

The Stanislaus Farm News

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture



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



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M & J Farms raises East Friesen, Lacaune and Assaf breed milking sheep near Hughson. See Page 4 for the full story.

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2025 TRAININGS



Register here:

<https://stanfarmbureau.org/events/>

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

Everyone operating a class C vehicle carrying
hazardous material must be trained.
Pricing: Member \$40/Nonmember \$50

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All proceeds from this fundraiser directly benefit our local ag community. Funds raised help us purchase livestock animals from deserving youth at the Stanislaus County Fair and provide scholarships to students pursuing degrees in agriculture. It's one of the many ways YF&R invests in the future of our industry and supports the next generation of agricultural leaders.

Tickets can be purchased through our website or by reaching out to any YF&R member. Your support makes a difference—we hope you'll join us in giving back while getting the chance to win big!

For questions or to learn more, please contact the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau office. Let's keep agriculture strong in our county—together!



Ranchers (YF&R) are excited to announce our 2025 Sweepstakes Fundraiser—and we need your support! This year, we've put together three incredible prize packages, each valued at \$1,000, thanks to generous donations from insureCAL, American AgCredit,

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All tickets are \$100 each and can be purchased on our website or from a YF&R member. Please call our office with any questions!



Woolly Innovation: Hughson Sheep Farmers Grow a Greener Garden

By Vicky Boyd

Marcie and Josh Davis have taken what was essentially a waste product and turned it into an all-natural specialty fertilizer they believe will benefit commercial nurseries and home gardeners alike. Marketed as Woolly Garden, their pelletized product is made from the roughly 8,000 pounds of wool produced annually by their herd of 500 to 600 milking sheep near Hughson. The fertilizer resembles pelletized rabbit chow and provides 9% nitrogen and 3% soluble potash, according to the third-party analysis required by the California Department of Food and Agriculture as part of registration. But as Josh joked, that was probably their lowest analysis, and the nitrogen usually runs about 2% higher.

What sets Woolly Garden apart from most standard fertilizers is it slowly breaks down and releases nitrogen, providing sustained food to plants rather than potentially burning them with high nitrogen rates. The

wool also readily absorbs moisture, helping save water and keeping plants hydrated between waterings.

PUTTING WOOL TO THE COMMERCIAL TEST

Jesse Hernandez, owner of Morris Wholesale Nursery in Riverbank, has been conducting trials with both the Davises' wool pellets as well as their raw wool. In June, he initially looked at raw wool as a type of mulch applied about 0.4 inch thick to manage weeds in potted aster plants. He compared it to their normal pre-emergent herbicide treatment.

"Low and behold, the weed control was there," Hernandez said of the wool, adding it provided as good if not better control than the chemicals. He also saw the plants in the wool-treated pots were 20% to 30% larger during the early growth stages, likely due to the slow-release nitrogen.

In addition, Hernandez is experimenting with the wool pellets as potential replacements for hydrogel polymers that nurseries regularly use to improve plant hydration. He blended 2

pounds of wool pellets per 1 cubic yard of potting soil.

"Normally in nurseries, we try to have a controlled watering regimen, but the fact remains that organic soils have a tendency to dry to the point that water just shies away," he said. "The wool does exactly the same thing (as polymers), but they're organic. It's a beautiful byproduct from something that's been thrown away."

Keeping the plants hydrated becomes even more important in six packs and ground cover flats where the plants are surrounded by only a small amount of soil and dry out quickly. Because the pellet trials were just started in June, Hernandez said he doesn't have final results.

"Pellets incorporated into the soil definitely work, but because we only started the project here in June, some of the plants are still developing," he said. "But the early results are very positive."

He said he believed the pellets also greened up the plants slightly because of their slow-release nitrogen.

Hernandez planned to increase the use rate to 4 pounds of pellets per cubic yard of soil



Marcie and Josh Davis sell their Woolly Garden wool pellet specialty fertilizer through Amazon as well as at the Ripon and Oakdale farmers markets.



(from left) Morgan Lourenco, Georgia Davis, Gregory Lourenco and Jackson Davis sit atop bags of raw wool waiting to be made into pellets.

to examine potential differences in future trials.

THE QUEST FOR UPCYCLING WOOL

The Davises operate M & J Farms, which milks sheep twice daily and sells the milk to Bellwether Farms near Petaluma to produce yogurt and cheese. Since they began the operation in 2015, it has grown from about 50 head to the now 500 to 600 head.

The Davises have their sheep shorn twice a year. But since their animals were bred for milk production and not wool, they didn't have a profitable outlet for the coarser fleece. That prompted them to look for ways to upcycle what is a waste product.

Initially Marcie tried making wool dryer balls, but she found they couldn't compete with cheap imports. The Davises then looked into using wool to make a specialty fertilizer, which Marcie said wasn't a new idea.

"We didn't invent the concept, but I think it's more prevalent in the Midwest, Northeast and mountain states," Marcie said.

Much of the limited research on wool pellets has been conducted by the University

of Vermont. In one trial using spinach and tomatoes, the UV researchers found they performed comparably to organic fertilizers when both were applied based on the same nitrogen rates.

Details have yet to be worked out, but Benjamin Hoover, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo associate professor of sustainable nursery production, said he planned to offer students research on the wool pellets as a senior project option this fall.

One area of interest includes looking at whether top dressing or incorporating the wool pellets increases water-use efficiency compared to an untreated control, he said. Another is whether the wool pellets result in less nutrient run-off than the control.

As Hoover has done in the past, he said he also may add using the wool pellets as a top dress to reduce weeds in containers as a research option.

THE ROAD TO WOOLY GARDEN

In this age of the Internet, Marcie said they were able to research how to process their wool and learned that shredding it first speeds pelletization.

They purchased a pellet mill from Indiana-based Buskirk engineering, but Josh said he preferred a shredder from Chechnya. It took six to eight months to receive the imported machine.

The pelletizing process heats the wool up to about 180 degrees, creating an easy to handle product. In order to market a fertilizer directly to consumers, CDFA requires it first be registered.

The state also requires a third-party laboratory conduct a nutrient analysis. But completing the necessary registration forms and making sure all of the so-called I's were dotted and T's were crossed was a challenge, Marcie said. The Davises began producing the pellets in February and marketing them in April.

They recommend mixing in about 1 tablespoon of pellets into the soil for each 6-inch pot. For a garden space, they recommend spreading 1 pound of pellets around 15 square feet. Based on their experience, they said the pellets will last six to eight months before users need to add more.

The Davises currently sell their Woolly Garden pellets through Amazon in 2- and 5-pound bags and at a handful of Northern

California nurseries. They also market their pellets along with their U.S. Department of Agriculture-certified lamb meat at the Ripon and Oakdale farmers markets.

In the future, Josh said he'd like to develop a 50-pound bag designed for commercial nurseries.



After they are processed, the wool pellets resemble rabbit chow.



Six-year-old Jackson Davis holds some of the raw wool used to make the Woolly Garden specialty fertilizer in his hand.

Photos Contest !!!

Am I eligible?

The contest is open to anyone (professional photographer or not) in Stanislaus County.

How many photos may I enter?

An entrant may submit up to five photos.

What are the prizes?

The first place winner receives \$250 cash and will be featured on the cover of our Membership special.

Contest Rules

- Photos must highlight Stanislaus County agriculture.

- Written agreement to terms and conditions is required.

- The model release portion of the entry form must also be completed and signed by each entrant; a parent or guardian must sign for a minor.

- All photos submitted become property of Stanislaus County Farm Bureau*.

- Stanislaus County Farm Bureau may, without offering any consideration to or obtaining the further permission of its submitter, use any submitted photo for any purpose*.

** Intended uses include but not limited to newspaper, E-news, social media, general publications and marketing materials around Stanislaus County Agriculture and Farm Bureau.

Photo requirements and preferences

- Images from mobile devices may be submitted if they are

high resolution.

- Turn off the date stamp option on your camera. Photos on which a date stamp or photographer's name is visible will be disqualified.

- All photos must be in .jpg format.

What is the entry deadline?

Entries must be entered by September 26, 2025.

How do I enter?

Email your photos to abid@stanfarmbureau.org or submit via our google form.

Agreement

By entering this contest, you grant to Stanislaus County Farm Bureau and to its affiliates and member county Farm Bureaus a royalty-free,

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RATES: Display rates on request. Terms are cash. Ads should be paid for at time of first insertion or immediately after receipt of bill if order is placed by telephone or mail. ERRORS: The Stanislaus Farm News will not be liable for more than one incorrect insertion. Errors must be called to the attention of the Classified Advertising Department not later than 4 p.m. on the Tuesday following publication of the ad. Claims for adjustment must be made within 15 days. We reserve the right to reject or revise any advertisement.

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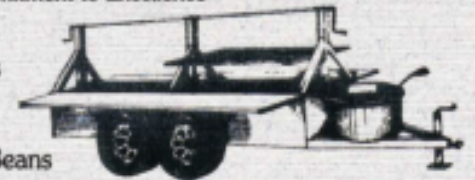
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California Farm Bureau Advocacy in Action

Source: *Ca Farm Bureau*

Water

The California Farm Bureau plans to attend all meetings of the California State Water Resources Control Board's second statewide agricultural expert panel.

Farm Bureau was involved in the first expert panel and has heavily litigated the issue. Litigation related to the Central Coast Agriculture Order that Farm Bureau was involved in led to convening of the second expert panel.

The state's second statewide agricultural expert panel will meet in person and virtually Aug. 8 and Aug. 14, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., to evaluate the data collected as part of the state's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program and consider the approaches adopted in waste discharge requirements issued by the Central Valley Regional Water

Quality Control Board for growers in the eastern San Joaquin River watershed.

To register to participate or to learn more, go to www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/agriculture/2025-expert-panel.html.

Meanwhile, the State Water Resources Control Board last week released a revised draft update to the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan and seeks public comment on the document through Sept. 10.

The announcement begins a public review and comment period on the proposal that would update measures in the Bay-Delta plan to protect the Sacramento River, the delta and associated tributaries

The revised draft includes proposed changes based on input and comments received throughout the planning process, including additional options for flow and habitat, and refinements to the water-user-supported alternative titled "Healthy Rivers and Landscapes," also known as the "voluntary agreements."

State law requires that the state water board adopt water quality control plans to protect and balance beneficial uses of water, including municipal, industrial, agricultural, and fish and wildlife uses.

The board scheduled a public hearing to receive comments on the revised document on Sept. 8 and 9 in Sacramento.

California Farm Bureau plans to submit written comments. Additional information

on opportunities to comment are available on the board's notice.

Williamson Act

Solano County Farm Bureau member Daniel Jones provided testimony in support of state Senate Bill 5, aimed at safeguarding California's Williamson Act lands from being swept into infrastructure financing districts.

Jones provided testimony in support of the legislation, authored by state Sen. Christopher Cabaldon, D-West Sacramento, at a July 16 hearing before the state Assembly Committee on Local Government.

The bill would exclude the taxes levied upon a parcel of land enrolled in or subject to a Williamson Act contract or a farmland security zone contract from allocations to an enhanced infrastructure district or community revitalization authority. The legislation passed from the committee with bipartisan support

Ultra-processed foods

California Farm Bureau continues to oppose state legislation that seeks to address public health concerns by classifying food into two categories: ultra-processed food or not ultra-processed food.

Farm Bureau's concerns about Assembly Bill 1264, by Assembly Member Jesse Gabriel, D-Encino, were shared last week with the Senate Environmental Quality Committee. While the bill advanced out of committee and heads to the Senate Appropriations Committee, many key issues are unresolved.

Concerns remain about liability implications and the lack of clarity on what qualifies as ultra-processed food. Despite amendments, the bill still does not provide the technical specificity for stakeholders to be confident in its direction. Farm Bureau plans to continue working with coalition partners to voice concerns about the legislation.

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Closes October 31, 2025



Leadership & Education in Ag Fund Grants \$100,000 to San Joaquin A+

Established in 2023, Stanislaus Community Foundation’s Leadership and Education in Ag Fund (LEAF) supports agriculture students, future leaders, and current workers in Stanislaus County through ag-focused leadership programs and scholarships – resulting in a stronger talent pipeline for the Ag industry in our community. SCF recruited ten local ag leaders to provide insight into the current landscape of agriculture in our region and help identify impact opportunities. Committee members include:

Ashley Ahlem, Ahlem Dairy
 Joti Aulak, Stanislaus Foods
 Celeste Ayers, GALLO
 Melanie Chiesa, Martella Farms
 Jacob DeBoer, American Ag Credit
 Ali Morr Gemperle, Gemperle Family Farms
 Anna Genasci, Stanislaus Farm Bureau
 Jessica Godden, Stanislaus Partners in Education
 Pat Romero, Romero Farming
 Scott Severson, Mid Valley Ag Services

Working with SCF, the committee granted \$100,000 to San Joaquin A+, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preparing local students to be successful citizens who earn a

living wage in a career that they love – without having to leave their community. The funding will support the expansion of San Joaquin A+’s successful workforce development program (currently operating in San Joaquin County) to

bolster the agriculture sector in Stanislaus County. Offered in partnership with Stanislaus Partners in Education, the program will provide 100 students (ages 17-19) from underserved communities with career exposure opportunities, professional skills training, and opportunities for paid internships.

“We are so grateful for this investment from the Stanislaus Community Foundation and the Leadership and Education in Ag Fund. At San Joaquin A+, we believe that every young person deserves access to meaningful career opportunities, especially in industries that define the identity and economy of our region. With this support, we’re excited to expand our proven model into Stanislaus County, connecting more students to professional skills, real-world experiences, and pathways to careers in agriculture, right here at home,” said Kai Kung, CEO of San Joaquin A+.

Melissa Van Diepen, Chief Philanthropy Officer at Stanislaus Community Foundation, emphasized the significance of the investment: “This is more than a grant, it’s a long-term strategy to strengthen one of the region’s most vital industries. We’re grateful to our advisory committee and to San Joaquin A+ for helping us build a future where local talent can thrive right here at home.”

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Your support plays a vital role in Stanislaus County Farm Bureau's efforts in defining and addressing the issues facing the Agricultural Industry. We would like to thank our President's Club Members!

Making Healthy Choices, Organic and Conventional

I love fresh summer produce. Walking through the grocery store or my local farmers market takes me back to my Central Valley roots, when I would follow my dad through nectarine orchards and watermelon fields in California. We would sample pomegranates and pluots fresh in the field, long before any of these products were trendy. My dad showed me how to assess ripeness for good flavor. He taught me to steer clear of beehives and rattlesnake dens. And he taught me to value the final product over the production method. Whether organic or conventional, my dad wanted me to understand how my food was grown and to appreciate the men and women who grew it.

Organic and Conventional

We had organic and conventional produce in our home. It wasn't an either-or choice for us. There was no ranking. My dad

helped me see the benefits of both, and he taught me the ABCs of shopping for fresh produce. Those are lessons I apply weekly as I shop in urban markets, miles away from the nearest farms.

A – Assess for Flavor and Quality

Even now, I will call my dad early in the summer to ask him what is looking good this year. How did the weather treat the grapes? Will the early plums have good flavor, or should I wait for mid-summer varieties? To be clear, this quality check-in is all about flavor and preference. If you like your fruit on the tart side, the nutritional value is no different than fruit with a higher sweetness profile. Any produce that has made it to your local grocery store is safe for consumption. Fruit that was spoiled with an untimely rain shower or hit by a late freeze will get tossed in the field. If your peach has a little scar or bruise, you can just trim it off and enjoy the rest. Or, one of my favorite tricks, consider poaching them for a dessert topper.

B – Buy What You'll Eat

Growing up around California agriculture and now working on behalf of farmers across the country, I have had the opportunity to see firsthand the sustainable and regenerative practices that farmers are using to keep our soil healthy and our air and water clean. What farmers cannot control is the food waste that can happen when produce gets to kitchens across the country. This is why my dad taught me to only buy what I can eat—and share the rest. Consumers can do our part by being good stewards of the produce we buy for ourselves and our families. Let's keep reaching for those healthy, farm fresh snacks!

C – Clean Your Produce

Whether you are buying conventional or organic, you should always wash your produce. But this washing has nothing to do

See Health on page 14

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From Health on page 13

with the pesticides (conventional or organic) that may have been used in the field. I have lost count of the number of times, as a kid, that I enjoyed fruit fresh off the tree. My dad would simply instruct me to brush the dirt off with a clean handkerchief or t-shirt. Why was my dad confident it was safe for his young daughter to eat fresh from the field? Just like all farmers, he thinks about the safety of his family first, and he knows that when it comes to pesticide residue, federal regulations are strict. How strict are they? So strict that the Environmental Protection Agency sets regulations for residue levels to be at least 10 times below what researchers have found to be safe. To put this in context for your own snacking, you would need to eat more than 850 apples in ONE day to exceed the safety threshold for pesticide residue exposure. (Refer back to Step B.) Produce washing is about rinsing off any remaining dirt or debris from the field and handling.

Health and Affordability

Ultimately, price is going to be a major factor in my shopping decisions. For example, I am happy to buy conventionally grown car-

rots for a dollar less, as I know they are just as safe and nutritious. I'm also happy to splurge on organic heirloom carrots when I want a fancier side of roast veggies for the menu. My choices for healthy eating take into account what fits my budget and meal plans for the week. When I stock up on fresh tomatoes at the farmers market this weekend and pickup red seedless grapes at the grocery store, my goal is to get some fiber and a dose of vitamin C—and hopefully, I can find some good deals along the way.

No matter the ratio of organic to conventional purchases in my shopping cart, however, my purchases are part of a healthy, well-balanced diet. And I know I am supporting hard-working farmers who care for their land and make choices that best fit their business and meet market demands. These are choices I can feel good about, and that I trust my dad can be proud of.

Kari Barbic is a director of communications at the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Dear Beef Supporter of the Stanislaus County Fair




Thank You for supporting, and or purchasing a market beef animal! Your support to youth in agriculture has not gone unnoticed! We hope you have enjoyed the process. Our SCBS was developed to promote youth with a love for the beef industry. In the last eleven years, we have provided the following:

1. Increased the average price per pound on market steers from \$3.00 to \$6.00 /lb. at the Stanislaus County Fair
2. Created a carcass contest that awards buckles in the following three areas: Rate of Gain, Carcass contest and Super Steer.
3. Provides the opportunity for youth to show market beef cattle through offering (5-6) merit awards per year. Roughly 50 over the last 10 years at \$1500 for each merit award
4. Providing scholarships to our graduating seniors who have applied, interviewed and then attended a post- secondary school. 1-5 scholarships per year at \$500-\$1,500 per scholarship depending on the involvement of the youth.


WE INVITE YOU TO OUR ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER ON AUGUST 23RD that allows our committee to honor hard work, community support and the love for agriculture. Please know that any and all contributions made to our organization are distributed back to the youth in the forms of scholarships, merit awards, and carcass awards.

Awards dinner will be held at: Diamond Bar Arena
 August 23RD, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.;
 Social and dinner at 6:00 p.m.
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 \$65.00 per ticket or choose a level for Dinner Sponsors

Sponsorship Opportunities
Dinner Sponsorships: Cattle Barron, Prime, Gun, Choice, Ranch Hand (call to see what's included!)
Award Sponsorships: Buckles & Chairs for Champion of Rate of Gain, Carcass Contest & Super Steer
Merit Award Sponsorships: Awarded to livestock exhibitor to help cover cost of raising a market beef
Scholarships: Any amount donated that will be awarded to our Seniors during the awards banquet



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Enhancing Worker Safety in Agriculture, Food, and Fuel Industries: Every STEP Counts

The following information is provided by Nationwide®, your approved insurance and financial services company.

In high-risk industries like agriculture, food processing, and fuel distribution, one misstep can change a life forever. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the agriculture sector alone recorded 453 worker deaths in 2021 — a fatality rate nearly five times higher than the average across all industries.¹ While safety standards have improved, even one preventable injury or death is too many.

Why Worker Safety Matters

A strong safety culture protects your most valuable asset — your people. It also reduces costly incidents, improves productivity, and supports long-term business success. But how do you build a culture where safety is second nature?

That's where Every STEP Counts comes in.

Introducing the STEP Framework Nationwide's Every STEP Counts program is a structured, educational framework designed to help businesses reduce risk and improve safety outcomes. It focuses on four key areas:

S – Selection and Orientation
Hire right, start

strong.

This phase helps employers identify candidates with the right skills and experience for the job. It also emphasizes the importance of a robust orientation process to set expectations, reinforce safety protocols, and improve retention.

T – Training and Safety Programs
Keep safety top of mind.

Ongoing training is essential to maintaining a safe workplace. This component provides access to regulatory, general, and industry-specific safety materials to help teams stay informed and compliant.

E – Events and Losses

Respond with care and clarity.

Even with the best precautions, incidents can happen. This phase supports effective reporting, offers innovative solutions dur-

ing a loss, and promotes prompt, compassionate care for injured workers.

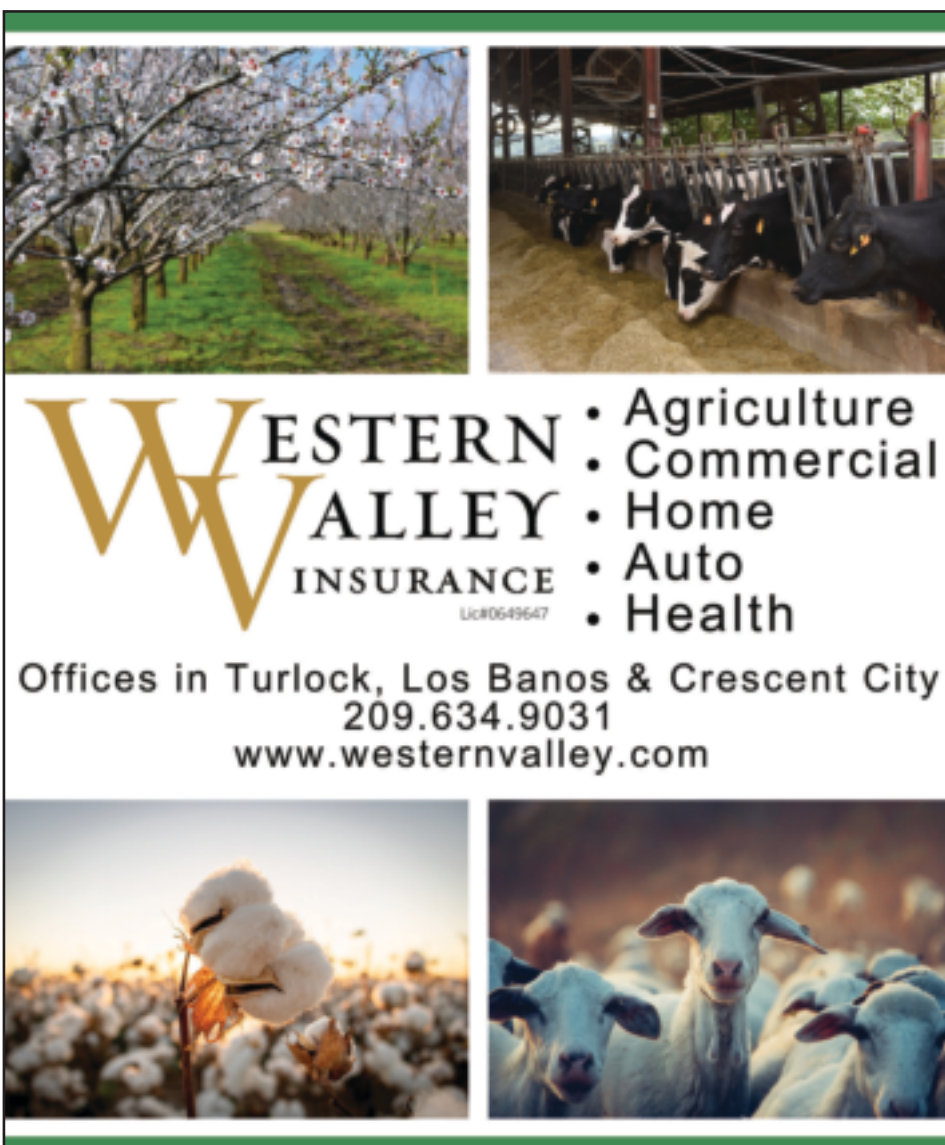
P – Post-Event Understanding and Actions
Learn, recover, and improve.

After an incident, it's critical to analyze what happened and take steps to prevent recurrence. This includes formalizing return-to-work programs and conducting root cause analyses to drive continuous improvement.

Why Every STEP Matters

Understanding when and where risks are most likely to occur is key. Research shows that 40% of worker injury claims happen

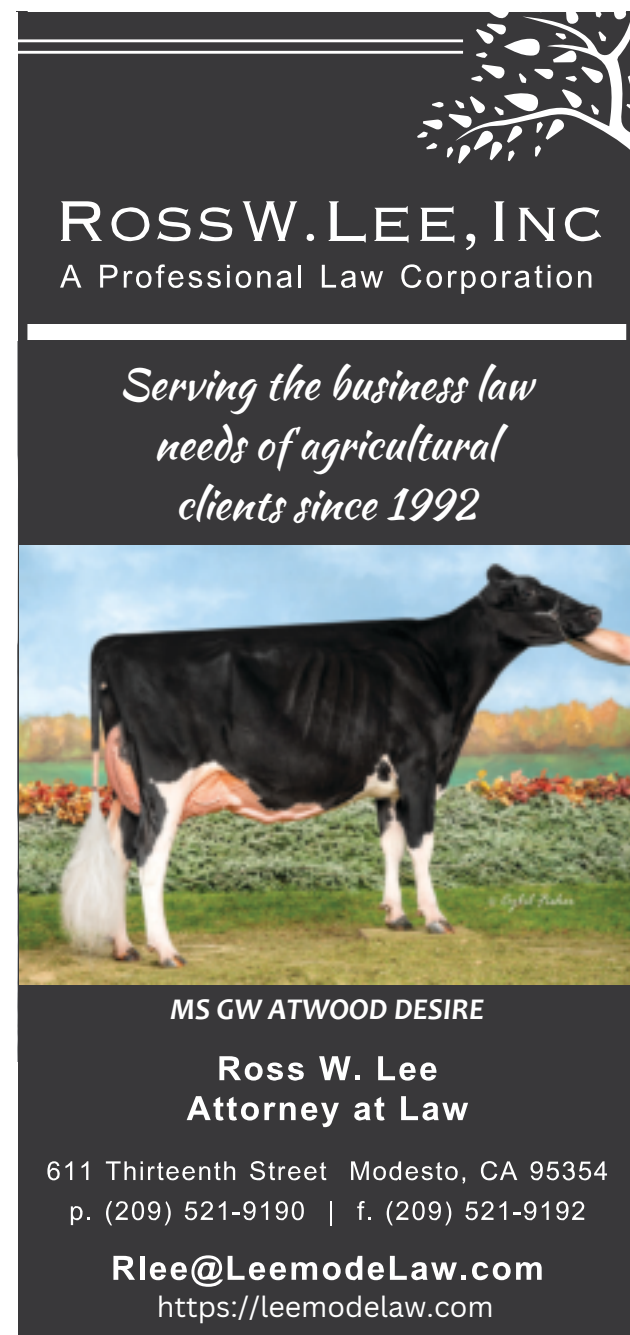
See Safe on page 21



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We've got 50 acres of clean, flat farmland available in Vernalis, California, right across the road from our compost facility. It was previously used for almonds, but the orchard has been removed and the ground is ready to prep for farming. We're open to suggestions on what to plant.

Water is available on site, and the land needs to be prepped for planting.

We're looking for a dependable farmer interested in a sharecropping deal – no monthly rent, just a fair split of the profits. You bring the work and experience; we provide the land.

If you're interested or want to talk details, contact Tim Hester, General Manager at Recology Blossom Valley Organics North, at thester@recology.com

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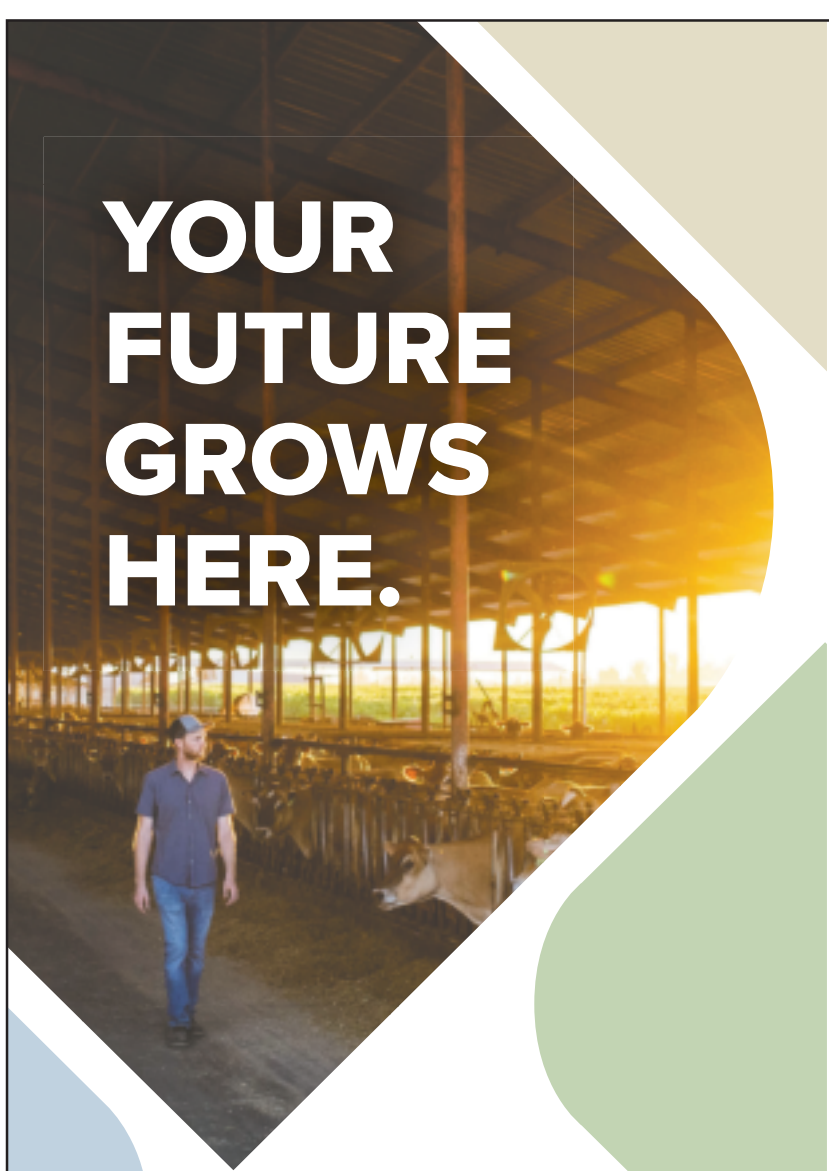
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Cal/OSHA Seeks Common Ground on H5N1 Dairy Safety Petition

Senior officials from the Cal/OSHA Standards Board have urged representatives of California dairy employers and Valley Voices—a voter registration and political mobilization organization that recently entered the occupational safety and health space by petitioning the board for revisions to the zoonotic aerosol transmissible disease standard. Valley Voices' petition calls for extensive employee testing and significantly expanded paid sick leave in response to H5N1 avian influenza. These proposals raise serious concerns regarding employee privacy, logistical feasibility and workplace dynamics. H5N1 typically causes only mild illness in humans—such as conjunctivitis and nasal congestion—leading many employees to prefer continuing to work and reserving sick leave for more serious health issues. At the standards board's June meeting, dairy industry representatives highlighted their considerable efforts to protect public and worker health during the H5N1

outbreak. In contrast, public commenters organized by Valley Voices alleged widespread noncompliance with existing occupational safety and health standards within the dairy sector. Cal/OSHA responded by detailing its ongoing efforts to monitor and address noncompliance. Several board members expressed concern about the stark differences in the portrayals offered by dairy industry representatives, agency officials and Valley Voices supporters. As a result, the board is working to bridge these perspectives and identify common ground moving forward. Staff contact: Bryan Little, blittle@cfbf.com

Governor Signs AB 525 to Extend Agricultural Vehicle BIT Exemption

Assembly Bill 525 authored by Assembly Member Tom Lackey, R-Palmdale, was signed by the governor and supported by California Farm Bureau. AB 525 would extend the current exemption for "agricultural vehicle" from the California Highway Patrol's (CHP) Basic Inspection of Terminals (BIT) Program by five years. The BIT

Program requires CHP to inspect vehicles, maintenance records and driving records as part of a performance-based system for selecting truck terminals. Staff contact: Steven Fenaroli, sfenaroli@cfbf.com

USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Veterans Webinar Series

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is offering a free webinar series for military veterans, transitioning service members and military spouses on how to work with USDA to prepare for a career in agriculture. The webinar series is designed to provide information about the USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher programs and resources for the military community. Topics for the Aug. 13 webinar include the USDA Farmers First initiative, disaster relief and agricultural taxes. The Aug. 14 webinar topics will include Farm Service Agency county committees, Natural Resources Conservation Service local working groups and state technical committees, and a discussion on becoming market-ready. Registration can be accessed here. Staff contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cfbf.com

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Agricultural Trade Boosts Farms and the Economy

By: Zippy Duvall, American Farm Bureau President

U.S. farmers and ranchers are committed to growing high-quality agricultural products and safe, nutritious food for families near and far. Here in the U.S. and abroad, American-grown means high quality and value. We know that our products can compete anywhere in the world, when barriers are removed. That's why we are eager to see a boost in trade opportunities for U.S. farmers and ranchers with new and existing markets.

Trade matters to farmers and ranchers because we need export markets to help us remain competitive and economically sustainable. If we're going to keep growing the food, fiber, and renewable fuel that our country needs for national security, we need to ensure that farms of all sizes have opportunities for growth. Agricultural trade can maximize the value of our

products. For example, some cuts of meat are more popular in other countries, and a variety of fresh produce is grown for both consumers in the U.S. and abroad.

When farmers have this variety of market opportunities, they can keep their businesses running and support jobs across our nation's economy. Our agricultural trade helps to create jobs right here on American soil. Did you know that more than 1 million full-time jobs are supported by U.S. agricultural exports? According to USDA data from 2023, about half of those jobs were on the farm and the remaining half were across related industries like shipping, processing and storage. If we look at trade as a return on investment, agricultural exports double our returns, with every \$1 of farm products sold overseas bringing back more than \$2 in economic activity here in the U.S.

At Farm Bureau, we are grateful for the administration's focus on achieving new trade deals with a commitment to making agriculture a priority. With the recently announced framework deals in the EU, Japan, Indonesia, South Korea and the Philippines, in addition to recent deals with Vietnam and the U.K., we see real opportunities for U.S. farmers and ranchers. We are urging the administration to finalize new deals and to reach agreements with large agricultural markets like China.

The stakes are high when it comes to trade negotiations, and unfortunately, farmers and ranchers are often first to bear the



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brunt of retaliatory tariffs. That's why we consistently urge the administration to limit trade disruptions and work to resolve disagreements quickly. Farmers and ranchers, our employees, our families, our rural communities, and our fellow Americans across the country cannot afford to lose markets or the trading relationships we have built with our businesses over the years. One-fifth of U.S. agricultural products are exported, and behind those products are hundreds of thousands of hardworking Americans.

Let's keep working to open new markets and strengthen our existing partnerships so that U.S. farmers and ranchers can keep leading the world in growing safe and sustainable food for families at home and around the world.

From Safe on page 16

within the first year on the job.² That's why careful selection and onboarding are so important.

Investing in safety also pays off. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, employers can save \$4 to \$6 for every \$1 spent on effective safety programs.³ The STEP program supports this with sample safety plans and access to additional training resources.

In 2022, private industry employers reported 2.8 million nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses.⁴ Ensuring employees and supervisors know how to respond to an incident is critical that's why the program of-

fers an incident reporting form, toolbox talk on how to handle an incident, and technical bulletin on reporting near-miss incidents.

And when the unexpected happens, STEP offers resources to support recovery. These include a return-to-work sample program and root cause analysis templates to help businesses learn from incidents and improve safety practices.

Take the Next STEP Toward a Safer Workplace

The Every STEP Counts program is more than a checklist—it's a comprehensive risk management solution. From hiring and training to incident response and recovery, the program helps ensure a holistic approach to creating and maintaining a safe

workplace. Members are encouraged to take steps toward a safer, more productive work environment – because every step counts.

Learn more at [Nationwide.com/AgribusinessWorker-Safety](https://www.nationwide.com/AgribusinessWorker-Safety)

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2. WCIRB: Employee Tenure and Claim Frequency Study
3. U.S. Department of Energy: Investment in Safety
4. OSHA: Workplace Safety Statistics



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- **Capacity Chemical**
Westley 231-3297
- **East Valley Ag Corporation**
Modesto 606-0549
- **Exact**
Modesto 544-8600

Misc. Services

- **Clark Pest Control**
Modesto 556-5200
- **Cover Specialty Services**
Modesto 988-3864
- **Drone for Hire**
Modesto 818-4109
- **Ex OpCo LLC**
Modesto 544-8600
- **Modesto Nuts Baseball Club**
Modesto 572-4487

Petroleum

- **Boyette Petroleum**
Modesto 281-7134
- **George W. Lowry**
Salida 545-0791
- **Valley Pacific Petroleum**
Stockton (209) 948-9412
- **Van de Pol Enterprises**
Keyes 667-0236

Banking/Financial

- **Agri Business Financial Inc**
Oakdale 607-0037
- **Central Valley Community Bank**
Fresno 559-323-3472
- **Edwards, Lien & Toso**
Hilmar 634-9484
- **Farmers & Merchants Bank**
Riverbank 571-4023

- **G&F Ag Services**
Escalon 599-8911
- **Golden State Dairy Service**
Modesto 557-9484
- **Hotsy**
Modesto 578-3925
- **Pacific Distributing Inc.**
Hughson 883-4032

- **McManis Farms Inc**
Modesto 541-9345
- **Melo Farms LLC**
Turlock 585-7852
- **Michael Van Andel**
Modesto 531-4667
- **Ray Ruiz**
Modesto 576-3280
- **Redwood Ranches LLC**
Hughson 883-2603

- **Farm(x)**
Mountain View 559-608-4410
- **FISHBIO**
Oakdale 847-6300
- **Hughes Ag Service**
Modesto 765-6075
- **Recology Inc**
Westley 395-9506

- **Randal Edwards**
Hilmar 634-9484
- **R & J Avila**
Hilmar 678-1723
- **Rocha's Valley Enterprises**
Oakdale 581-1473
- **Smith Chevrolet Co Inc.**
Turlock 632-3946
- **Terra West Group**
Modesto 606-5767
- **Quality Rodent Control, Inc.**
Modesto 225-4124

Processors

- **Grizzly Nut**
Waterford 874-5223
- **Setton Pistachio of Terra Bella Inc**
Terra Bella 559-535-6050
- **Turlock Walnut Co.**
Turlock 668-0955
- **Travaille & Phippen**
Manteca 599-6111

Farm Management

- **Becerra Farm Services**
Oakdale 380-0448
- **Benchmark Farm Management**
Riverbank 869-4290
- **Grover Farm Management**
Modesto 602-3031
- **Mike Gorras Consulting**
Modesto 499-4898
- **TriNut Farm Management**
Ceres 431-3425

Restaurant

- **The Fruit Yard**
Modesto 577-3093
- **Rodin Ranch**
Modesto 577-3224

- **Grimbley Coleman CPA's Inc**
Modesto 527-4220
- **Moss Adams**
Stockton 955-6100
- **Oak Valley Community Bank**
Oakdale 844-7500
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- **Vermeulen Company CPA**
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- **RAYCO**
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- **Turlock Auto Parts**
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- **Turlock Dairy & Refrigeration**
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- **Oxbo**
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- **Starkey & Lucas Farming & Cattle**
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Ceres 602-8899
- **Walter Nicolau**
Denair 538-7600
- **Weaver Bros**
Crows Landing 854-6716
- **Wyeth Dairy Inc.,**
Modesto 545-2101

- **Rumble Ag Service**
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Turlock 667-8378
- **UAV Ag Solutions**
Oakdale 840-2964
- **West Valley Agricultural Service**
Westley 894-3121

California Almonds at the Crossroads: Tariffs, Trade, and Hope for a Better Harvest

Source: AgNet West

California Almonds at the Crossroads: In today's episode of the AgNet News Hour, the AgMeter and Josh McGill dove deep into the challenges and opportunities shaping California's almond industry, joined by Darren Rigg of Minturn Nut Company.

Despite market turbulence, Darren shared a cautiously optimistic view for the coming harvest season. After a rollercoaster of pricing over the past few years—marked by suppressed returns and fluctuating global demand—Rigg emphasized that 2025 may finally offer a glimmer of hope, thanks in part to California's ideal growing conditions this spring and summer.

The episode tackled the impact of a recent 3 billion-pound crop estimate, which spooked the market and dropped prices. Rigg stressed that the estimate was just that—an estimate—and urged growers not to panic. Encouragingly, lower prices reenergized buyer demand, creating the potential to rebound like last year, when almond prices hit their highest point in a decade.

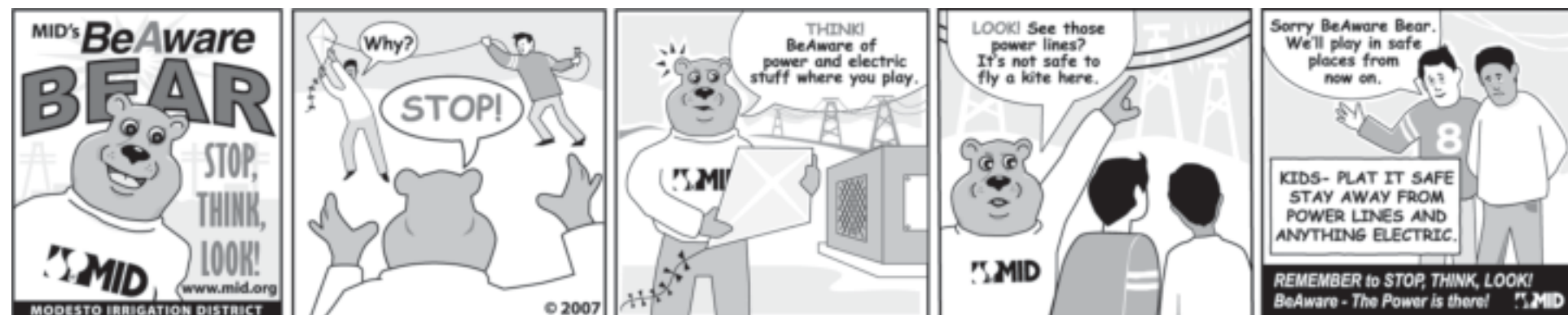
Rigg explained how international trade dynamics and tariffs have created significant uncertainty. While exports remain vital—70 to 90% of Minturn's business is overseas—demand from countries like China has sharply declined since 2017. However, new markets in North Africa, the Middle East, and Turkey are stepping up to fill the gap.

The discussion also highlighted the vital

importance of water access, domestic almond marketing, and the shelf life advantage of California-grown almonds. With freight and labor issues less problematic than in past years, Darren believes the almond industry is positioned to adapt, provided policy makers, marketers, and growers work together.

Josh and the AgMeter closed the episode by emphasizing the resilience of California growers and the superior quality of California almonds. As Darren put it, "We're one trade deal away from making 3 billion pounds of almonds profitable again."

If there's one takeaway from today's show, it's this: the almond industry is still in the fight—and the road ahead, while uncertain, may just lead to better days for California farmers.



Six legacy farms and ranches honored at Agricultural Heritage Club

The California Agricultural Heritage Club inducted six farms and ranches during last month's ceremony at the California State Fair, recognizing families with 100 years or more of continuous operation. Among the honorees were Locke Ranch in San Joaquin County and Hoskins/Pleasants Ranch in Solano County, both of which reached the 175-year milestone under long-standing family management. Additionally, Gowan's Family Orchard in Mendocino County and Tryon Ranches in Del Norte County, both 125 years, and San Gabriel Nursery and Florist in Los Angeles County and Heinke's Family Farm in Butte County, both 100 years, were recognized for their resilience, adaptation and legacy.

Breakthrough could hasten breeding of disease-resistant crops

Farmers could be closer to growing crop varieties that are better at fighting off diseases thanks to a new scientific breakthrough. Researchers at the University of California, Davis, are using artificial intelligence to redesign a key immune receptor in plants, enabling the plants to strengthen their immune response. "We were able to resurrect a defeated receptor, one where the pathogen has won, and enable the plant to have a chance to resist infection in a much more targeted and precise way," said lead author Gitta Coaker, professor at the UC Davis Department of Plant Pathology. Coaker said the method has the potential to help researchers breed more disease-resistant varieties of hundreds of

plant species, including staple crops such as tomatoes and potatoes.

Irrigation may be key to maintaining crop yields in high heat

Farmers have long struggled to keep crop yields up amid high temperatures. But it isn't the heat itself that is most responsible for zapping yields, according to a recent study by researchers at the University of California, Berkeley. The study found that soil moisture, not temperature, is the primary factor that determines crop productivity in high heat. "We've known for a long time that high temperatures are associated with low yields, but we didn't know why," said Vargas Zeppetello, a faculty member in the Department of Environmental Science, Policy and Management. The research could benefit future agricultural production by encouraging greater emphasis on irrigation and soil moisture during high heat events.

Farmers share experiences adopting regenerative agriculture

About five years ago, Kings County farmer John Warmerdam began incorporating regenerative farming practices to grow peaches, plums, nectarines, cherries and almonds. Because he isn't certified organic, Warmerdam doesn't earn a premium when he sells his fruits and nuts, but he said he is still passionate about "doing the right thing." Last month, he and other farmers in the San Joaquin Valley shared their experiences implementing regenerative farming practices with researchers at a symposium organized by the University of California. Speakers at the event agreed

that to succeed, regenerative agriculture needs more investment, improved markets and greater profit margins for farmers.

Peach growers praise fruit quality as yields dip

Mild temperatures in the Central Valley were kind to peaches used for canning this month as farmers harvested their early varieties. "The quality of the fruit is looking really good," Sutter County farmer Chetan Khera said. Growers were projected to supply around 224,000 tons of cling peaches to canneries this year, the California Canning Peach Association estimated, a slight reduction from last year. However, the association reported that early yields were down roughly 12% from initial estimates. Last summer's extreme heat and an unusual bloom pattern this past winter and spring "may have hurt some of our production," said Thomas Gradziel, professor of plant sciences at the University of California, Davis.

Federal forestry cuts fuel wildfire, resource concerns

With wildfire conditions in California expected to increase in coming months, state officials expressed concerns about cuts in staff and funding at the U.S. Forest Service, a division of the Agriculture Department that partners with the state to fight wildfires and manage forests. The proposed federal budget for fiscal year 2026 includes a reduction in Forest Service spending, including for fire suppression. "The key is we need to scale up across the board if we are going to meet our targets and keep our



communities safe,” said Patrick Wright, executive director of the California Wild-fire and Forest Resilience Task Force. “This causes real concern in the federal ability to step up and meet our joint targets.”

California’s fresh apples compete against old Washington fruit

Harvest of Gala apples—the earliest commercial variety to arrive in stores—has started in the Central Valley, with the fruit hitting produce aisles this week. Because California starts picking apples several weeks before Washington state—the nation’s leading producer—providing the

first fresh apples of the year is a key selling point. “As foreign imports start to drop off, last year’s fruit from the Pacific Northwest will remain the only competition for the start of the season,” said Todd Sanders, executive director of the California Apple Commission. Unlike the Evergreen State, which keeps its apples in cold storage and sells them long after harvest ends, apples from the Golden State are picked, packed and shipped fresh.

On the Record: Ricardo Lara discusses California’s insurance crisis

California Insurance Commissioner Ricar-

do Lara spoke with Ag Alert® this month about the state’s insurance crisis and his strategy to stop insurance companies from leaving California and restore access to property insurance for farmers and rural communities. California’s Sustainable Insurance Strategy allows insurers to use catastrophe modeling to better assess modern-day risks—and to pass along the rising cost of reinsurance—in exchange for committing to expand insurance access in high-risk areas. “Our job is to make insurance more available, reliable and fair, especially for those in high-risk, rural areas,” Lara said. “I want farmers to know that we are fighting for them and that we’re not going to stop until we fix this crisis.”

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Adeline Pombo

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7th Year at Stanislaus Fair



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