

The Stanislaus Farm News

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture

STANISLAUS COUNTY



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See Bays Family Ranch, page 3
Wishing you a Wonderful Thanksgiving

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To serve as the voice of Stanislaus County agriculture at all levels of government, while providing programs to assist its farms and family members and educate the general public of needs and importance to agriculture.

Bays Family Ranch

By Vicky Boyd

For three generations, the Bayses have served on various commodity and water district boards, bringing agriculture's voice to the table.

"If you're going to farm, you need to be involved in whatever you're doing, whether it's water or Farm Bureau or advisory boards for different crops," said Ken Bays, who farms with his father, Gene Bays, and son Daniel Bays.

Together they run Bays Ranch and grow a diverse mix of tree and row crops near Westley and Patterson. Joining them are Ken's wife, Michele, and

Daniel's wife, Rebecca, who handle many of the financial duties.

Ken has served on the West Stanislaus Irrigation District Board since shortly after he graduated from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, with a degree in farm management. He also is a board member of the Westside Hulling Association, of which the family is a charter member, and served several terms on the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau's board.

Ken's commitment to service was instilled in him by Gene, who was on the Del Puerto Water District's board for more years than he can count. When Gene felt it was time to step down, he encouraged grandson Daniel to apply for the open seat. Daniel currently is vice-chair of the Del Puerto board.

During Gene's tenure, the board successfully developed a project with the cities of Turlock and Modesto to purchase and transfer about 20,000 acres-feet annually of tertiary treated recycled municipal wastewater for use by the district's farmers.

The additional water proved a savior during the recent drought, when the federal Central Valley Project — which provides water to Del Puerto — made zero allocations for two straight years, Ken said.

During a number of other dry years, the CVP reduced allocations, and the recycled wastewater helped tide them over.

The Bayses farm in five or six different water districts, including Del Puerto. Although they prefer to use surface water because of its quality, Ken said they also have wells as insurance to serve as back-up.

During those years with zero allocations, they idled much of their row crop ground and used what

See BAYS on page 4



Bays Ranch near Westley dates back to 1957, when Gene Bays, his wife and three children moved north from Ventura County.

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From BAYS on page 3

water they had to keep their trees alive.

With ample surface deliveries in 2022 and 2023, the Bayses never ran their pumps.

This year, Ken said they used them sparingly in the fall just to keep them operational.

A history of leadership

Daniel, who currently serves on the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau's board, became involved when he joined Young Farmers & Ranchers shortly after college.

In 2016, he received the YF&R Achievement Award and represented California at the American Farm Bureau convention.

Daniel also was a YF&R district representative before eventually joining the county Farm Bureau board when a seat representing the Westside opened.

As an individual farmer, Daniel said he can't keep up with all of the daily political and regulatory happenings in Sacramento, so he relies on the state Farm Bureau to advocate on his and other farmers' behalf.

On the local level, Daniel pointed to the strong Stanislaus County Farm Bureau, its staff and the relationships they've cultivated with county leaders over the years.

"They do a good job of being involved and aware of things," he said. "I think they're doing the best job they can of keeping farming and ag at the forefront of what they do and what they represent. They're well respected within county government."

In addition to Farm Bureau, Daniel sits on the county Water Advisory Committee, the state Broomrape Board and Patterson High School's Agricultural Advisory Committee. (*Broomrape is an invasive yield-robbing parasite of tomatoes and several other crops.*)

He said he believed it was important to be active to "help shape some of the rules and policies that affect where you work. It's not always a lot of fun, but you have to make those tough decisions."

Those convic-

tions were born during his middle and high school days, when Daniel was active in 4-H and FFA and learned the value of leadership. Once he graduated college, he continued to hone his skills by participating in Blue Diamond Grower's young leaders program, the Almond Board of California's leadership program and CFBF's Leadership Farm Bureau.

"Part of that was to improve myself, but a big part of it was to learn more about these different organizations," Daniel said.

Evolving with the times

Bays Ranch dates back to 1957, when Gene, his wife and three children were getting crowded out by Ventura County subdivi-

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(from left) Daniel Bays, his grandfather Gene Bays and his father Ken Bays run the family farming operation that produces a diverse mix of row and tree crops near Westley and Patterson.

sions and moved to Westley. He had looked at ground as far north as Woodland but settled in western Stanislaus County where he knew people.

Although Gene said he let his children decide their career paths, Ken said it was always his plan to return to the farm after college graduation.

"I just like being out in the field and growing things," Ken said. "I've never wanted to have a job where I'm locked up in an office all the time. I just really wanted to come and do what I grew up on."

For Daniel, who received a bachelor's degree in bioresource and agricultural engineering from Cal Poly SLO, there was never any doubt either. His father and grandfather encouraged him to work other places to experience having supervisors who were

not family. Daniel had internships with Colorado and Oregon agricultural operations and at a local water district before returning to the farm.

"It's great to see them come back," Gene said.

Over the years, the Bayses have grown a variety of crops, starting with primarily apricots and almonds. As markets ebbed and flowed, they changed their mix, adding walnuts, processing tomatoes and lima beans. They also have added custom brush shredding more recently.

Gene remembered when the state's apricot growers routinely harvested 180,000 to 200,000 tons of fruit each season. In 2024, they picked just 50,000 tons.

In the past, much of the apricot crop went

to canning or drying. But consumers are not eating as much canned fruit as they once did, and cheaper, imported dried apricots have crowded out California product on grocery store shelves.

Nevertheless, the Bayses continue to advocate on behalf of the orangey, oval stone fruit and its producers. Daniel is president of the Apricot Producers of California, a commodity group of which they're charter members.

Never ones to become complacent, the Bayses at one time tried apples and nectarines, but the markets weren't kind. More recently with soft prices for almonds and walnuts, they've planted some canning peaches and olives for a Tracy cannery.

"Over the years we've tried apples, tried nectarines and tried other different things," Ken said. "Sometimes they work, sometimes they don't."



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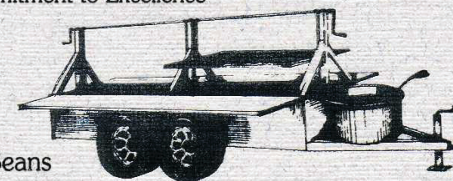
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A Time of Thanksgiving

Source: Zippy Duvall, American Farm Bureau President

As Thanksgiving approaches, families across America are getting ready to gather with loved ones, share favorite dishes and reflect on the past year. For our family, we continue a long tradition of celebrating Thanksgiving in my grandfather's barn. Over the years, that barn has seen countless gatherings, but each one feels a little richer as we welcome new generations to the table. It's such a blessing to watch my children and grandchildren laugh, play and make memories in the same place I once did. That's what makes this season so special, a reminder of how our love ties us all together.

For many farms, this season marks the end

of the year with harvest but also brings us a time to reflect on the work we do to provide safe and abundant food for families across the country. It's a chance to look across the Thanksgiving table and celebrate the fruit of our labor, while also being mindful of the families struggling to put food on the table.

This year, the American Farm Bureau Federation's annual Thanksgiving Dinner Cost Survey shows the average price of a holiday meal is down 5% from last year, which also saw a similar-sized decline in costs. But even with this relief, inflation and the cost of food remain top of mind with prices still 19% higher than in 2019. Farmers and ranchers are feeling that pressure too, dealing with high interest rates, steep costs for labor and other business expenses, and a year marked by devastating natural disasters across the county. We need Congress

to pass a modernized farm bill to ensure we can keep doing the job we all love in the face of these challenges. Disaster relief and extended tax provisions will also help keep our food supply secure and affordable for all Americans.

While the challenges our farmers and ranchers are facing can feel very heavy at times, this holiday season offers a time to reflect on why we press forward. When we look around the table at our families and loved ones, thinking about those who came before us and those who will come after us, we're reminded of what it's all about.

This holiday season also presents an opportunity for us to reach out to others. Many of our neighbors and community members are still dealing with the effects of natural

See THANKS on page 13

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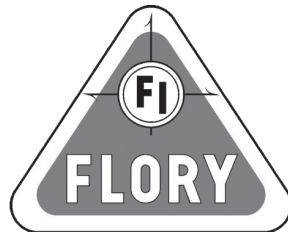
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Port of Oakland continues to be an agricultural export powerhouse

The Port of Oakland continues to be one of the most important gateways for U.S. agricultural products. As of October, the port has exported nearly \$8.5 billion in agricultural commodities this year, ranking No. 1 in the nation in the volume of international refrigerated exports. "Agricultural exports are especially important commodities for our port's business," said Port of Oakland Maritime Director Bryan Brandes. "In any given year, agricultural products comprise between 37% and 45% of total exports from Oakland."

Virtual fencing 'game-changer' for ranchers grazing cattle

After the Caldor Fire destroyed 7 miles of fencing on their cattle ranch in 2021, Leisel Finley and her family needed to replace the fence. Finley, a sixth-generation rancher at Mount Echo Ranch in Amador County, learned about a pilot program for virtual fencing that uses GPS enabled collars to monitor each animal's location in near real time. Livestock producers can draw a perimeter on a map of their pasture using a laptop or smartphone application and send those instructions to the collar. The collar then uses audio and tactile cues to contain the animal in the area.

Farm families emphasize importance of mental health

The Voice of California Agriculture podcast, produced by the California Farm Bureau, discussed the importance of mental health on farms. Tricia Stever Blattler, executive director of the Tulare County Farm Bureau, spoke with host Gary Sack about losing her husband, Robert, to suicide, and about the need to speak up about mental health in farming communities that face many stressors. "We have to keep normalizing and bringing that conversation forward," Stever Blattler said. The episode also covers efforts in California to combat the oriental fruit fly and a message from the California Farm Bureau to president-elect Donald Trump and other newly elected leaders.

Probiotics and prebiotics: hype or health?

Consumers may have noticed a recent trend in food and beverage products labeled pro-

biotic or prebiotic. The products often say they "support a healthy gut" or "boost your immune system" by providing good microbes that are often missing from people's diets. But how can consumers know if these products are really good for them? A new episode of the University of California, Davis, podcast *Unfold* took a closer look at the proliferation of probiotics and interviewed Maria Marco, a microbiologist and professor in the department of food science and technology at UC Davis.

Sonoma County farmers celebrate Measure J defeat

The defeat of a Sonoma County ballot measure last week brought relief for farmers in the county. As of Friday, more than 85% of voters had voted against Measure J, which within three years would have banned large dairies and poultry farms in the county. The measure would have capped the number

of animals each farm can raise, banning large farms or forcing them to downsize. Doug Beretta, owner of Beretta Family Dairy in Santa Rosa and president of the Sonoma County Farm Bureau, said he was "ecstatic" so many voters had sided with the county's farmers. "The community came together to fight for agriculture," Beretta said. "When those results came in, it really showed."

Agencies identify organized farm equipment theft ring

As part of a monthslong investigation known as Operation Tractor Pull, California law enforcement agencies have uncovered an

organized agriculture equipment theft ring that targeted San Joaquin Valley farms. After conducting extensive surveillance operations throughout the San Joaquin Valley, authorities said evidence collected accounted for 24 pieces of stolen equipment valued at more than \$2.25 million. Authorities recovered \$1.3 million worth of equipment. "This is a large-scale theft ring impacting our farmers, our ranchers and our agricultural community," said Tulare County Sheriff Mike Boudreaux during an Oct. 29 press conference.

Brussels sprouts nab more acreage as demand grows

As Brussels sprouts have become trendy on social media and restaurant menus during the past several years, California farmers have been able to cash in on the vegetable's popularity. "The market's really grown, especially the fresh market, and a lot of

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that has to do with the food shows on TV and chefs' artistic abilities," said Monterey County-based vegetable grower Jeff Hitchcock. "It's really put Brussels sprouts on the map." U.S. per capita consumption of Brus-

sels sprouts increased from 0.33 pounds in 2011 to 0.78 pounds in 2019, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture statistics.

Turkey supplies ample heading into Thanksgiving

The Voice of California Agriculture podcast, produced by the California Farm Bureau, discussed turkey supplies heading into the Thanksgiving holiday season. Bill Mattos, president of

the California Poultry Federation, said on the podcast that despite millions of turkeys being lost to bird flu across the country during the past two years, "I think you'll find plenty of turkeys for Thanksgiving," including fresh California turkeys. Mattos said prices may be slightly higher on average this year, but that many grocery stores offer steep discounts on Thanksgiving turkeys to get shoppers into their stores. The episode also covered the efficiency of autonomous sprayers, water flow standards for the Scott and Shasta rivers, and crop damage estimates resulting from hurricanes in Florida and North Carolina.



"Agriculture is the engine that drives Stanislaus County. Thank you to all of the hard-working farmers and ranchers and their employees who fuel that engine! Stanislaus County salutes you! I am proud to be a farmer!"
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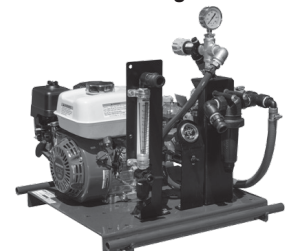
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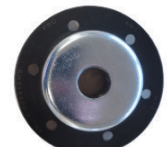
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Cattle called

Burlap Bovine gets holiday shoppers in the moo'd

Story by Caitlin Fillmore

Photos by Fred Greaves

Fall 2024 California Bountiful magazine

Who says delayed gratification no longer exists? Malorie Walker's handmade leather goods are worth the wait.

"My customers will tell me, 'I've waited four years to be able to order this from you!'" says Walker of her custom graduation cap toppers, the top-selling product at her online store, Burlap Bovine.

From agriculture majors crossing graduation stages around the country to local shoppers looking for special stocking stuffers, Burlap Bovine's cheerful founder offers an ever-evolving product line that

ensures her customers follow her inspiration to "differ from the herd."

An unexpected path

Walker's one-of-a-kind leather accessories cater to an underserved community of agriculture enthusiasts: lovers of beef cattle.

"One of the reasons I took off with leather was because people would get me gifts and it would always be a Holstein, ugh!" jokes Walker of ubiquitous dairy cow merchandise. "I always wished it was a Hereford or a Black Baldy."

Burlap Bovine combines two aspects of Walker's personality close to her since youth: beef cattle and crafting. Walker grew up on a ranch in Livermore, in Alameda County, where her family operated a small cow/calf operation. She nurtured a passion for agriculture by serving in leadership roles in 4-H and FFA and studied agricultural communication at Cal Poly, San Luis

Obispo.

Walker was always a crafter. She remembers going to scrapbooking parties in the 1990s and learning to crochet from her aunt. When a friend asked Walker to make a beef cattle-themed baby mobile, an opportunity was revealed.

However, an artistic life was not always Walker's goal. "I've always been creative, but (Burlap Bovine) wasn't something I had in the plan," she says. After a few years dabbling with an Etsy shop part-time, Walker transitioned her crafty ideas to a full-time business seven years ago.

Malorie Walker's custom-made graduation cap toppers have become popular with graduates who hear about the novelty by word of mouth.

A personal touch

A one-woman business, Walker handcrafts every whimsical earring, ornament and cuff bracelet. She works from a spare room and garage of her home in the Placer County community of Lincoln, accompanied by her cat, Pepper.

Walker buys leather from various U.S. companies and works with other makers to source scraps. This choice is not only eco-friendly; it allows Walker the flexibility to create a wider range of products in a variety of patterns and colors. Her "on the edge" collection displays the raw edge of the scraps she repurposes. "These designs mean I can use every piece," Walker says, and result in products with "much more character."

When Walker first began 10 years ago, she cut everything by hand. She has since upgraded to a clicker press and cow-shaped steel dies. The press exerts 4 tons of pressure on the dies, stamping out the shapes in the leather.

While the clicker press has streamlined



See BOVINE on page 20

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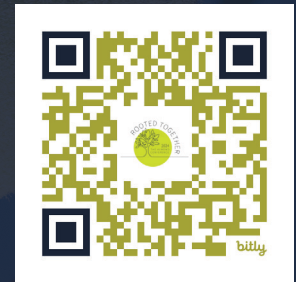
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From THANKS on page 7



covery efforts, sharing a meal or simply offering support, we can all make a difference for those in need. Also, if you are looking for a way to give back this season, then I encourage you to check out our Hurricane Relief page to learn how you can help support the efforts of our state Farm Bureaus to assist farm and ranch families impacted by the disasters.

Throughout this year, we've seen countless examples of Farm Bureau members stepping up to support their communities, and I have no doubt that spirit of generosity will shine even brighter this holiday season. It's that collective strength and commitment to one

another that makes us a community, and I trust that, no matter what's ahead, our dedication to agriculture and our fellow Americans will remain strong.

This Thanksgiving, as we gather around the table, let's all take a moment to appreciate those bonds that bring us together, the hard work that fills our plates, and the support we offer each other along the way. It's a time to be grateful for what we have and look forward to the new moments and memories that await us.

From my family to yours, may you have a safe, blessed and joyous Thanksgiving.

disasters or facing other hardships, and this is a great time for us all to keep lending a hand. And whether it be helping with re-



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Thanksgiving Dinner Costs Are Down Again

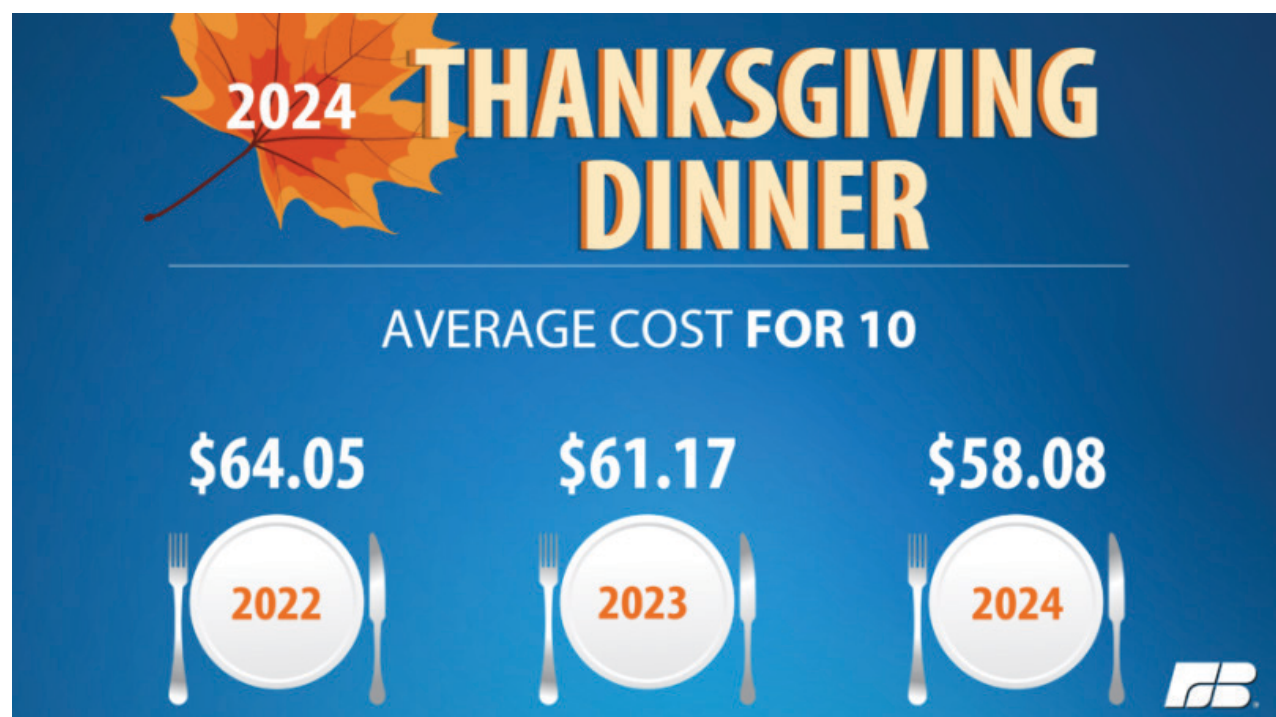
Americans stocking up for this year's Thanksgiving dinner will see a dip in their grocery bills for the second year in a row. The 39th annual American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) Thanksgiving dinner survey finds that the classic feast for 10 will run you \$58.08, down 5% from last year. However, this is still 19% higher than five years ago. While consumers are getting some much-needed relief after years of elevated retail prices, these grocery bills also reflect some hard conversations around the dinner table for farm and ranch families.

The Thanksgiving Dinner Survey For one week each year, volunteer shoppers from all 50 states and Puerto Rico visit their local grocery store (or local store's website) to survey the prices of items used in a classic Thanksgiving feast. Since 1986, these volunteers have collected price data on turkey, cubed stuffing, sweet potatoes, dinner rolls, frozen peas, fresh cranberries, celery, carrots, pumpkin pie mix and crusts, whipping cream and whole milk.

The classic dinner's grocery bill is a mixed bag of savings and squeezes. Seven items dropped in price this year, including turkey, sweet potatoes, frozen peas, a vegetable tray of carrots and celery, pumpkin pie mix, pie crusts and whole milk. However, the remaining four items –dinner rolls, fresh cranberries, whipping cream and cubed stuffing – rose in price.

Prices for ham, Russet potatoes and frozen green beans were added to the survey in 2018 to reflect more Thanksgiving favorites, with all of them showing a year-over-year reduction in price. When including the additional items, the meal cost rose to \$77.34, or \$7.73 per person, with more leftovers, of course. The updated Thanksgiving dinner nearly doubled the cost savings of the classic basket – an 8.7% decrease in price from 2023.

Turkey – Carving the Grocery Bill
Over the span of the AFBF Thanksgiving survey, turkey has accounted for an average of 43% of the total dinner cost. This year is right on the mark – a 16-pound turkey accounts for 44.2% of the classic 10-person feast. Given its large share of the total dinner bill, differences in the grocery bill year-over-year closely follow the change in turkey prices. This year's 6% decrease in turkey prices is a bit of an anomaly. According to USDA's Turkeys Raised report, farmers raised 205 million turkeys in 2024, down



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See **TURKEY** on page 18

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TUOLUMNE COUNTY FARM NEWS



Tuolumne County Farm Bureau hosted their Annual Dinner on Saturday, October 19th at the Tuolumne County Sheriff's Posse Grounds.

of our events and their catering is second to none. The prime rib was absolutely perfect and all of the sides were perfect for a lovely fall evening.

This team does so much work to make the evening so smooth and we are so appreciative of this great catering team. We always so enjoy our time at the Posse Grounds and wanted to thank the Sheriff's Posse for the use of their wonderful venue. They host us each year and it is a great spot for our event! We appreciate their team coming in early for our set up, running the bar and of course, helping us get broken down and cleaned up!

We owe George Croft a big shout out. He is an incredibly talented man and provided

fantastic entertainment for the evening. His mix of covers and original songs was absolutely perfect.

We host the Ag in the Classroom Silent Auction each year, and each year everyone really shows up and supports this great program. Funds raised here support our scholarship program that goes to students who wish to pursue a career in agriculture. Thank you so much to everyone who donated wonderful items and showed up to support our ability to educate the next generation.

Thank you to our Sponsors:

Chicken Ranch Casino, Yosemite Farm Credit, Terri Arington, El Dorado Septic, and Left Coast Land Clearing.

It was a great evening of fellowship with members, an amazing prime rib dinner and we thoroughly enjoyed George Croft's wonderful music throughout the night.

We wanted to thank our many members for attending!

We also need to thank Mike Quinones and team for another amazing dinner. Mike and his team come in for each

"I am proud and excited to see that our Tuolumne County Farm Bureau has exceeded our membership goals for the year. We will continue to work diligently to make Tuolumne County and its issues well represented at the local, state, and federal levels."

Tuolumne County Farm Bureau President, Colton Gaiser

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Scan to nominate!



From TURKEY on page 14

6% from last year and the lowest since 1985. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza is responsible for the decline in turkeys raised. Typically, fewer turkeys would mean an increase in price, but demand for turkey fell in 2024. USDA estimates per capita demand for turkey is 13.9 pounds per person, down a pound from 2023. This drop in demand has caused prices to fall.

The Rest of the Thanksgiving Dinner Table Most ingredients in our survey decreased in price including fresh vegetables and the centerpiece of our Thanksgiving table, the turkey. Overall price volatility in vegetables pulled fresh vegetable prices down, including those on the celery and carrot relish tray. Favorable weather conditions for dairy cows and feedstuffs led to a 14% decrease in the price for a gallon of whole milk. It's important to note that milk prices varied significantly between regions across the country.

The largest increases in your Thanksgiving dinner bill this year come from processed products. Dinner rolls and cubed stuffing both increased over 8% from 2023. Nonfood inflation and labor shortages have driven up costs for partners across the food supply chain. Fresh cranberries had the next-largest price increase at 12%.

This is a stabilization of prices after a significant 18% drop in prices from 2022 to 2023. Despite the year-over-year price increase, cranberries are still more affordable than historical averages. In fact, when adjusted for inflation, this is the lowest price for cranberries since 1987.

Regional Differences – More than Dressing vs. Stuffing Thanksgiving staples, and what you call them, are not the only things that vary as you move across the United States. For those celebrating in the West, your grocery bill will be at least 15% steeper than the rest of the country: \$67.81 for a party of 10. The other regions

of the U.S. are lower by 9 dollars or more. Southern dinners will cost the least at \$56.81, followed closely by the Northeast at \$57.36 and \$58.90 in the Midwest.

When looking at the expanded Thanksgiving basket, the West also has a divide from the rest of the country. The South, Northeast and Midwest can add ham, Russet potatoes and green beans for a basket total of \$81.07, \$81.37 and \$83.03, respectively. However, the expanded Thanksgiving basket in the West costs \$94.09, over a dollar



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The Cost of Food

Even though the price tag for this year's Thanksgiving meal is down 5%, it's still up nearly 20% from just five years ago. Consumers are exhausted from years of inflation, and it will take more than the past two years' improvements to ease the pain. However, these declines are reflective of the greater affordability of food in the United States. Rising grocery bills might be a bit of a shock, but food inflation is a fraction of the hikes hitting other expenses. From October 2023 to 2024, food at home prices generally rose only 1.1%, half of the total economy's 2.6% increase in prices.

Other bills that may have even larger spikes include transportation (up 8.2%), housing (up 4.9%) and electricity (up 4.5%). When adjusted for inflation – or if your dollar

had the same overall purchasing power as a consumer in 1984, right before the beginning of this survey – this would be the least expensive Thanksgiving meal in the 39-year history of the AFBF Thanksgiving survey, other than the outlier of 2020. Even with the decreasing purchasing power of the dollar, some of the goods in our basket are at their long-term lowest prices, even in terms of the “current dollar” price. Cranberries are the second-lowest, following only last year's large drop in price, since 2015.

We can also look at food affordability in terms of wages. American consumers spent 6.7% of their expenditures on food in 2022, including food eaten away from home or takeout, the lowest percentage in the world. For comparison, the food share of expenditures is 8.5% in the United Kingdom, 16.2% in Brazil and up to 59% in developing countries like Nigeria.

pandemic, even as inflation cooled. Because average wages rose 4% from 2023 to 2024, it took 9% less work time for us to pay for this year's Thanksgiving dinner.

Back on the Farm

While consumers are seeing some signs of retail food price stability, farmers are experiencing lower and more volatile prices at the farm gate. And just like consumers, they are also victims of inflation, as their production costs rose steeply over the last few years. USDA projects national net farm income will fall by \$6.5 billion in 2024. Put simply, farmers are price takers, taking on the greater price volatility that gives the food supply price stability. On average, 9.3 cents of every dollar spent on food goes back to the farmer producing it; but this share varies from product to product.

When products are less processed, a greater share of every dollar goes back to the farmer, and consumers also experience more of the price variability that the farmer faces. Examples include products such as meat, milk and vegetables, which tend to have more price variability at the grocery store, giving consumers a taste of the price volatility that farmers experience.

Give Thanks for Supporting Farms
The farmers and ranchers who grow the food on your table this Thanksgiving face many challenges. Low crop prices, poor growing weather, disasters like the recent hurricanes and shifting international markets all threaten farmers' livelihoods. Congress has historically provided help in the form of the farm bill and in exceptional situations, disaster relief. The most recent farm bill expired this fall, already six years old and out of date; and disaster relief in recent years has been short and severely delayed, hampering recovery for farmers and rural communities. This support, when timely and effective, is one of the most important tools to

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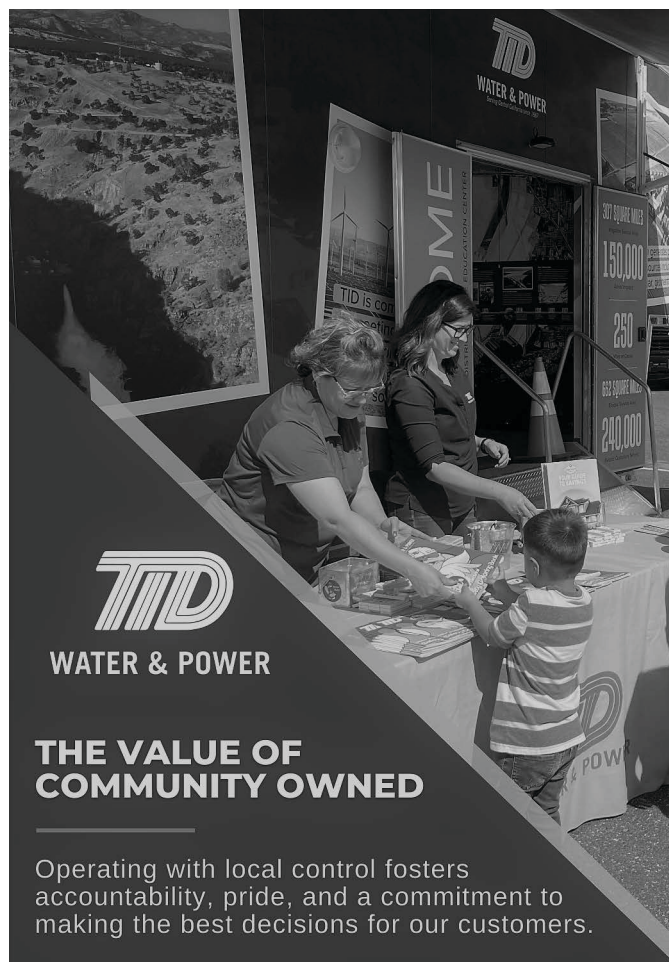
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See **TURKEY** on page 27

From BOVINE on page 10

operations, Walker chooses to handstitch every product herself. “People think I’m crazy, but I enjoy it,” she says. “It’s therapeutic.”

That personal touch also appears in the custom-made graduation cap toppers. Graduates choose from several options in cowhide patterns, customizations like soldered initials and graduation year, and tooled leather corners.

The cap toppers are a “100% word-of-mouth product” as graduates aspired to decorate their mortarboards like their friends’ from the year before. In fact, this Sacramento-area shop boasts Mississippi State University students as her top customers, all based on Walker’s friend who started the trend. “Graduates want something so unique on their special day,” she says. “It’s fun for me to help them celebrate their achievements.”

Tooling up for the holidays

Burlap Bovine enters its eighth holiday season as the cowboy trend has lassoed the attention of popular culture. Walker welcomes the wider cultural appreciation of the lifestyle she grew up enjoying.

“I’m inspired by the Western way of life,” she says. “If it trickles out to the mainstream world, we can share the true legacy the Western life provides.”

Burlap Bovine’s leather ornaments often draw a mainstream crowd from outside the cattle community. Ornaments in the shape of cow heads and full-body cow profiles are popular holiday gifts for ornament swaps, teacher gifts or “to

commemorate a favorite cow.”

Tooling, or carving a design into the leather, is a new self-taught skill Walker is incorporating into her products this year. She has developed whimsical hand-drawn tooled designs with holiday and seasonal themes for wallets, earrings, notebook covers and patches.


“I never considered myself skilled at drawing, but I always loved the look and heritage feel that tooled leather gives,” Walker says. “My husband was amazed. We didn’t know I could draw—and I can’t. But on leather, it just comes together.”

Walker’s brisk business and diligence to crack into larger farmers markets, including the nearby Fowler Ranch market, means she now sells year-round in-person and online at burlapbovine.com. But the holiday

season remains special as how this entrepreneur got her start. “The holidays are my most favorite time of year,” Walker says. “I get to make the most products and share them with the most people.”



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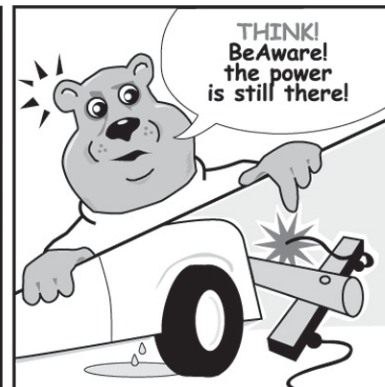
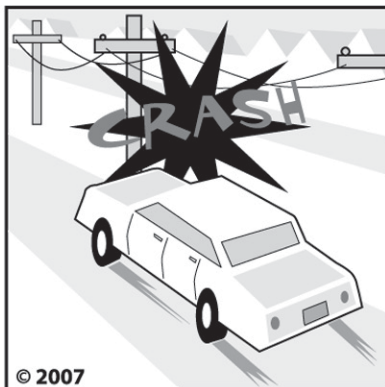


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Modesto Irrigation District hires Paul Peschel as Assistant General Manager of Water Operations

Modesto Irrigation District (MID) has hired Paul Peschel to serve as Assistant General Manager of Water Operations. Peschel succeeds Gordon Enas who recently retired after more than 9 years of service at MID and more than 30 years in the water industry. Peschel joins MID from Hi-Desert Water District in Yucca Valley where he served as the General Manager since 2021. He previously had a five-year tenure as General Manager at Kings River Conservation District and spent more than 28 years in various leadership positions at Imperial Irrigation District.

As MID's Assistant General Manager of Water Operations, Peschel will plan, orga-

nize and direct division activities including civil engineering, water use, planning and conservation, irrigation services, construction management and Modesto Regional Water Treatment Plant operations.

"Paul's leadership coupled with his vast technical experience will be an asset to upholding the District's commitment of providing the highest level of service to our customers," said MID General Manager Jimi Netniss.

Peschel received a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from North Dakota State University. He is a California-licensed civil engineer.

*About the Modesto Irrigation District (MID)
The Modesto Irriga-*

tion District, established in 1887, is a vertically integrated public utility located in California's Central Valley. MID provides irrigation water to more than 2,300 agricultural accounts irrigating close to 60,000 acres and electricity to more than 131,000 residential, commercial and agricultural accounts in Modesto, Empire, Salida, Waterford and Mountain House as well as parts of Escalon, Oakdale, Ripon and Riverbank. MID also treats, delivers and wholesales up to approximately 67,000 acre-feet of drinking water per year to the City of Modesto. For more information about MID visit www.mid.org or follow MID on Facebook (@modestoirrigationdistrict) and Twitter (@mod_irrigation).



"We are blessed with the most fertile farmland on the planet, but our most valuable assets are the farm and ranch families of Stanislaus County. Like the founders of this great nation, our county's farmers have the grit, determination and dedication to drive our local economy. Our family is proud to be part of this great industry.

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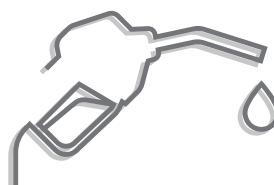


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USDA to Gather 2024 Crop Data from California Producers

Source: Sabrina Halvorson, National Correspondent / AgNet Media, Inc.



The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA/NASS) will soon start collecting information for its 2024 Agricultural Survey. Beginning in late November, over 2,000 producers across California will receive questionnaires aimed at evaluating the year's crop production, acreage, and yield. The survey will also assess quantities of grains and oilseeds in storage.

The data collected will provide valuable insights for the agricultural industry, aiding in export potential assessments and calculating crop supplies for the coming marketing year. Producers can submit their responses online at accounts.usda.gov, by

phone, or by mail. Those who haven't responded by November 29 may be contacted by NASS representatives for assistance. NASS Pacific Regional Director Gary R. Keough emphasized the importance of the survey, thanking producers for their cooperation and assuring them of strict confidentiality. Survey results will be published on January 10, 2025, in the Grain Stocks and Crop Production reports, contributing to USDA's broader agricultural outlook efforts.

For additional information, visit nass.usda.gov/Publications or call the Pacific Regional Field Office at 1-800-851-1127.



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- **Cal Ag Safety**
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- **Dairy Veterinary Services**
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- **FISHBIO**
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- **Hawkins & Associates Engineering**
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- **Arrowhead Insurance Agency**
Modesto 524-6157
- **Crivelli Ins & Fin Sv Inc**
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- **DiBuduo & DeFendis**
Fresno 557-2759

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- **Waterford Irrigation Supply**
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Ripon 599-7545
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Empire 847-2520
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Modesto 531-4667

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- **Schut Insurance Services Inc**
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- **Western Valley Insurance Associates**
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**Adelynn Battig,
Reporter for Shiloh 4-H**

For the month of October, we painted pumpkins for the 4-H County Contest. The theme was Spookiest, Ugliest and Most Creative. Afterwards, we donated them to our Local Senior Living Citizens Facility. We feel very grateful to be able to put smiles on their faces.

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America's Farmers and Ranchers Need Immediate Congressional Support

By: Tracy V. Sparks, President & CEO, Yosemite Farm Credit and Jill Jelacich, Head of Regional Banking, American AgCredit

America's farmers and ranchers are enduring a severe downturn in the agricultural economy, exacerbated by extreme weather events. They need the help and support of Congress to continue producing food and fiber to feed the world.

These are specific examples of the economic headwinds faced by producers in the Central Valley:

- Almond and walnut growers have recorded per acre losses of \$500 to \$1,500 per year in 2022 (Source: Terrain Ag).
- The 2022 price of walnuts was the lowest in USDA records (which started tracking in 1987) (Source: NASS)
- The cost of producing milk in California has increased 35% between 2017 and 2022 (Source: Terrain Ag)

We ask Congress to work expeditiously on two fronts before year-end. Congress must provide emergency funding for agricultural producers recovering from disasters across the US – both economic and weather-related. Further, Congress needs to enact a 5-year Farm Bill providing an enhanced safety net for farmers and ranchers.

As the leaders of your local Farm Credit Associations, we witness first-hand the challenges faced by our local customer-owners. Low commodity prices, coupled with high input costs, are creating severe losses for many producers. Experts predict the

current economic environment to continue in 2025. These challenges may cause many producers to discontinue their operations. The dairy industry is no stranger to these struggles. From 2017 to 2022, the number of dairy operations in California decreased from 1,287 to 855 (Terrain Ag).

As a cooperative and a mission-driven lender, owned and governed by our customers, American AgCredit and Yosemite Farm Credit will continue leveraging our financial strength to support U.S. producers through this difficult period.

Congress must keep in mind that current conditions are making it especially difficult for our young and beginning producers, many of whom do not have significant equity built up from long-time land ownership. Many of these producers have few remaining options as they work to continue for another growing season. We need Congress to take action to ensure the next generation of agriculture can make it through this downturn. Even experienced producers

with equity built up via rising land values also face difficult decisions about how much of their hard-earned equity to risk with no sign of profitability on the horizon. All producers need the certainty of a full 5-year farm bill with additional federal investment that reflects today's market reality.

We thank the House and Senate Agriculture Committees for working hard behind the scenes to bring relief to American farmers and ranchers.

As Congress returns to Washington, we urge them to help farmers and ranchers by enacting a strong Farm Bill and passing emergency disaster assistance this year.

Respectfully,
Tracy V. Sparks
President & CEO, Yosemite Farm Credit
Jill Jelacich
Head of Regional Banking, American AgCredit



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2024

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COST BY REGION

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2024
\$67.81

MIDWEST
2024
\$58.90

SOUTH
2024
\$56.81

NORTHEAST
2024
\$57.36



From **TURKEY** on page 19

keeping America's food supply safe, affordable and secure.

Conclusion
According to AFBF's national Thanksgiving survey, this year's Thanksgiving meal will cost consumers about 5% less this year, though it is still up almost 20% from just five years ago. The long road to reduced inflation has exhausted many Americans, including farm families, who have been squeezed between falling prices for their output and higher prices for their inputs.

Farmers take on much of the food system's risk to help keep food plentiful and affordable. When times get tough, they have relied on a strong farm bill (and effective assistance, when disaster strikes) to provide the help to stay in business.

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Thank You Central Valley Farmers

It has been an honor to represent the breadbasket of the world these past two years in Sacramento.

There is so much more we can do, and I look forward to doing it together for years to come.



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