



The
Stanislaus Farm News

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture

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Land values plunge as groundwater law dims farm prospects

The value of farmland in parts of the San Joaquin Valley, California's agricultural heartland, has fallen rapidly this year as commodity prices lag and implementation of the state's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act casts a shadow on the future of farming in the region. In 2014, when SGMA was adopted, the value of farmland without reliable surface water access began to decline. But within the past several months, those values have plummeted, according to appraisers, realtors and county assessors.

Spread of bird flu 'baffles' dairy farmers in the Central Valley

Even though he has been bracing for impacts of H5N1 bird flu since April, Tulare County dairy farmer Preston Fernandes said it still came as a surprise when milk samples from his farm tested positive for the virus last month. As the leading dairy state in the nation, California now also has the most bird flu cases in its milking herds. As of Oct. 11, 100 cases have been confirmed. Of the 14 states hit by bird flu in dairy cattle, California is one of two that have reported new infections in the past 30 days. Exactly how the virus spreads from herd to herd is not fully understood.

Market manager educates people about food and agriculture

Cheyenne Erickson, general manager of the Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association's North Bay region, is enthusiastic about two things: fostering community and advocating for agriculture. Overseeing farmers markets in Contra Costa and Solano counties, she plays a vital role in connecting farmers, producers and small businesses with the communities they serve, while also informing consumers about their food. Erickson is a member of the California Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers State Committee representing Humboldt and Del Norte counties

and serves as president of the Contra Costa County Farm Bureau.

FIRA USA to bring autonomous farming solutions to Yolo County trade show

The third edition of FIRA USA, the premier event for agricultural robots and autonomous farming solutions in California, is coming to Woodland Oct. 22-24. The three-day showcase will feature the cutting edge of technological innovation through live demonstrations and industry round tables. Demonstrations will include technological solutions for farming nuts, fruits, grapes, vegetables, berries and field crops. The event is free for growers to attend.

Flood irrigation can be efficient when done the right way

Having endured crushing impacts of drought and regulatory water restrictions, California farmers have embraced drip irrigation to improve their water footprint. At the same time, flood irrigation has faced increased scrutiny for being inefficient—even

wasteful. But experts say that with automation and other design improvements, farmers could maximize efficiency with flood and surface irrigation systems. "It could be as efficient as other pressurized irrigation systems—and friendly to the environment," said Khaled Bali, an irrigation water management specialist at the University of California Kearney Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Parlier.

State water board increases rates for 2024-25

To meet budgetary shortfalls for water rights and water quality programs that require participation by farmers and ranchers, the California State Water Resources Control Board has approved rate increases, including for groundwater recharge projects. The higher fees come as California water users and local agencies work to balance critically overdrafted aquifers under the state's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. "Farm Bureau is concerned that if the fees are too high, this will be a disincen-

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tive to doing the exact sort of recharge that the temporary 180-day and five-year, high-flow diversion permits were intended to do," said Alexandra Biering, senior policy advocate for the California Farm Bureau.

Sales rep helps farmers find solutions for

irrigation needs

As an irrigation sales representative in the Imperial Valley, John Tamayo is on the front lines of the most ambitious water conservation effort in the country. Amid warnings that the Colorado River is running dry, farmers in the valley have under-

taken efforts to conserve an unprecedented amount of water, some of it through the installation of more efficient irrigation systems. "I appreciate being able to play a role in that," said Tamayo, who works with farmers to determine which irrigation systems are best suited for their farming

needs and conservation goals. His desire to support farmers led him to join the California Farm Bureau's Young Farmers & Ranchers program, where he serves on the State Committee representing Santa Clara, Santa Cruz and San Mateo counties.

California Farm Bureau weighs in on ballot propositions

The Voice of California Agriculture podcast, produced by the California Farm Bureau, discusses the organization's 2024 general election voter guide with Steven Fenaroli, policy advocate at the Farm Bureau. Fenaroli speaks about the Farm Bureau's positions on ballot propositions that would impact the state's minimum wage, rent control policy, sentencing criteria for drug and theft crimes and other issues. The episode also covers the U.S. agricultural trade deficit, the probationary status of the Tulare Lake Subbasin under California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, and the potential impacts on agriculture of a major East Coast port strike that was suspended last week.

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As another membership service, Farm Bureau members are offered FREE classified advertising in the Stanislaus Farm News. Ads must be 18 words or less and only one ad per month per membership (membership number required.) Ads may be MAILED to the Stanislaus Farm News, or BROUGHT to the SCFB office, 1201 L Street, Downtown Modesto. NO PHONE-IN OR FAX free ads will be accepted. Free ads are restricted to farm machinery or equipment or unprocessed farm products. Farm jobs wanted or offered will also be accepted. No real estate ads and no commercial items or services will be accepted. 209-522-7278

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CAAA: Advocating for Agricultural Pilots Amid Increasing Challenges

Sabrina Halvorson, National Correspondent / AgNet Media, Inc.

The California Agricultural Aircraft Association (CAAA) serves as a critical advocate for agricultural pilots and operators throughout the state. The association works to protect the interests of those in agricultural aviation, an industry that is often subject to stringent regulations and evolving legislation. According to Justin Stoss, chairman of CAAA, the organization plays an essential role in ensuring that pilots and operators have a voice in the decision-making processes that affect their work.

Stoss, who is also an agricultural aircraft operator, explained that CAAA members

include pilots, operators, and associate members from across California. These members meet annually for a convention that provides educational opportunities and fosters a sense of community. "Our members come together once a year for a convention, similar to what other groups like CAPCA do," Stoss said. "And with that, our members are able to get continuing education credits." Continuing education is important for agricultural pilots, who must stay updated on the latest regulations and best practices to maintain their licenses.

The convention also features a trade show where vendors display the latest technology and tools for agricultural aviation. However, Stoss emphasized that beyond education and networking, the CAAA convention serves as an opportunity for members to strengthen their collective voice in

advocating for the industry.

One of the association's main challenges is lobbying against laws and regulations that could negatively impact agricultural pilots and operators. Stoss noted that legislation related to pesticide application and air quality can have unintended consequences on agricultural aviation, making it harder for operators to do their jobs effectively. "It's getting really hard to get some people in our corner to help fight some of the bills and laws that are passed that are preventing us from doing our job," Stoss explained.

CAAA uses its membership dues to fund lobbying efforts, which, Stoss said, have become increasingly crucial as California's regulatory environment grows more complex. The association works closely with legal experts to ensure that legislators un-

See "CAAA" on page 15

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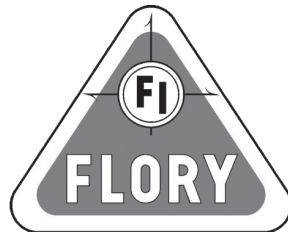
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Elevating Agricultural Education

Zippy Duvall, AFBF President

Today is American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture's Giving Day, a time to celebrate the incredible work being done to support agricultural education and recognize all the educators, staff and volunteers who help us make it happen.

Advancing Agricultural Education for Future Generations

The Ag Foundation is on a mission to spark students' curiosity about where their food comes from, but we cannot do it alone. It takes community – people like you – who believe in the importance of ag education and want to make a difference for the next generation.

From publishing award-winning books through Feeding Mind Press to creating rigorous STEM curriculum, the Ag Foundation is providing resources that introduce future consumers to agriculture and inspire the next generation of farmers, researchers, veterinarians and ag innovators. Whether it's through engaging lesson plans, activities or videos, every resource is designed to be accurate, accessible and impactful. Every book, lesson plan and resource is carefully researched by education specialists and reviewed by subject matter experts. We do our homework first so that educators, parents and volunteers have the confidence to bring agricultural education into the classroom and at home.

Beyond resources, the Ag Foundation

is also committed to equipping educators with opportunities and training, including our On the Farm STEM program, farm tours and scholarships to give them tools to help these lessons come alive in the classroom.

The Ag Foundation has so much to offer and if you haven't checked out our website yet, that should be your next stop.

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cated volunteers. By donating, you can help us develop literacy resources and reach more students across the country. To make your commitment or find out more about the ways to donate, please visit our donate page on the website. Supporters who give today will be eligible for special prizes, and we have some special plans for the state Farm Bureaus with the most donations.

There are also many other meaningful ways you can help contribute to the mission of agricultural education outside of our Giving Day such as giving your time or donating resources straight to the classroom. The first step is to reach out to your county and state Farm Bureaus to see what volunteering opportunities may be available to bring agricultural literacy to the classroom. Across the nation, our local and state lead-

ers are hosting booths at county fairs and visiting local elementary schools and libraries to read books about agriculture. And if there are not efforts like this in your community yet, then I encourage you to see what you can do to get something started.

You also can invite students to visit your farm or organize a community event focused on ag literacy. Something as simple as donating Feeding Minds Press books to a local library

can help open doors for agricultural education in your community.

Join Us in Advancing Agricultural Education

As we come together to support the Ag Foundation's Giving Day, I challenge you to reflect on the difference we can make together. The Foundation has accomplished so much, and I'm so proud of all the work our dedicated staff and volunteers do year-round. But class is still in session and there's still more work to do.

So whether it's through donating, volunteering or raising awareness, please know your efforts are planting seeds for future generations. These are the contributions that can yield a lasting impact for the next generation to have a better understanding of the exciting and innovative work happening on our farms and ranches to bring

food to everyone's pantries.

On behalf of the Ag Foundation's board and staff, I want to thank everyone who has contributed to our mission of advancing agricultural education.



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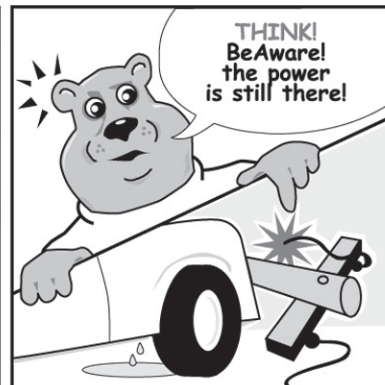
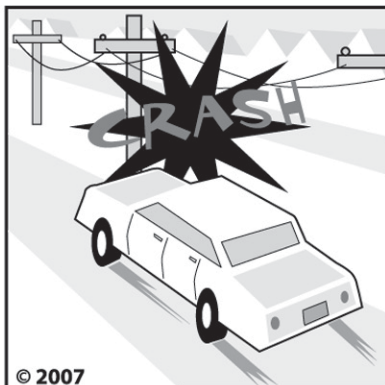
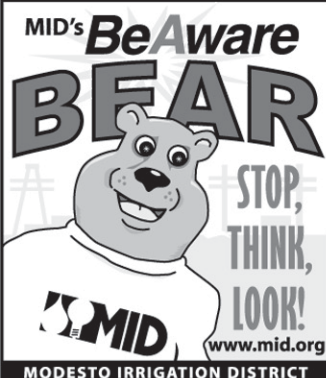
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Breaking the stigma of hearing loss in farming

The following information is provided by Nationwide®, the #1 farm and ranch insurer in the U.S.1

Just about everyone in rural America knows someone who fits the description. A farmer — young or old — who responds with a “What?” whenever you say something or ask a question. You may yourself be that person. Often from extended exposure to loud machinery and noisy environments, farmers are at a significantly higher risk of hearing loss than the general population. One third of all U.S. farmers have some form of hearing loss, according to the Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Lauren and Alyssa Roling know that well.

Hearing loss is common among farmers

“All participants had overexposure to noisy farm machinery and environments. Sixty-four percent said they have hearing loss related to extended exposure to high noise levels,” said Lauren Roling, a McCook Central FFA member in Salem, South Dakota. Along with sister Alyssa in 2024, they conducted a survey of farmers seeking input on hearing loss. That survey also found almost 75 percent of farmers don’t use hearing protection, even when working around high noise levels. Hearing loss is a fact of life on the Roling family farm, much like it is on thousands of farms around the country.

“We are the sixth generation on our family farm. We work beside our grandfather, father and brother. They all have some form of hearing loss,” Lauren said. “We wanted to find a way to educate the next generation of farmers to prevent the trend of hearing loss in agriculture.” Addressing the stigma of hearing loss

Lauren and Alyssa’s research confirmed there’s a major stigma surrounding hearing loss among farmers. This stigma often stems from a perceived notion of weakness or vulnerability. The stigma may keep farmers from wearing hearing aids or seeking medical advice. This reluctance not only makes their hearing health issues worse but also impacts their overall well-being and safety.

Tackling the stigma around hearing issues is key to helping farmers take charge of their hearing health. Be open about it—start conversations and share success stories of farmers who have sought help. This can help reduce the fear of judgment and inspire others to prioritize their health. Understanding how common hearing loss is among farmers is a big step towards breaking down that stigma.

Helping boost lost hearing

Whether it’s noise-induced or age-related – the two main types of hearing loss – the implications go well beyond just having to turn up the radio volume or ask someone to repeat what he or she has said to you. On the farm, hearing loss can make it difficult to hear warning signals or alarms, putting you at risk of accidents. In severe cases, hearing loss can even contribute to social isolation, depression and cognitive decline. The good news for farmers and anyone with hearing loss is there have been massive advancements in hearing aids and other tools to help restore the lost sense. Hearing aids were once just available with a prescription or recommendation by an audiologist or ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist. But today, over-the-counter aids and other tools like

tinnitus maskers offer the same hearing assistance, often with a much lower price tag.

It’s also important to add preventative measures whenever working around loud equipment or machinery on the farm. This includes wearing hearing protection and limiting the time of exposure to loud conditions.

Visit AgInsightCenter.com for resources and expert tips on trending topics to help you run a successful business and maintain the safety of your operation.

[1] A.M. Best Market Share Report 2023.

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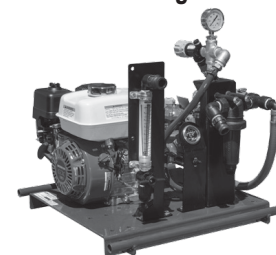
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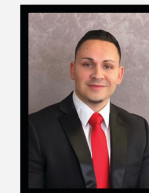
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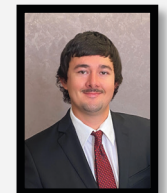
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Original cosponsor of the GEB were Stanislaus and San Joaquin County area poultrymen and the Modesto Chamber of Commerce. Stanislaus County Farm Bureau was added as the cosponsor and the poultrymen evolved into the Pacific Egg and Poultry Association and the California Poultry Federation. Today the four entities that plan and execute the breakfast are the Modesto Chamber of Commerce, California Poultry Federation, Pacific Egg and Poultry Association and the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau.

The Good Egg Committee is made up of members from the four aforementioned sponsors. The original GEB award was given to an area resident singled out for their outstanding contribution to agriculture. The breakfast also kicked off Farm-City Days in Stanislaus County.

The breakfast has evolved overtime to include recognition of not only agriculturalist, but also those from every walk of life who have demonstrated dedication and outstanding service for the benefit of the community.

This year's winner, is retired Stanislaus County Farm Bureau Executive Director, Wayne Zipser (pictured below). Wayne joins the list of past winners, including, then Governor, Ronald Reagan in 1970.



The breakfast includes scholarship recipients. The GEB awards scholarship stipends to local Modesto Junior College students who epitomize a GOOD EGG... someone that gives back to their community.

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From "CAAA" on page 7

derstand the unique challenges faced by agricultural pilots. "We have less than 30 operators and less than 250 members and pilots, so for the whole state, which is a very massive agricultural state, we are very small. So, we need this association to have a big voice," Stoss said.

In addition to regulatory challenges, Stoss highlighted the demanding nature of the agricultural aviation industry. Becoming an agricultural pilot requires specialized training, including a commercial pilot's license, an FAA medical certificate, and a license from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation. Stoss advised those interested in becoming ag pilots to understand the seriousness of the profession. "It's a very dangerous career if you're not going to take it very seriously, and your heart has to be in it," he said.

Ultimately, the CAAA works to ensure that agricultural pilots have the resources, support, and legal backing they need to continue serving California's agricultural industry safely and effectively. Through its advocacy efforts, the association is helping to secure a future for agricultural aviation in a challenging and ever-changing environment.



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(Nut/Tree Fruit Sessions)

7:00 am Registration
7:15 - 8:30 am Nut Grower/PCA Breakfast (1hr Laws & Regs CEUs)
 Welcome and Introduction
 Matthew Malcolm, Editor Pacific Nut Producer

7:30 - 8:00 am Pesticide Regulatory Updates
 Judith Arroyo, Deputy Ag Commissioner, Stanislaus County Department of Ag

8:00 - 8:30 am Common Pesticide Violations & Compliance Tools
 Melanie Pellegrino, Ag Inspector, Stanislaus County Department of Ag

----- 30 Minute Break & Exhibits -----

9:00 - 9:30 am State of the Walnut Industry
 Robert Verloop, CEO/Executive Director, California Walnut Board & Commission

9:30 - 10:00 am State of the Almond Industry
 Katie Staack, Vice Chair, Almond Alliance & Grower Relations, Grizzly Nut LLC
 Julie Adams, Vice President, Global Technical & Regulatory Affairs, Almond Board of California
 Matt Woolf, Specialty Crop Analyst, Terrain Ag

----- 30 Minute Break & Exhibits -----

10:30 - 11:00 am Current Knowledge on the Invasive Red Leaf Blotch Disease of Almond
 Alejandro Hernandez Roscos, UC Davis Plant Pathology Dept. (Rarent Troulis, Lab)

11:00 - 11:30 am State of the Pistachio Industry
 Zachary Fraser, President & CEO, American Pistachio Growers

11:30 - 12:00 pm Securing Your Water Future with On-Farm Groundwater Recharge
 Moderated by Rogell Rogers, Sustainable Conservation
 Featuring: Erich Gempferle, Gempferle Orchards - Eric Harcksen, Harcksen Almond Farms - Michael Roots, Almond Board of California - Wes Miller, Turlock Irrigation District

----- 30 Minute Break & Exhibits -----

12:00 - 1:30 pm Grower/PCA Tri-Tip Lunch
12:30 - 1:00 pm Boosting Soil Health & Lowering Input Costs with Cover Crops
 Stetecyn Maldonado, Seeds for Bees Manager, Project Apis m.
 Danny Hicks, Grower Relations, RPAC
 Christine Gempferle, Gempferle Orchards & Director, Almond Board of California
 Nav Athwal, 39kul Farms

1:00 - 1:30 pm Combating the Invasive Carpophilus Beetle in Almonds & Pistachios
 Steve Koretoff, Purity Organics & Director, Almond Alliance board
 Joe Coelho, Grower, PCA & Director of Sustainable Growth & Outreach, American Pistachio Growers
 Mel Machado, VP of Member Relations, Blue Diamond Growers
 Mike Strmiska, PCA, Advanced Nut Crop Sciences

(Grape Sessions)

7:00 am Registration

7:15 - 8:30 am Grape Grower Breakfast
 Welcome and Introduction
 Danny Malcolm, Malcolm Media Ag Publishing

7:30-8:00 am Hyperspectral Imaging Solutions to Vineyard Problems
 Luca Brillante, Department of Viticulture & Enology, Fresno State

8:00 - 8:30 am Crop Insurance Improvements to Support Grape & Nut Growers
 Jeff Tassul, Regional Director, USDA Risk Management Agency

----- 30 Minute Break & Exhibits -----

9:00 - 9:30 am Managing Powdery Mildew, Summer Bunch Rot & Grapevine Trunk Disease
 Akif Eskalen, UCCE Specialist & UC Davis Plant Pathologist

9:30 - 10:00 am Preparing for Spotted Lanternfly, California's Next Major Pest
 Kaiti Lund, UCCE Viticulture Advisor, Modero, Merced & Mariposa Counties

----- 30 Minute Break & Exhibits -----

10:30 - 11:00 am Ag Legislative Update
 Michael Miller, Director of Gov'l Relations, California Association of Winegrape Growers

11:00 - 11:30 am Grape Rootstock & Clone Selection for Stress Resistance & Crop Productivity
 Justin Tomner, San Joaquin County UCCE Viticulture Farm Advisor

11:30 - 12:00 pm How to Deal with Nematode Infestations in the Vineyard
 Andreas Westphal, UC Riverside CE Nematologist, Kearney Ag Research & Extension Center

----- 30 Minute Break & Exhibits -----

12:00 - 1:30 pm State of the Grape Industry Tri-Tip Lunch
12:30 - 1:30 pm State of the Wine Grape Industry
 Mike Needham & Marc Cuneo, Turentine Brokerage



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Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department Ag Crimes Unit

By Vicky Boyd

When thieves stole a tractor last year from a Stanislaus County Farm Bureau Board member's Oakdale-area farm, he reported it to the Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department Ag Crimes Unit.

As they followed up on a reported fuel theft, Ag Unit detectives discovered stolen equipment, including the missing tractor. Because the board member had filed a report, they were able to reunite him with his machine.

That's why Detectives Robert Domingos and Kyle Gomes, who comprise the Ag Crimes Unit, said filing a timely report is so important. Had they not known about the board member's stolen equipment, it would have been much more difficult to find the owner.

Even if the detectives aren't able to solve a particular crime that was reported, they said the information isn't for naught.

"It's the little bread crumbs that maybe don't help on that case but maybe help on another case," Domin-



Members of the Ag Crime Unit recovered this stolen tractor not long after it was stolen, and the suspected ended up sentenced to three years in jail. Photos courtesy Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department

gos said.

Unfortunately, the detectives estimated, only about half of ag crimes are ever reported.

Theft of equipment, which includes tractors, trailers, side-by-sides, water tankers, generators and all-terrain vehicles, is one of the top ag crimes in Stanislaus County along with fuel theft and metal and copper wiring theft.

And winter, considered one of the prime times for theft, is just around the corner. Once farmers park equipment in storage yards at the end of the season, they may not return for weeks or months. During that time, suspects can steal machinery and be long gone before it's discovered missing. Winter fog also creates low visibility, allowing criminal activity to go unnoticed.

Find My farm equipment

In addition to requests to report crimes or suspicious activity, the detectives provided tips on how to aid law enforcement in thwarting criminals.

Prevention should always be the backbone of any program and should include adequate lighting around equipment yards, parking equipment away from high-trafficked roads, removing keys to equipment, locking equipment and gates, and keeping up-to-date inventories of equipment and tools.

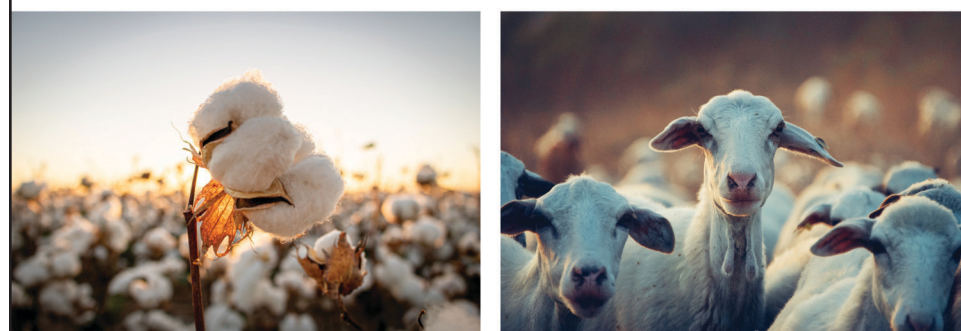
Domingos and Gomes also recommended growers apply GPS trackers to their equipment in inconspicuous places. Domingos said he recently went on Amazon and found the same trackers the Sheriff's De-



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OANs, or owner-applied numbers, can be etched in just about anything including beehives. Photos courtesy Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department

partment uses for \$18 each, plus a \$34 annual subscription fee. Not only do the devices show their location on a smartphone app, they can be set up to send alerts when they start to move. For the low purchase price, the detectives said the trackers have proven

invaluable.

"When people have GPS (trackers) and they call us in a reasonable amount of time, we have close to 100% success of getting their equipment back," Gomes said.

In areas with high theft activities, the Ag Unit has taken a proactive approach with its successful decoy program. The detectives invited producers who have had theft issues to call for more details.

Smile, you're on Candid Camera

In addition, the detectives recommended installing surveillance cameras around equipment yards and other places where valuables are stored. Devices, such as game cameras, that have their own power source are preferred to avoid loss of signal during power outages or if suspects cut the electricity. Most cameras nowadays rely on cell signals to transmit images and have a good communication range.

Domingos and Gomes agreed that the technology has come a long ways, and many produce clear images even in dim lighting.

"With the technology we have, we don't even need a license plate to find a car," Domingos said. "If we have a picture of a vehicle, we normally find the car."

For videos to be useful, reporting a crime soon after it occurs is crucial because most cameras record over previous images after a few days up

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See "Crimes" on
page 18

From "Crimes" on page 17

to two weeks.

Owner-applied numbers

OANs, or owner-applied numbers, have been around for years, but they're still a mainstay for marking equipment, the detectives said. Robert Beuttler, a reserve deputy who recently retired, is now applying the OANs and should be more readily available.

To take advantage of the free service, farmers should obtain the simple one-page application from the Sheriff's Department, fill it out and return it. It's also available online at <https://www.scsdonline.com/online-services/forms-reports/-folder-55>.

The department works through the state-wide Rural Crime Task Force to obtain the unique 10-character identification number. Beuttler will then make an appointment with the applicant to apply the OANs.

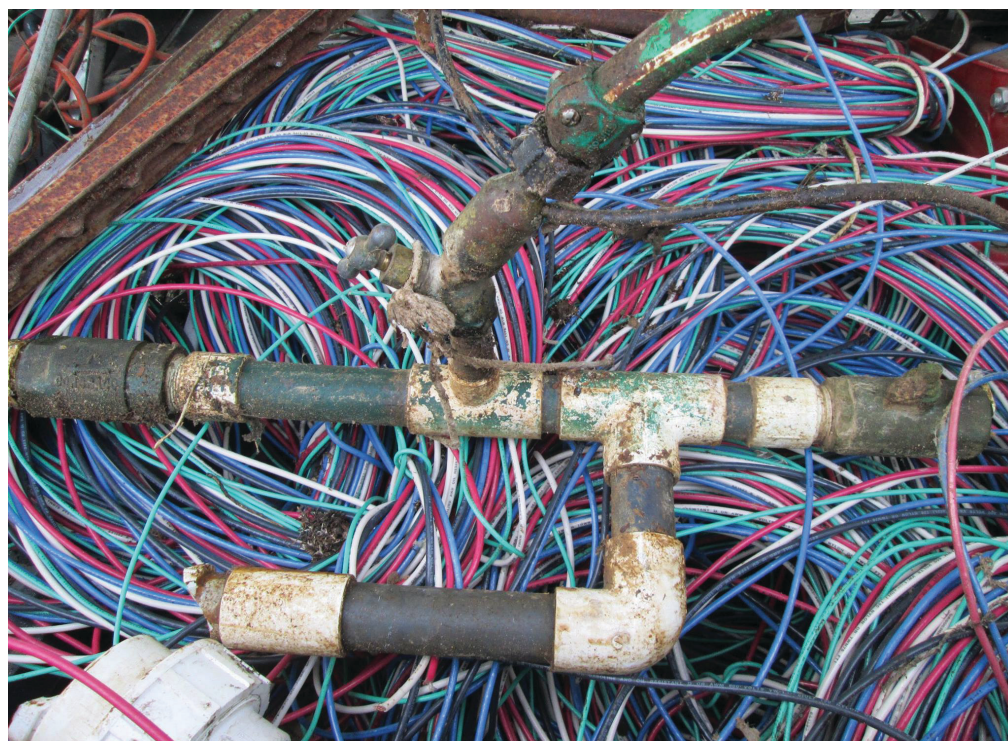
Because the number is accessible to other law enforcement officers in the state, it also helps recover stolen items taken across county lines.

Gaining a leg up on wire theft

Although copper wire theft is one of the top ag crimes in the county, Gomes said it probably is only reported about 20% of the time and then mostly when there's an insurance claim.

"They can only report it so many

times before the insurance company drops them," he said. "What ends up happening is they don't report it. Plus copper wire



Wire is one of the top farm-related items stolen in the county, yet only about 20% of thefts are typically reported. Photos courtesy Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department

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thefts happen in very remote locations.” Where law enforcement has gained leverage is with legislation passed about 10 years ago that targets scrap metal dealers and metal recyclers. It applies to loads of non-ferrous metals — aluminum, copper, lead, tin, titanium, zinc and alloys such as brass — over 20 pounds.

The law requires dealers and recyclers to keep extensive records that include the seller’s name and address, identification information, and a statement from the seller that he or she is the owner or a signed transfer document.

In addition, dealers and recyclers must hold the metal for three days before paying the seller to allow law enforcement time to check whether it’s stolen. The tag-and-hold period worked as designed recently when

a suspect brought in hundreds of pounds of melted telecommunications wire to a Modesto-area scrap metal dealer.

“When the suspect came for his money, we were waiting,” Domingos said. While the wiring was valued at only \$2,000 to \$3,000, the suspect caused an estimated \$200,000 in damage.

The scrap metal law also gives law enforcement officers the right to enter a scrap metal dealer or recycler without a warrant to inspect the facility for potentially stolen items and check records.

“We can walk into any recycling facility without a warrant and show up and ask for receipts and records and look at all of their bins,” Domingos said. In Stanislaus County, the Ag Crimes Unit is responsible

for enforcing scrap metal and metal recycling laws.

Farm Bureau Board regulars

Domingos and Gomes, who are regulars at Stanislaus County Farm Bureau Board meetings, say it’s an important part of building relationships.

“We want to build trust with these farmers,” Gomes said. “That’s what we want — we want people to call us.”

Both detectives come from agricultural backgrounds and said they like the flexibility that the Ag Crimes Unit provides.

Domingos’ father ran a dairy tech services business, and he recalled riding along and visiting dairies when he was young. A six-year veteran of the sheriff’s department, Domingos has been with the Ag Unit for about a year.

Gomes grew up on a Merced County dairy until he was a teenager. After graduating college and working more than four years as a pest control advisor, he made a career change and attended the peace officer training academy. Of the 10 years he’s been with the sheriff’s department, almost five have been with the Ag Unit.

If a crime is in progress, Domingos and Gomes recommended first calling 911 or sheriff’s office dispatch, then following up afterward with the Ag Crimes Unit. If farmers want to report crimes that have already occurred, call Domingos on his cell at 209-226-5998 or Gomes on his cell at 209-652-0654.



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Reflecting on the Contributions of Roger Duncan's 30-Year Tenure with UCCE

By Kristin Platts, Writer, West Coast Nut

For over three decades, Roger Duncan has equipped growers in Stanislaus County and beyond with essential tools for success. Duncan officially retired on July 1, concluding a prolific career. Since 1990, he served as the UC Cooperative Extension pomology farm advisor in Stanislaus County, participating in on-farm research projects with over 100 local growers there, ranging from single-season studies to those spanning more than two decades.

Duncan's research has significantly impacted California agriculture. His 22-year trial on almond tree spacing and minimal pruning showed closely planted trees are easier to maintain, more productive and potentially more profitable with a longer lifespan than conventionally spaced orchards. The study also

found pruning does not benefit yield. Initially skeptical, Duncan noted similar findings from previous studies, including a 21-year trial in Arbuckle, Calif. with consistently confirmed results.

Other important studies he worked on included almond rootstock and variety trials, almond orchard compost trials and studying whether self-fertile almond varieties benefit from bees (they do, he found).

But Duncan's legacy is more than just statistics and research. In the wake of his retirement, his colleagues, grower collaborators, and friends, are reflecting on the legacy of a man whose con-

tributions to California agriculture paved the way for a future that wouldn't look the same without him.

Growers, Colleagues on Duncan's Impact

Duncan is leaving a huge hole, said Blue Diamond Grower Relations Vice President Mel Machado. There's a joke among many in the industry, according to Machado, that Duncan could call a last-minute meeting in



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a random location without even providing coffee and donuts, and 300 people would still show up.

“He’s got that kind of respect within the grower community,” Machado said. “He’s a solid researcher who speaks farmer. He understands what the producer is trying to accomplish, he understands the challenges

they face. His work has been very practical.”

Duncan was the authority on rootstocks, Machado said.

“There are things that I say I can’t keep up with, I’m just going to lean on other people, and rootstocks was one of those things,” he

said. “I’d say, ‘You know what? We’re just going to call Roger.’”

But it was Duncan’s pruning study that was the most revolutionary and impactful in Machado’s mind.

“It was just spot-on for answering a lot of questions that people had, and answering questions that people had never even thought of,” he said. “It’s changed the way we grow almonds.”

The study taught almond growers that just by altering the way they do things a little bit, they could make more money, Machado said.

Noting the almond industry is blessed with top-notch UCCE farm advisors a lot of other crops in California don’t necessarily have, Machado said while he will miss being able to work closely with Duncan, he doesn’t think this is the last the industry will hear from him.

“Like a lot of the other farm advisors, they tend to not fade away, they’re still out there and available, and I’m looking forward to working with him in the future,” Machado said.

Tom Orvis, governmental affairs director for Stanislaus County Farm Bureau (SCFB), board president for Oakdale Irrigation District and an almond grower who has worked with Duncan for years, recalls Duncan’s passion for walking among the trees. “As a new grower, Roger pointed things out to me I didn’t see,” Orvis said.

Like Machado, Orvis was also impacted by Duncan’s pruning study.

“The studies he was involved with changed the way we do business,” Orvis said. “I haven’t pruned in four years, and my trees are growing.”

His research on wintertime flooding was also notable to Orvis, who said it gave growers more options with storm water, which is especially important as the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act



2024 General Election • Tuesday, November 5

The California Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors adopted the following recommendations on statewide ballot measures that will be before California voters in the Nov. 5 general election.

PROPOSITION	POSITION
<p>PROPOSITION 2: Issue \$10 Billion in Bonds to Fund Construction and Modernization of Public Education Facilities</p> <p>New construction and modernization of education institutions will cost \$8.5 billion for K-12 and \$1.5 billion for community colleges.</p>	<p>OPPOSE</p> <p><i>REASONING: California is already paying off billions in bond debt, all at a cost to the general fund to service the debt payments.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 3: Removes Outdated Language Regarding Marriage from State Constitution</p> <p>Repeals the unenforceable constitutional provision that marriage only between a man and woman is valid or recognized in California.</p>	<p>NO POSITION</p> <p><i>REASONING: CAFB does not have policy on this topic.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 4: The Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act</p> <p>Allows for the issuance of \$10 billion in bonds to fund safe drinking water; drought, flood, water resilience; wildfire and forest resilience; nature-based climate solutions; climate-smart, park creation and outdoor access; and clean air programs among other programs. Allows for funding to be shifted from the state budget to bonds for ongoing programs.</p>	<p>OPPOSE</p> <p><i>REASONING: Shifting government program costs from general tax revenues to additional public indebtedness through bond issuance to mitigate budget shortfalls is bad fiscal policy.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 5: Lower Supermajority Requirement to 55% for Local Bond Measures to Fund Housing and Public Infrastructure</p> <p>Amends the constitution to lower the threshold from 2/3 vote to 55% to allow a local government to impose a parcel tax for the purpose of issuing bonds to build or rehabilitate public infrastructure and affordable housing, including downpayment assistance, or permanent supportive housing.</p>	<p>OPPOSE</p> <p><i>REASONING: The 2/3 vote for taxes and fees is paramount and should not be weakened.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 6: Amend the California Constitution to Bar Involuntary Servitude in Correctional Facilities</p> <p>Removes a constitutional provision allowing jails and prisons to impose involuntary servitude as criminal punishment. It prohibits the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation from disciplining inmates for refusing work assignments while allowing inmates to voluntarily accept work assignments for credits to reduce their sentences.</p>	<p>NO POSITION</p> <p><i>REASONING: CAFB does not have policy on this topic.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 32: \$18 Minimum Wage Increase</p> <p>Increases the minimum wage from \$16 per hour to \$18 per hour by January 1, 2025.</p>	<p>OPPOSE</p> <p><i>REASONING: California is already a difficult and costly state to do business in without an increasing minimum wage.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 33: State Limitations on Local Rent Control</p> <p>Allows a city or county to enact rent control by repealing the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act of 1995.</p>	<p>OPPOSE</p> <p><i>REASONING: Private property rights are paramount.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 34: Restrictions on AIDS Healthcare Foundation Support</p> <p>Ensures that health care providers spend 98% of revenues on direct patient care if their spending on items other than patient care exceeds \$100 million over 10 years.</p>	<p>NO POSITION</p> <p><i>REASONING: CAFB does not have policy on this topic.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 35: Permanent Managed Care Organization (MCO) Tax</p> <p>Makes permanent the existing tax on managed health care insurance plans, currently set to expire in 2026. The revenue generated pays for health care services for low-income families with children, seniors, disabled persons and other Medi-Cal recipients.</p>	<p>NO POSITION</p> <p><i>REASONING: CAFB does not have policy on this topic.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 36: Drug and Theft Crime Penalties and Treatment-Mandated Felonies</p> <p>Allows for felony charges and increases sentences for certain drug and theft crimes, including organized theft.</p>	<p>SUPPORT</p> <p><i>REASONING: Law enforcement should have all the tools necessary to prevent crime from occurring.</i></p>

From "Duncan" on page 21

starts to take effect.

As farm advisor's cycle through SCFB's board meetings each month to deliver research updates, Orvis said Duncan was a familiar face who the board was always eager to hear from.

"When Roger came, there was always a lot of interest and a lot of questions," Orvis said. "Our board probably has at least 50% that grow almonds, so they loved to pick his brain, and he was always very open and honest with them. We had a very good relationship with Roger and still have one with the entire [UCCE] team; they're an important member of our Farm Bureau team."

Jennifer Heguy is a member of that team. Serving as Stanislaus County's UCCE dairy advisor and county director, she's worked with Duncan in some capacity for more than a decade and a half.

To Heguy, Duncan exemplified what it means to be a farm advisor.

"Roger is extremely knowledgeable and personable, which, when combined with 30 plus years of asking questions and learning through his research, made him the source of information on all things almonds, peaches, etc.," Heguy said. "His research and extension program has set the bar for all new farm advisors in Stanislaus County, and I consider myself extremely lucky to have worked with him for the first 16 years of my career."

Heguy said UC ANR awarded Roger with the Distinguished Service Award this past June for Outstanding Extension for his exceptional contributions.

"I couldn't think of a more fitting way to end such an amazing career," she said. UCCE Orchard Systems Farm Advisor Franz Niederholzer said Duncan's extension efforts were extensive and exceptionally effective.

"His spacing trial in eastern Stanislaus

County, along with rootstock trials and organic matter work, had huge impacts on almond growing," Niederholzer said. He said Duncan's immense impact on the almond industry during his career stemmed from his careful research on varieties, rootstocks, all manners of pest management, irrigation and fertility and nutrient inputs.

"He presented those results in careful, effective and memorable language," Niederholzer said. "When Roger talked, people listened."

UCCE Orchard Systems Farm Advisor Katherine Jarvis-Shean first met Duncan when she was a grad student at UC Davis about 15 years ago. As a colleague, she said he's an amazing person who always had time for mentoring in all things almonds and farm advisor how-to's. While much of Duncan's career consisted of research that was well-known within the ag community, Jarvis-Shean said he was also someone who did far more work behind the scenes than most people realize.

"Roger's just been great for the industry as a whole in a lot of ways that people realize and in a lot of ways people probably don't realize," she said.

Jarvis-Shean is currently the pomology program team chair for the UC system, a position that Duncan held for several years. She refers to it as the "team mom" role for orchard crops, and while it's likely one of the lesser-known positions within the UC system, she said, it's a crucial one that Duncan excelled in.

"It keeps all the orchard people connected, makes sure we're all talking to each other, that our research makes sense, that it's practical, that research projects are taking advantage of the different kind of smarts within the UC system, and getting new farm advisors connected and tapped in to the whole community as well as advocating for new orchard advisor positions," she said.

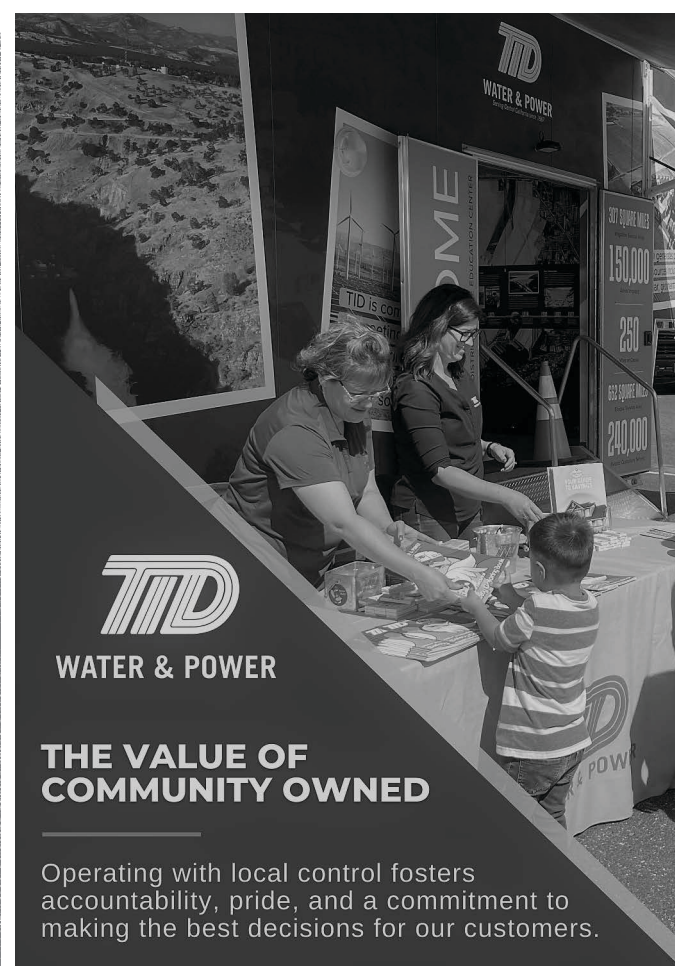
She noted Duncan also served as a committee member and liaison for the Almond



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Board of California (ABC), a responsibility that allowed him to be an advocate for growers within ABC.

“He’s been a great voice for research-based practicalities and what the Almond Board has been doing, where they’re going to spend their money and where they were going to invest in research,” Jarvis-Shean said.

Jarvis-Shean said Duncan’s farm advisor position will eventually be filled with one of 30 or so advisors in a new round of hiring that will be based in Stanislaus County but also cover San Joaquin County.

“I think across the system we recognize there’s a huge number of acreage there, but also there are a lot of small growers there, growers who really benefit from having a position like Roger’s that we didn’t want to

leave high and dry,” she said.

A Dream Job

While appreciation for Duncan runs deep within the grower and UC community, he remains modest about his impact.

“The part I guess I’d be the proudest of is that people actually called me for advice, and sometimes even followed it,” he joked. He is also pleased with his role in helping the almond industry consider new rootstocks tailored to specific orchards, rather than just falling back on what they’ve always done or what the nurseries suggested, he said.

Duncan also highlighted an early study in his career that challenged the routine practice of annual dormant spraying with copper, oil, and insecticides, leading to most orchards no longer receiving dormant sprays. He said, all of their fears of the disease and insect outbreaks were unwarranted.

“Although I know that PCAs and the ag supply dealerships were affected, that’s a big savings for growers and also has an environmental impact as well,” he said.

He humbly noted that while some of the most interesting things he’s been

a part of may not seem groundbreaking, they’re still important, like the evolution of orchard design, spacing, and rootstocks.

“Just the whole orchard design configuration has changed, and I guess I feel like I have contributed at least a little to that,” he said.

Born and raised in Stanislaus County, where he later spent his career, Duncan quickly built strong connections within the ag community. He said he was pleasantly surprised by how eager people were to welcome him into the role and onto their farms.

“I was amazed at how welcoming everybody was and how they really wanted to help, to get me trained up, so I could hopefully be of some value for people here,” Duncan said.

Despite being officially retired, he continues to oversee several ongoing studies, aiming to maintain them in Stanislaus County until a successor can take over.

Reflecting on his career as a UC farm advisor, Duncan described it as a dream job.

“It really was a good fit for what I enjoyed; the public service aspect of the job, being a part of the ag community and having

an economic impact in the community that I live and work in. This job also helped satisfy my scientific curiosity. What happens when we do this or don’t do that? I’m just thankful I had the opportunity,” he said.

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MJC School of Agriculture Hosts Annual Open House and Senior Day

(Modesto, CA) – The Modesto Junior Col-

lege (MJC) School of Agriculture held their annual Open House and Senior Day. Open house was held on October 3rd, 2024, the event was open to the public. Prospective students and their families were able to visit with a counselor, meet current students and teachers, and tours of west campus. The event allows MJC to connect with not only incoming students but their families and the community as well.

On October 4th, 2024, Modesto Junior College School of Agriculture held their annual Senior Day, with 287 high school seniors attended from 30 surrounding high schools participating. Seniors had the chance to go through four unique and interactive stations. The stations are run by

MJC students and faculty. They got to meet with counselors and plan out their associate degrees. As well as apply to MJC and get their account and W#. They got to tour west campus and attend a trade show.

These two events highlight MJC School of Agriculture ongoing dedication to their future students but their families and communities as well. The MJC School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences division is home to over two thousand MJC students, served by a dozen full time staff. Learn more at mjc.edu/ag.

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From the Fields - Ron Macedo

Source: AgAlert

We have a 20-acre corn maze, 75 different varieties of pumpkins, and we've been harvesting pumpkins for about a month. We're starting to get into the traditional carvers, the orange harvest.

It's been extremely challenging this year with the hot weather, trying to hold vines and moisture and keeping pumpkins from getting sunburned. It's been a heavy mite year with a lot of extra watering, but all in all, the quality looks good. Fortunately, we're in a very good water district, and we have excellent groundwater here, so zero water challenges.



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The corn maze and the pumpkin stand have been slow due to hot weather, but we're making the most of it and hoping for cooler weather and better crowds.

We plant pumpkins the entire month of June. We grow all the pumpkins on black plastic mulch and drip, and this year was so hot in June when we were planting. We encountered some high-heat bacteria that were causing the plants to wilt and die. We had to take steps and measures to treat those, to get them to survive. It was very, very challenging. I'd seen it one other time about 10 years ago, but I wasn't sure what it was then.

This year when it happened again, I was looking for similarities, and I noticed that it was the 104- to 107-degree weather for an extended period. I had some plants cultured, and we found three different bacteria actively colonizing the plants. The treatment is very expensive. We transplant a lot of these higher-end varieties ourselves. They're expensive, and to put them out there and the next day they're dead, it's discouraging. I think people should celebrate Halloween. It's the best day of the year. That means celebrate and decorate and buy and carve as many pumpkins as they can.



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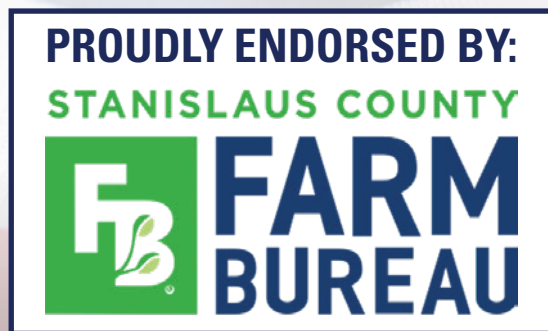
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