

The Stanislaus Farm News

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture

STANISLAUS COUNTY



For the **good** of your **food**.



**Official Publication of Stanislaus
County Farm Bureau
Vol.76 No.7 April 25, 2025**

While nene geese are less aggressive than Canada geese, they still are a bit wary of visitors — including Tim Sanders — and won't get too close.

See full story on page 3

Published Fridays by the
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**February 25, 2025
Food Safety - FSMA**

9:00-10:30am - Spanish
10:30-12:00pm - English

What is FSMA? Who does it apply to?
How do I comply? What should I expect during
an inspection?
Pricing: Member \$50/Nonmember \$60

**June 5, 2025
CPR & First Aid**

8:00-12:00pm - Spanish
1:00-5:00pm - English

CalOSHA requires that at least 1 employee for
every 20 employees be trained.
Pricing: Member \$100/Nonmember \$125

**March 6, 2025
Pesticide Handler & Fit Testing**

9:00-12:00pm - Spanish
1:00-4:00pm - English

This is an annual training required by the
Department of Pesticide Regulation.
Pricing: Member \$60/Nonmember \$75

**July 31, 2025
Tractor Safety**

9:00-10:00am - Spanish
10:00-11:00am - English

CalOSHA requires that employees who
operate equipment be trained annually.
Pricing: Member \$40/Nonmember \$50

**May 1, 2025
Indoor&Outdoor Heat Illness Prevention**

9:00-10:00am - Spanish
10:00-11:00am - English

CalOSHA requires this training annually for
employees.
Pricing: Member \$40/Nonmember \$50

**October 23, 2025
Hazardous Ag Materials (HAM)**

9:00-10:30am - Spanish
10:30-12:00pm - English

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hazardous material must be trained.
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members and educate the general public of needs and
importance to agriculture.

A Labor of Love: One Grower's Feathered Fascination

By Vicky Boyd, SCFB

Ceres-area almond grower Tim Sanders has been a fan of waterfowl ever since he was 5 years old and his father took him hunting for the first time.

"They don't have to do any type of adaptation to be on this planet," he said. "They can fly, they can swim in the water and they can walk on the ground. That's why I've always been fascinated by them."

Sanders became even more enthralled with waterfowl after his grandmother gave him a mallard duck egg to care for, and it even-

tually hatched. Like most ducklings, the young bird imprinted on the first creature it saw, which happened to be Sanders.

As he recently recalled the episode, he laughed at how the duck would follow him around and sit on his chest to watch TV. Thus, was born Sanders' life-long love of waterfowl that has grown into a hobby.

GRANDMOTHER'S TURKEY FARM

Growing up, Sanders remembers going to his grandparents' farm near Ceres, where they moved to in 1920. During the early years, his grandmother was one of the largest commercial turkey raisers in the area. Unlike the industry today that focuses on rearing birds in turkey houses, birds back then were raised free range.

farm in 1974. The fields on which the turkeys once ranged are planted to almonds. While Sanders has raised a few turkeys over the years, he still prefers waterfowl.

A WATERFOWL MENAGERIE

Currently, Sanders has 250-300 waterfowl in pens and roosting houses that range from the more common Canada geese, wood ducks, ruddy ducks and cinnamon teal to more exotic species like barred geese from India, barnacle geese from Asia, ring teal from South America and nene geese from Hawaii.

All of this is done under state and federal migratory bird permits, which require Sanders to conduct and send in an annual census of his birds. For all North American species, he also must pinion, or clip, one of their wings, clip a back toe or band an ankle.

In addition, Sanders has a coop and keeps bantam and other chicken breeds for eggs. He credited his uncle, Bob Godring, for getting him involved with raising and caring for the various waterfowl species. As Sanders' hobby has grown, he's also befriended other waterfowl collectors throughout California, and they regularly get together to trade or sell different birds.

Because of his incubators, collectors often bring him cartons of eggs to hatch. Using a candler that shines bright light through the eggs, he can see whether the bird embryo is viable and moving or whether it is dead.

At one time, Sanders said he had even more birds than he currently does. But as he has grown older, he said he cut back because of the amount of work involved in caring for them. That includes draining ponds and cleaning pens each week as well as feeding and watering the birds daily.

"It's truly a labor of love," Sanders said.

SAY ALOHA TO NENE

See Sanders on page 4



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"My grandmother would never have any turkey here other than a broad-breasted bronze," Sander said, referring to what is now considered a heritage breed. Family lore even has it that Max Foster, founder of Foster Farms, came out to learn how to raise turkeys.

During his childhood visits, Sanders said he was tasked with gathering turkey eggs to take to the hatchery building. The structure still stands today but houses only two small incubators that Sanders uses.

His grandparents retired in the 1960s, and Sanders and his wife, Sue, eventually moved to the

From Sanders on page 3

One of his favorite species is nene geese, which at one time were federally endangered because their numbers had dipped to roughly 30 birds in the 1950s. Native to the Hawaiian Islands, nene fell victim to habitat destruction and predation from feral cats and Indian mongooses introduced to control rats.

Their numbers have since rebounded to more than 3,800 within the Hawaiian Islands, thanks in part to a captive breeding program, and the species has been downgraded to federally threatened. Breeders on the mainland, such as Sanders, can possess nene with the proper paperwork. But because of Hawaii’s strict quarantines, they can’t send any of their mainland-raised geese to Hawaii.

Nene resemble smallish Canada geese, which is natural because taxonomists believe the Hawaiian native descended from the larger honker beginning about 500,000 years ago. Being sequestered on the islands, nene evolved to fit their habitat.

The webbing between their toes, for example, is only about half that of Canada geese, allowing them to better walk on lava flows, Sanders pointed out. Nene also have longer and stronger legs designed for improved running on land compared to their Canadian counterparts.

Uncle Godring obtained one of the first



Tim Sanders shines a light through an egg, or candles it, to see whether the embryo is moving and viable or whether it has died.

nene pairs on the mainland several years ago and shared eggs with Sanders. Nene have a much quieter disposition than the more aggressive Canada geese, capturing Sanders’ fancy.

He currently has 33 adult and gosling nene, with a hen still nesting on eggs. When they hatch, his total could be close 40, which he



Nene geese are good parents and will keep a close eye on their goslings.

said is more than he needs.

Nene are good parents, with the hen sitting on the eggs for about 30 days while the male guards her. Because of that, Sanders said he rarely intervenes to collect eggs to put in the incubator.

Wood ducks are a different story. He’s learned to let then sit on the nest for about two weeks before gathering eggs for incubation. When he grabbed freshly laid eggs, the hatch-out rate was about 50%. But waiting the two weeks resulted in hatch-outs of more than 90%. Should other waterfowl aban-

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don their nests, he'll also collect the eggs to incubate.

Most of the species in his pens seem to get along well much of the year without major tiffs. During the spring breeding season, Sanders said some will become a bit more aggressive.

The exceptions are Canada geese. During the first year of life, Sanders said they're typically fine. But as they enter their breeding age beginning at 2 years old, they can become unruly and downright nasty.

This season, he had to put a pair in a separate time-out pen because they weren't playing well with others.



Hilmar™ announces new CEO Greg Schlafer to succeed David Ahlem as President & CEO

Hilmar, Calif. April 16, 2025. Hilmar Cheese Company, Inc., one of the world's largest cheese manufacturers and a global supplier of high-quality whey ingredients, today announced that Greg Schlafer will join the company as President & CEO on July 1, 2025.

Schlafer has served as President & CEO of Foremost Farms USA, a supplier of cheese and dairy ingredients, butter and milk products for nearly six years. Foremost Farms USA is a dairy cooperative owned by more

than 600 members in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Michigan and Ohio.

"The board spent a great deal of time interviewing and vetting many qualified candidates for this position and Greg stood out among them," said Jim Ahlem, Chairman of the Board.

"He brings extensive experience in cheese and ingredients markets, working with dairy farm families and an impressive leadership style that is a good fit for the Hilmar culture."

Late last year, the company announced that CEO David Ahlem would step down from his role after almost 10 years at the helm and 22 years with the company. He will continue to work with the company in a Board Advisor role.

Schlafer earned his MBA from UCLA's Anderson School of Management and his undergraduate degree from the University of Minnesota. He has served on the board of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, the National Milk Producers Federation and the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy. Greg is also passionate about food security and education and has served on the board of Project SUCCESS and the North American Millers' Association.

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Prior to Foremost Farms, Schlafer was Vice President, Food Group Sales & Marketing at J.R. Simplot Company. Before that he served as President of Lamb Weston, a division of ConAgra Foods, Inc. He also worked for General Mills as Vice President & General Manager, Bakeries & Foodservice Division.

"I have long ad-

See Hilmar on page 7

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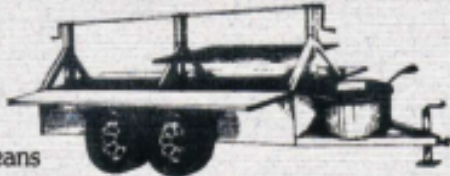
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From Hilmar on page 5

mired Hilmar Cheese Company, a market leader in the cheese and ingredients space, for their vision, growth and sharp focus on technology and innovation,” shared Schlafer.

“David’s stewardship of the company these past ten years has been a true inspiration and I’m delighted to continue the journey to achieve Hilmar’s vision and build upon our great relationships with employees, owners, dairy farmers and customers.”

Schlafer will be only the third CEO in Hilmar’s 41-year history.

About Hilmar™
Hilmar Cheese Company, Inc. uses the power and promise of dairy to improve lives together. We provide health and nutri-

tion for consumers, contribute to brand success for our customers, create opportunities for employees, support independent milk producers and improve the communities where we live and work. With a focus on collaborative product innovation, real-time scalability and a progressive approach to sustainability, Hilmar™ is a global leader in efficiently producing functional cheese and whey ingredients at scale. We deliver high-quality products to customers in more than 50 countries. Founded in 1984, Hilmar operates manufacturing plants in Hilmar, California; Dalhart, Texas and Dodge City, Kansas. For more information, visit www.hilmar.com and LinkedIn @Hilmar.
Media contact:
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Petaluma Poultry takes legal action to protect associate safety and privacy and curb aggressive, unlawful harassment from animal rights extremist group

Petaluma, California – April 4, 2025 — Petaluma Poultry, a division of Perdue Foods, is taking legal steps to prioritize the safety, privacy and well-being of an associate and his family amid repeated harassment and privacy violations by the radical animal rights group Direct Action Everywhere (DxE). A complaint for injunctive relief was filed with the California Superior Court, Sonoma County, on Friday after DxE deployed alarming, and illegal, tactics against an associate and his family at their private residence.

The associate is a material witness in an ongoing case against DxE operative Zoe Rosenberg, who is facing criminal charges related to illegally entering a Petaluma Poultry facility in 2024. DxE has relentlessly harassed the associate, his family, and neighbors ahead of Rosenberg’s upcoming trial in May.

“Perdue Farms fully supports the right to free speech and peaceful protest. However, there is a clear line between lawful advocacy and repeated, unlawful, intimidation tactics. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their own home, without fear of harassment or disruption. Today, we took steps to protect those values for our associates, their families and our community,” said Julie Katigan, Chief Human

Resources Officer for Perdue.

“While we welcome open and honest discussion about the welfare of animals, we strongly oppose the extreme tactics used by DxE,” Katigan added. “These are not the actions of an organization seeking constructive dialogue.”

“Direct Action Everywhere is an animal rights extremist organization, founded with the agenda of ‘destroying’ or ‘canceling’ animal agriculture. The organization is actively demanding ‘animal liberation.’ Extremists with Direct Action Everywhere frequently engage in criminal activities that put animal health, employee safety, and food security at risk,” said Abby Kornegay, Director of Issues and Engagement for Animal Agriculture Alliance. “Their supporters are well aware that the actions they engage in are illegal, as the organization regularly holds trainings on how to interact with law enforcement, what to expect if they’re arrested, and how to prepare for legal cases.”

“It is extremely disheartening to see Direct Action Everywhere target an individual and his family so mercilessly, though it is not the first time we’ve seen this tactic used by the organization,” Kornegay added. “The utter disregard for the law, the right to privacy, and consideration for others highlights just how extreme this organization is and how far they are willing to escalate to achieve their goal.” “Direct Action Everywhere has been disrupting farms and businesses in Sonoma County for over seven years,” said Dayna Ghirardelli, CEO of the Sonoma County Farm Bureau. “They

tried to eliminate farms in Sonoma County through the Measure J ballot initiative, which they lost by 85%. This was a clear message from the community supporting our farmers, ranchers, and agricultural businesses that drive our economy and ensure food security.”

Despite this, DXE continues to harass and terrorize a local man and his family making an honest living working for a business that contributes greatly to our food supply. The lengths to which they will bully, intimidate, and disrespect are heinous and disgusting. Their self-imposed moral high ground trespassing, theft, and misleading tactics are not welcome here,” said Ghirardelli.

“Petaluma Poultry has long been a leader in free-range and organic poultry, and they’re known for taking great care of their birds,” said Bill Mattos, President of the California Poultry Federation. “The claims being made by DxE simply don’t line up with reality. Their persistent protests at an individual associate’s home are not only disruptive — they’re intentionally misleading and misrepresent the work Petaluma and its employees do every day.”
Contact: Perdue Farms Corporate Communications: corpcomm@perdue.com; 410-341-2533

About Petaluma Poultry

Petaluma Poultry, the home of ROCKY® The Free Range and ROSIE® The Original Organic Chicken. We provide locally raised, fresh organic and free-range chicken with ranches in and around Sonoma County. We also have a feed mill and packing operations in Petaluma.


As a pioneer in free range and organic poultry, we are dedicated to sustainable farming practices that renew natural resources. Our goal is to produce the finest free range and organic poultry products while reducing waste, preserving our environment, supporting our employees and contributing to our local communities.

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Ag Innovation: The Key to Tomorrow

By Joby Young, executive vice president at the American Farm Bureau Federation

Agriculture has long been defined by innovation, as farmers, especially in recent decades, have leveraged technology to improve yields, adapt to challenges and ensure their farms remain strong and sustainable for seasons to come. Innovation in areas such as data, crop protection tools and biotech, have all led to better nutrition, improved environmental outcomes and greater food availability and affordability for Americans. But today, as the headwinds in agriculture continue to grow and technology advances, the conversations around innovation matter more than ever.

2025 World Agri-Tech Innovation Summit

Recently, I attended the World Agri-Tech Innovation Summit in San Francisco. The two-day event brought together a cross-section of farmers, researchers, industry stakeholders and other leaders all focused on the challenges and opportunities ahead for food and agriculture.

While at the conference, I moderated an opening panel discussion with other leaders from across the supply chain focused on how we can set strategic priorities for our food system in times of change. Throughout the discussion we hit on how technology is shaping policy and evolving practices, how global markets are shifting and how we must ensure innovation pipelines are designed to meet real-world needs.

One theme that emerged from the conversation, and throughout the entire summit, was the important role partnership plays in agricultural innovation. It's one thing to have a great idea, but it's another to bring that idea to life by sharing it and gaining feedback, to ensure it works on our farms and within our supply chain. Farm-

ers need tools that are accessible, effective and designed with their daily challenges in mind.

Today, we're seeing incredible advancements happening in the world of agricultural innovation. From new equipment that utilizes AI algorithms to platforms with the capability to analyze crop health in real-time, farmers are able to navigate numerous tasks and access insight that previously would have taken days or weeks to complete. We also need to make sure as more technology becomes available, we safeguard the interests of our farmers and work in partnership across the entire supply chain.

Ag Innovation and AI


One of the most talked-about topics at the summit this year was artificial intelligence. I attended a pre-summit AI event that dove deep into the technical side but drove home the point that AI isn't just on the horizon anymore. It's here and will continue to advance. The key around AI is charting a course that will help

farmers embrace new opportunities while also ensuring that these technologies are deployed ethically and responsibly.

Ag Innovation and Farm Bureau

At Farm Bureau we believe that by supporting innovation, we are working to solve the challenges of tomorrow, today. Our policy book, developed by our grassroots leaders, supports the advancement of agricultural research, along with a cautious approach towards AI. Farm Bureau members see this as a useful tool but also believe that transparency in how platforms utilize data and security for sensitive data are crucial. We also promote agricultural innovation in partnership with Farm Credit by leading the Ag Innovation Challenge, which supports agricultural entrepreneurs and pro-

See Innovation on page 12



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"Blue Jackets, Bright Futures: The Valley's Next Generation of Ag Leaders"

By Destiny Reyes, SCFB Intern

FFA Students Shine at Ag Aware Luncheon, Bridging Generations Through Agriculture

On April 17th, beneath the warmth of a midday sun, students zipped up their iconic blue corduroy jackets and shook hands with industry leaders in a powerful display of agricultural tradition and mentorship—where the wisdom of older generations meets the passion of the next generation.

The Ag Aware Luncheon, hosted by Modesto Chamber of Commerce Agricultural Committee, serves as a scholarship fundraiser celebrating local FFA students and the generous sponsors who help shape their future. Distinguished supporters included Crystal Creamery, American Ag Credit, F&M Bank, JS West & Companies, Modesto Irrigation District, Yosemite Farm Credit, American Chevrolet, Berliner Cohen LLP, Turlock Irrigation District, and Zaiger Genetics, along with numerous table sponsors who continuously invest in agricultural education.

Held at the Modesto Junior College Agriculture Pavilion, guests were greeted with warm smiles from FFA students and ushered to their seats, where lively conversation and excitement filled the air. While enjoying a meal served by the students, attendees had the opportunity to explore school booths highlighting awards and hands-on student projects. Many students shared their unique FFA journeys with pride and enthusiasm.

Julia and Michael, first-year students from Thomas Downey



See Leaders on page 17

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From Innovation on page 10

vides our members with a front-row seat to the latest in innovation.

Innovation touches every part of our food system. Whether you're a farmer adopting new technology, an innovator with a groundbreaking idea, or a consumer enjoying a variety of healthy, safe, and affordable choices in the grocery store, innovation plays a role. We need to make sure there is partnership on every level so that farmers have access to new ideas and that our researchers and entrepreneurs know the needs of our farms and rural communities. By establishing a pipeline of innovation across the supply chain, we will have a food supply that remains strong and resilient for whatever tomorrow brings.

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The English at Work Class is FREE this year because Stanislaus County Workforce Development (SCWD) secured grant funding. The funding requires full enrollment, that requires the following:

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- Watch Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Orientation Video on SCWD website
- Review/complete the SCWD Eligibility Packet
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2. Workforce Specialist completes the step-by-step WIOA Title I Application wizard with the client to establish Adult or Dislocated Worker eligibility.
3. Client signs Application and signs and completes forms included in the Eligibility Packet (if not done previously)

What Happens AFTER Eligibility has been completed?

4. Meet with a Career Services Specialist
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8. Family income for the last 6 months example: paycheck stubs



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Rising wages test ranchers who provide vegetation management

Sheep and goats, increasingly used to eat flammable vegetation in targeted areas, have become a key part of California’s wildfire prevention efforts. But ranchers who provide targeted grazing services depend on a viable sheep and goat ranching industry. Their business may be in jeopardy due to a steep rise in the minimum wage ranchers must pay the herders who look after their animals around the clock. Since 2019, that wage has more than doubled, soaring this year to \$4,820 a month. “It’s just become untenable,” said sheep rancher Andrée Soares, who operates Star Creek Land Stewards in Merced County.

Researcher develops tool to deter spread of bird flu on farms

Maurice Pitesky, University of California Cooperative Extension poultry specialist, has developed a Waterfowl Alert Network to provide data to farmers and agricultural agency staff about the locations of waterfowl roosting

and feeding. Pitesky developed the tool to help poultry and dairy farmers limit contact with the migrating birds, as they can carry the virus that causes bird flu. The network uses data from satellites, weather radar and land-based environmental sensors. “One thing we need to consider in the medium- to long-term is the concept of waterfowl habitat shifting away from food animal production,” he said.



Research says overtime law has cost farmworkers \$100 a week


In 2023, University of California, Berkeley, assistant professor Alexandra Hill published research showing California’s 2016 agricultural overtime law had not achieved its goal of increasing earnings for farmworkers. She found that Assembly Bill 1066 caused workers to lose hours and pay as farmers shortened the workweek to balance their wage bills. Hill said her continued analysis of farmworker

employment data shows farmworkers have earned roughly \$100 less per week on average than they would have without AB 1066. “There is really convincing evidence that work hours for individual farmworkers fell after the law went into effect,” she said.

Farm technology showcased at Ventura County field day

A drone that performs multiple functions on the farm; a self-driving strawberry harvester; smart valves that manage irrigation; a software-powered system for irrigating and weeding; and a machine that weeds, thins and fertilizes. Those are the latest innovations that five agricultural technology companies demonstrated at a University of California field day in Ventura County this month. “We’re







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trying to pair up growers, startup companies and our academics to trial and validate technologies that will hopefully improve them, get them to stick and the growers to adopt them,” said Gabe Youtsey, UC Davis chief innovation officer.

Ranchers grapple with livestock losses as wolf population grows
With California wolf populations expanding and attacks on livestock on the rise, the state announced this month a new phase of managing the protected species, saying it will consider allowing more aggressive forms of nonlethal hazing to deter the predators. But frustrated ranchers say the new provisions do little to address problem wolves and their most significant cost, which is not from direct livestock kills but from stress-related impacts due to wolf presence, with cattle losing weight and failing to conceive. A new study by researchers

at the University of California estimated such indirect losses at \$1.4 million to \$3.4 million in 2023. “This conflict is real and escalating,” said Ken Tate, UC Cooperative Extension specialist. “People are not crying wolf.”

Groundwater official calls for support for farming communities
California’s Sustainable Groundwater Management Act has reshaped groundwater use for many farmers and other groundwater users in recent years. This month, state water agencies signaled their intention to implement even stronger measures to prevent groundwater overdraft and related impacts such as land subsidence. “It’s going to cause a significant ask on land transition, so there will have to be a considerable state effort in these areas because you are dealing with a lot of ag transition, jobs and community impacts,” said Paul Gosselin, Department of Water Resources

deputy director for sustainable groundwater management.

Annual report shows major declines in farmland values

The value of much of California’s farmland declined from 2023 to 2024, according to figures published last month by the state’s chapter of the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers. Authors of the ASFMRA chapter’s annual Trends report attributed the declines in farmland value to multiple factors, including low prices for many crops, high inflation and interest rates, and overall high operating costs. Farmland subject to groundwater pumping restrictions saw some of the steepest value declines, with farmland in parts of the San Joaquin Valley that depend entirely on groundwater losing more than half its value in the space of a year.

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From Leaders on page 11

High School, represent two different but equally inspiring paths. Michael, currently raising a pig for the fair, is discovering a love for livestock judging and all that FFA has to offer. "After showing animals go-

ing into my freshman year, I'm hooked," he shared. Julia, who's saving up to raise a sheep next year, called FFA "an investment," adding, "I'm grateful to be welcomed into FFA and excited to learn more and become a role model to others."



Gratitude was a recurring theme, echoed by students from James C. Enochs High School who praised the hands-on experiences and career-building opportunities offered through their chapter.

Teachers, too, shared pride in their students' talents. An educator at Grace M. Davis High School spoke about students designing and selling custom ag mechanics

projects like charcuterie boards. The school even offers real-world courses like Agricultural Economics, preparing students for life beyond the classroom.

Among the many touching moments was the heartfelt testimony of Brendy Puckett and Austyn Lugo, who described FFA as life-changing. From overcoming bullying and inconsistency to finding belonging and purpose, these young women have transformed through agricultural leadership and advocacy.

The event came full circle for Jake Wenger, panel moderator and general manager of Salida Huling Association. A former FFA student who once served lunch at the very same event, Jake proudly watched his own son carry on the tradition. A California Farm Bureau Board Member and former MID Director, Jake led critical discussions on topics like the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, recharge costs, and the importance of water policy.


"Water used to grow food is not wasteful," Jake emphasized. "California is the 5th largest economy in the world. Our food is exported globally, and water is the lifeblood of agriculture—and the world."

From new connections to rekindled traditions, from corduroy jackets to professional blazers, the Ag Aware Luncheon was a reminder that agricultural education doesn't just cultivate crops—it cultivates leaders for tomorrow.

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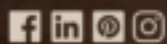
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Stanislaus County Farm Bureau State of the Poultry Industry

By Bill Mattos, President
California Poultry Federation

Chicken, eggs, and turkeys grown in California create an economic impact of more than \$10 billion, according to the 2024 impact study by John Dunham and Associates. The fact that most of these poultry and

egg products are grown and produced in the Central Valley, from Sacramento to Bakersfield, makes these numbers important for our region.

Yes, a significant number of eggs are produced in Southern California; however, much of that production including chickens and turkeys has moved north. The North Bay Area also has considerable chicken and egg production as well, even though most of that production has also moved.

When Stanislaus County salutes our poultry and egg farmers and processors, most people know these neighbors and their impact to our region.

Poultry and egg families play a remarkable role here, and it has been my pleasure to present this industry for 34 years.

As you know, our industry has faced significant challenges over the past year due to the outbreak of High Path Avian Influenza (Bird Flu). Farmers who raise layers, chickens, turkeys and ducks have experienced substantial losses the past year because of this virulent disease which has spread from migrating birds to poultry and dairy cows. Both the poultry and dairy industries are working together to maintain biosecurity and enhance the careful movement of birds and cattle outside of quarantine zones. This effort has been significant for two industries that are located in the richest agricultural state in the nation.

As this issue of your Farm Bureau news goes to press, our farmers have repopulated their barns with new birds after losing millions over the past year. We hope to get many more eggs and poultry products to market now and help stabilize prices for eggs and other commodities. We continue to work with both the California Department of Agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture on the latest changes to biosecurity practices and bird flu monitoring

We will proceed to meet all challenges and work collaboratively with all communities to make our region the best place to call home.

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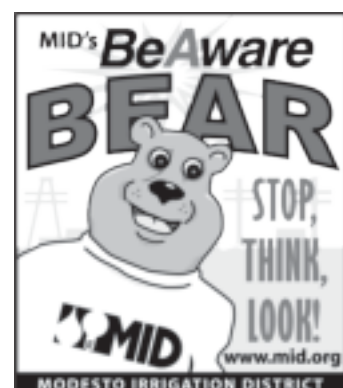
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Federal Affairs

Member Feedback Opportunity: Forest Service Seeking Examples of Problematic Decisions Impacting the Ag Industry
With the new administration settling in across agencies, the US Forest Service is looking to identify areas where past decisions and regulatory hurdles have negatively affected the agricultural industry. The American Farm Bureau Federation is helping collect these examples, but members are encouraged to keep submissions concise and address the following: decisions that have made it more cumbersome to interact with USFS programs; decisions that have negatively impacted multiple use activities; and decisions that have resulted in reduced land management and/or increased fire risk. You can click here to submit your examples. Please note there is a short turnaround, as the deadline is April 25th. Staff Contact: Erin Huston, ehuston@cbbf.com

House Passes Budget Framework

Two weeks ago, the House of Representatives passed a budget plan by a narrow 216–214 margin. The plan would result in up to \$1.5 trillion in cuts, marking a major departure from the Senate-passed version, which proposed only \$4 billion in cuts. These differences will need to be reconciled before the legislation can move forward. The Senate version narrowly passed in a 51–48 vote through the reconciliation process, which bypasses the usual 60-vote threshold required for cloture. However, this process limits what can be included in a reconciliation bill, so additional proposals from the White House will likely need to be introduced separately if they hope to advance further cuts and program extensions.. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cbbf.com

CAFB Group Travels to DC, Meets with Lawmakers

Last week, nearly two dozen individuals representing California agriculture traveled to the nation’s capital for a series of meetings and training sessions. The group included CAFB’s executive team, the Lead-

ership Farm Bureau class, several Board members, and additional staff.

They met with AFBF’s policy team, sixteen Congressional offices, both California Senators at a constituent gathering, and officials at the Mexican Embassy, among others. The visit was a timely opportunity to discuss trade, while also allowing the group to advocate on workforce challenges, the Farm Bill, and key forestry and public lands issues.

These trips continue to be valuable opportunities to engage lawmakers on the most pressing issues facing California agriculture, with several offices already following up with attendees to schedule in-state meetings. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cbbf.com

USDA to End LFS and LFPA Programs

Last month, USDA announced it would be ending two Biden-era programs that connected local producers with schools and food banks. The Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement (LFS) Program and the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement (LFPA) Program had received over \$1 billion in funding to distribute across the states, including California. Both programs were well received by public and private partners, and legislation is now being considered to provide more stable, long-term financial backing. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl,

mviohl@cbbf.com

US to Withdraw from the Tomato Suspension Agreement

Last week, the US Department of Commerce announced they would be withdrawing from the 2019 Agreement Suspending the Antidumping Investigation on Fresh Tomatoes from Mexico (or, the Tomato Suspension Agreement). In its place will be a 20.91% duty on most imports of Mexican tomatoes. Many organizations, including CAFB, had called for the agreement’s termination to protect and promote domestic production, arguing that it effectively

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shielded Mexican growers from consequences tied to illegal dumping practices. The withdrawal and new duty will take effect on July 14 and represent a promising example of more targeted trade measures available to the federal government. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cbbf.com

Tariffs Delayed, China Back-and-Forth Continues

Just a week after the President announced sweeping tariffs on nearly every country, the administration has hit the pause button following mounting pressure to reverse course. A 90-day delay has been implemented for most of the proposed tariffs, although tensions between the U.S. and China continue to escalate, with both countries imposing new tariffs and other trade

restrictions. In the days following the original April 2 announcement, global markets reacted sharply, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average dropping nearly 11% before the pause was announced. Markets remain volatile amid the growing trade conflict between China and the U.S. In 2022, California exported over \$1.8 billion in agricultural goods to China, with pistachios, dairy products, and almonds accounting for roughly 60% of that total.

Adding another layer to the developing situation, Governor Gavin Newsom announced last week that the state would be suing the federal government for overstepping its constitutional authority on tariffs. CBBF continues to engage with offices in Washington, D.C., urging caution and advocating for more targeted trade measures

that support California and U.S. agriculture. If you have personal experiences or impacts to share related to these trade actions with China, please don't hesitate to reach out. These insights are critical for assessing short-term effects on our industry. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cbbf.com

State Affairs

Priority State Water Legislation for 2025 Advances

With several weeks of policy committee hearings now completed in the California Legislature, the California Farm Bureau has nar-

rowed its focus to a list of key water-related bills to support or oppose in 2025. Most of these bills have active coalition efforts. To join a coalition on any of these measures, please contact Alex Biering at abiering@cbbf.com.

AB 263 (Asm. Rogers, D-Humboldt) Would codify emergency regulations adopted annually by the State Water Board for the Scott and Shasta River watersheds until permanent instream flow requirements are adopted.

Sponsored by: Karuk Tribe, Yurok Tribe, and Coastkeepers Alliance

Status: Passed Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee on 4/8

CBBF Position: Oppose

Coalition: ACWA, CalChamber, Western Growers, California Municipal Utilities Association, others

AB 362 (Asm. Ramos, D-Highland) Would recognize tribal water uses as "beneficial uses" of state waters and delay adoption of the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan Update.

Status: Passed Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee on 4/8

CBBF Position: Oppose

Coalition: ACWA, Western Growers, CMUA, others

AB 430 (Asm. Alanis, R-Modesto) Would require the State Water Board to release an economic and environmental analysis when adopting non-fee emergency regulations for two or more consecutive years.

Status: Scheduled for Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee on 4/29

CBBF Position: Sponsor and Support

AB 929 (Asm. Connolly, D-Marin) Would prohibit groundwater sustainability agencies in unmanaged subbasins from imposing fees or pumping limits on small community water systems serving disadvantaged communities and private managed wetlands.

Status: Scheduled for Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee on 4/29

See Affairs on page 23

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From Affairs on page 21

Note: Reintroduction of vetoed AB 828 (2024)
CAFB Position: Oppose

AB 1146 (Asm. Papan, D-San Mateo) Would prohibit the release of stored reservoir water under “false pretenses” and grant the State Water Board interim relief powers.
Status: Scheduled for Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee on 4/29
CAFB Position: Oppose

AB 1413 (Asm. Papan, D-San Mateo) Would make findings in groundwater sustainability plans binding in court if the basin enters adjudication.
Status: Passed Assembly Water, Parks &

Wildlife Committee on 4/8
CAFB Position: Oppose

AB 1466 (Asm. Hart, D-Santa Barbara) Would establish a “substantial evidence” standard for parties challenging the actions of a groundwater sustainability agency with an approved plan during groundwater adjudications.
Status: Scheduled for Assembly Judiciary Committee on 4/8
CAFB Position: Oppose

SB 72 (Sen. Caballero, D-Merced) Would require the California Water Plan and future updates to include recommendations for meeting beneficial uses, achieving storage targets, accounting for agricultural needs, and conducting a cost-benefit analysis.

Status: Passed Senate Natural Resources & Water Committee on 4/8
Sponsored by: California Municipal Utilities Association
CAFB Position: Support

SB 601 (Sen. Allen, D-Santa Monica) Would create a new water quality permitting regime for “nexus waters” and allow private citizens to bring legal action on water quality violations.
Status: Passed Senate Environmental Quality Committee on 4/2
Coalition: Over 100 organizations in opposition
CAFB Position: Oppose

Consumer Watchdog Sues Lara
The consumer advocacy group Consumer Watchdog filed a lawsuit this week challenging Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara’s 2023 agreement with insurers regarding financial responsibility for the FAIR Plan. As previously discussed, the FAIR Plan is financially backed by insurers in the regulated market—meaning those companies handle claims when the FAIR Plan lacks sufficient cash reserves. That scenario has materialized following the Palisades and

Eaton fires. The FAIR Plan currently faces over \$4 billion in claim losses, with only \$1 billion in cash available to pay them.

The Department of Insurance reached an agreement with insurers last year requiring them to cover the first \$2 billion in unpaid claims. For the remaining losses, insurers may assess their policyholders to cover 50% of the gap—likely through a one-time direct assessment. While the Department of Insurance has declined to comment on the pending litigation, it is defending the agreement as a necessary step to prevent further exits from the admitted insurance market in California. As of now, insurers have not confirmed whether they intend to pass along Palisades and Eaton-related losses to ratepayers.

In response to this issue, the California Farm Bureau supports AB 226, authored by Assemblymembers Lisa Calderon (D–City of Industry) and David Alvarez (D–Chula Vista). The bill would authorize California’s Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank (iBank) to issue bonds for the FAIR Plan to help cover claim losses—offering an alternative to directly assessing ratepayers. The bill is advancing with bipartisan support and is currently on the Assembly Floor. It includes an urgency clause, which would allow it to take effect immediately upon the Governor’s signature. Staff Contact: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com

AB 226 Offers Bond-Backed Relief for FAIR Plan Wildfire Claims
Related to this issue, California Farm Bureau supports AB 226, authored by Assemblymembers Lisa Calderon (D City of Industry) and David Alvarez (D Chula Vista) which would authorize California’s iBank to issue bonds that would be available to the FAIR Plan to cover these claim losses, as an alternative to passing costs through to ratepayers. The bill is moving with bipartisan support and currently is on the Assembly Floor with an urgency clause so that it could take effect immediately upon signing by the Governor. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com



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How Digital Marketing is Transforming the Poultry Industry

Written by Kathryn Kim Ramos, Sisbro Innovation Website and Digital Marketing Consultant

The poultry industry plays a vital role in the global food system, supplying millions of households with nutritious, affordable protein every day. In regions like California’s Central Valley, poultry operations are essential to both the economy and the agricultural community. But as with many industries, poultry farming has experienced rapid change in recent years. Rising consumer demand, increased competition, and a growing need for transparency have all pushed poultry producers to think outside the coop. One of the most impactful changes? The rise of digital marketing.

Today’s poultry farmers are not just responsible for producing high-quality chicken and eggs—they’re also business owners who must promote their products, communicate with customers, and compete in an increasingly digital world. Digital marketing tools are helping these farmers do just that, offering powerful ways to expand their reach, boost brand visibility, and build loyal customer bases.

Building Trust Through Online Visibility

One of the key benefits of digital marketing for poultry farmers is the ability to build trust through transparency. Consumers want to know where their food comes from, how it’s grown or raised, and what practices are used. By maintaining a strong online presence, whether through a website, blog, or social media platforms, farmers can share their stories, showcase their operations, and educate consumers about humane animal care, feed practices, and sustainability efforts.

Regular social media updates, behind-the-scenes videos, and informative posts help humanize poultry operations, making them more relatable and trustworthy in the eyes of the public. This level of engagement not only builds consumer confidence but also differentiates small- to mid-sized poultry farms from larger, more anonymous competitors.

Expanding Market Reach

Digital advertising, SEO (Search Engine Optimization), and local listing management have made it easier than ever for poultry businesses to reach potential customers. Whether selling direct-to-consumer through a farm website or promoting eggs and poultry to local restaurants and grocers, digital tools help ensure the right audiences see your products.

With targeted advertising on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Google, farmers can focus their marketing efforts on customers most likely to buy—based on location, interests, and search behavior. These platforms also offer analytics and insights that help refine marketing strategies for better results.

E-commerce and Direct Sales

Many poultry producers are now offering online ordering through their websites or local delivery programs. Digital marketing supports these efforts by driving traffic to e-commerce pages, promoting seasonal specials, and keeping customers informed with newsletters and updates. This shift not only increases revenue but strengthens relationships between the farm and the customer.

Simplifying the Process with Sisbro Innovation
Digital marketing might sound overwhelming, especially when you’re managing a busy farm—but it doesn’t have to be. That’s where Sisbro Innovation comes in. We offer affordable tools that make managing your social media stress-free. In as little as four hours a month, we can help you plan, schedule, and automate all your posts—so you

can focus on your birds, not your inbox.

And now, with our new AI Virtual Assistant services, you can take your farm’s customer experience to the next level. From answering FAQs to helping customers place orders or schedule deliveries, our AI solutions keep your business responsive and professional around the clock.

Give Sisbro Innovation a call today—and let us help you grow your poultry business with smart, simple digital solutions.

Elevate your company’s online presence with the professional solutions offered by Sisbro Innovation. Our comprehensive services include new website development, existing website enhancements, Online Reputation Management, Virtual Assistant support for social media posting, phone support, and AI Bot services to streamline customer interactions and improve responsiveness. Visit us at www.sisbroinnovation.com, or contact us directly at (800) 291-9102. For a tailored approach, call Kathryn Ramos at (719) 237-9155 to schedule your FREE consultation today.



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