

<http://exiledonline.com/how-limousine-liberals-oligarch-farmers-and-even-sean-hannity-are-hijacking-our-water-supply/>

Take the deal that went down this summer between a farmer with a stake in the Kern bank and a McTractHome paradise in the Mojave Desert, 100 miles east of Los Angeles. For roughly \$73 million, the Mojave Water Agency acquired permanent rights to 14,000 acre-feet of water pumped out of the Sacramento Delta and delivered via the State Aqueduct, enough water to flood an area the size of San Francisco six inches deep or hydrate up to 30,000 families for a whole year.

The farmer selling the water was not really a “farmer” in the poor, homesteading, buck-toothed sense of the word, but a private Bay Area-based company called Sandridge Partners owned by the Vidovich family. In addition to running a lucrative cotton and almond growing operation in the heart of the Central Valley, the Vidoviches also control a small real estate empire in the Silicon Valley, building and managing estate developments: office complexes, condominiums, mobile home parks, hotels and shopping centers.

John Vidovich, the current patriarch of the family business, and his wife Lydia live in an \$11.4 million Los Altos Hills home. Hilly, wooded and overlooking the bay just south of San Francisco, it's one of the ritziest places to live in Northern California and the 8th most expensive zip code in America. (The president of Resnick's Paramount Farms, Joseph MacIlvane, rubs shoulders with the Vidovich family, sharing a post on the board of directors of the Dudley Ranch Water District, a private water district that owns 9.62% the Kern bank, along with John Vidovich.)

Despite — or maybe because of — the family's extreme wealth, Sandridge Partners is one of the top welfare queen-farmers in the country. In 2007, it received \$1 million in federal farm subsidies, more than any other farmer that year, raking in an additional \$6.8 million between 1995 and 2006, according to the Environmental Working Group. Known as “direct payments,” the subsidies are made each year mostly to growers of corn, wheat, rice and cotton, with payout amounts based on past production, sometimes even regardless of whether the crops are still being grown.

But their \$73-million water deal shows that farm subsidies aren't the only, or even the most, lucrative handout that has the Vidoviches living well. The money paid out via farm subsidies pale in comparison to the massive profits that can be reaped from simply reselling the heavily taxpayer subsidized water they receive from the state.