



**COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

STAFF REPORT

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DATE: MARCH 23, 2016

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION

PROJECT PLANNER: OKSANA NEWMEN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, PLANNING 

APPLICANT: COUNTY OF MERCED

APPLICATION REQUEST: AGRICULTURAL MITIGATION ORDINANCE FOR
MERCED COUNTY

LOCATION/SITUS: UNINCORPORATED AREA OF MERCED COUNTY

SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT: ALL

MUNICIPAL ADVISORY COUNCIL: MULTIPLE

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed ordinance details the purpose and intent, definitions, and requirements of implementing the adopted General Plan policy requiring mitigation for the loss of agricultural land at a 1:1 ratio of land converted to land placed under a conservation easement. The ordinance will apply to all General Plan Amendments and rezoning of productive farmland from an agricultural to an urban designation, and for discretionary projects on productive agricultural designated land that involve a non-agricultural use.

This ordinance is being presented to the Planning Commission for general information and review, but does not require a formal recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

II. ANALYSIS

A. Background

The County adopted its current 2030 General Plan in December of 2013 after extensive preparation, public workshops, stakeholder interviews, and focus group meetings. The resulting Plan consists of 11 elements, and meets the requirements set forth by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research.

Specifically, the Merced County 2030 General Plan Update included Program AG-J, *Agricultural Conservation Easement Program*, which implements three policies:

- Policy AG-2.2 calls for agricultural land mitigation in order to protect agricultural areas from conversion to non-agricultural and urban uses by establishing and implementing an agricultural mitigation program preserving farmland at a one-to-one (1:1) ratio of acres converted to acres preserved.
- Policy AG-2.4 encourages property owner participation in programs that preserve