



FARMS PROGRAM

Empowering the Next Generation of Agricultural & Environmental Leaders

24/25 ANNUAL REPORT

Center for Land-Based Learning

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**CENTER FOR
LAND-BASED LEARNING**

FARMS Program

Leadership • Advanced • Internship

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Dear Partners, Funders, and Friends,

As I reflect on the 2024–2025 program year, I'm filled with pride, gratitude, and a deep sense of purpose. The FARMS Program continues to grow not only in reach but in impact, touching the lives of more than 300 students across 14 counties this year through immersive field days, hands-on learning, and powerful mentorship connections.

At its core, the FARMS Program is about more than agriculture or environmental science. It's about giving young people, many of whom have never set foot on a farm, the tools, exposure, and confidence to envision a future in which they are leaders, innovators, and caretakers of the land and their community.



This year, we saw students speak up at community meetings, present original research to professionals, and lead sustainability projects in their neighborhoods. These moments remind us that this work matters.

Thanks to your partnership and support, students participated in over 40 experiential field days, explored many key sectors in agriculture and environmental science, completed 25 Community Action Projects, and connected with more than 100 professionals through job shadows and paid internships. These are not just numbers—they represent transformation.

We are especially proud of the many FARMS alumni who continue their journeys in higher education, in the workforce, and as scholarship recipients. Their continued success is a testament to the strength of the FARMS pipeline—and to the community of funders, educators, and partners who make it possible.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to growing access and equity in agriculture and environmental careers. We are cultivating not just future farmers or scientists, but future stewards of our world.

Thank you for believing in this vision and in the potential of every student we serve.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mindy Cunko".

Manager, FARMS Program
Center for Land-Based Learning



INSPIRE. EDUCATE. CULTIVATE.

The Center for Land-Based Learning is a statewide leader in agricultural and environmental education, dedicated to inspiring, educating, and cultivating the next generation of farmers, agricultural leaders, and natural resource stewards. Founded in 1993, the organization offers hands-on, experiential programs that connect youth and adults to the land, to science, and to real-world career pathways. From high school leadership programs like FARMS and SLEWS to the California Farm Academy for aspiring farmers, Land-Based Learning empowers participants across more than 30 counties in California to pursue meaningful futures in sustainable agriculture and environmental stewardship. Through education, innovation, and deep community partnerships, we are helping shape a healthier, more resilient California.

FARMS PROGRAM

The FARMS (Farming, Agriculture, and Resource Management for Sustainability) Leadership Program is a year-long, immersive learning experience that connects high school students to careers in agriculture, environmental science, and natural resource management. Through hands-on field days, leadership development, college and career exploration, and community-based projects, students gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence to pursue meaningful pathways in STEM and sustainability fields. Operating across 14 counties in California and partnering with over 40 high schools, the FARMS Program engages more than 300 students annually, building a diverse and informed future workforce while fostering environmental stewardship and community impact.

Tier 1

FARMS Leadership: Entry-level program with immersive field days at farms, ag businesses, and research sites. Students build leadership skills, explore careers, and visit colleges.

Tier 2

FARMS Advanced: For returning students, with a focus on workforce readiness. Includes job shadows, mock interviews, resume building, and a year-long Agricultural Issues Project.

Tier 3

FARMS Alumni: Connects graduates to internships, jobs, and mentors. Supports the transition from high school to career through real-world experiences and continued guidance.

OUR IMPACT



260 Students



34 Schools



82 Field Days



105 Industry Partners



33 Community Action Projects



8 Professional Development Workshops



12 Job Shadows



2 Paid Internships



9 Scholarships Awarded



“

“Being a part of the FARMS program really reinforced my passion for hands-on experiences and a career in the agricultural field. My favorite experience was the trip to UC Davis, where we got to learn about their dairy production and ecological gardens.”

- Senior, Sac Valley FARMS Leadership

North State - Yuba, Sutter, Butte, Tehama, & Colusa Counties

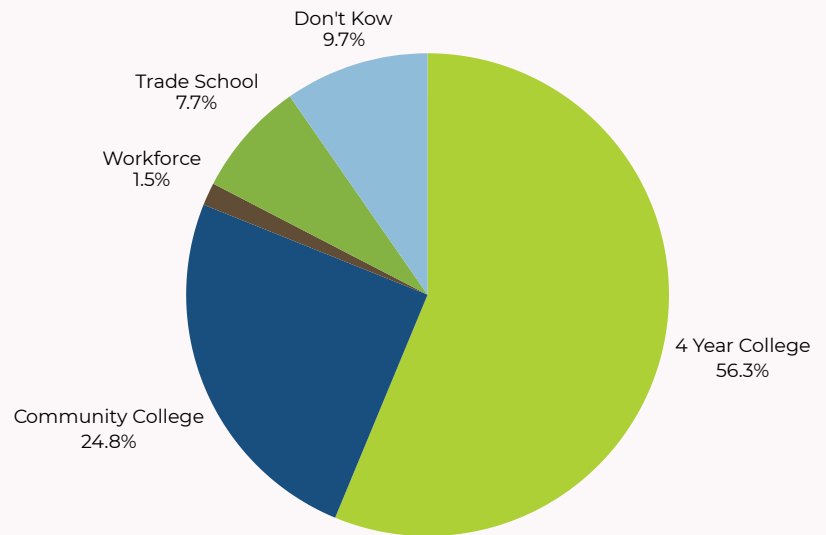
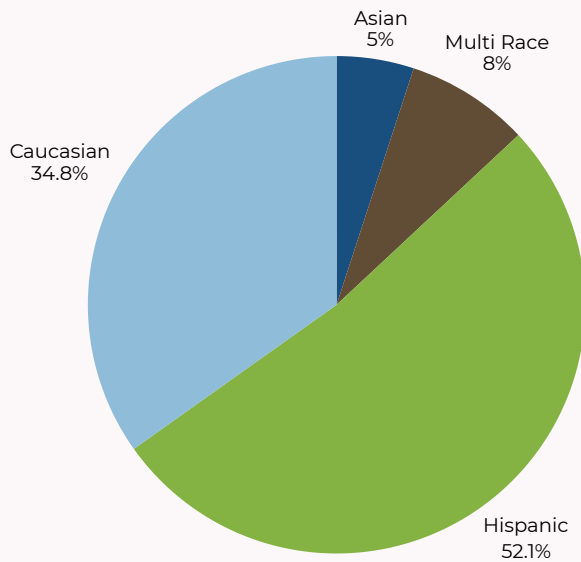
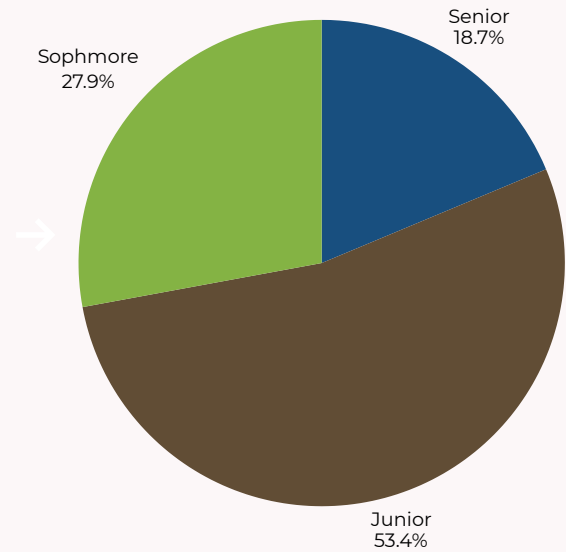
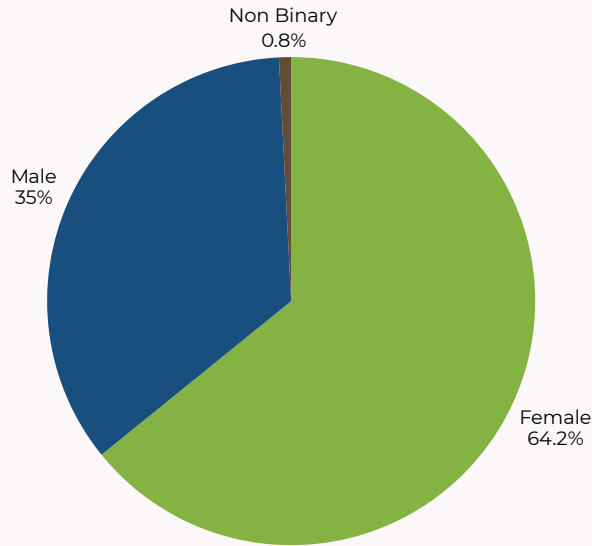
Sacramento Valley - Sacramento & Yolo Counties

Monterey Bay - Monterey & Santa Cruz Counties

Central Valley - Madera, Merced, Fresno, Kings & Tulare Counties

Kern - Kern County

STUDENT STATISTICS



98% of students are interested in pursuing agriculture or environmental careers
 75% of Advanced Program students showed an increase in resume and cover letter creation skills

92% of students showed a high level of experience in Community Service
 58% of students reported an increase in public speaking skills

FIELD DAYS

Field days are the heart of the FARMS Program, transforming traditional learning into hands-on, real-world experiences that connect students directly to careers in agriculture, environmental science, and natural resource management. Hosted at working farms, research institutions, conservation sites, and ag-based businesses, each field day immerses students in critical topics such as sustainable farming practices, water management, climate resilience, and food systems. Students engage with professionals in the field, participate in interactive workshops, and practice leadership skills through public speaking and team activities. These powerful experiences not only deepen students' understanding of STEM and sustainability but also build the confidence and connections that inspire them to pursue meaningful careers in these industries.

FIELD DAY AGENDA

9:00 AM Students Arrive:
Breakfast & Leadership
Development



10:00 AM Partner Time:
Tour & guest speakers

12:00 PM Lunch Break:
Everyone enjoys being together

12:30 PM Learning Activities:
Workforce Skill Development

2:00 PM Reflection Time:
Student Departure



82 Field Days



Plant Science



Resource Management



Agriculture Business



Ag Technology



Animal & Vet Science



Agri Science

"One of my favorite experiences was traveling to the Wind Wolves Wildlife Preserve, where I learned about the effects of grazing and the importance of maintaining a balanced ecosystem. I loved getting my hands dirty, planting trees, including the endangered Bakersfield Cactus, and working with pollinators. Hands-on learning is the best way for me to absorb information, and this experience had a lasting impact on me."

-Senior, Kern FARMS Advanced Program

COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECTS

Community Action Projects (CAPs) are a cornerstone of the FARMS Leadership experience, empowering students to apply what they've learned by addressing real-world agricultural or environmental challenges in their own communities. Working in teams, students design and implement projects that promote sustainability, raise awareness, or provide a direct service, such as planting pollinator gardens, improving campus recycling systems, or organizing educational events. These projects foster critical thinking, collaboration, and leadership while creating tangible, positive impacts. CAPs not only allow students to take ownership of local issues, but they also showcase the power of youth-driven solutions and leave a lasting legacy in the communities we serve.



33 Community Action Projects

- Salsa Garden Planting with Elementary School Students
- Winter Clothing Drive
- 3rd Grade Ag Day
- Community Park Clean Up
- Flowers to Esplanade House
- Community Garden with Special Day Classes
- Blossom Together campus garden
- Animal Shelter toy drive
- Canned Food Drive
- Veterans Memorial Park Clean Up



"My project was cultivating beautification - The project impacted the community of the school by making the garden in front of the cafeteria more visually appealing to all the members and guests who are walking past, It also better improves the plant life to make it look more beautiful. The project impacted me by helping me work better with different participants and building teamwork. Even though we had a hard time at first, through teamwork I easily pushed through these difficult tasks."

– 10th grader, Central Valley FARMS Program

WORKFORCE & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FARMS Advanced builds on the foundation of the FARMS Leadership program by offering returning students a deeper, career-focused experience designed to enhance their professional readiness. Throughout the year, participants engage in job shadow opportunities with industry partners, gaining firsthand insight into careers in agriculture, environmental science, and ag-tech. Students also participate in structured resume development workshops and mock interviews, which help them develop essential skills for future employment and postsecondary success. This advanced tier equips students not only with knowledge but with the tools, confidence, and connections they need to take their next steps toward a meaningful career.



8 Professional Development Workshops



12 Job Shadows

TOPICS:

- Resume & Cover Letter creation
- Interviewing Skills
- Applying for Scholarships
- College Life Preparation
- Public Speaking
- Professional Communication
- Activating excellence
- Professional Networking

“

I found value in all of the Advanced Student Workshops, as each workshop touched on a different topic that was impactful to me. As a senior, they touched on many things important for my future.

Central Valley FARMS Program - Senior



“On April 18, 2025, I met with Mark Pisoni. It was a very eye-opening experience into the work that goes into grape production for wine. I also toured his fields with commodity crops. While riding around the Santa Lucia Highlands, I was able to ask Mark how his business worked and about his background in agriculture. Throughout the day, I spoke with many of Mark's employees and the roles they play in Pisoni Vineyards and the crop ranches. I got to learn about the struggles that come with owning vineyards and how irrigation works in the mountains. We also talked about my future goals in agriculture and potential pathways I could take. I had a great time.”

~Areli Calderon

THANK YOU PISONI VINEYARDS!

“I am profoundly grateful for the lifelong experiences that the FARMS Program has provided me. The past two years, participating as both a FARMS Leadership and FARMS Advanced student, have helped me build confidence in my abilities and develop characteristics that are desirable to future employers—qualities that I might not have cultivated without the FARMS Program.”

-Senior, FARMS Advanced Program

ALUMNI

The FARMS Alumni and Internship program serves as the bridge between high school and meaningful careers in agriculture, environmental science, and related fields. After completing the FARMS Leadership and Advanced tiers, students are connected to a growing network of mentors, job opportunities, and paid internships with industry partners across California. Our Alumni and Internship Manager actively supports students by identifying relevant positions, providing professional guidance, and advocating on their behalf with employers. These internships give alumni hands-on experience, build professional skills, and often lead to long-term employment. This tier not only strengthens the program's impact but also ensures that students continue to grow, lead, and contribute to the industries and communities they care about.



2 Paid Internships



9 Scholarships Awarded



From field days at Pisoni Vineyards to internships with Delicato Wines & Scheid Vineyards, Lisandra's dream of working in viticulture has officially come true, she just accepted a full-time role as a Viticulture Technician at Scheid Vineyards while she finishes her degree!



FARMS has shown me that it does not matter how long it takes for you to reach your end goal, as long as you reach it. Being able to hear speakers from our FARMS days explain how many obstacles they went through is what has motivated me to keep going every day, because we all struggle, we all face challenges, but we need to learn to never give up and just keep walking with our heads up."

Lisandra Lopez - Monterey Bay FARMS Program



The FARMS Program has prepared me professionally in many way. It gave me the opportunity to ask advantageous questions that could get me further when apply to job positions.

Giovanni Ramirez - Kern FARMS Program



Giovanni Ramirez is a FARMS Program student from the Kern Region, and a graduate of McFarland High School in 2022. Giovanni's interest in robotics and working with his hands led him to Bakersfield College for the Industrial Automation program.

The My Job Depends on Ag Scholarship is a 10-year partnership between My Job Depends on Ag and the Center for Land-Based Learning. It supports graduating seniors and alumni of the FARMS Program by enabling them to pursue higher education or training in agriculture, environmental science, and related fields. This investment helps secure the industry's future. Over the past decade, a total of 147 scholarships, amounting to \$88,500, have been awarded.

FUTURE PLANS

As we celebrate the successes of this past year, we remain focused on the road ahead. The FARMS Program continues to evolve in response to the growing need for skilled, diverse leaders in agriculture and environmental science. Guided by our mission and informed by student feedback, industry trends, and community input, our goals for the coming year reflect both our commitment to equity and our vision for deeper, lasting impact. We are investing in new partnerships, expanding access to career-building opportunities, and enhancing the support we provide to students and alumni, ensuring that every young person who participates in the FARMS Program leaves with the tools and inspiration to shape a more sustainable future.

25-26 FARMS PROGRAM GOALS

- 1 Add FARMS Advanced Program in Sac Valley region
- 2 Add additional FARMS Leadership cohort in Monterey Bay region
- 3 Incorporate an Agriculture Issues project for all FARMS Advanced cohorts
- 4 Secure 10 paid internships for Alumni
- 5 Addition of ag technology focused field days in all regions
- 6 Implementation of the Farm Robotics Challenge

"The FARMS program has had a huge impact on my future professional plans by solidifying my passion for animal science and veterinary work. It has given me hands-on experience that reassured me I'm on the right path toward becoming a Vet Tech and eventually a Veterinarian specializing in large animals."

-Senior, FARMS Advanced Program

DONORS & PARTNERS

The FARMS Program thrives because of the commitment and collaboration of our donors and partners. Their involvement is more than generosity; it's an investment in preparing the next generation of leaders in agriculture and environmental science. By providing resources, expertise, and opportunities, you help bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world career pathways. Whether it's hosting a field day, offering a job shadow, funding program activities, or mentoring students, your contributions ensure that young people from across our 14 counties can build essential skills, gain confidence, and see their own potential in shaping a sustainable future. Together, we are creating pathways for students to succeed, strengthening our workforce, and cultivating resilient communities that will benefit for years to come.



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-Senior, FARMS Advanced Program

THANK YOU!

Your support is the foundation of everything we do. Because of your investment in the FARMS Program, students across California are gaining access to transformative, hands-on experiences in agriculture, environmental science, and leadership. You help open doors to career pathways, build confidence in the next generation, and cultivate a deeper connection to the land and community.

Whether you provided funding, hosted a field day, mentored a student, or shared our vision, your partnership fuels lasting impact. Thank you for believing in the power of education, equity, and opportunity. Together, we are growing not just future farmers and environmentalists, but future changemakers!

With heartfelt gratitude,

The FARMS Program Team



Destinee, Mindy, Stephanie, Ventura, Erica, Leti, Carly