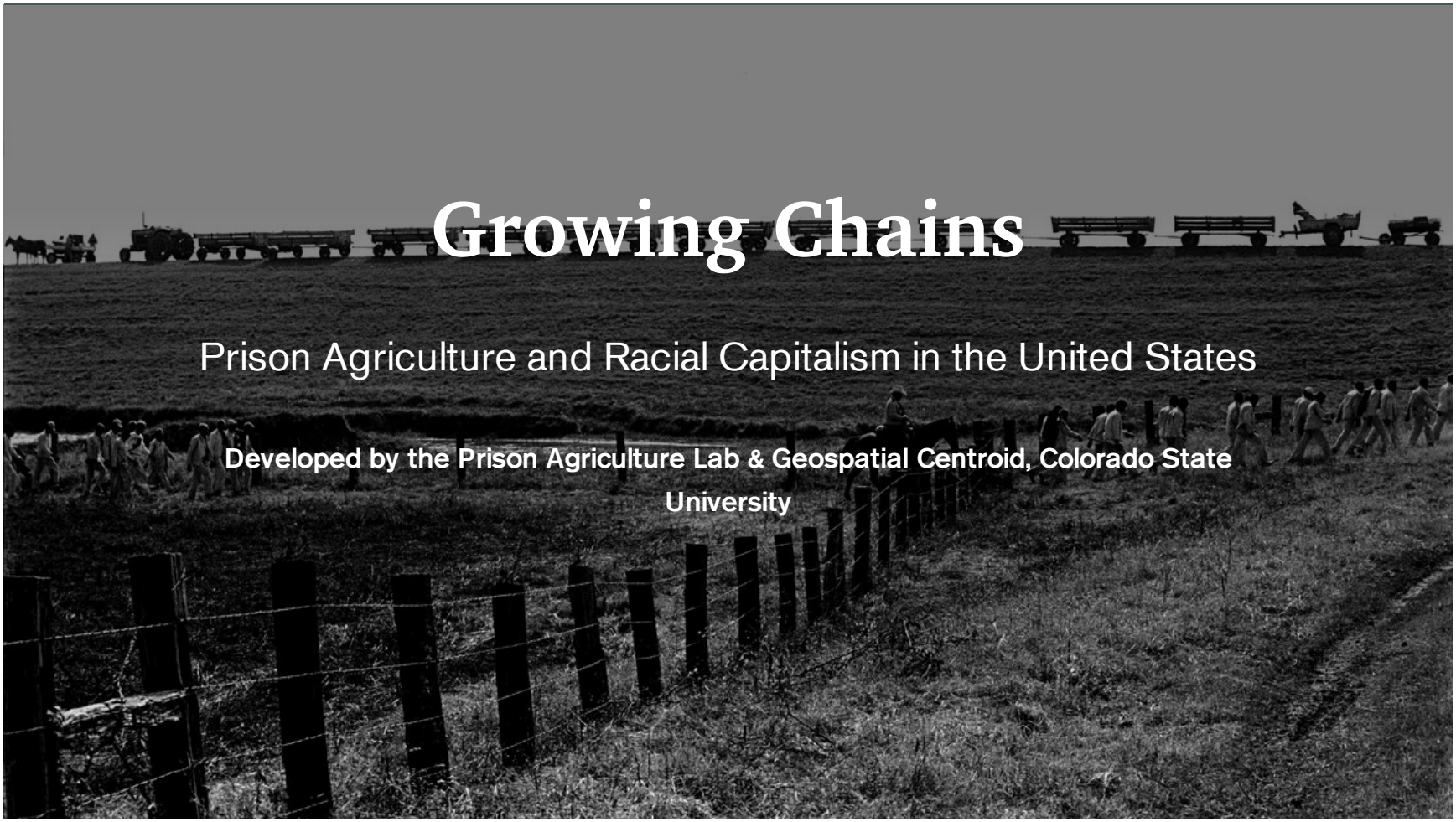


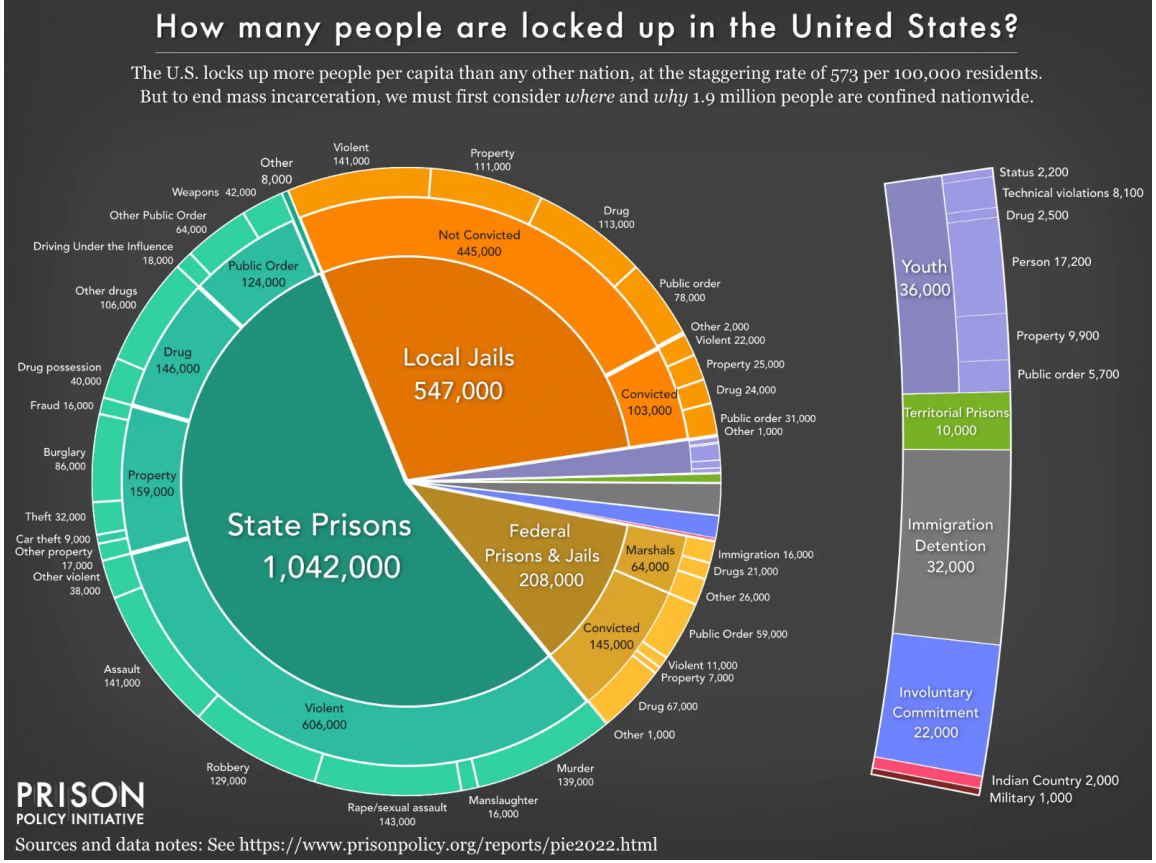
# Growing Chains

## Prison Agriculture and Racial Capitalism in the United States

**Developed by the Prison Agriculture Lab & Geospatial Centroid, Colorado State University**

## Disciplinary Legacies


The United States prison system is built on disciplining incarcerated people to the strictures of work. Agriculture is prominent in this regard. Nearly 2 million people, mainly poor and people of color, are behind bars in the US prison system, including 1,566 state prisons and 102 federal prisons.




Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2022 (Prison Policy Initiative)

Given the resources required to house, feed, and control this many people and places, the state consistently turns to agriculture to jumpstart local economies, finance prisons, punish or rehabilitate prisoners, combat prisoner idleness, and create self-sufficient prisons.

The conditions of present-day prison agriculture should be understood within the realities of racial capitalism. Capitalism is fundamentally a system that ascribes value and grows by exploiting ethnoracial hierarchies and difference. Prison

agriculture has long been fundamental to shoring up white economic and political power and managing manfucatured conditions of poverty and landlessness through the criminalization of poor and Black communities after the abolishment of chattel slavery. Whether as a replaceable, nearly free, surplus workforce for plantations that lost enslaved people or a captured class working to feed themselves and survive the squalor of prison, agricultural labor in this era was intimately associated with exploitation.

> “For this much all men know: despite compromise, war, and struggle, the Negro is not free. In the backwoods of the Gulf states, for miles and miles, he may not leave the plantation of his birth; in well-nigh the whole rural South the black farmers are peons, bound by law and custom to an economic slavery, from which the only escape is death or the penitentiary. In the most cultured sections and cities of the South the Negroes are a segregated servile caste, with restricted rights and privileges.... And the result of all this is, and in nature must have been,

lawlessness and crime."

– W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

Due to increasing political pressure, prisoner resistance, and new laws, more explicit forms of agricultural exploitation partially waned after the Reconstruction era, in favor of renewed

emphasis on criminal behavioral reform through moral re-education, work skills, and societal re-integration.

Today, prison agriculture has expanded from mandatory farm labor to include a broad array of activities like horticulture certification classes. Contemporary prison reformers claim that spending time outside, getting hands in the dirt, and integrating vocational training and therapy into prison agriculture can reduce the chance of "reoffending" by providing "life skills" and correcting "deviant behavior." Such claims have served to soften the image of the prison and legitimate their continued power to incarcerate.

> "I have worked in jails and state prisons in both New York and Florida and advised in numerous other states throughout the country, both building and administering educational-based horticulture therapy programs. While these programs operate on a small scale relative to our prison-industrial complex, they offer an important counterweight to the prevailing concept that the harshness of prison will prove a deterrent to crime. In fact, gardening and organic horticultural practices in prison contain

a valuable concert of activities and opportunities, lending powerfully to human recovery."

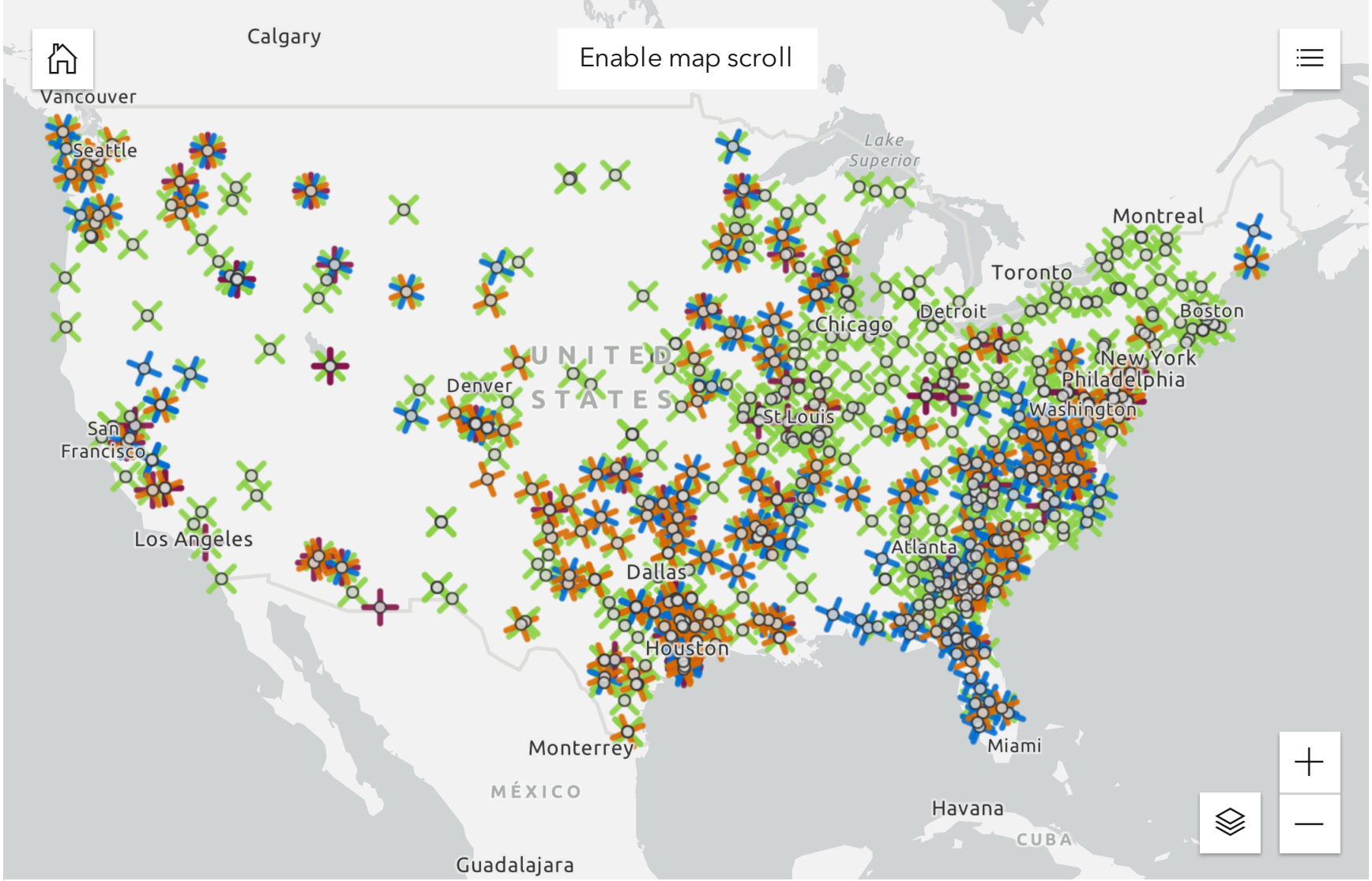
– James Jiler, *Digging Out from Prison: A Pathway to Rehabilitation*

Agriculture offers a lens into how prisons prioritize their own needs over those of incarcerated people. For the state to maintain that tending plants and animals is necessary to run certain prisons and beneficial to prisoners, it must frame prisoners as fit for marginalized agrarian work. Prisons must also show the public that their operations are beneficial. For instance, prisoners may grow food to feed themselves, earn or save the

state money, and develop a work ethic in an idle population that supposedly lacks such an ethic.

Discipline through agriculture, always a reflection of class and ethnoracial hierarchies, requires explicit forms of exploitation ***alongside*** claims of rehabilitation.

## Prison Agriculture Today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Los Angeles
Atlanta
Dallas
Houston
Miami
Monterrey
MÉXICO
Havana
CUBA
Guadalajara
Esri, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA
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So how might we understand exploitation and rehabilitation together? This story map distills research from the first ever nationwide study of prison agriculture. The Prison Agriculture Lab scoured official reports, data sets, and internet archives, as well as communicated with state prisons, departments of

correction, and prison industries to determine whether and where agricultural activities existed in 2019 or 2020.

- **Animal Agriculture** – livestock, beekeeping, poultry, egg, aquaculture, and equine operations, whether for food production or supporting agricultural operations, therapeutic activities, or other activities; animal conservation and management; any instructional or experiential activities focused on these topics.
- **Crops and Silviculture** – farm-scale vegetable, field crop (e.g., corn, cotton, rice, sorghum, soybeans, wheat), fruit, and nut production and harvesting; cropland, range/pastureland, forestry, and woodland management; any instructional training or experiential programs focused on these topics.
- **Food Processing and Production** – transformation of raw agricultural materials into food and beverage products for consumption by human or animals (e.g., livestock slaughtering and processing, dairy processing, butchering, canning, milling, coffee roasting, bottled beverage production); any storage, sorting, packing, or distribution of these products; any instructional training or experiential programs focused on these .
- **Horticulture and Landscaping** – garden or greenhouse production of vegetables, trees, flowers, turf, shrubs, fruits, nuts, and ornamental plants, including hydroponics and

aquaponics operations; cultivation of native plants; landscape design and management in gardens, lawns, and green spaces; any instructional training or experiential programs focused on these topics.

*Click the layer list icon in the lower right-hand corner to view prison agriculture categories. Each point on the map is a prison in the data set.*

## Racial Capitalist Drivers

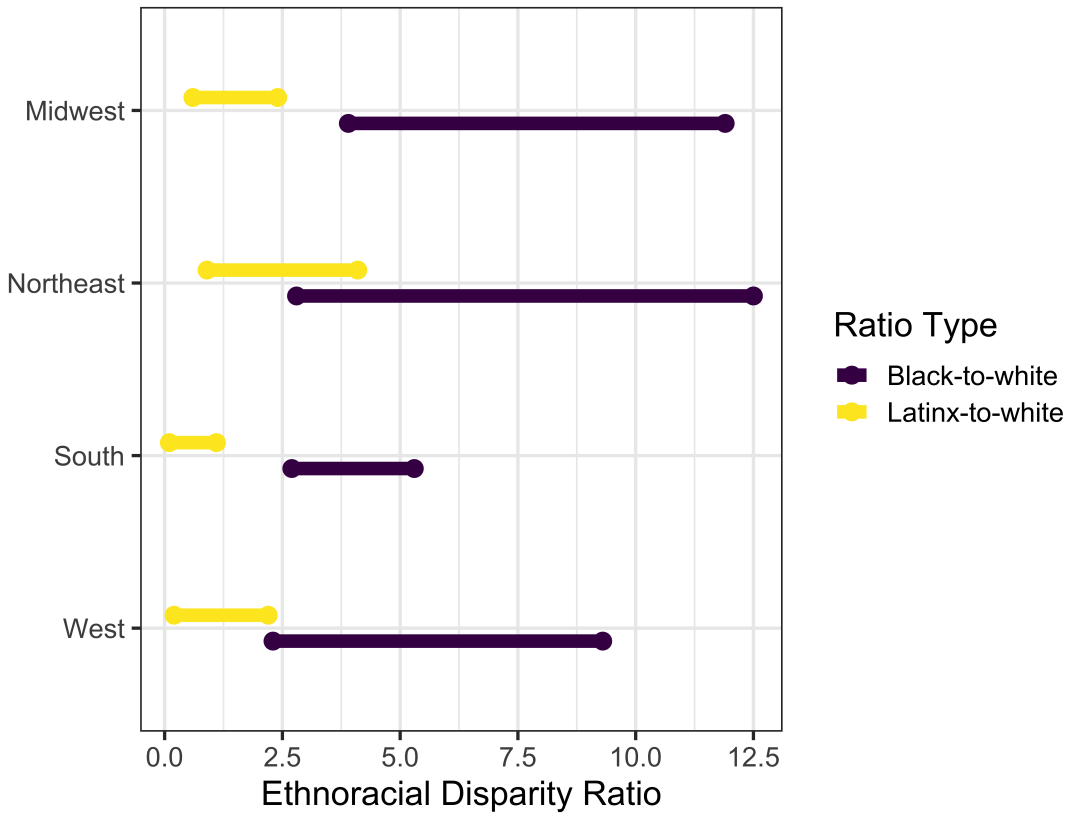
We have identified how racial capitalism drives prison agriculture by attending to the value prison authorities ascribe to agricultural activities. We categorize these values as four broad drivers, each containing several subdrivers:

- **Financial**: cost savings, feeding incarcerated individuals, revenue generation

- **Idleness reduction**: recreational, work requirement
- **Training**: educational, vocational
- **Reparative**: community service, environmental, therapeutic

These drivers should be understood as constitutive of ethnoracial, gender, and economically unequal prison settings where work and education requirements are nearly universal. Looking at Black-to-white and Latinx-to-white incarceration rates

by region reveals the ethnoracial hierarchies that prison food and plant production operates through and reinforces.




Ethnoracial incarceration based on the range of state ratios of over-incarceration of Latinx and Black people in relation to white people occurring within a US region (Chennault and Sbicca 2022). Data Source: The Sentencing Project (Nellis 2021).

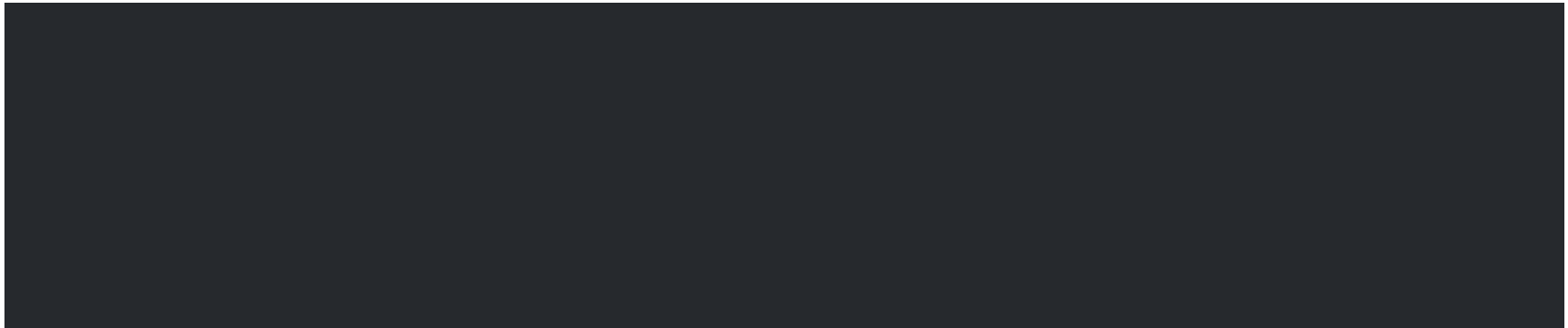
We also know that the carceral state addresses poverty with incarceration. While on the inside, if lucky, prisoners then receive educational opportunities mainly for low-wage sectors. When working, they are paid on average highs of $0.63/hour for regular prison jobs and $1.41/hour for prison industry jobs.

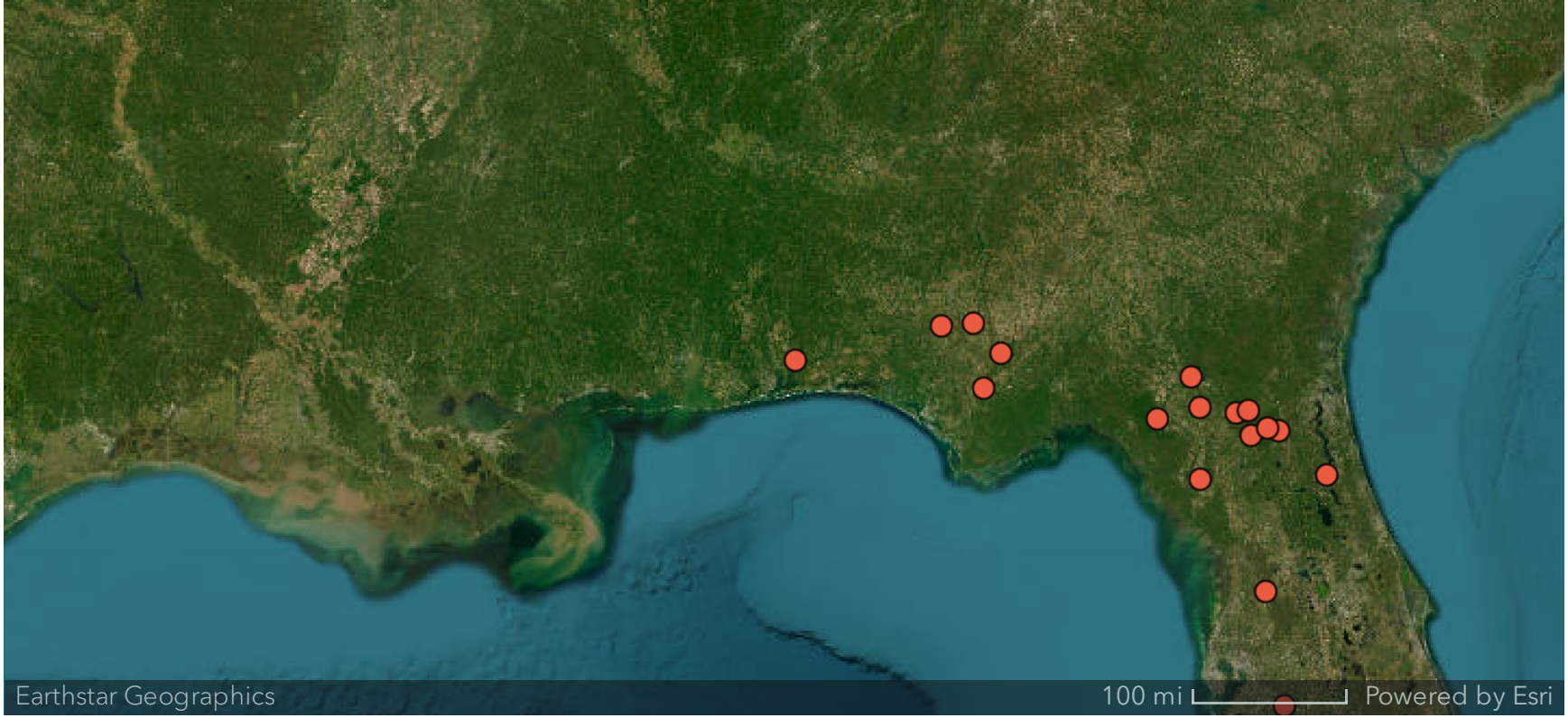
With this in mind, we take the drivers of agriculture to interrogate how prison discipline operates by asking what engaging in agriculture signals to incarcerated people. Racial capitalism underpins this process through extracting wealth from and shaping work opportunities for racialized people.

Prison agriculture signals lower levels of deservingness: Prisoners “deserve” low pay for hard work while state and private interests stand to profit. Prisoners “deserve” this work because they otherwise cause problems during incarceration. Prisoners “deserve” training for dangerous and strenuous jobs performed during and after incarceration.

These discourses elevate the power of prisons to assign value and maintain disciplinary authority with appeals to agriculture's financial, idleness reduction, training, and reparative benefits.

## Financial






## Cost Savings

## *State run production ag: Florida*

Running agricultural operations is key to the history of Florida's penal system. Beginning with Florida State Prison Farm (also called Raiford Prison), the state has turned to animal and crop production to reduce the costs of incarceration, especially given the expansion of the penal system. As of a 2017-2018 report by the Florida Department of Corrections, the state was the third largest penal system in the country with an incarcerated population of approximately 96,000 people in 144 facilities statewide, including 50 correctional institutions, 7 private partner facilities, 17 annexes, 34 work camps, 3 re-entry centers, 13 FDC operated work release centers, 16 private work release centers, 2 road prisons, 1 forestry camp and 1 basic training camp.

While agricultural production is not as central as it once was, what is now called the Farm and Edible Crop Program, “grows millions of pounds of fresh vegetables each year in support of the food service master menu. In FY17-18, approximately 4.1 million pounds of fresh produce was harvested and distributed to the institutions. Crop production was valued at approximately $2.69 million. FECP staff initiated and implemented a consolidation plan to reduce costs without severely impacting harvest productions. As part of this consolidation, smaller farms were closed and agricultural equipment and related supplies were relocated to invest in a more centralized farm program. This effort is projected to save costs while continuing to produce fresh vegetables that are consistent with the food service master menu.”

Given the many controversies plaguing Florida's prisons, from violent white supremacist and racist guards, rampant use of solitary confinement, and staffing shortages, to a lack of poor medical care and educational programming, politicians have consistently attempted to manage an expensive system.

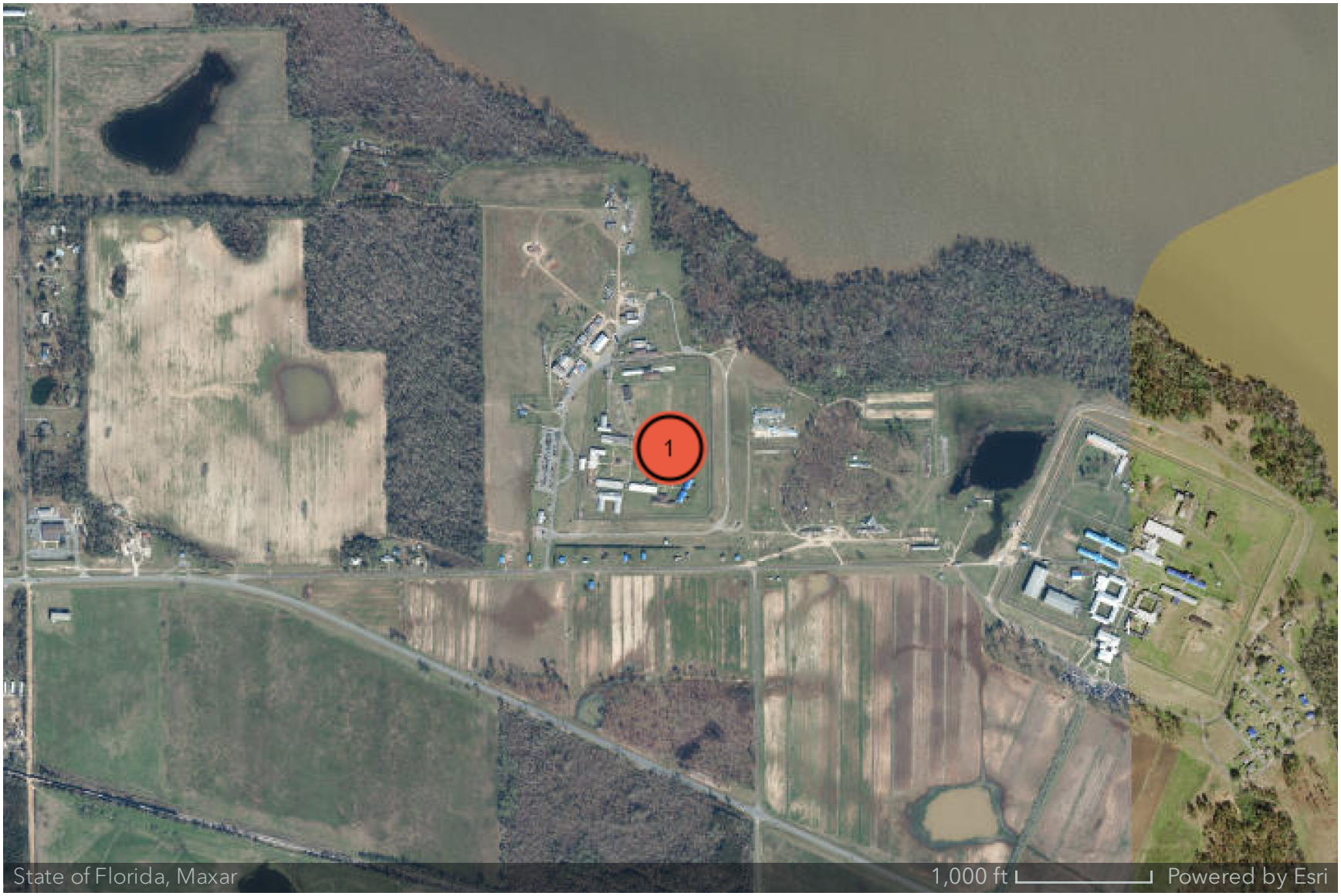
Famously, former Governor Rick Scott ran on a platform in 2010 to cut $1 billion from prison costs. Central to his plan was to increase cost savings by forcing prisoners to grow more food. While the Farm and Edible Crop Program predated Governor Scott, it grew under his tenure.

POLITIFACT
The Poynter Institute

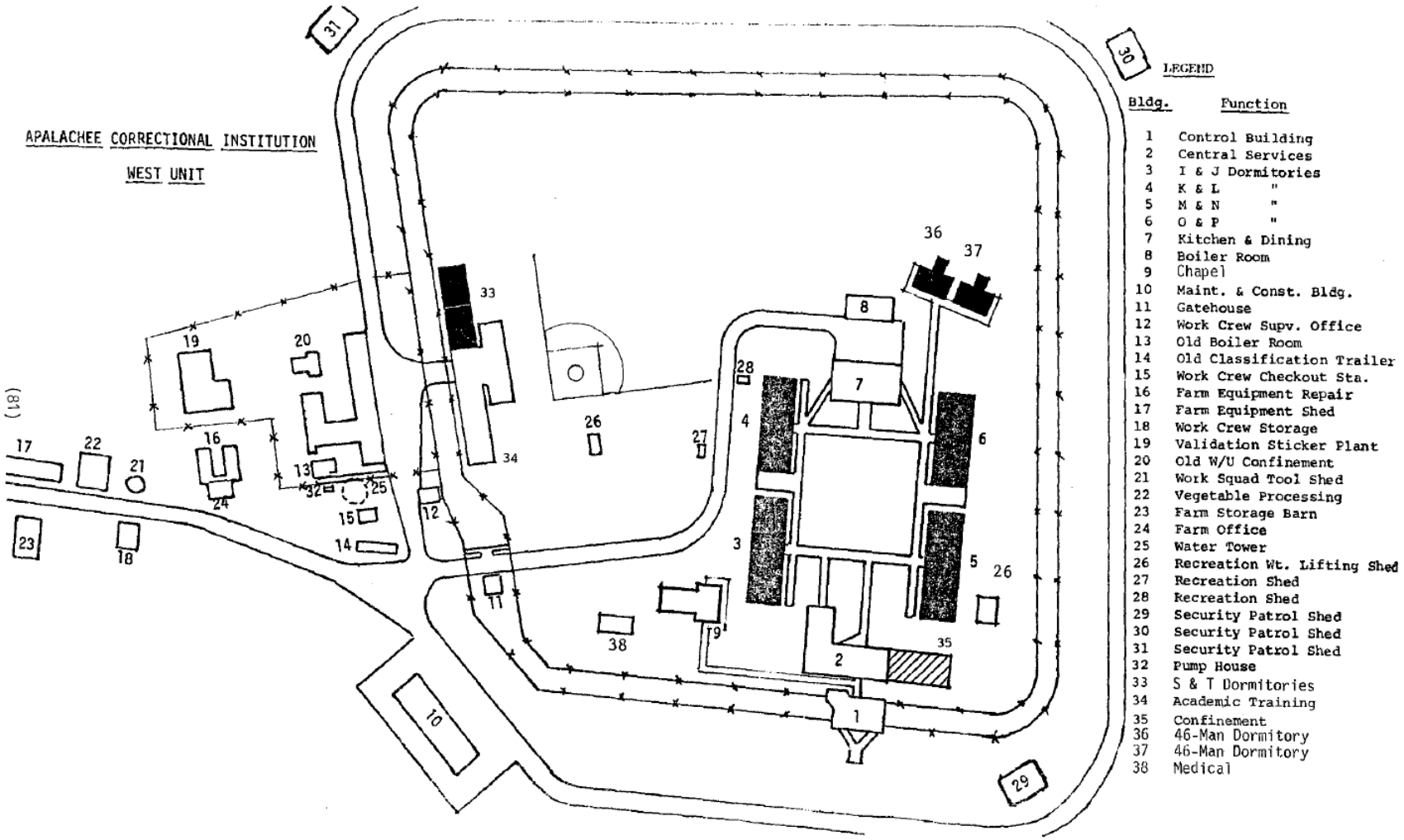
| Fiscal Year | Value of Produce Grown/Used | Budget | Weight of Crops in pounds | Net Savings |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2010-11 | $3.7 million | $940,000 | 7.4 million lbs | $2.7 million |
| 2011-12 | $5.1 million | $940,000 | 9.5 million lbs | $4.1 million |
| 2012-13 | $5.3 million | $1.2 million | 9.8 million lbs | $4 million |
| 2013-14 | $4.5 million | $1 million | 8.9 million lbs | $3.5 million |

However, Governor Scott did not come close to his promised prison system reductions, revealing its politically legitimating power despite the marginal cost savings of prison agriculture.

## Tour Three Largest Prison Farms in Florida



# 1 Apalachee West Unit



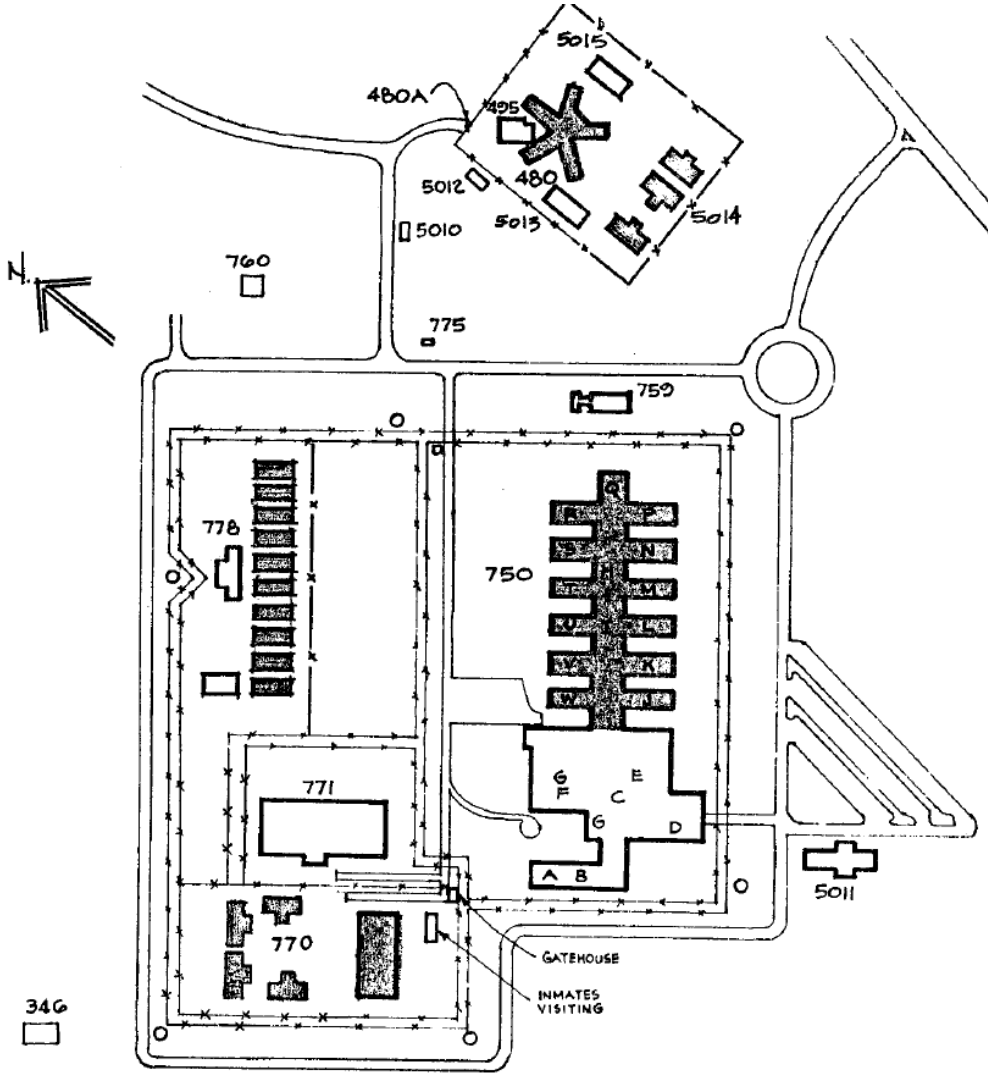

Fiscal Year 2018/2019 Statistics

Average Number of Prisoners Assigned Per Day: 32

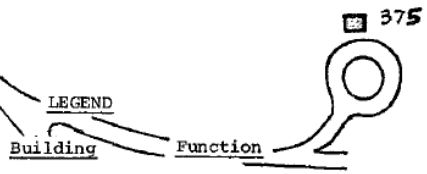
Pounds of Food Grown: 432,180

Diversified Farm: Crops include sweet potatoes, carrots, sweet corn, Calabaza squash, yellow squash, zucchini, cabbage, collards, turnips, potatoes

## 2 Florida State Prison West Unit




FLORIDA STATE PRISON




| | |
|---|---|
| 346 | Swine Farm |
| 375 | Dog Yard |
| 480 | "O" Unit |
| 480A | "O" Unit Gatehouse |
| 495 | "O" Unit Dining and Dayroom |
| 750 | Main Unit |
| | A - School (First Floor) |
| | B - Clinic (Second Floor) |
| | C - Control Room, Chapel (Second Fl) |
| | D - Visiting, Administration (Second Floor) |
| | E - Gym (Second, Third Floors) |
| | F - Maintenance (First Floor) |
| | G - Col's Office, Dining Room, Kitchen (Second, Third Fls) |
| | H - Corridor, Dayrooms (Second Fl) |
| | I - Tunnel (First Floor) |
| | J, K, L, M, N, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W - Wings (All three Floors) |
| | X - Sally Port Gatehouse |
| 759 | Power Plant |
| 760 | Water & Sewage Treatment Plant |
| 771 | Garment, Tobacco Factory |
| 778 | Lake Butler Transit Unit (RMC Administration) |
| 770 | Lake Butler Transit Unit (RMC Administration) |
| 775 | Utility Building |
| 5010 | Counseling & Social Services Trailer |
| 5011 | Administration Building |
| 5011 | A - Proposed Administration Building Add. |
| 5012 | "O" Unit General Services |
| 5013 | "O" Unit Kitchen/Dining |
| 5014 | 56 Bed Dormitories |
| 5015 | Recreation |

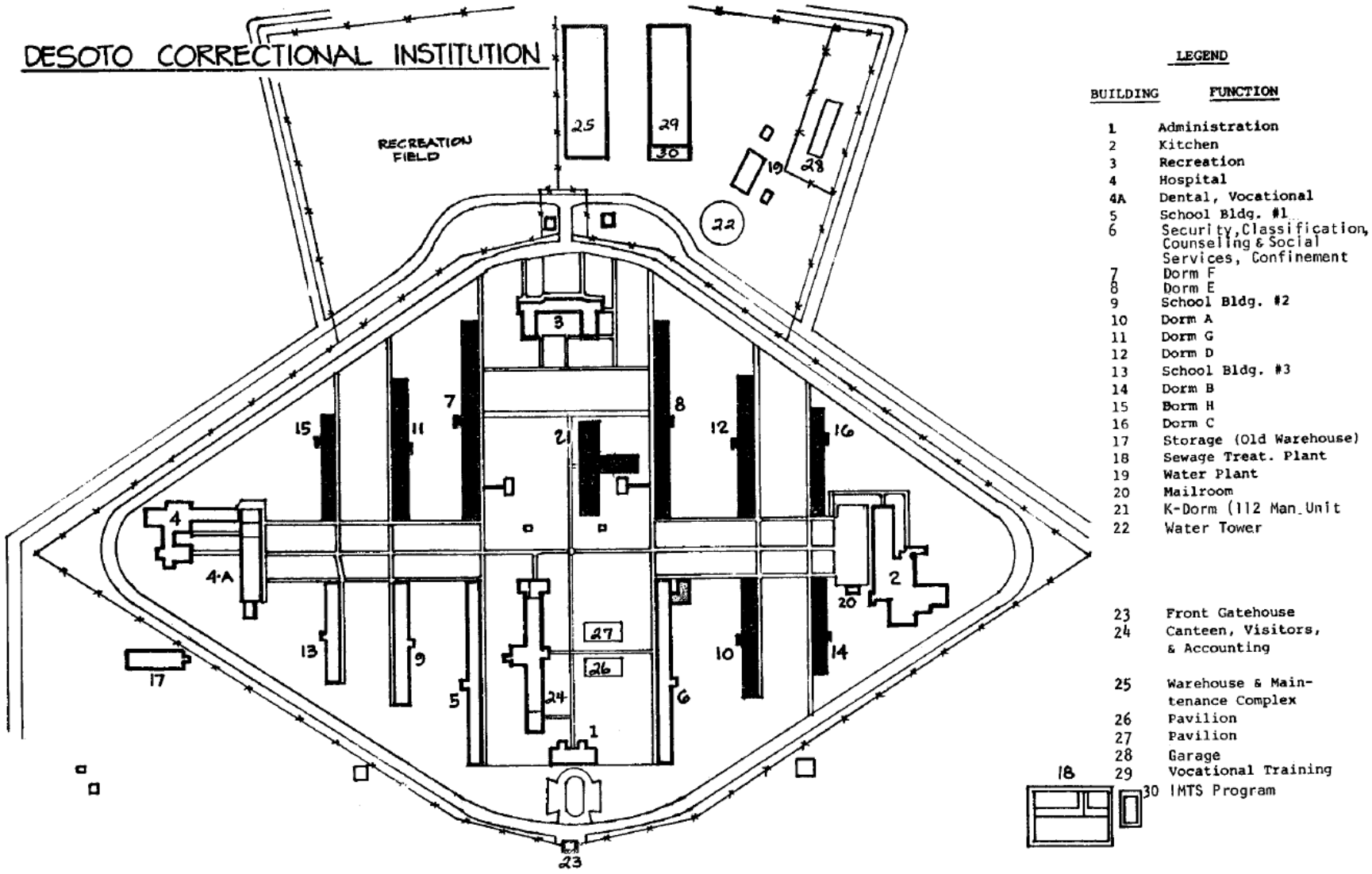
Fiscal Year 2018/2019 Statistics

Average Number of Prisoners Assigned Per Day: 12

Pounds of Food Grown: 752,375

Diversified Farm: Crops include cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, collards, sweet onions, cucumbers, squash, watermelons, cantaloupes, pumpkins, tomatoes

## 3 Desoto Work Camp




Fiscal Year 2018/2019 Statistics

Average Number of Prisoners Assigned Per Day: 46

Pounds of Food Grown: 899,510

Diversified Farm: Crops include corn, collards, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, sweet potatoes, tomatoes

## Revenue Generation

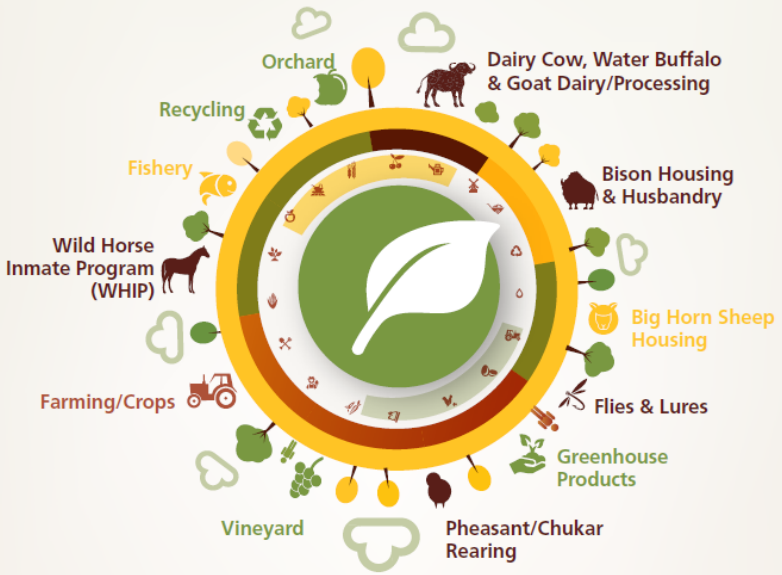
### *Correctional Industries, Colorado*

Given the cost of incarceration the state consistently turns to profit producing enterprises, including agriculture. This driver is usually mixed with others.

Colorado Correctional Industries (CCI) states its mission is:

- To train offenders in meaningful skills, work ethics and quality standards which better enable them to secure long-term employment after release from prison.
- To reduce offender idleness and the demand for general funded programs by working as many offenders as possible in self-supporting and productive industries.
- To operate in a business-like manner so that enough revenues are realized each year to meet the ongoing capital equipment, working inventories and operating cash needs of the Division.

# Agribusiness




## Dairy Cow, Water Buffalo & Goat Dairy/Processing

| | |
|---|---|
| Cow milk collected | 17,459,709 lbs |
| Goat milk collected | 1,160,000 lbs |
| Water buffalo milk collected | 350,000 lbs |
| Number of births (all) | 2,410 |
| Goat and WB milk sold to make cheese | 1,510,000 lbs |
| Cow milk sold to DOC for offender consumption | 4,550,000 lbs |
| Cow milk sold to DFA (Dairy Farmers of America) | 12,909,709 lbs |
| Total number of animals housed | 3,617 |
| Total number of animals milked | 1,725 |

*Did you know?*

*The cow dairy earned a Quality Bonus from DFA for 83% of its production for the year!*

## Fisheries

| | |
|---|---|
| Tilapia sold | 50 tons |
| Rainbow trout sold | 50 tons |

## Greenhouse

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of hanging baskets/ pots produced | 3,200 |
| Size of area maintained for bedding plants | 10,000 sq. ft. |

## Recycling

| | |
|---|---|
| Tons of cardboard, office paper, scrap metal/tin, aluminum recycled tons | 1,050 |

## Wild Horse Inmate Program (WHIP)

| | |
|---|---|
| Mustangs saddle/halter trained | 139 |
| Mustangs on grounds (monthly average) | 230 |
| Public adoptions | 267 |

With agricultural roots dating back over 100 years, CCi knows how to grow success. Our Agribusiness programs provide work opportunities, supply food and milk for the prisons, and generate revenues from surplus crops and dairy processing sold to outside markets. From fish to cows, and grapes to apples, our 20+ different Agribusiness programs employ up to 800 offenders and make a positive impact on their daily lives as well as the communities we serve.



## Farming

**11.75 TONS** Vineyards Harvested

**520 ACRES** Farmed

**9,520 TONS** Silage Harvested

**5,040 PHEASANTS & CHUKARS** Raised for Public Sale



The agribusiness of CCI is diverse and includes farming, livestock, fish, and greenhouse operations. It is also profitable, in recent years generating over $6 million a year, while incarcerated people are paid between $0.74 and $4 a day.


COLORADO
STATE of MIND
Mary MacCarthy
Feature Story News reporter

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What's It Really Like To Work In A Prison Goat Milk Farm? We Asked Inmates

MANAGEMENT

Prison labor's new frontier: Artisanal foods

MUNCHIES

FOOD BY VICE

Prisoners Are Becoming Some of America's Best Farmers

Colorado's prison inmates go from hard time to soft cheese

The Atlantic

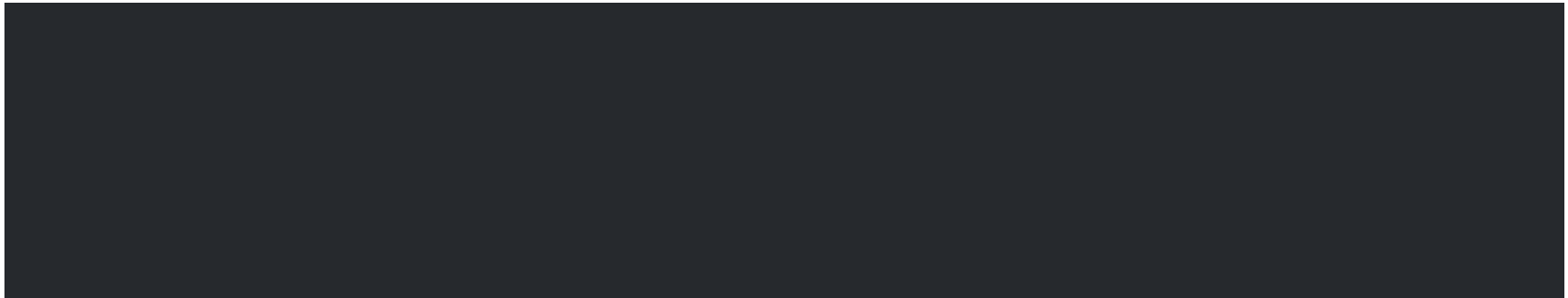
BUSINESS

How Dairy Milked by Prisoners Ends Up on Whole Foods Shelves

Agricultural operations in Colorado prisons have been met with controversy, due in large part to how profit comes at the expense of incarcerated people's low pay. Products such as goat milk used in cheese production and tilapia have been sold to grocery stores such as Whole Foods where public outcry led to the elimination of prison-produced food.


But while Whole Foods may no longer stock these prisoner-produced products, CCI still sells to other food corporations. For example, Leprino Foods, a $3 billion company that supplies mozzarella to Papa John's, Pizza Hut, and Domino's, bought all of CCIs buffalo milk between 2017-2020.

## Idleness Reduction




## Work Requirement

## *Convict leasing: Arizona*

Modern correctional industries merge government and private enterprise. Prison labor is used in the production of goods and services that generate revenue for the enterprise. At the same time, states tout benefits including idleness reduction and job skills that prisoners learn and may use upon their release.

In Arizona, Arizona Correctional Industries (ACI) claims to provide "structured programming designed to support inmate accountability and successful community reintegration." Programs include in-house operations and convict leasing, which

it describes as partnerships to private industry “customers,” including farming operations.

In marketing convict leasing, ACI describes the benefits of its “labor partnerships” to customers: "What’s in it for you? Motivated workers that can be relied upon to be at work on time, no paid vacation, no paid sick leave, and prepared to work."

On the other hand, workers are paid poorly, may face inadequate training, and suffer injuries. As one incarcerated worker who filed a federal lawsuit after a finger was severed while operating a chicken feeder noted:

> “‘*Figure it out*’ – *that’s pretty much what they tell you.*”
>
> – Mary Stinson, incarcerated worker at Hickman's Family Farm

## ACI Labor Partnerships

Arizona prisoners are sent from ASPC Florence, ASPC Lewis, ASPC Perryville, and ASPC Douglas to several private agricultural operations, including Hickman's Family Farms, Taylor Farms, and Fiesta Canning.

ACI receives $12 an hour per worker, the state minimum wage.

Incarcerated workers receive $4.25 to $5.25 an hour. However, a majority of this wage is deducted, leaving most prisoners with about $0.50 an hour.

## Tour Hickman's Family Farms Use of Prison Labor

Hickman's Family Farms describes its business as a family owned and operated egg company, the largest in the Southwest. They began their labor partnership with ACI in 1995. Incarcerated workers care for chickens, provide farm maintenance, and package eggs.

In 2020, ACI was Hickman's Family Farms number one customer, generating an annual revenue of $7,031,01. Prior to the pandemic there were 186 workers from men's prisons and 93 from women's prisons. In 2021, there are 92 incarcerated workers and over 70 formerly incarcerated workers with full-time jobs.


## Hickman's - Buckeye

During the pandemic, Hickman's worked with Arizona Corrections and ACI to build out a temporary housing unit on their Buckeye property to house 114 workers from ASPC Perryville

## Hickman's - Tonopah

Hickman's markets Tonopah as housing its white cage free hens, but does not mention prisoners who built the facility.


## Hickman's - Arlington North & South

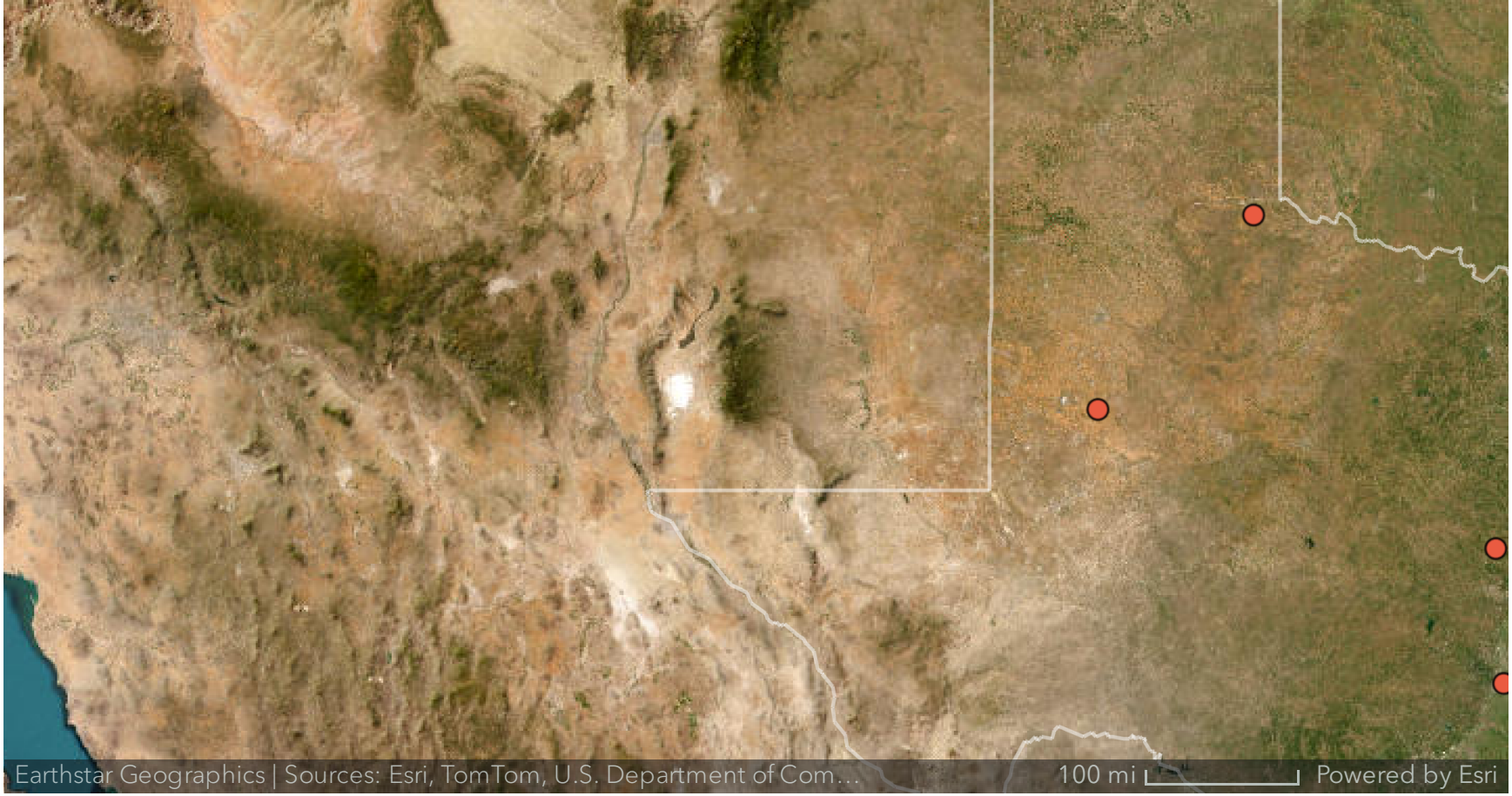

## Hickman's Maricopa

## ASPC Florence

## ASPC Lewis

## ASPC Perryville

# Training




## Educational

## *Agricultural job skills: Texas*

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice, historically known for its retributive model of imprisonment, aims to soften this reputation with agricultural training, such as the horticultural program at the Ellis Unit in Huntsville. The program offers curriculum to earn an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Horticulture from Lee College and Horticulture Technician Certification hands-on training through the Master Gardener Examination at Texas A&M University. Program details:

**Approximate number of participants:** 25

**Work schedule:** 6-7 hours a day, Monday-Friday

**Facilities:** Individual gardens, community garden, three greenhouses, shaded nursery area and shaded parakeet aviary with an aquaponics enclosure

A TDCJ press release highlights the 'feel-good' aspects of horticultural education:

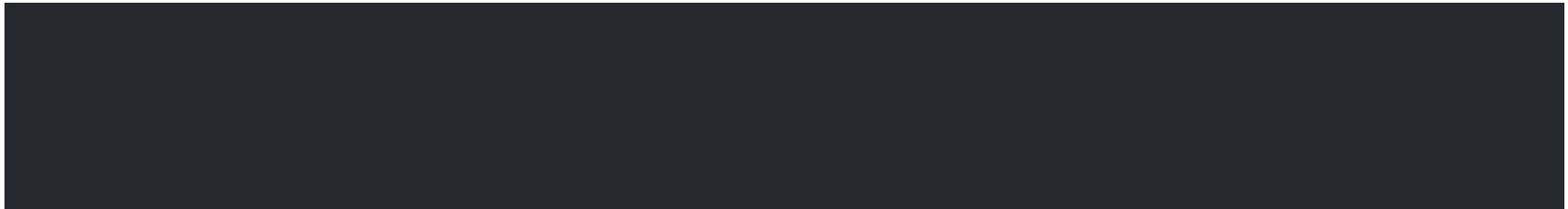
> *"I find freedom in the gardens even though I'm behind a chain-linked fence and rows of razor wire. When I enrolled in the class I realized that I had found something that I like and am learning to love. The class teaches us how we can change, just like the plants we care for, and how we can make it when we are released."*
>
> – Unnamed incarcerated individual at Ellis Unit prison

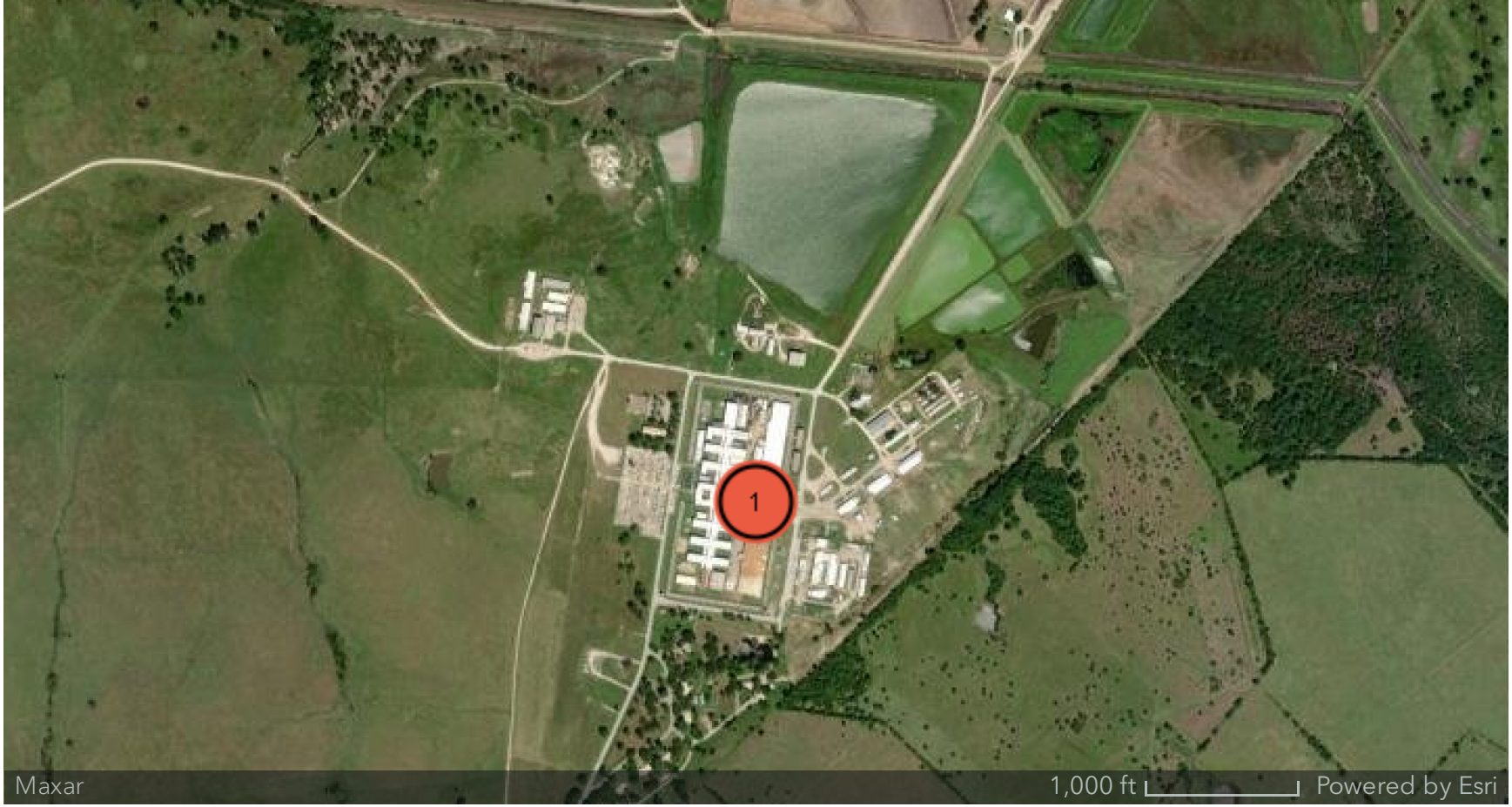
The state furthermore celebrates prisoner contributions to community service, demonstrating how the drivers of prison

agriculture intermix and overlap.


TDCJ Tweet

## Tour Ellis Unit Prison Farm






1 **Ellis Unit**

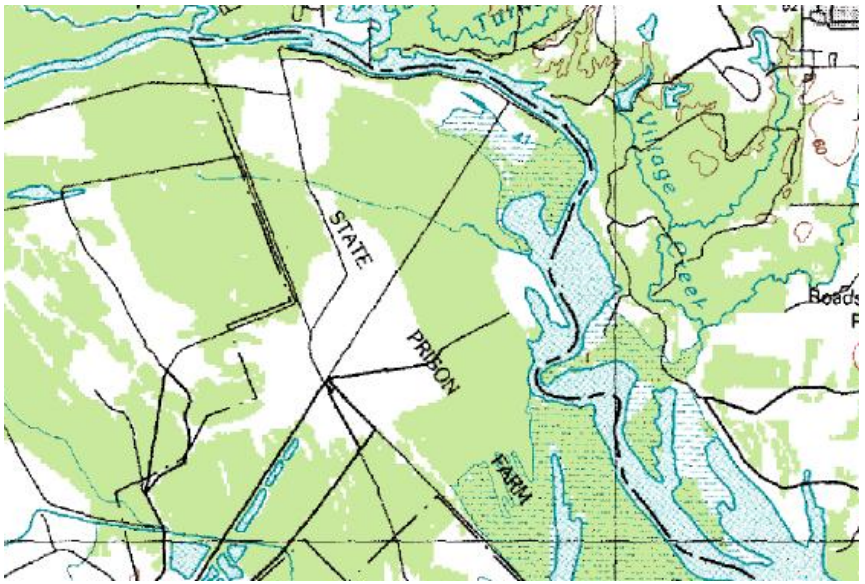
Agriculture takes place on adjacent farmland historically known as the Ellis Prison Farm. Its current operations include:

**Staff:** 16

**Prisoners:** 164

**Operations:** Cotton Gin, Cow/Calf, Edible/Field Crops, Farm Shop, Poultry, Swine Farrowing/Nursery/Finishing, Security Horses

## Google Satellite Imagery (2022) and USGS Topographic Map (1983) of the Ellis Unit (outlined in red) & Prison Farm



The Ellis Unit horticultural program satisfies the state's legal requirement that all prisoners work. Revenue-generating and cost-saving agricultural work assignments in Texas prisons—where no pay is the norm—are also sold to the public as training opportunities. TDCJ projects a sense that exploitative agricultural practices are in the past by emphasizing how today's prison

farmworkers at Ellis Unit learn agricultural science and trade skills to assist with post-release employment readiness.

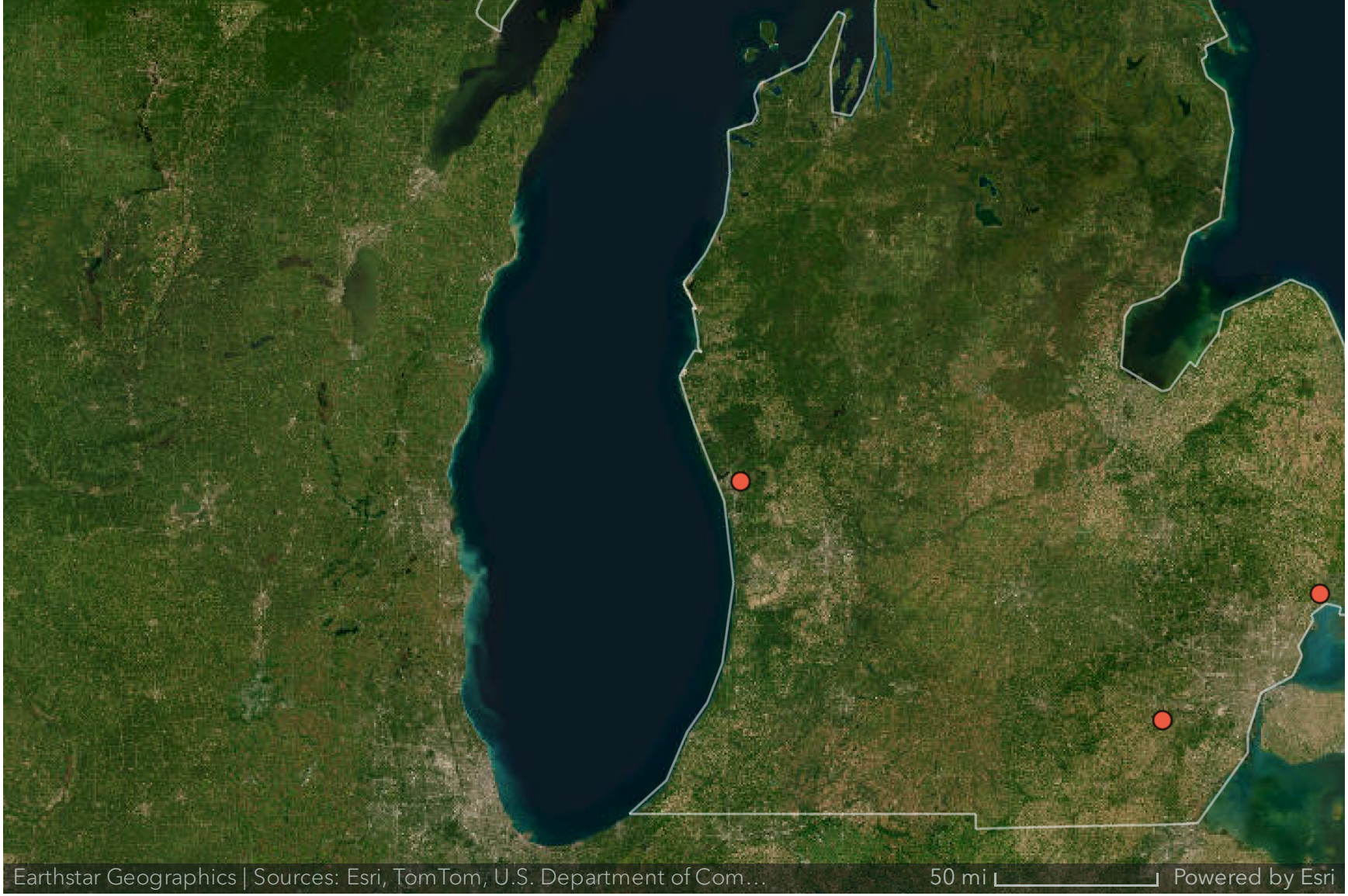
**Texas Department of Criminal Justice**
July 10, 2020 ·

Whether it's learning vehicle and machinery maintenance, culinary arts, or leather work, our staff are dedicated to teaching offenders valuable skills in various trades to help them be successful upon release.

One of those trades is in agriculture and working with animals on our unit's farms. Offenders at the Ellis Unit work closely with agricultural specialists and farm managers to learn the science behind raising swine, and calves for our heifer program.

#TDCJ #FridaysAtTheFarm

TDCJ Facebook Post about Ellis Unit Farm




## Vocational

### *Entrepreneurial horticultural: Michigan*

In the case of states that attempt to intervene in the conditions faced by incarcerated women with vocational training, this commonly entails horticulture classes and certifications. In the

Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility in Michigan, women grow vegetables and operate an on-site farm stand as part of a horticulture program with the support of Michigan State University Extension.


Incarcerated women encounter complicated notions of deservingness given historic race, class, and gender barriers to entry. For example, organizations that engage in horticultural

education inside and outside prisons, such as Master Gardeners, have predominately engaged white middle-class women and stay-at-home or retired participants. Yet, questions remain as to whether the gardening and landscaping skills incarcerated women learn in such programs could lead to running a successful farm stand post-incarceration, let alone middle class status or the ability to one day retire like volunteers.

The stated goal of the Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility horticulture program is for prisoners to learn entrepreneurial skills and on-farm food safety techniques required for running a successful farm stand. But this is not clearly connected to the curricular focus on obtaining a Pesticide Applicator license and preparing for a Michigan Nursery and Landscape license.

One might not intuit these conditions given the glossy treatment given the program in photo-ops.

Visit by State Attorney General Dana Nessel and MDOC Director Heidi Washington, along with Attorney General staff.

Moreover, the horticulture program participates in community service through donations. Any produce not sold to prison staff through the Green Valley Market has to be donated. The program grew and donated 12,000 pounds of produce in 2018 to a single local food bank, while in 2019 over 115,000 pounds of produce was given to food assistance organizations.

## SoundCloud - Hear the world's sounds

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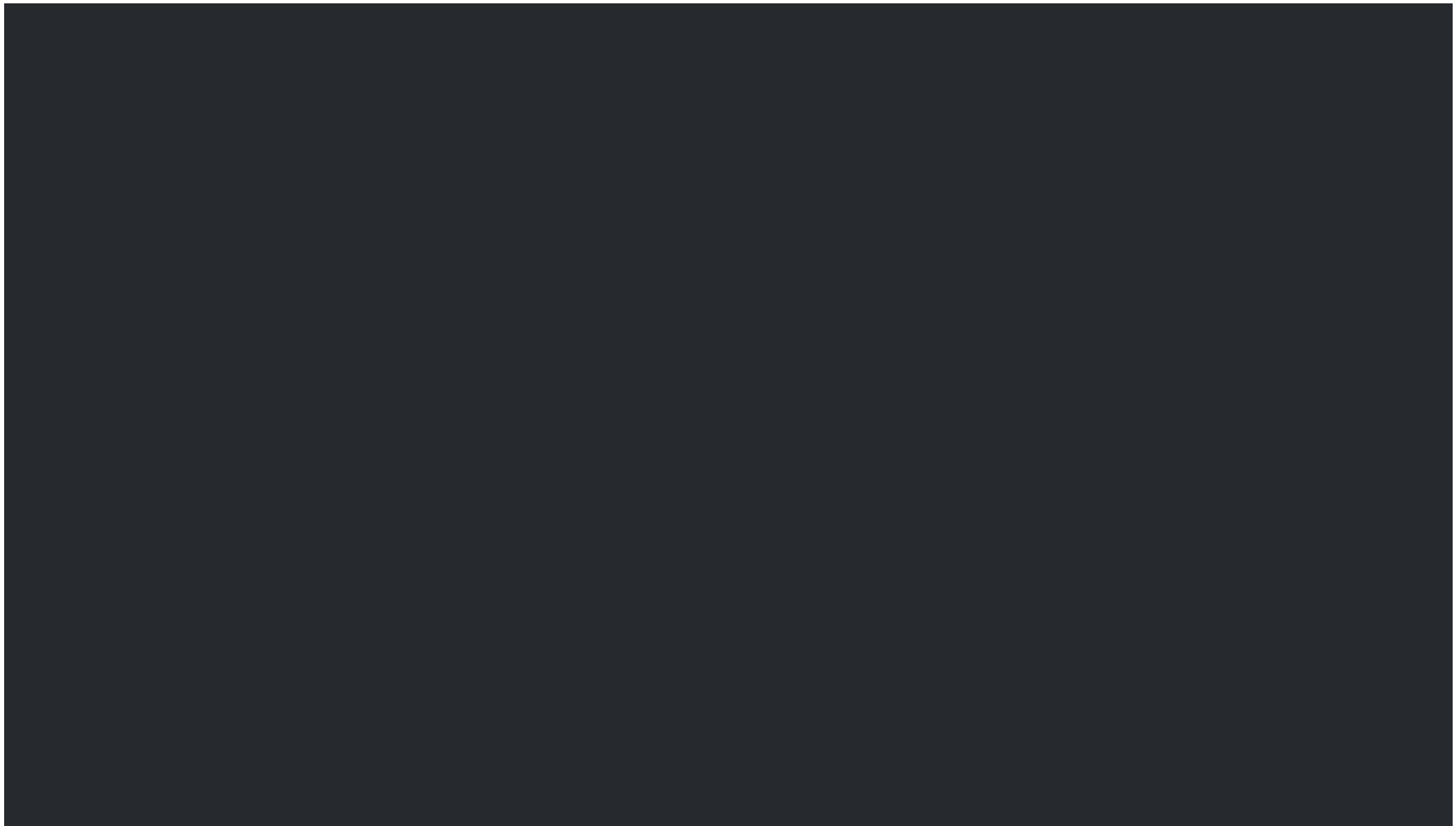
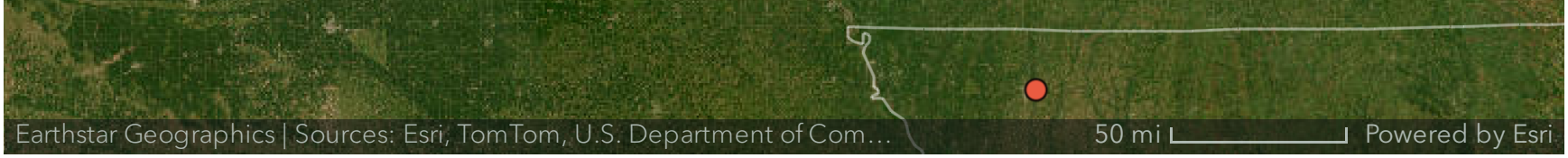
Green Valley Farmers Market At Women's Huron Valley by Field Days

While official statements by the Michigan Department of Corrections and their Extension partners focus on training

incarcerated women for agricultural jobs, there is little evidence provided that this takes place. Instead in several publications, the claim is made that the farm stand is a means to improve prison morale and positive interactions with prison staff and guards. In this sense horticulture programs are a disciplinary tool to manage the interpersonal and social conditions of incarceration.

## Reparative






## Community Service

### *Gardening for donations: Missouri*

Missouri Department of Corrections runs garden programs with the express intent to donate the produce. Through their Restorative Justice Gardens located at most facilities in the state, prisoners grow food to give to people on the outside facing food

insecurity. All seeds and plant starts used to grow the 70 to 100 tons of produce a year are donated.


MDC explains restorative justice as follows:

> *"With the goal of giving back to the people of the state, Missourians in state correctional centers perform*

> *volunteer work and complete projects to support nonprofit agencies…. Through restorative justice initiatives, offenders serve fellow citizens and strengthen social bonds that serve as the foundation of communities."*

This notion of 'giving back' is central to the Restorative Justice Gardens.


Not being able to enjoy the produce has produced some public reactions.

**Missouri Department of Corrections** · Aug 4, 2020

@MoCorrections · **Follow**

The Restorative Justice Garden at Potosi Correctional Center yielded these beautiful summer squashes, zucchinis & ears of corn. Fresh vegetables & fruits grown in prison gardens help feed children, seniors & other food-insecure people through local food banks.



**amaretto**

@amarettosourlvr · **Follow**

Aaaaaaand again, what about feeding the incarcerated the literal fruits (and vegetables) of their labor????? Something besides food clearly marked not fit for human consumption and soy with protein pellets that damage the digestive tract?

2:12 PM · Aug 4, 2020

3 Reply Share

Read 2 replies

But it is not simply a matter of whether prisoners get to eat the food they grow. The same disproportionately poor communities and communities of color from which prisoners are taken also experience higher levels of food insecurity. The state disrupts the social reproduction of a neighborhood through incarceration. Then, under the claim of community service, prisoners ‘give back’ to criminalized and food insecure communities as a form of individualized restorative justice.

MDC strategically uses social media to manage public perceptions of these practices.

**Missouri Department of Corrections**

@MoCorrections · **Follow**

Southeast Correctional Center Restorative Justice garden donated over 3 tons of produce in four months. Weeding for second planting project!



1:50 PM · Aug 31, 2017

**11** **Reply** **Share**

**Read 1 reply**

**Missouri Department of Corrections**
@MoCorrections · **Follow**

"After visiting with guys in the Restorative Justice Garden and seeing the recidivism statistics, I am convinced of the value of these types of programs... No matter the context, gardening is a tool that changes people's lives." More at @columbiatribune ow.ly/yuwm30lTk8o



3:04 PM · Sep 19, 2018

4 Reply Share

Read more on Twitter

**Missouri Department of Corrections**
@MoCorrections · **Follow**

Southeast Correctional Center has donated a ton of food to @semofoodbank. Literally. An actual ton. The 2,448 pounds of fresh produce grown by offenders in the prison's Restorative Justice Garden will be distributed to 16 counties in Southeast Missouri.



7:01 AM · Jul 12, 2018

14 Reply Share

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**Missouri Department of Corrections**
@MoCorrections · **Follow**

Crossroads Correctional Center Restorative Justice garden donated produce to Seventh-day Adventist Church Food Pantry and other groups.



8:05 AM · Sep 14, 2017

1 Reply Share

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**Missouri Department of Corrections**
@MoCorrections · **Follow**

The Restorative Justice Garden at the Southeast Correctional Center donated 1,000 pounds of produce to the Charleston Nutrition Center.



3:35 PM · Aug 15, 2017

1 Reply Share

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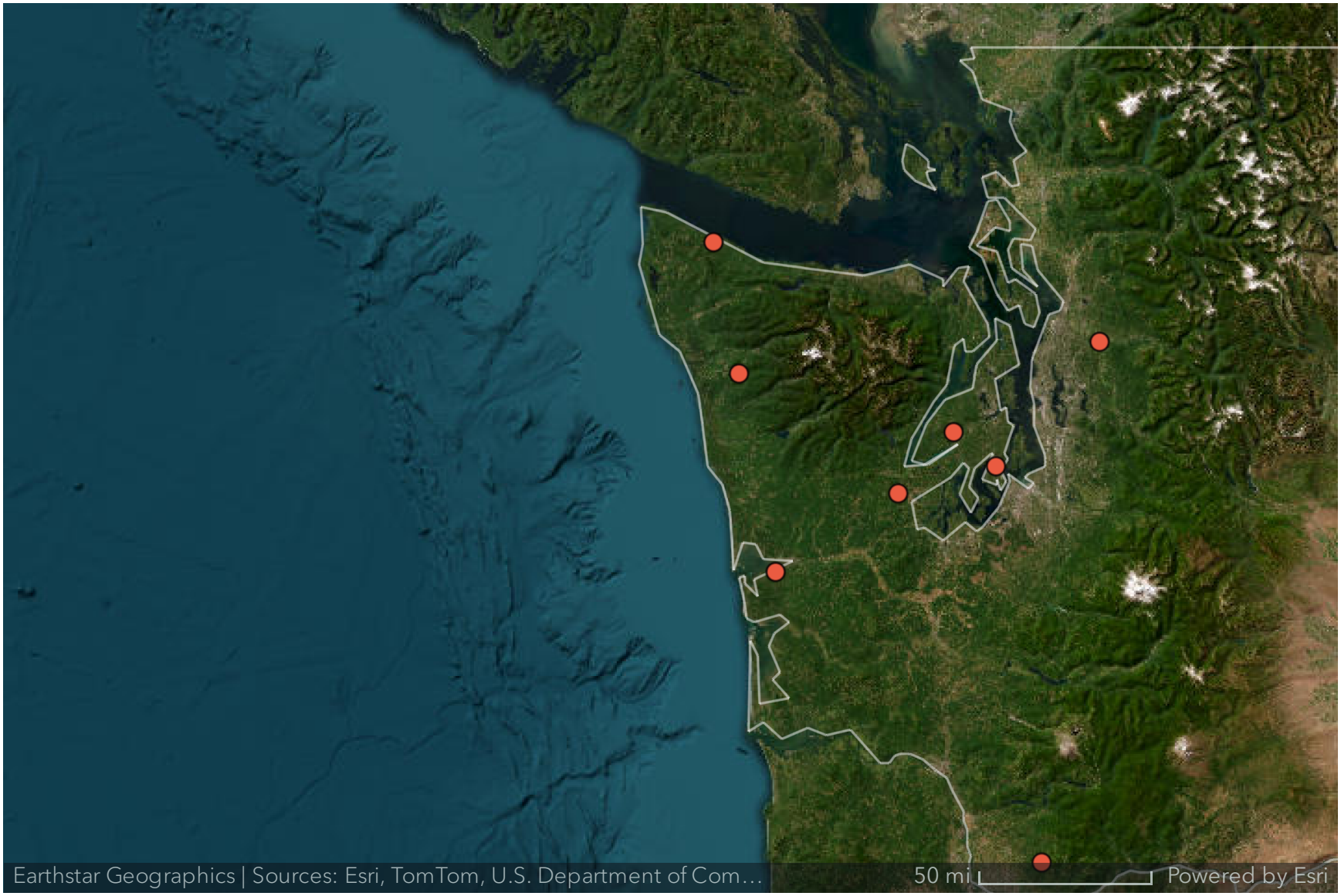



## Environmental

### *Agriculture for sustainability: Washington*

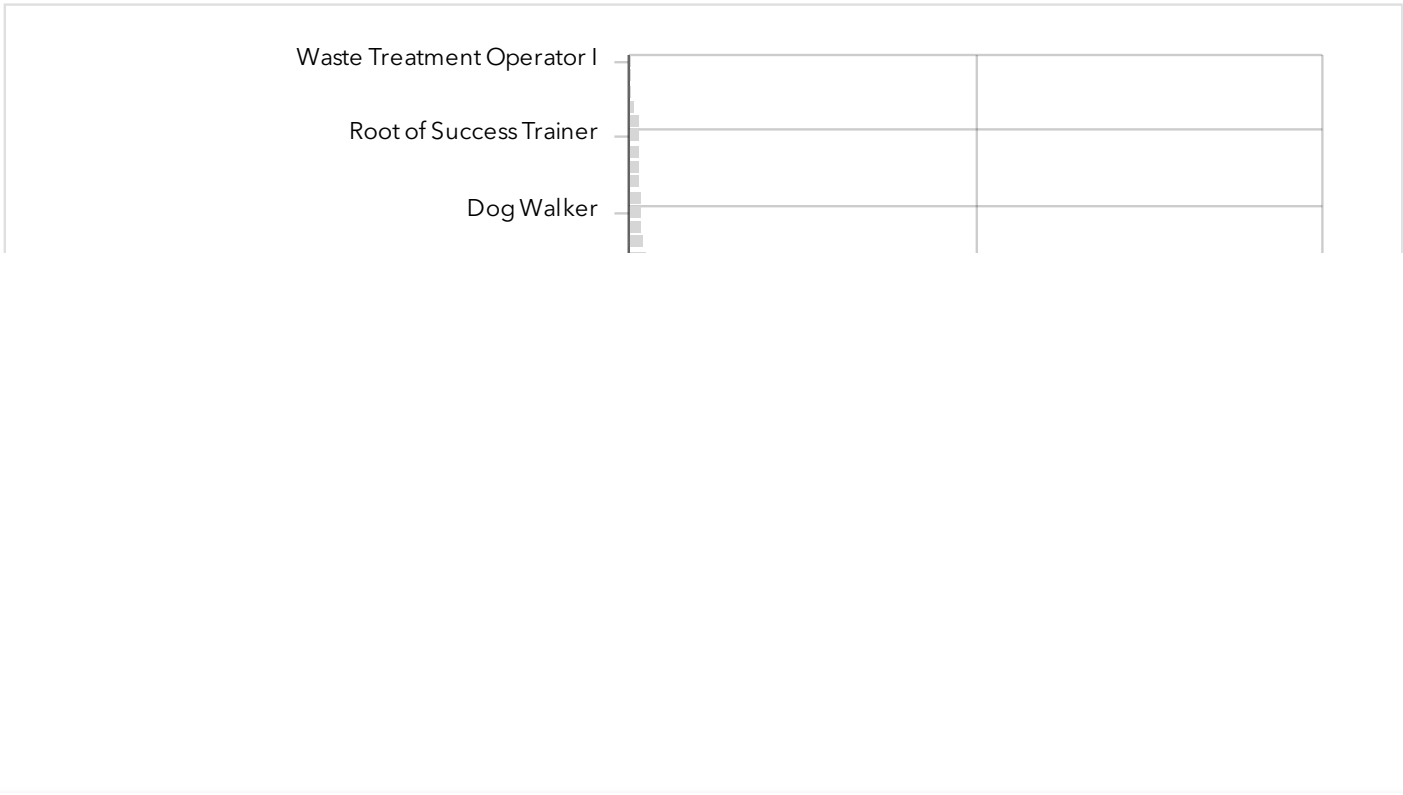
The Washington Department of Corrections runs one of the largest prison sustainability initiatives in the country. The state touts the benefits of sustainability programming for creating educational, “volunteer,” and job opportunities, many focused on food and agriculture.

The Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP) is a collaboration between Evergreen State College and Washington State Department of Corrections. SPP has helped to legitimate the centering of penal environmental goals nationally, especially as they pertain to prison agriculture programs. But sustainability, as a reparative driver, is almost always paired with other drivers, which compromises the environmental position.

SPP secures the carceral footprint of Washington State through its broad appeal, attracting public support and funding for sustainability programming at all 12 of the state's prisons. Tapping into broader sentiments in the state, its mission is to "empower sustainable change by bringing nature, science, and environmental education into prisons."

According to SPP, its programs prepare incarcerated participants to fill a wide range sustainability-related jobs offered within Washington State prisons. Approximately 24%, or 3,710, of the state's 15,644 incarcerated population worked in a sustainability job program in July 2019-December 2020.

## Sustainability Job Programs in Washington State Prisons
## July 2019 — December 2020

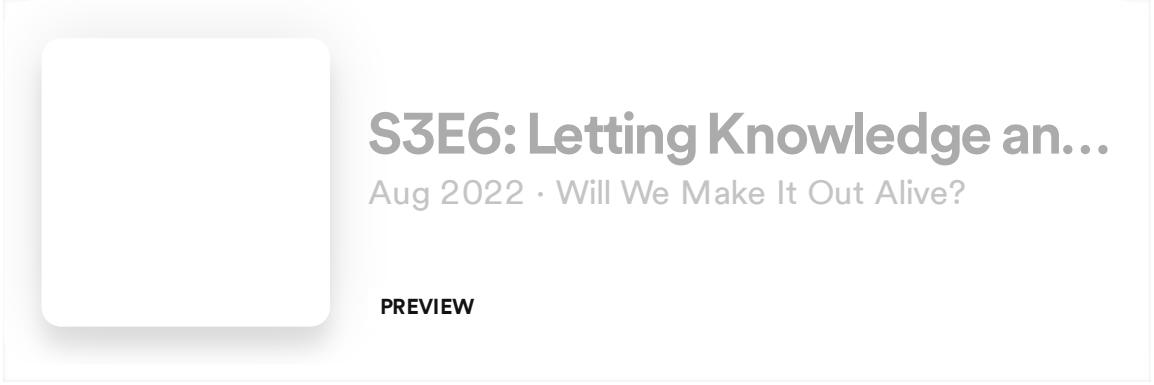



Data Source: Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP) 2020 Annual Report

The SPP program insists that it is “not designed to provide a source of cheap labor for environmental orgs: all participants must receive benefits” and that “many programs are offered purely for their educational value.” Nevertheless, some programs “save the prison system operating funds through reduced resource use.”

Washington state law also requires incarcerated people to hold prison jobs and sets out provisions for carceral work programs, leaving sustainability jobs as perhaps the best—or least undesirable—of options for surviving prison. Despite the unique successes of SPP, situating work requirements and other financial drivers in sustainability initiatives, environmental education, and hopes of reduced recidivism hides the exploitative nature of this non-choice choice for incarcerated people.

In the podcast below, SPP's Education and Outreach manager explains how gardening and beekeeping programs make harsh prison and post-prison life more bearable. While focusing on the benefits offered by SPP, the challenges that arise from working within the current carceral system are also evident.




Recognizing the limits of reformist organizations like SPP, more radical efforts in Washington state aiming to abolish prisons argue that society should not simply "fix prison with more prison." Indeed, collaborations emerging across the US are considering how gardens and plants can simultaneously play a reparative role and envision a world without prisons.

## Resources

Interested in prison abolition? Want to know how you can get involved and learn more?

### Organizations Working Towards Prison Abolition

#### Critical Prison Research Organizations

- Prison Agriculture Lab
- Prison Policy Initiative

- Impact Justice

### Frontline Prison Accounts and Journalism

- Prison Legal News
- Prison Writers
- Prison Journalism Project
- The Marshall Project

### Abolition Resources

- If You're New to Abolition: Study Group Guide
- Prison Abolition Syllabus 2.0
- Prison Abolition Resource Guide

## Credits

Prison Agriculture Lab

| | |
|---|---|
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Josh Reyling, *Geospatial Centroid*, Colorado State University

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