.S.	83 (86)
Arizona	90
California	95
Mexico	81

*60% by 2030, 68% by 2050 (UN)



Water to Feed Arizona

- Water required to feed one person
(Virtual Water)

800 – 2,000 gallons water/day

- Range is dependent upon meat consumption
- **Average is close to 2,000 gallons/day/person**

- Using 1,000 gallons/person/day

7.6M Arizonans = 8.3M AF/year



Arizona Water Footprint

- 7 MAF wet water consumed

5 MAF used by agriculture

- 8.3 MAF required / year

—to feed 7.6M Arizonans

- Balance:

- 3.3 MAF (deficit) to feed AZ



Arizona Agriculture & Exportations



Arizona Ag Exports

- **Foreign Exports account for 8% of Arizona agricultural sales**
- **Arizona Foreign exports:**
 - **88% of cotton,**
 - **39% of fruit,**
 - **24% of other crops and hay,**
 - **9% of vegetable and melon sales.**

The Contribution of Agricultural Exports to Arizona's Economy

Claudia Montaña, Dari Duval, George Frisvold

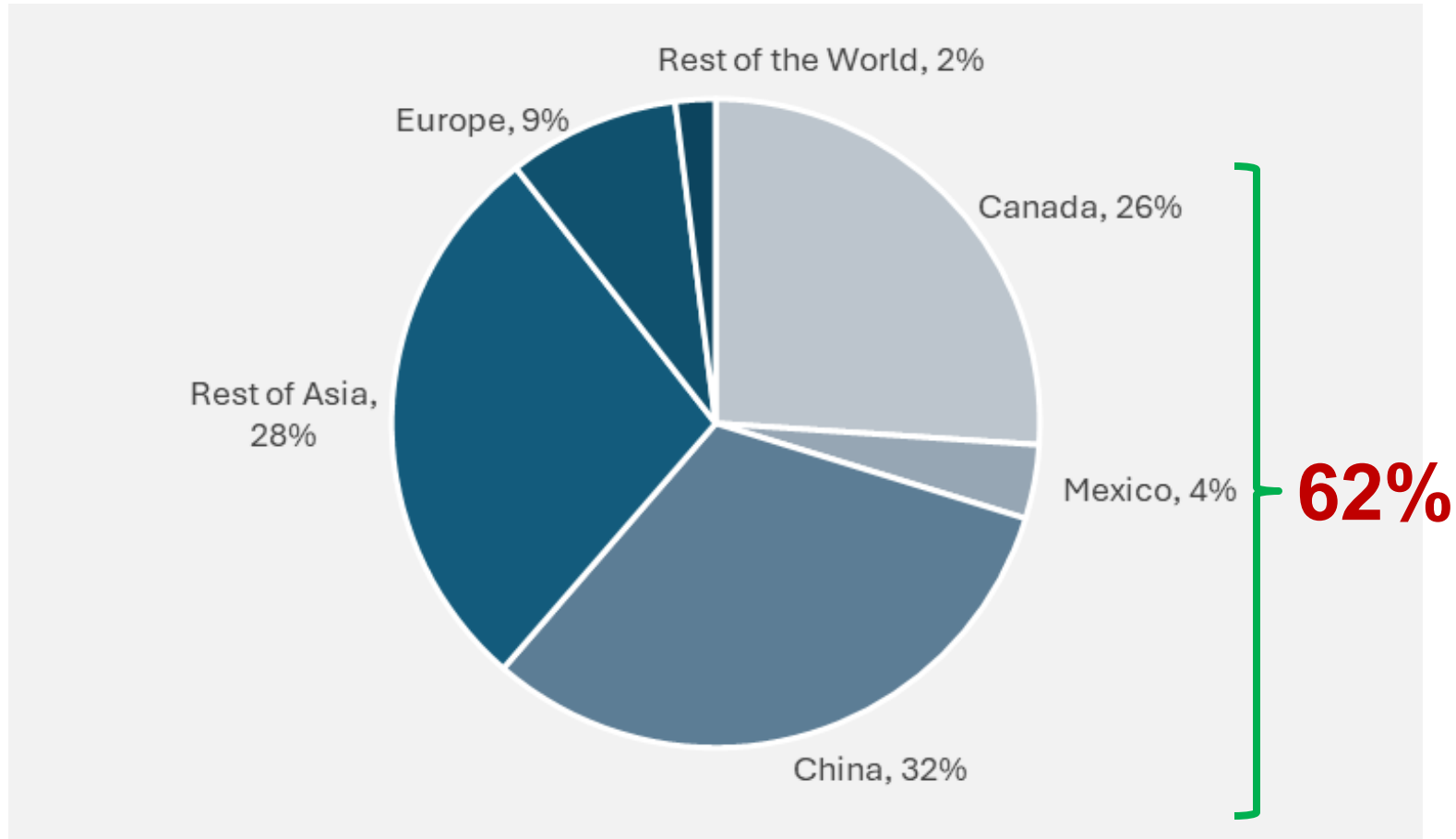
Department of Agricultural & Resource Economics, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension

March 2025.



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Destination of Arizona's Primary Agriculture Exports, in 2022 USD



The Contribution of Agricultural Exports to Arizona's Economy

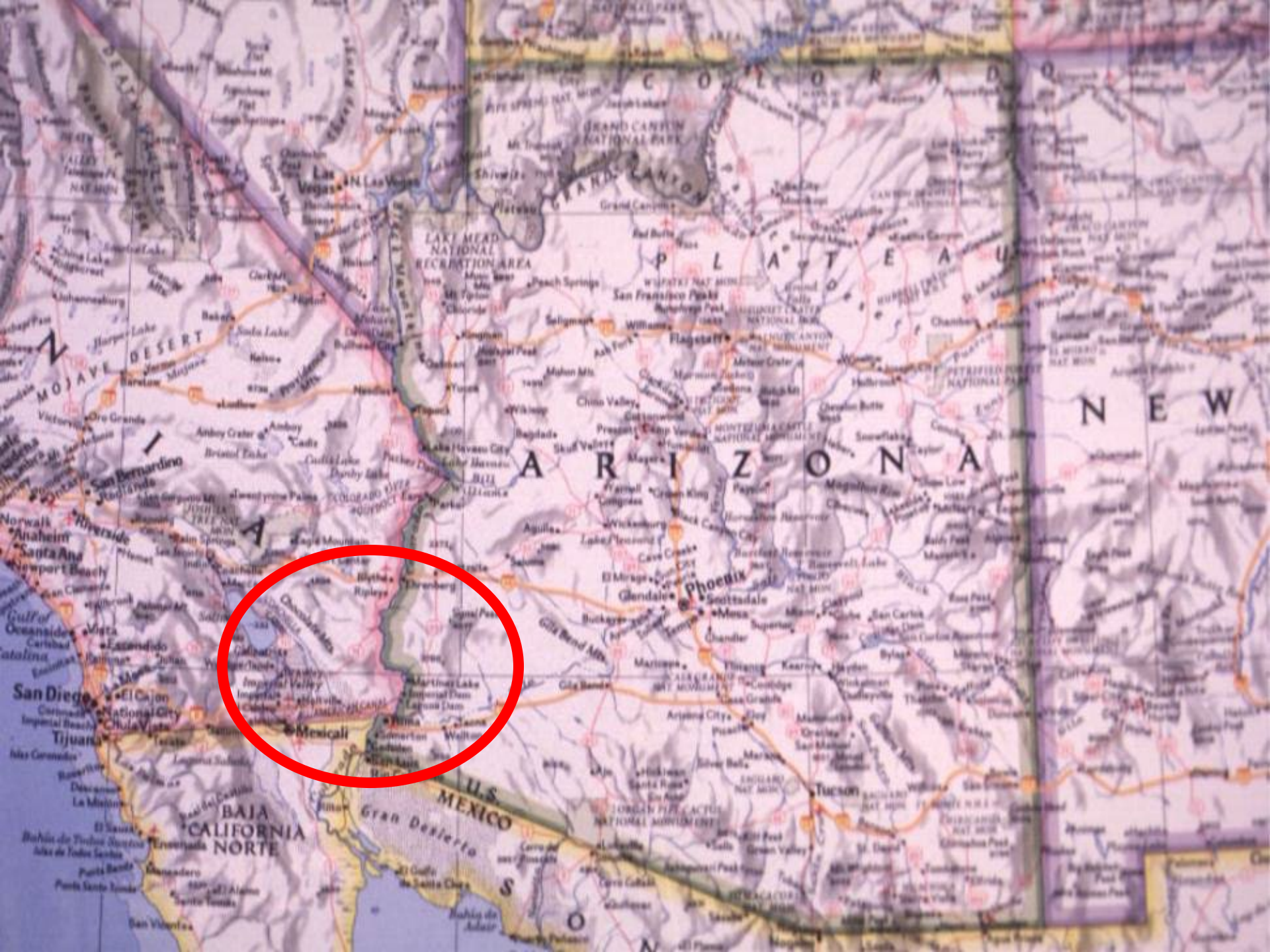
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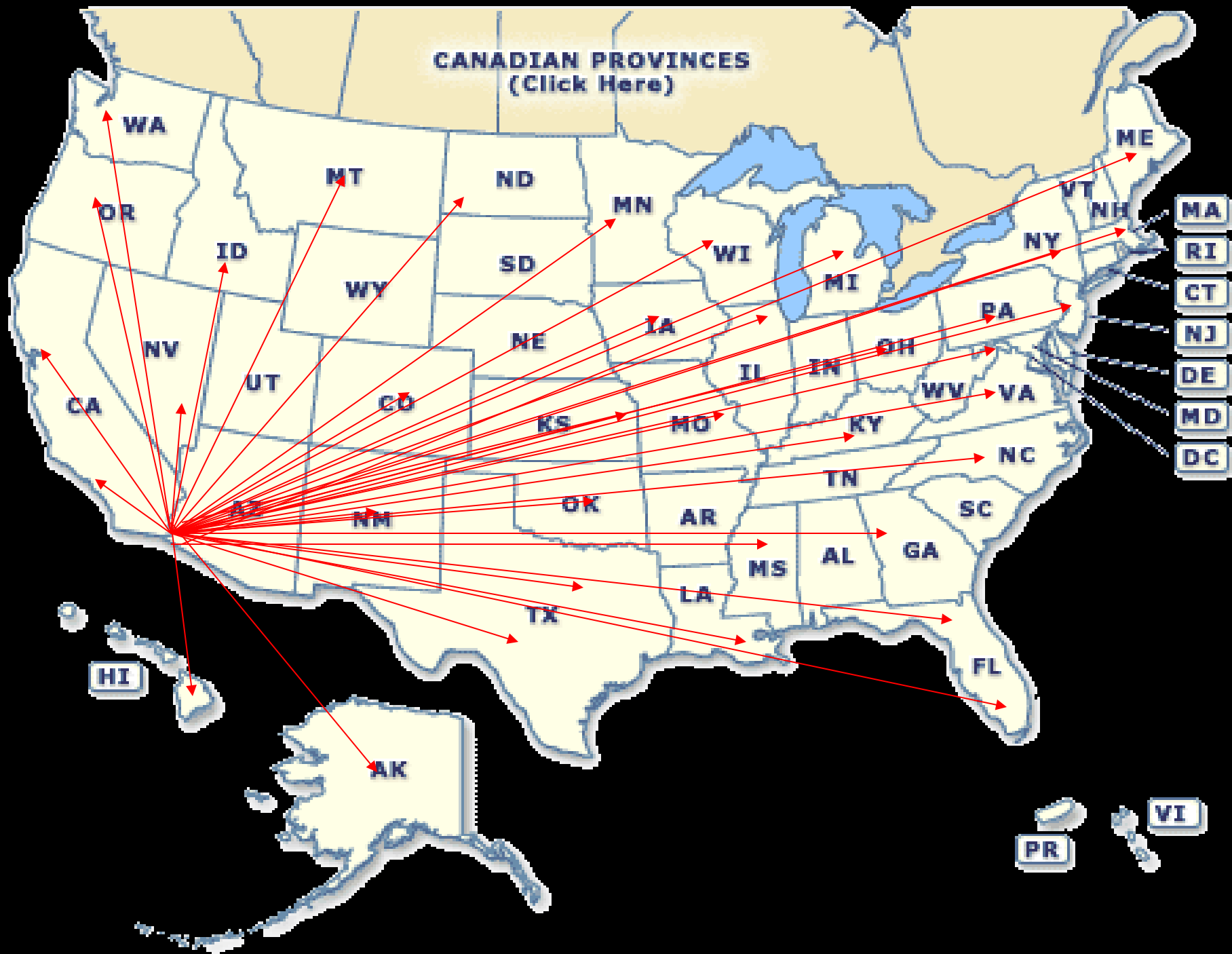
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Winter Vegetable Production

- Southwest Arizona
 - Yuma Valley, Lower Colorado River Valley
- **Principle winter vegetable production center for the U.S.**
 - **November to March**
 - **approx. 150,000 acres**





Arizona Lettuce/Leafy Greens

- 90% of the U.S./Canada winter supply of leafy green vegetables
 - Yuma, AZ
- 25% of the nation's annual LGV production



Arizona Leafy Green Winter Vegetable Production

- **\$4.4B to Arizona's economy (2022)**
 - 56% of the state's agricultural GDP.



U.S. Agriculture & The Global Economy



Global Economy

- **On the average, the U.S. exports ~20% of annual agricultural production.**
 - Top categories:
 - Grains, soybeans, and livestock

Source: USDA – ERS, 2025



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Global Economy

U.S. imports ~15% of annual national food supply.

- Seasonal and climatic factors drive U.S. food imports
 - popular types of fruits, vegetables—and tropical products, such as cocoa and coffee.

Source: USDA – ERS, 2025



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The United States is a Net Agricultural Importer

- U.S. imports exceeding exports by:
\$21 B in 2023; \$39 B in 2024
- The 2025 deficit was: **\$41 B**
 - increased demand for high-value imports i.e., **fruits, vegetables, processed foods**,
 - **Strong U.S. dollar** making imports cheaper,
 - **Rising consumer demand**
 - **Tariffs**

Kaufman, J. USDA-ERS. 2025. U.S. agricultural import values outpaced export values again in 2024. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/chart-gallery/chart-detail?chartId=58310>

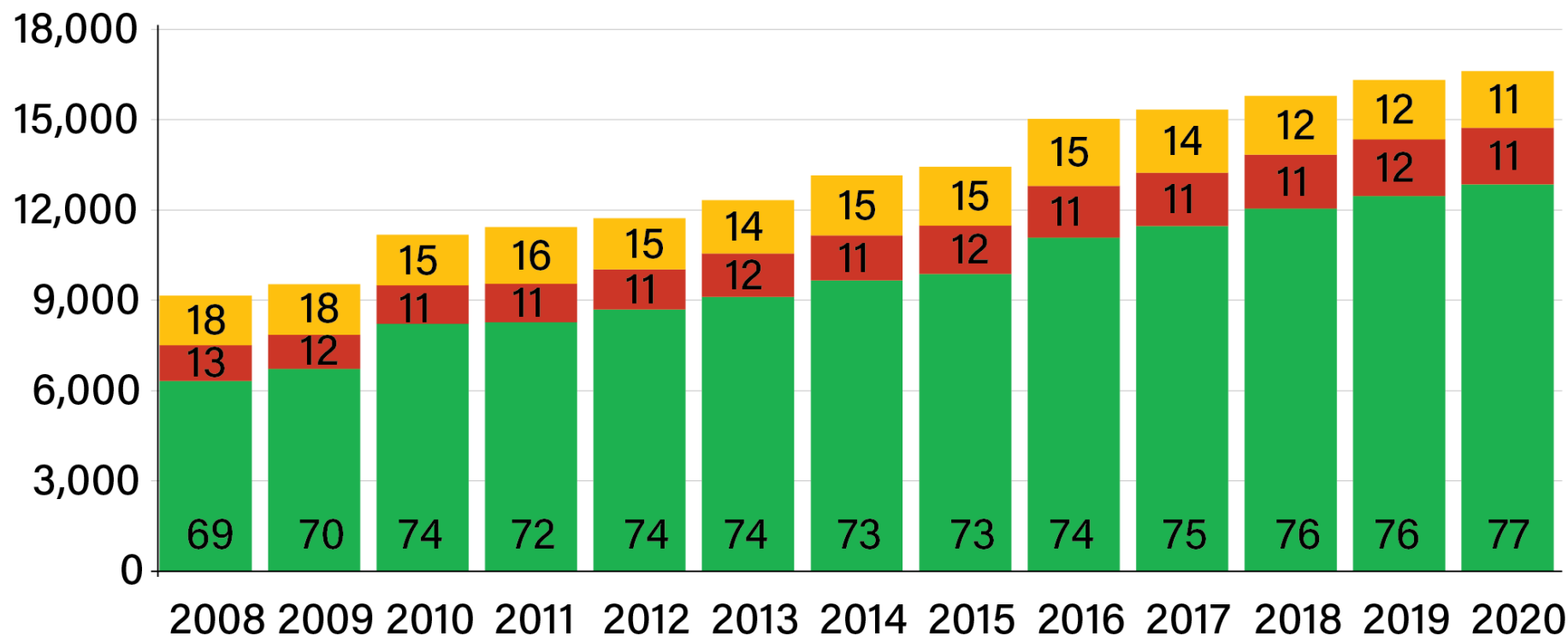


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U.S. fresh vegetable import volume continues steady growth

Million pounds

Mexico Canada All other countries



Numbers inside bars represent share of import volume

Notes: Fresh vegetables exclude potatoes and pulses (such as dry beans, lentils, peas, e.g.). See July 2021 Vegetables and Pulses Yearbook Tables 12-41 for the fresh vegetables included.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service calculations using U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census data.

Mexico Ag Imports to the U.S. Economic Value - Nogales, AZ

- **Fresh Produce imports totaling \$31.2 B, 2025**
 - Fruits, vegetables, and nuts
 - Fresh, frozen, and processed
 - **Fresh produce accounting for nearly 89% of the total.**
- **Mexico's agricultural imports into the U.S. reached \$43.9B, 2025**



Arizona Ag Exports

- **48%** of Arizona's agricultural exports come from **primary agriculture**,
- **43%** from **food and fiber manufacturing**, and
- **9%** from **input suppliers**.

The Contribution of Agricultural Exports to Arizona's Economy

Claudia Montaña, Dari Duval, George Frisvold

Department of Agricultural & Resource Economics, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension

March 2025.



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Arizona Cotton Production is the Most Export-Dependent

Arizona cotton industry is more vulnerable to retaliatory tariffs or foreign import restrictions.

The Contribution of Agricultural Exports to Arizona's Economy

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March 2025.



Conclusions

- **Arizona consumes much more water through the food required to support the population than is used in statewide ag production.**

5 MAF used in Arizona for food/fiber production

8.3 MAF to feed Arizonans

3.3 MAF Deficit

Conclusions

- Overall, exports account for **8%** of Arizona agricultural sales.
- On the average, the U.S. exports **~20%** of annual agricultural production.
- U.S. is a net importer of ag products
– **\$21B in 2023** —————→ **\$39B in 2024**



Conclusions

- Arizona produces the **highest yields and quality of crops** – anywhere in the world.
- Arizona crop **water use efficiency has steadily improved** in the past 40 years.
- Arizona contributes to the regional, national, and global food supply.



Water & Arizona Agriculture





Photo credit: Brian van der Brug / LA Times

Colorado River Water Update

5 November 2025

Jeffrey C. Silvertooth

**Professor and Extension Specialist
Agronomy / Soil Science
Department of Environmental Science**

Outline

- Background
 - Geography, hydrology, history
 - Law of the River
- Current situation
- Looking ahead – prospects for the future

Colorado River Watershed



- 1,450 mile river channel
- 244,000 sq. mile drainage
- greatest elevation drop in North America
- budgeted volume = **16.5 million acre-ft/year**
 - Columbia River: 192 million acre-ft/year
 - Mississippi River: 400 million acre-ft/year
- covers portions of **7 states** and **2 nations**
- **40M people w/ 30 American Indian Tribes**
- **~ 6.0M acres of farmland**

Colorado River Water Budget

- **16.5 MAF** Currently budgeted total

(7.5+7.5 MAF = 15 MAF + 1.5 MAF Mexico)

- Average annual flow:
14.8 MAF/year; 1906-2000

Rio Colorado – Sonora/Baja California/Arizona

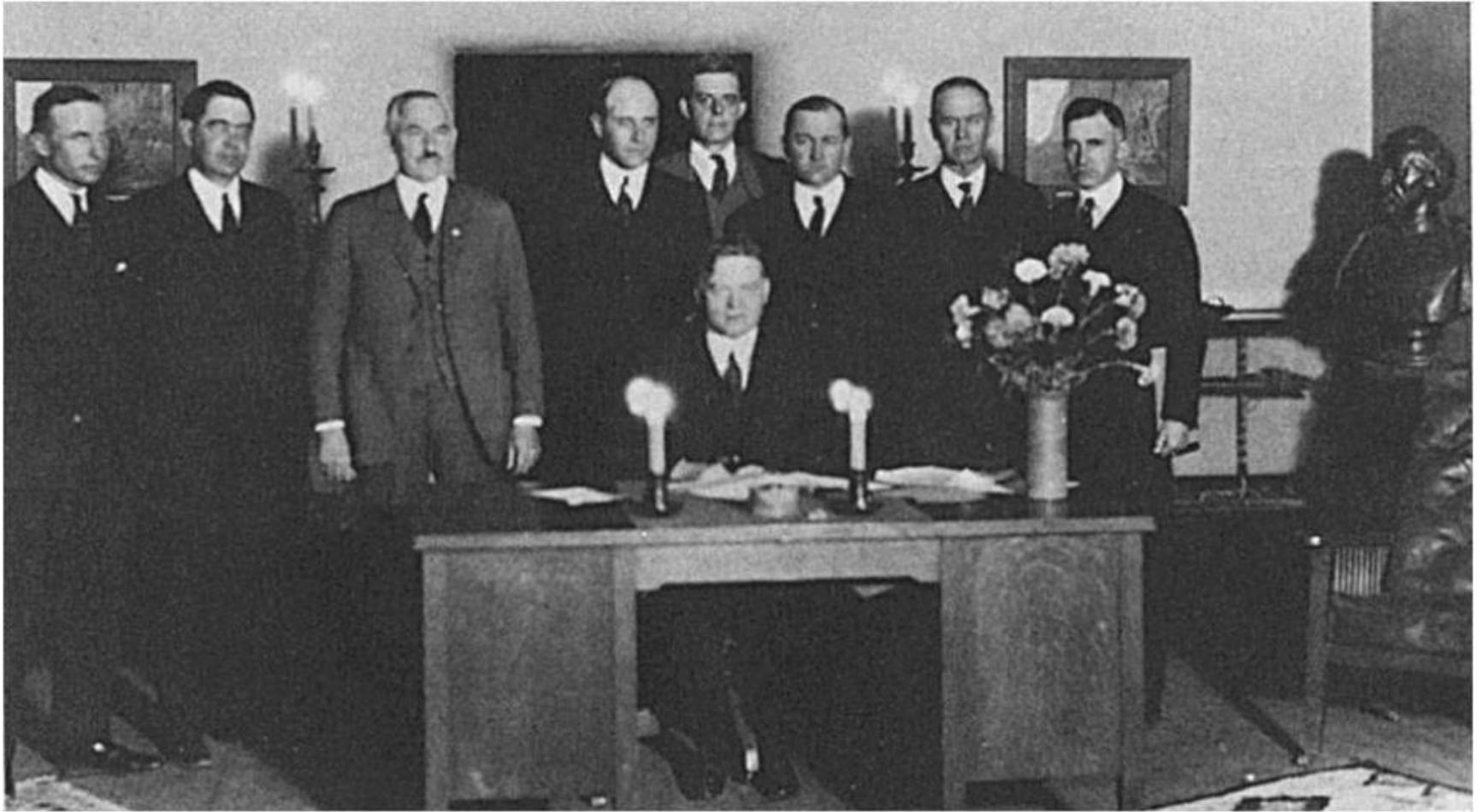


The Law of the River



COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AND LIFE SCIENCES
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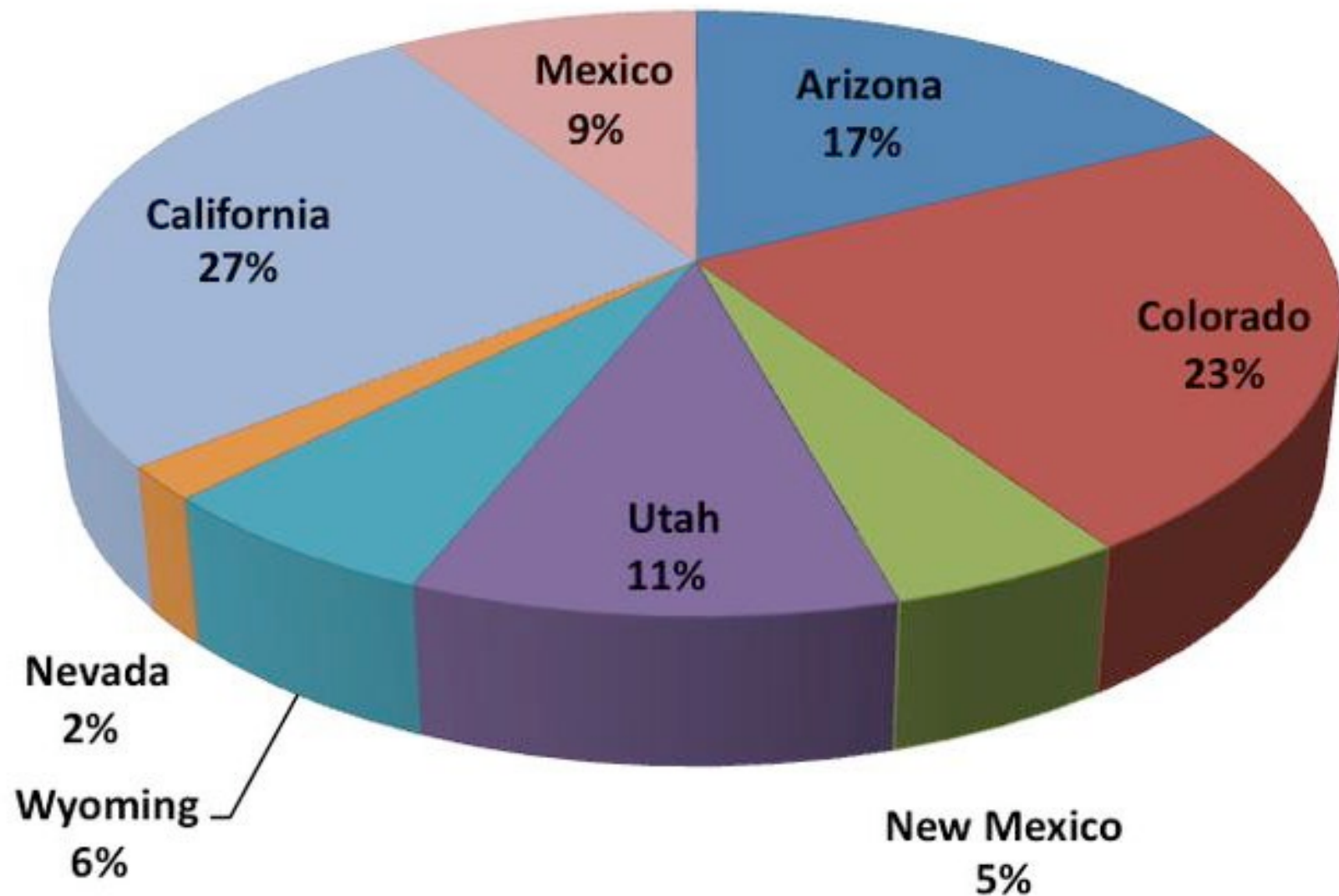
Colorado River Compact Signed 24 November 1922



Colorado River Compact

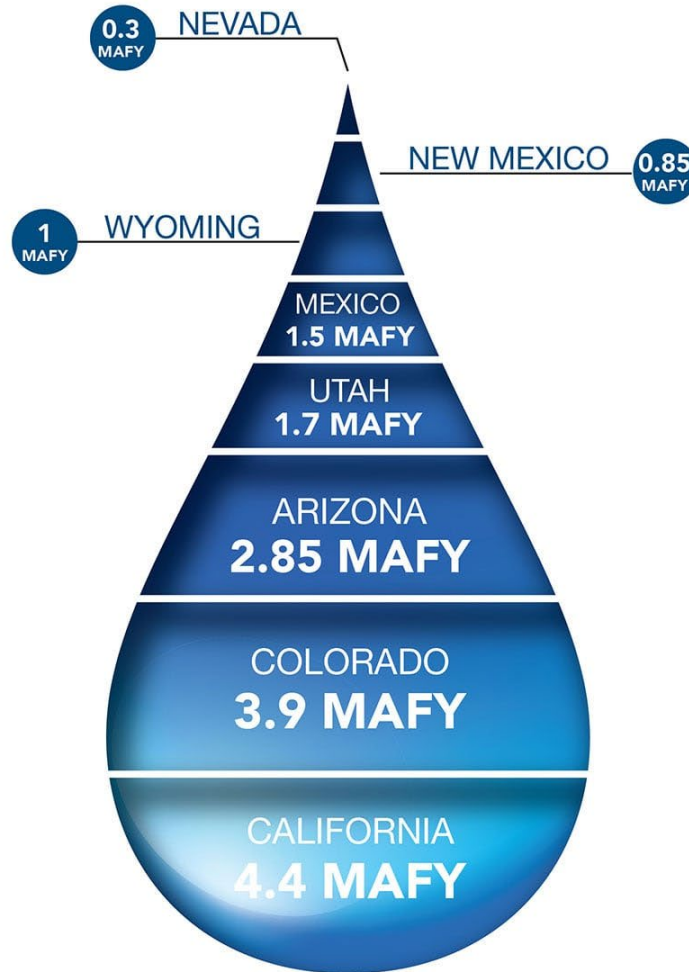
- **Created in 1922 to Divide the Water of the Colorado River**
 - At The Bishop's Lodge in Santa Fe, N.M.
 - Secretary Herbert Hoover presiding
 - Signed 24 November 1922
 - **Ratified by Arizona on 3 February 1944**

Colorado River Apportionment



WHERE THE WATER GOES:

Who Shares the Colorado River?



MAFY = million acre-feet per year

Mexican Water Treaty of 1944

Minute 319

- Mexican Water Treaty of 1944 committed the U.S. to deliver 1.5 MAF of water to Mexico on an annual basis,
- + an additional 200 KAF under surplus conditions.
- Total Colorado River allocations: 16.5 MAF

Presa Morelos



Present Perfected Rights, PPRs

The “present perfected rights PPRs” is an important aspect of the Law of the River.

The PPRs are those rights to use Colorado River water that were acquired or “perfected” by prior appropriation under state law before the Boulder Canyon Project Act of 1928 was passed.

BoR has established a priority ranking of water rights to administer diversions from the river on a “first-in-time-first-in-right” basis.

Colorado River in the 21st Century

Lake Mead



2000 - Full

Colorado River – 21st Century

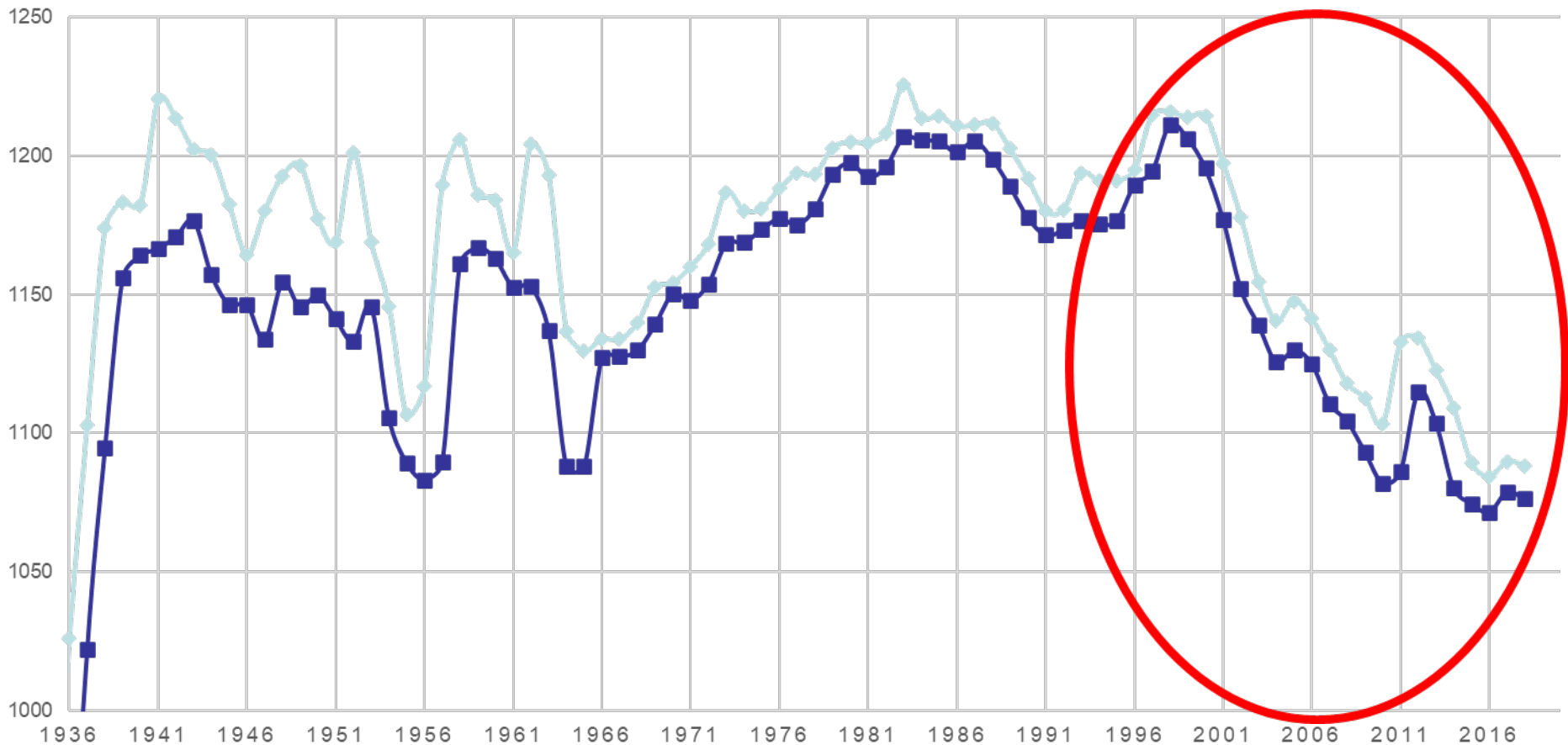
Average flow ~ **12.3 MAF**

16 % lower than the 20th Century
average of **14.8 MAF/year**

8.5 MAF in water year 2024-2025

HISTORY OF LAKE MEAD ELEVATIONS

— MAX ELEVATION — MIN ELEVATION

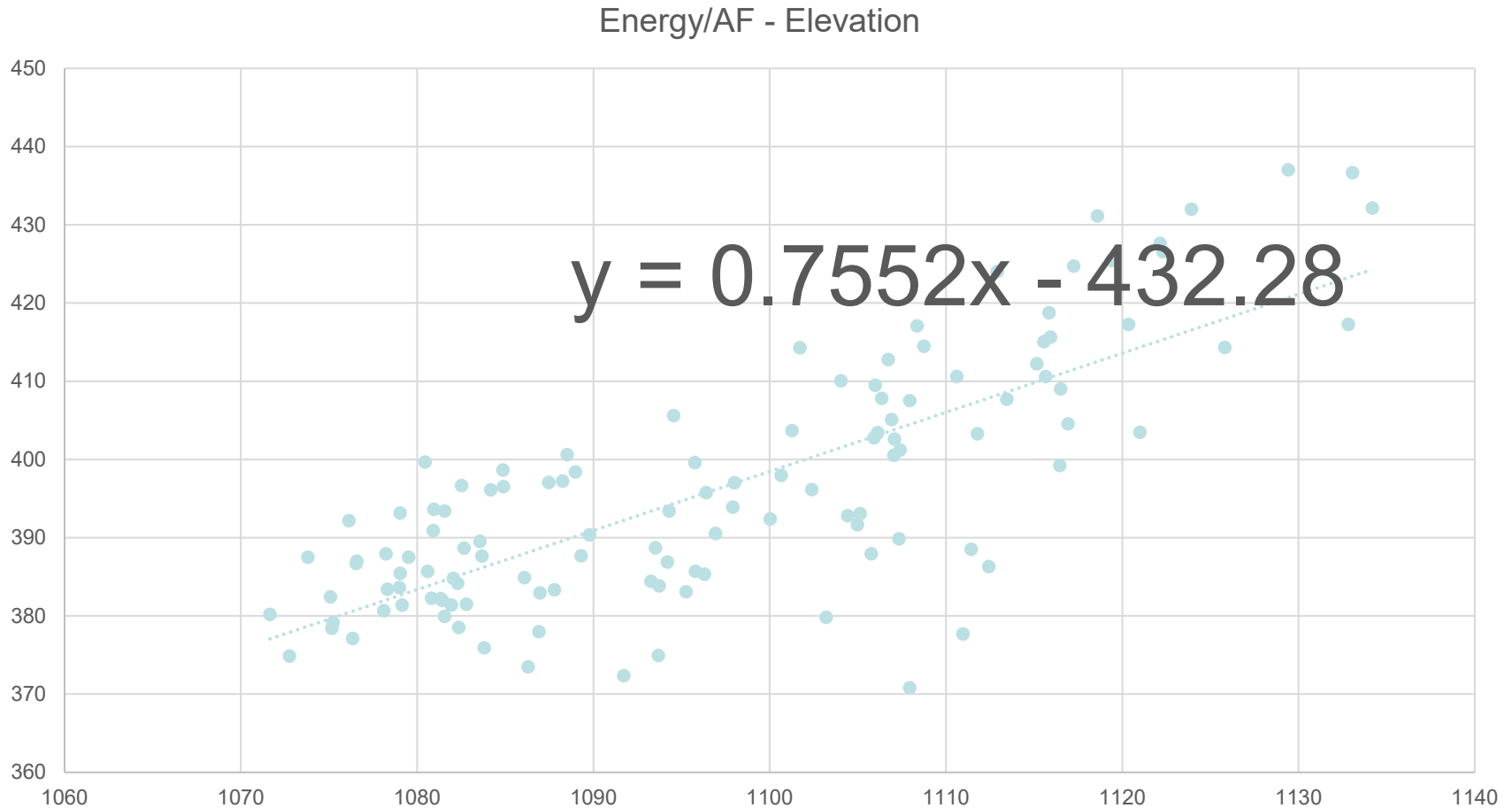




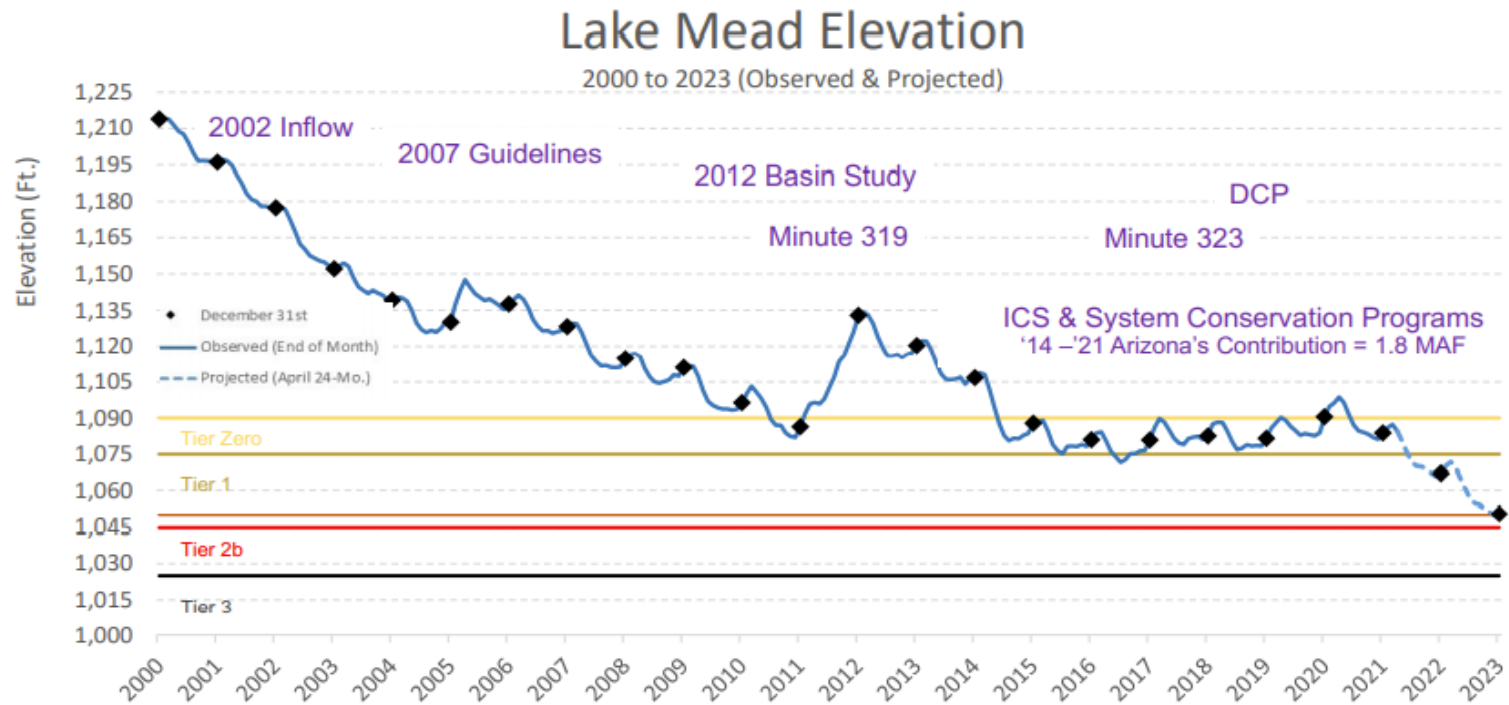
Lake Mead



Average Energy Production Based on Elevation at Hoover Dam



20 Years of Shortage Preparation



WHO **FACES WATER CUTS** AS LAKE MEAD SHRINKS?

Central Arizona Water Users

1,075 ft Agriculture and some land developers

1,050 ft More agriculture

1,025 ft Phoenix, Tucson, and other cities

Lake Mead



**WESTERN
RESOURCE
ADVOCATES**



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2007 Interim Guidelines, Minute 323, Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan, and Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan

Total Volumes (kaf)

Lake Mead Elevation (feet msl)	2007 Interim Guidelines Shortages		Minute 323 Delivery Reductions	Total Combined Reductions	DCP Water Savings Contributions			Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan Savings	Combined Volumes by Country <i>US: (2007 Interim Guidelines Shortages + DCP Contributions)</i> <i>Mexico: (Minute 323 Delivery Reductions + Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan Savings)</i>					Total Combined Volumes
	AZ	NV	Mexico	<i>Lower Basin States + Mexico</i>	AZ	NV	CA	Mexico	AZ Total	NV Total	CA Total	<i>Lower Basin States Total</i>	<i>Mexico Total</i>	<i>Lower Basin States + Mexico</i>
1,090 - 1,075	0	0	0	0	192	8	0	41	192	8	0	200	41	241
1,075 - 1050	320	13	50	383	192	8	0	30	512	21	0	533	80	613
1,050 - 1,045	400	17	70	487	192	8	0	34	592	25	0	617	104	721
1,045 - 1,040	400	17	70	487	240	10	200	76	640	27	200	867	146	1,013
1,040 - 1,035	400	17	70	487	240	10	250	84	640	27	250	917	154	1,071
1,035 - 1,030	400	17	70	487	240	10	300	92	640	27	300	967	162	1,129
1,030 - 1,025	400	17	70	487	240	10	350	101	640	27	350	1,017	171	1,188
<1,025	480	20	125	625	240	10	350	150	720	30	350	1,100	275	1,375

The Secretary of the Interior will take affirmative actions to implement programs designed to create or conserve 100,000 acre-ft per annum or more of Colorado River System water to contribute to conservation of water supplies in Lake Mead and other Colorado River reservoirs in the lower basin. All actions taken by the United States shall be subject to applicable law, including availability of appropriations.



2007 Interim Guidelines, Minute 323, Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan, and Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan

Total Volumes (kaf)

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Tier 1 Reductions

State	Reduction Acre-Feet	% Reduction of Allocation
Arizona	512,000	18
Nevada	21,000	7
Mexico	80,000	7

DCP Tier Reductions - 2026

Lake Level (fas)	Tier Level	Reduction Additions (KAF)	Total Reduction	Total % Reduction
1,075	1	512	512 K AF	18
1,050	2a	80	592 K AF	21
1,045	2b	48	640 K AF	23
1,025	3	480	1.2 M AF	43

DCP = Drought Contingency Plan

fas = feet above sea level on Lake Mead

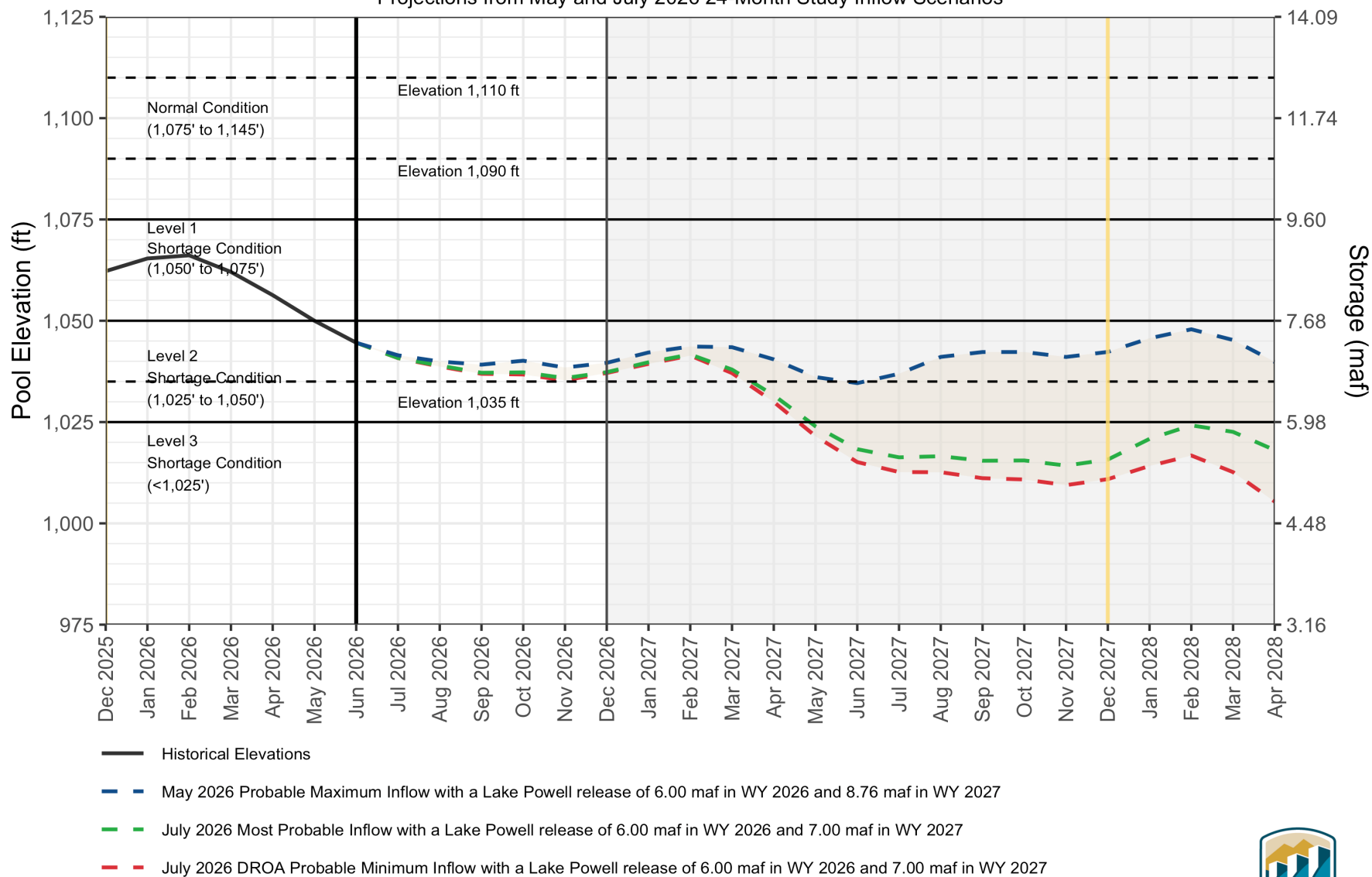
KAF = thousand acre-feet

MAF = million acre-feet



Lake Mead End-of-Month Elevations¹

Projections from May and July 2026 24-Month Study Inflow Scenarios



The Drought Response Operations Agreement (DROA) is available online at <https://www.usbr.gov/dcp/finaldocs.html>.

¹For modeling purposes, simulated years beyond 2026 assume a continuation of the 2007 Interim Guidelines including the 2024 Supplement to the 2007 Interim Guidelines (no additional SEIS conservation is assumed to occur after 2026), the 2019 Colorado River Basin Drought Contingency Plans, and Minute 323 including the Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan. With the exception of certain provisions related to ICS recovery and Upper Basin Demand management, operations under these agreements are in effect through 2026.



BUREAU OF
RECLAMATION

Colorado River Water Budget

- **16.5 MAF** Currently budgeted total
($7.5 + 7.5 \text{ MAF} = 15 \text{ MAF} + 1.5 \text{ MAF Mexico}$)
- Average annual flow 2000 - 2018
~ **12.4MAF**
 - 16 % lower than the 1906-2017 average of 14.8MAF/year
- ~ **4 MAF differential**

2026

All Conservation Guidelines Expire



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Post - 2026 Guidelines?

1. Follow the “Law of the River” and the high-priority senior water rights

➤ **“present perfected rights, PPRs”**

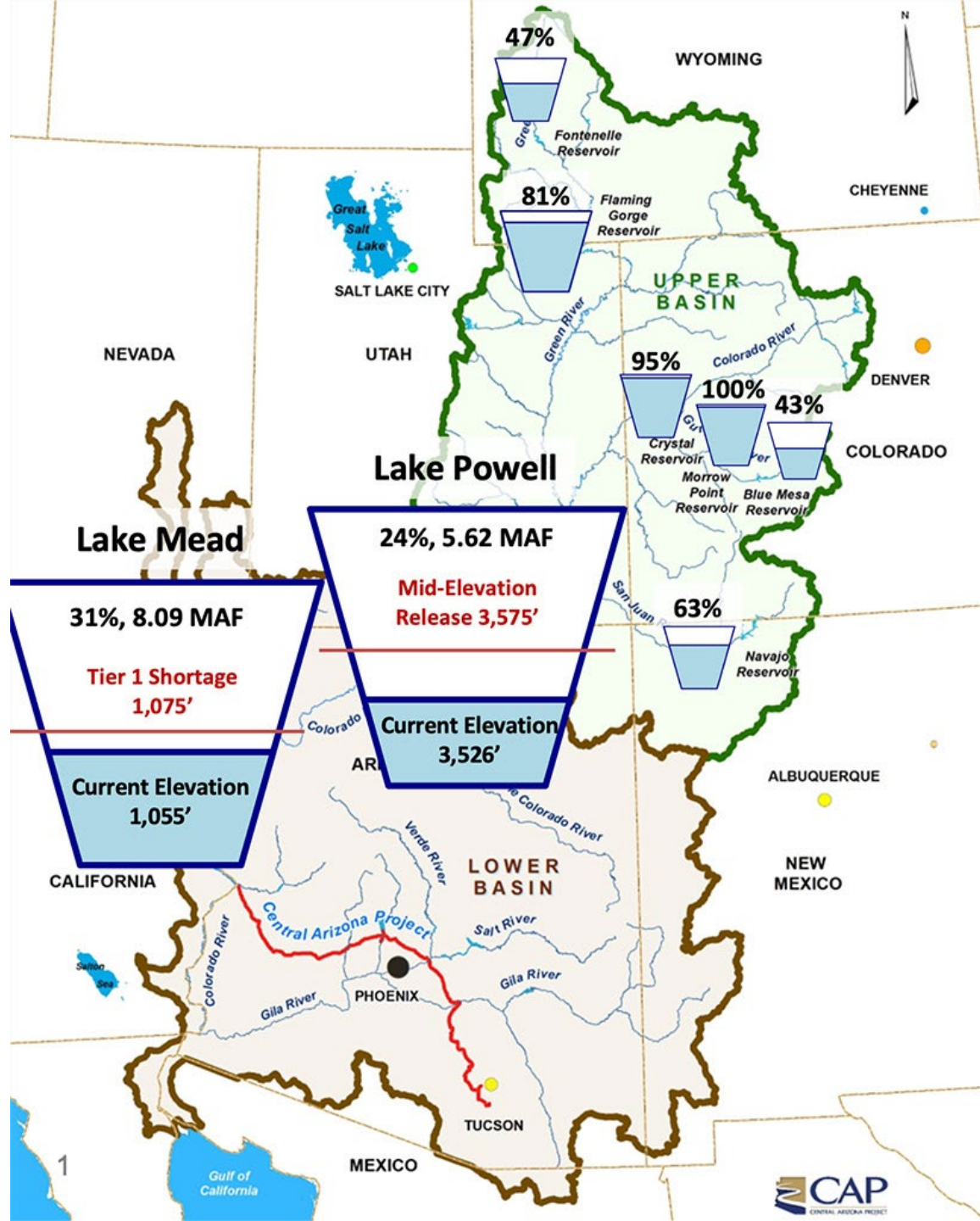
2. Develop an entirely new approach to Colorado River management.



Colorado River Water Budget

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- ~ **4 MAF differential**
(3-5 MAF, BoR)





Basin States Cannot Agree

11 November 2025

(no proposal submitted)

- Basins asked for an extension from the BoR.

14 February 2026

No Agreement

Final decision in the summer of 2026

implementation beginning in October 2026

Bureau of Reclamation

Plan Outline (13 May 2026)

- **The 10-year framework** would be broken into **5, 2-year plans**.
- **Lake Powell to Lake Mead releases through 2036 could be down to 5 MAF**
 - Depending on conditions.
 - Continue to evaluate and adjust accordingly



BoR – May 2026

- The Lower Basin states AZ, CA, & NV
 - possible reductions of up to **3 MAF/year**
40% reduction
- Release water from upstream reservoirs to support Lake Powell.
- Allows additional water storage up to:
 - 3 MAF in Lake Powell
 - 8 MAF in Lake Mead.



BoR Proposed Reductions to Lower Basin

3 MAF LB Reductions per year

- **Based on the the Law of the river.**
 - **Foundation: 1922 Colorado River Compact,**
 - **IID, PVIDD, and YCWA have the highest priority rights for water use (PPRs)**

CAP potentially going to zero



Lower Basin Proposal May 2026

Reductions and Additional Conservation

	Arizona	California	Nevada	Total Lower Division States
2027	760 KAF	440 KAF	50 KAF	1,250 KAF
2028	760 KAF	440 KAF	50 KAF	1,250 KAF
Total Reductions 2027-2028				2,500 KAF
Additional Conservation 2027-2028	300 KAF	300 KAF	100 KAF	700 KAF¹
Total Reductions and Conservation	1,820 KAF	1,180 KAF	200 KAF	3,200 KAF

¹The Lower Division States anticipate working to a target of a cumulative contribution of at least 1 MAF if possible.

Lower Basin Proposal

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BoR Colorado River 2026 Timeline

**1 May – LB states submitted a
proposal**

Late June - Final EIS

Late July - Record of Decision

1 October – Implementation of ROD



Groundwater Assessments

Dr. James S. Famiglietti Lab, ASU

Declining Freshwater Availability in the Colorado River Basin Threatens Sustainability of Its Critical Groundwater Supplies

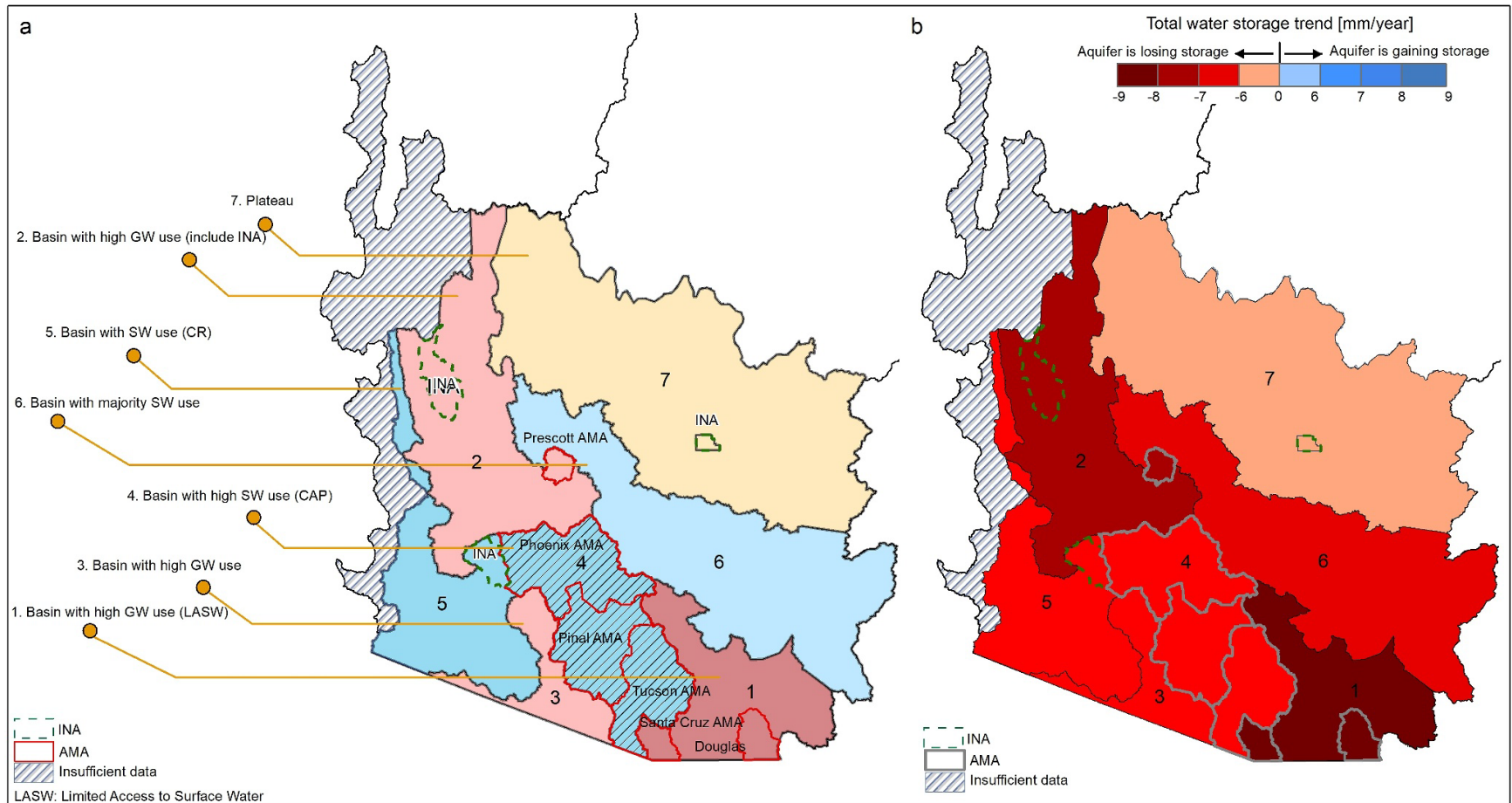
Abdelmohsen et al., 2025. *Geophysical Research Letters*, 52,

Unprecedented continental drying, shrinking freshwater availability, and increasing land contributions to sea level rise.

Chandanpurkar et al., 2025. *Sci. Adv.* 11



Groundwater in the CR Basin

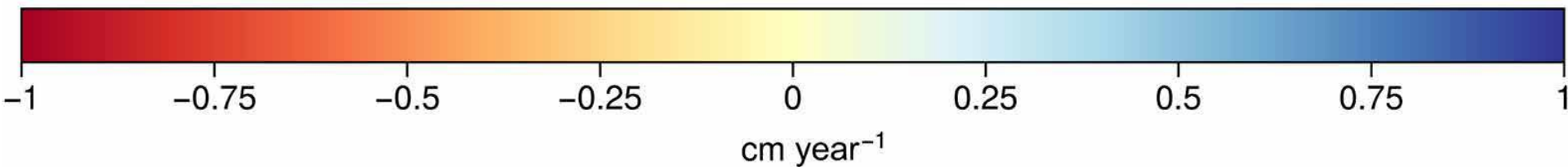
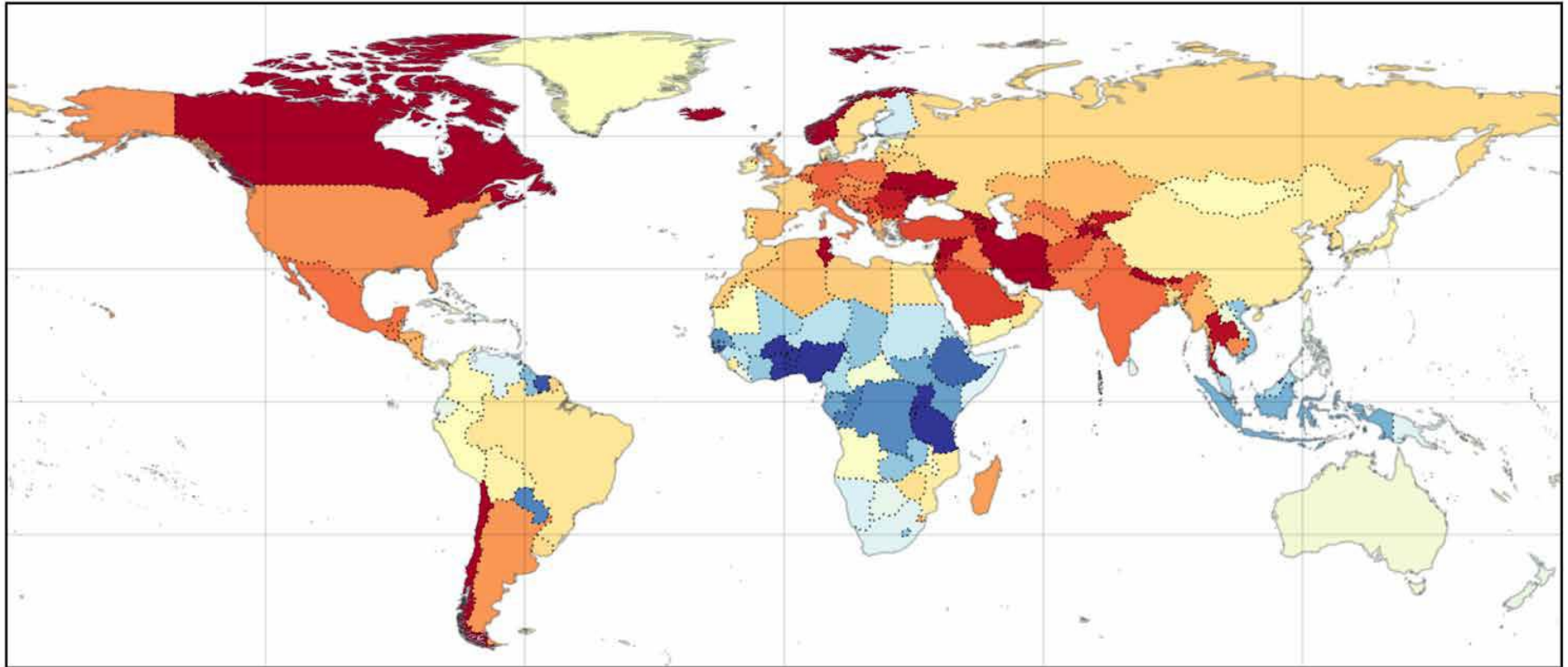


Source: Abdelmohsen, et al. 2025.



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Terrestrial Water Storage



Long-term mean TWS trends from GRACE/FO by country. TWS trends (February 2003 to April 2024) averaged for every country.

Water & Arizona Agriculture







Central Arizona Project. Santa Rosa Canal. Source: CAP



