



## Appendix IV EQUITY



## Appendix IV: The Fresno-Merced Future of Food Innovation (F3) Commitment to Race Equity

As noted in the Project Narrative and in the Regional Assets Appendix, F3 is one of 19 investment plans in the inclusive economic development strategy developed by Fresno DRIVE (Developing the Region’s Inclusive and Vibrant Economy). Fresno DRIVE was initiated in Spring 2019 by the Central Valley Community Foundation. What began as a straightforward, strategic planning process soon evolved into a comprehensive, \$4.2 billion, 10-year strategic investment plan for the Greater Fresno-Merced Region led by an Executive Committee of 50 people representing 35 organizations and a 300-person, 150-organization Steering Committee. Anchored by Urban Institute data showing Fresno, California to be the most racially segregated economy of all large cities in the state and among the worst in the nation, the community leaders around the DRIVE planning table recognized that traditional approaches to industry cluster and regional economic development would not result in shared prosperity for historically marginalized residents without intentional actions and investments. As a result, in 2020, the Fresno DRIVE Executive Committee developed and adopted its theory of change and Race Equity Plan. DRIVE’s theory of change establishes its North Star goal as: *“Economic growth that is based on transformed infrastructure and systems that enable historically excluded racial minority communities to prosper.”*

The DRIVE Race Equity Plan operationalizes its commitment to race equity in three, specific ways – (1) requiring all DRIVE actors (partners, grantees, contractors, etc.) to engage in “shared understanding and analysis” of the root causes of racism and their effects on the economy today; (2) adopting the Transformative Community Engagement framework developed by the International Association of Public Participation and creating onramps for community leadership by marginalized community representatives; and (3) making explicit programmatic and financial commitments to race equity outcomes in each DRIVE investment plan.

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As a strategy of Fresno DRIVE, F3 has incorporated the elements of the DRIVE Race Equity plan in the following ways. First and most importantly, F3 recognizes that producing healthy foods for the rest of the nation and world at the expense of Central Valley residents and communities is not only unsustainable, but also unjust. F3 couples its commitment to the global export of sustainable food system technology with a commitment to enhancing the local and regional food system. Advancing iCREATE simultaneous to making investments in the Hecho en Fresno network, pedestrian facilities connecting disinvested neighborhoods to the economic center of the region, and a revolving loan fund tailored for food micro-enterprises and mobile food vendors is an expression of that commitment.

Second, iCREATE has designed a governance structure that embeds its commitment to race equity. iCREATE will be established as an independent non-profit entity. Its founders are





the California Department of Food and Agriculture, California Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development, University of California Merced, University of California Ag and Natural Resources, Fresno State, and the Central Valley Community Foundation. Joining these founding institutions on the inaugural board of iCREATE will be representatives from small and medium farms, socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, other food related industries, community-based organizations focused on food systems and environmental justice, and end-user communities. In addition to a governance structure that is representative of the region’s diverse food ecosystem, iCREATE will sponsor several additional collaborative structures that ensure cross-pollination and interdisciplinary approaches to creating sustainable food systems technology, including an iCREATE Fellowship Committee, a “Just Transition” Advisory Committee, a Small Farm Technology Innovation Alliance, and a Central Valley Agroecology Program. Successfully advancing the F3 agenda will require much collaboration, communication and coordination among multiple stakeholders and sectors. These structures are envisioned to ensure communication, collaboration, and accountability to local communities, farmworkers, and farmers of color.


Third, F3 recognizes the role of small and medium farmer innovation in achieving long-term, sustainable economic growth and equitable distribution of benefits from the growth of the Climate Smart Food and Ag Tech Cluster. The Food Ag Tech revolution now under way has focused more acutely on re-engineering large, industrial operations due in part to scalability, access to capital, and adoption models, which has created even greater disparity between large and small farmers. To address this gap, F3 has adopted the following principles:


### Guiding Principles for Inclusion


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**1 Affordable:** Applied Food Ag Tech must assist small-scale farmers in improving their economic bottom line. To achieve this, technologies and services must have a favorable cost/benefit ratio for small family farms.
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**2 Appropriately scaled:** Applied Food Ag Tech needs to account for the diversity of size and production practices used by small farms. The technological systems must be enabling for the operators, not burdensome. Technologies are complementary, not adversarial.
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**3 Accessible:** Food Ag Tech should not obligate the community to outside entities. Open source systems free from burdensome subscriptions and proprietary controls enable the farm operators to iterate and adapt technologies as their circumstances change. Technologies should be adapted for ease of use and should not require an extensive technical background to operate. Decision-making tools can be built to provide simplified recommendations without requiring extensive interpretation by the end user.
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**4 Translatable & transferable:** Research outcomes must be offered in a format that can be disseminated through formal and informal training environments. Knowledge given to the community must have the capacity to propagate internally.
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**5 Low-risk:** Create mechanisms to facilitate low-risk access and on-farm testing of new ag-food-tech, such as centers where equipment can be stored and rented, borrowed, or shared, could make technologies more cost-effective for small farms.
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**6 Multi-beneficial:** Food production is one outcome of small farms, however, there are also ancillary services created such as habitat conservation, landscape diversity, energy production, groundwater recharge, and air quality protection. Providing technologies that allow farmers to quantify, control, and gain financial benefit from these ecosystem services will encourage sustainable agricultural practices and build resilience in the community.
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**7 Networked:** New technologies should seek to improve transparency, assure reliability, and facilitate new modalities.
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**8 Protective of privacy:** Information collected from sensors, online platforms, IoT, and any other methods must be safeguarded as confidential. Farmers in general face pressure from regulatory programs and the public to provide data on their production practices, and technologies that share data with a wider audience are unlikely to be adopted. This is especially relevant for small-scale farmers whose operations do not match well with “one size fits all” regulatory programs and for socially disadvantaged farmers.

