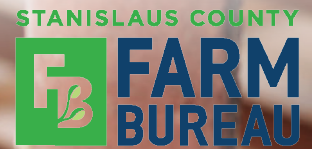


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Official Publication of Stanislaus
County Farm Bureau
Vol.75 No.10 June 21, 2024

"Their ultimate goal is they want to eradicate animal farming entirely and this is a stepping stone," said Sonoma County Farm Bureau, Executive Director, Dayna Ghirardelli.
See Page 26

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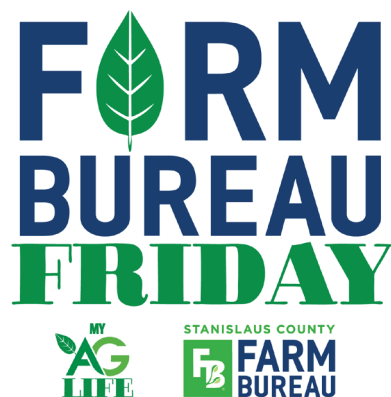
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FRIDAY REVIEW

LEGISLATIVE AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS



Agriculture Employment Policy

Governor Newsom fired back against two Cal/OSHA Standards Board members who publicly and pointedly criticized the administration for directing the Board to remove the pending Indoor Heat Illness proposed rule from consideration at the Board's March meeting. Board Chair Dave Thomas was stripped of his role, replaced by Joseph Alioto, appointed by the Governor to the Board only last year. Laura Stock, whose term expired in June 2023, was immediately dismissed. Board members whose terms have expired often continue to serve at the pleasure of the Governor. The Board is expected to take up a revised Indoor Heat Illness proposed rule on June 20 that excludes corrections activities. Implementation of the proposed standard by the Department of Corrections was estimated by the Department of Finance to add several billion dollars to the already

large fiscal deficit the Legislature is already grappling with to pass a budget by June 15.

In the last two weeks, Farm Bureau-supported legislation offered by Assembly-member Rebecca Bauer-Kahan (D Orinda) advanced through two Senate policy committees to the Senate Appropriations Committee. AB 2011 makes permanent a small employer family leave mediation program and expands the availability of mediation to disputes arising from bereavement leave requirements. The program, administered by the California Civil Rights Department, is set to sunset in 2025. The regulations governing these leaves are lengthy and complex and small employers do not have the means to hire human resources professionals or counsel to advise them on the details. The private right of action in CFRA means any mistake exposes small businesses to lawsuits that could quickly put them out of business. Since its inception, the program has been successful. More than half of the mediated cases have resulted in settlement with hundreds of thousands of dollars going directly to workers rather than plaintiffs' attorneys. The Senate Judiciary Committee passed AB 2011 11-0 on June 4; the Senate Labor, Public Employment and Retirement Committee passed the bill 5-0 on June 12. and referred it to the Assembly Judiciary Committee. Farm Bureau supports AB 2011. Staff: Bryan Little, blittle@cfbf.com

years, undermining the purpose of statutes of limitations by allowing actions to proceed long after records have been lost, memories have faded, witnesses have died, and other problems have arisen that statutes of limitations are designed to address. Staff: Bryan Little, blittle@cfbf.com

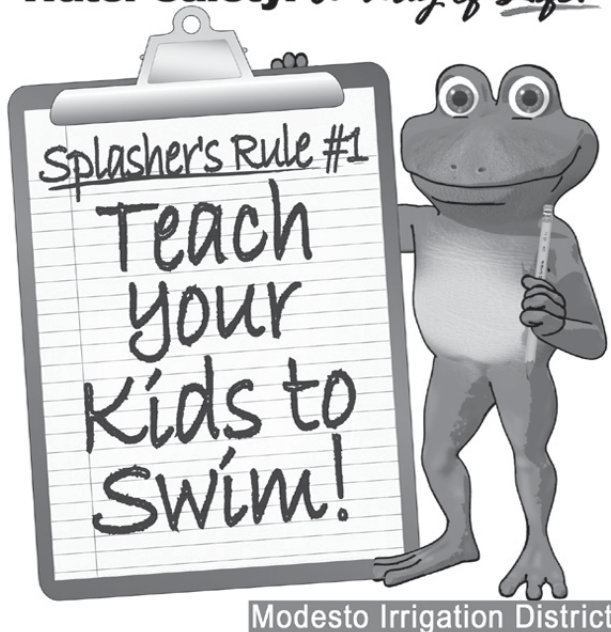
AB 2738 Assemblymember Luz Rivas (D Sylmar), passed the Senate Labor, Public Employment and Retirement Committee on June 12 4-1 and was referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee. AB 2738 will encourage local prosecutor litigation against employers for alleged Labor Code violations (permitted for the first time by Farm Bureau-opposed AB 594, Maieschein, 2023) by requiring a California court to award attorney's fees to a public prosecutor prevailing in a Labor Code related civil action. Farm Bureau opposes. Staff: Bryan Little, blittle@cfbf.com

On June 12, the Agricultural Labor Relations Board approved regulations implementing 2022 card check legislation as proposed and then revised by its subcommittee and directed them to be noticed for an additional 30-day public comment period. Staff: Carl Borden, cborden@cfbf.com.

Ballot Measures

The Legislature has until June 27 to negotiate any qualified ballot measure off the November 2024 ballot. There are currently 12 eligible initiatives. A more comprehensive writeup will be distributed once the ballot has been finalized. The CAFB Board of Directors will also consider positions on ballot initiatives relevant to Farm Bureau.

Water Safety: A Way of Life!



SB 1022 Senator Nancy Skinner (D Berkeley), passed the Assembly Judiciary Committee on a 9-3. Farm Bureau opposes SB 1022 because it expands the existing statute of limitations for any complaint brought by the Civil Rights Department or any of its "authorized representatives" to seven

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From "REVIEW" on page 3

Among them is the Taxpayer Protection and Government Accountability Act (TPA) which would give voters the opportunity to approve all future tax increases. California Farm Bureau has endorsed the measure and is leading the charge to let members know the significance of passing TPA in November. Recently, the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) conducted a survey that was in line with the TPA campaign's own internal polling. Further, the TPA campaign released further polling that shows that after hearing more about the measure, support for TPA jumps to 65%, an overwhelming majority. Polling also found that there was more appetite to reduce the state budget rather than increase spending. Additionally, a supermajority did not favor more bonds. Staff: Steven Fenaroli, sfenaroli@cfbf.com

Energy

Two bills Farm Bureau submitted letters of

support on which are seeking to advance the use of advanced reconductoring and/or grid enhancing technology either have moved from committee or will be heard next week.

- SB 1006 authored by Senator Steve Padilla (D San Diego) would require transmission utilities, as defined, on or before January 1, 2026, to jointly prepare a grid-enhancing technologies strategic plan that is designed to, among other things, cost-effectively increase transmission capacity and increase capacity to connect new renewable energy and zero-carbon resources. The bill would require each transmission utility, on or before January 1, 2026, and at least every 4 years thereafter, to complete an evaluation of which of its transmission and distribution lines can be reconducted with advanced conductors in a cost-effective manner to, among other things, increase transmission or distribution capacity and increase capacity to connect new renewable energy and zero-carbon resources. The plans would also require a timeline for implementation and progress reports on that implementation. The bill will be heard in Assembly Utilities and Energy Committee. on June 19.

- AB 2779 authored by Assemblymember Cottie Petrie-Norris (D Irvine) passed out of the Senate Energy, Utilities Communications Committee with 17 ayes and 1 abstention. The bill would require the California Independent System Operator to report to both the legislature and Public Utilities Commission on any new use of grid enhancing technology (GET) and the savings in deploying that technology. Farm Bureau continues to support the bill as an opportunity to avoid both ratepayer cost and potential transmission sitting on agricultural lands. The bill is headed to Senate Appropriations.

Farm Bureau also submitted another letter of support for AB 2750 authored by Assemblymember James Gallagher (R Yuba City) which would extend the investor-owned utilities (IOUs) obligations to collectively procure their proportionate share of 125 megawatts (MW) of cumulative rated gen-

erating capacity from bioenergy projects to July 1, 2025. As well as expands eligibility of the 5-year extensions for procurement contracts from biomass facilities to include facilities located in areas that voluntarily opt for federal "severe" or "extreme" non-attainment status but that have measured levels of air pollutants below "severe." The bill provides a necessary fix to air districts that voluntarily reclassified themselves to "severe" and "extreme" nonattainment (where actual measured levels of particulate matter are below these classifications). The bill will be heard in Senate Utilities, Energy and Communications Committee on June 18.

Farm Bureau submitted another letter of support for SB 1003 authored by Senator Bill Dodd (D Napa). SB 1003 would direct the Office of Electrical Infrastructure Safety (OEIS) to consider the timeliness of infrastructure upgrades to ensure that the maximum amount of risk from utility sparked wildfires is reduced in the shortest amount of time. Farm Bureau has routinely advocated for greater transparency and consideration of the electric rate affordability crisis when determining which mitigation measures are appropriate. The bill was bumped to the July 1 Assembly Utilities and Energy Committee hearing.

Finally, Farm Bureau resubmitted the coalition letter it authored in support of SB 1374. The bill, authored by Senator Josh Becker (D Menlo Park), among other things, would allow Net Energy Metering Aggregation (NEMA) customers to net or "self-consume" energy in 15-minute intervals, which restores some of the benefits that were removed in the latest Public Utilities Commission (Commission) decision at the end of 2023. It does not fully restore the prior NEMA subtariff but is a step in the right direction. The bill is set to be heard in Assembly Utilities and Energy Committee on June 19 and Farm Bureau has spent considerable time with other supporters in the last few weeks meeting with members to ensure its passage in the committee. Staff contact: Kevin Johnston, kjohnston@cfbf.com

See "REVIEW" on page 8

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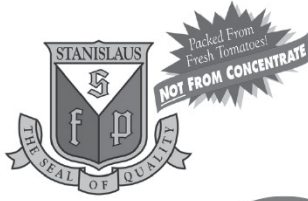
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From "REVIEW" on page 5

Forestry and Wildfire

SB 1101 authored by Senator Monique Limon (D Santa Barbara) will be heard next week in the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources. Farm Bureau previously had a support if amended position on the bill, encouraging the Author to enable expedited state contracting for all forms or fire mitigation, not just prescribed burns. The bill has now been amended and Farm Bureau now is in support of SB 1101. The bill has been amended to include contracts related to preparing lands for prescribed burns. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cbbf.com

AB 2276 authored by Assembly member Jim Wood (D Santa Rosa) and supported by California Farm Bureau passed from the Senate Natural Resources Committee with unanimous support. As discussed previously, the bill revises, improves, and reauthorizes an exemption first created in 2004 which provides an alternative to the Timber Harvest Plan process. It allows relatively

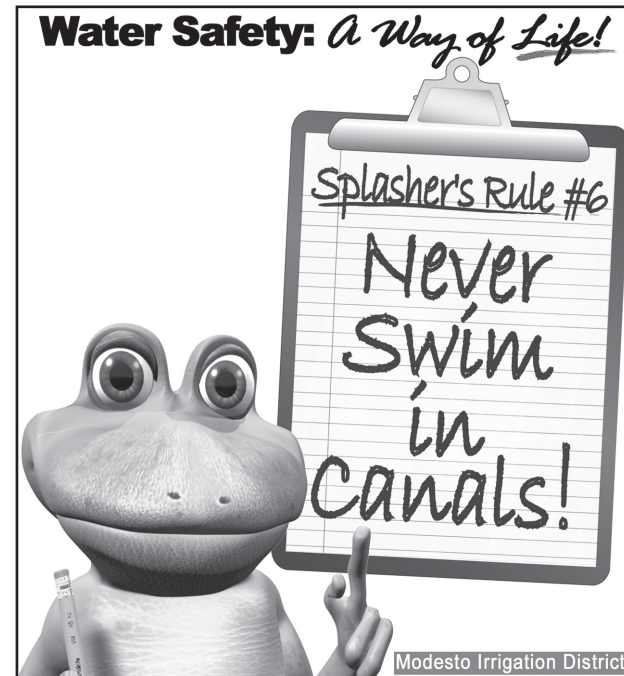
light-touch logging activities (compared to what could be done under a (THP) subject to numerous protective constraints but provides a more economical and easier way to do generally beneficial activities. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cbbf.com

Insurance

Last week, the Little Hoover Commission conducted a Virtual Roundtable on the insurance market and wildfire nexus. Farm Bureau provided public comments regarding the struggles our members have faced accessing affordable and comprehensive insurance. You can watch the testimony from over a dozen witnesses and hear public comments here. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cbbf.com

Next week, the Department of Insurance released draft regulations regarding how it will identify distressed markets and how it will track insurers' requirements to write policies again in those distressed areas based on the insurers' total statewide

market share. The Department will host a webinar on June 26, 2025 explaining the draft regulations which you can view here. Farm Bureau will submit public comments for this webinar. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cbbf.com



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Water

Successful Outcomes for Three Water Bills
One of the bills Farm Bureau fought hardest against in 2023 died a quick death this week. AB 1337, by Assemblymember Buffy Wicks (D Oakland), would have brought all water rights, including pre-1914 and riparian rights, under the full purview of the State Water Resources Control Board when it comes to curtailments – not merely in drought years but in any year and for any reason. After many conversations with

Farm Bureau, the bill's sponsors, and the author's staff, it was clear that no compromises were possible, and the author's staff chose to not pursue the bill further. The bill is dead for the remainder of 2024.

Another bill that Farm Bureau fought heavily throughout 2023 reached a favorable outcome this week. On June 3, AB 460 (Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, D Orinda) was amended to remove a majority of the bill's language that would have stripped due process from water rights holders when the State

Water Resources Control Board pursues and enforcement action. The remaining bill language was amended to merely increase per-incident fines for unauthorized water diversions and add a volumetric fine component. Once these amendments were made, leadership members of the 200-or-

ganization opposition coalition, including Farm Bureau, dropped their opposition to the bill. It subsequently passed the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee.

AB 2079 (Assemblymember Steve Bennett, D Ventura), died in the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee on June 11 after receiving 6 "no" votes by the committee members. The bill would have imposed what is effectively a blanket moratorium on new groundwater wells in most basins. The California Department of Water Resources sponsored the bill. Farm Bureau and other members of the opposition have committed to working with DWR to develop guidance on well permitting to prevent subsidence and interference with drinking water wells. Staff: Alex Biering, abiering@cfbf.com

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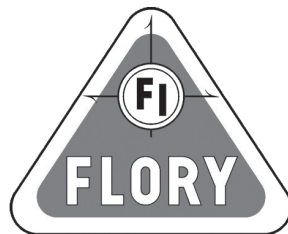
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Turnout for FFA Leadership Conference Indicates Bright Future for California Agriculture

Nearly 7,500 students attended the event, while FFA membership is over 103,000

If this year's state FFA Leadership Conference is any indication, the future of farming in California looks bright.

A record 7,416 middle- and high school students attended this year's conference in Sacramento, said Katie Otto, executive director of development for the California FFA Foundation. She said the FFA as a whole is growing as well.

"Membership grew to over 103,000 state-wide this year, and the conference is keeping pace," she said. "The FFA Leadership Conference is the largest youth conference in California and it's one of the most affordable student conferences at just \$165. Thanks in part to sponsors like Farm Credit, we can make sure that FFA has the ability to enhance opportunities for the students and to support our chapters."

Jacob DeBoer, Senior Regional Marketing Manager with American AgCredit and California FFA Foundation Board Member, noted Farm Credit has been sponsoring FFA for years.

"In addition to supporting programming throughout the year, our sponsor-

ship helped fund many scholarships and awards presented to FFA members at the conference this year in recognition of their achievements in 2023," DeBoer said. "Farm Credit knows FFA members represent the future of ag in California, which is why we are currently committed to providing \$250,000 over five years to help FFA fulfill its mission."

Farm Credit organizations members Ag-West Farm Credit, American AgCredit, CoBank, Colusa-Glenn Farm Credit, Fresno Madera Farm Credit, Golden State Farm Credit and Yosemite Farm Credit are proud supporters of FFA. The organizations are part of the nationwide Farm Credit System – the largest provider of credit to U.S. agriculture.

The four-day conference celebrates the success of FFA members through awards for a wide range of ag-related activities and work-based learning projects. Scholarships and distinguished service awards are also presented. Participants also could choose from seven live general sessions, educational leadership

workshops, networking opportunities with alumni and industry professionals and a career and trade expo.

Otto said FFA is thriving in California for several reasons, but it all starts with high school ag teachers – something she knows from experience.

"I was shy and quiet as a high school freshman and I wasn't sure I wanted to be in FFA in the first place," she recalled. "But an ag teacher encouraged me to participate in the FFA Creed competition, and I did well. I made it to sectional and then regional and was in the state finals and I was hooked. That ag teacher saw something in me and took the time to make me realize there are opportunities and ways to engage in agri-



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culture.”

Among those opportunities are the ability for students to travel, to gain skills and to meet people who can make a difference.

“For each student who participates in a Field Day or a speaking contest, the judges and coaches are alumni or people who work in the industry. It’s likely they may approach you and ask what your plans after high school are. It becomes a self-feeding pipeline,” she said.

And the ag-related career paths are nearly endless, she added.

“We realize ag is broader than boots in the field. Few FFA members will work on a farm, but they might become a formulator at a feed company, an embryologist, a pest control advisor, or an accountant working for an ag-related company. These are all jobs that influence the food and fiber chain,” she said.

Kevin Ralph, California president of Ag-

West Farm Credit, praised the diverse educational opportunities FFA provides its members.

“FFA currently provides educational opportunities in seven pathways – agricultural business, agricultural mechanics, agriscience, animal science, forestry and natural resources, ornamental horticulture and plant and soil science,” Ralph said. “Like Farm Credit, FFA recognizes that the needs of California agriculture are always evolving, and we’re pleased to be able to help make these opportunities available to so many young people.”

Ag education consists of a three-pronged learning model designed to engage and educate all types of students. It includes classroom and laboratory instruction, work-based learning for students not planning on attending a four-year university and student leadership experience through FFA.

Otto said despite headwinds facing California agriculture, she expects FFA to continue to grow and evolve with students and industry. She cited drone technology

and agriscience as two program areas expanding to meet demand.

“As FFA approaches our centennial in 2028, the future of the industry, ag education and FFA looks bright,” she said.

Next year’s conference will be held April 3-6 in Sacramento. Registration will open on December 1.

###

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About the California FFA Foundation: California FFA Foundation serves more than 103,000 California students and strives to make a difference in their lives by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education. To learn more about the California FFA, visit calaged.org.

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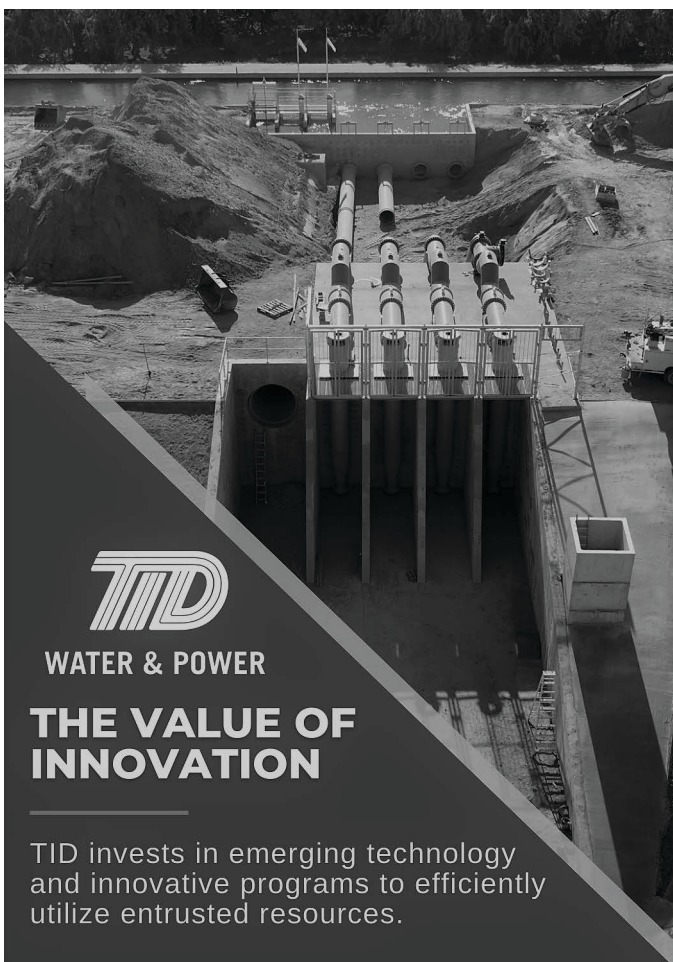
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From the Fields - Josh Barton

Source: CFBF

By Josh Barton, San Joaquin County walnut grower

It's kind of uncharacteristic to have these high, triple-digit temperatures in the beginning of June. This year, specifically, given where the industry is on the walnut side, we have made an aggressive effort to focus any and all of our resources on preserving quality on our products.

Quality is what's going to try to raise all tides. We've done a lot in preparation for this season knowing that our goal was to put the emphasis on quality. We've made a very mitigated irrigation schedule to be on top of it, irrigate more intermittently to satisfy the water demand in the trees. With the heat that we've had in early June, we have gone through and applied Surround on our early varieties in a hope that we can alleviate any sunburn that

may or may not come from this heat.

It's also a really important time because we're trying to get size right now, and when you get into this high-heat index, as your crop is trying to size up, it can hit stall points with really hot temperatures. We really need more of those mid-80-degree, low 90-degree days right now to get really good, consistent size as we transition from post bloom into the heart of the growing season. It's a two-prong approach. We're doing everything we can to monitor our irrigation closely, to not overirrigate but not underirrigate and hit size and quality early on. That helps set the tone for the rest of the growing season.

Early-season fertilizers are going out as well. We're trying to take our nitrogen management plan, and we're already starting to spread or inject fertilizer on the walnuts as well, to try to meet the early demand on our nitrogen budget at this time.



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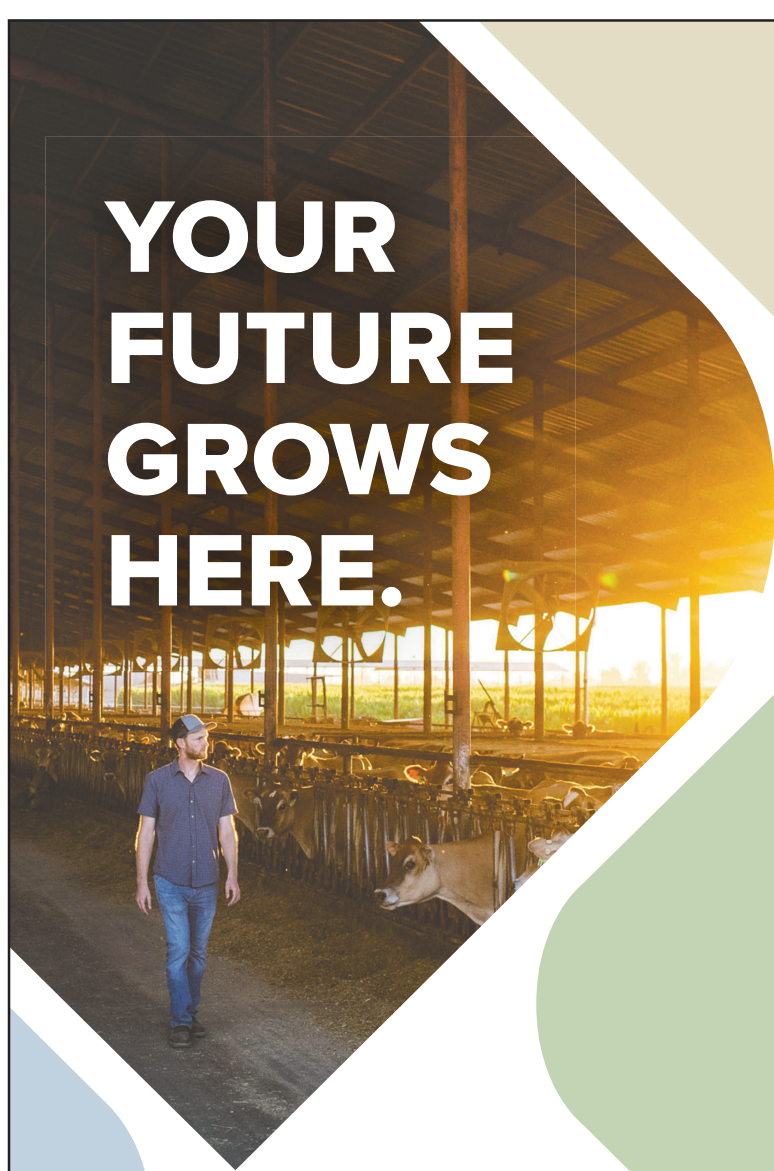
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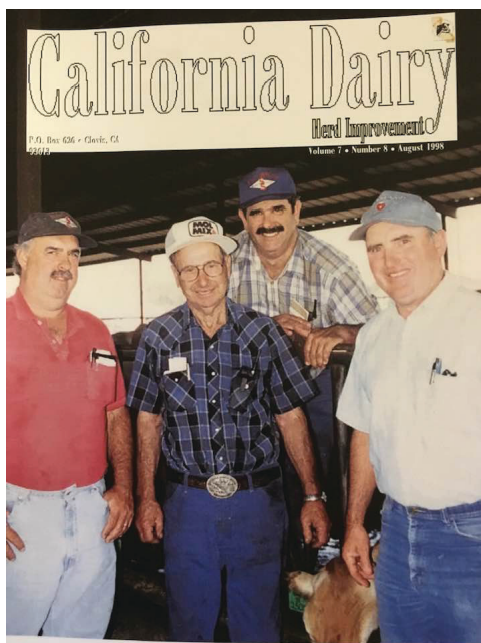
By: *Bill Genasci*

The dairy industry has been pretty rough on everyone this year, and I have been trying to think of all the ways it has positively affected my life. I'm sure many of you will recognize these, and many will be able to add more.

First it provided a great way to raise a family. My children had responsibilities, and we had expectations. They grew up with a good work ethic, knew how to take directions, respected their elders, and understood that teamwork helped make the job both easier and quicker. These lessons served them well as they matured. They have each found a career that they enjoy, a wife that they love, and have given us 12 terrific grandchildren.

It has allowed me to make friends all over our country. The immediate bond we have over

the Holstein cow leads us to find many other ways that we connect. Being able to congratulate them when things are going well, support them when things aren't, help them when it's needed, and comfort them when things are overwhelming are blessings we have both given and received. This industry has provided many great friends to share our life with, and we are grateful.



The dairy industry has presented many opportunities to grow as an individual. The good times (our 100th anniversary sale), the bad times (when 430 cows died of botulism) which turned into good times

when friends in the industry and others donated cattle to help get us back on our feet. Managing employees has been both a joy and a train wreck. Every situation taught us a lesson.

The positives outweighed the negatives, and I wouldn't have it any other way. For us the Registered Holstein Cow opened up other opportunities to travel and meet people in allied industries. It also provided extra income when we had surplus cattle to sell.

With some feed products declining in price, milk prices appear to be getting better, prices for excess cattle holding very well I hope the industry will turn around and become profitable again for everyone. In the meantime embrace the good memories, and God Bless You All.



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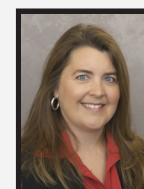
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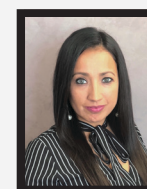
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Sustainability: Myths vs. Facts

Source: AFBF, by Heather Lang

The story of the newly married couple and their dream of continuing the family farming legacy is a tale of determination and resilience in the face of challenges. With a deep-rooted belief in living off the land and improving it for future generations, they encountered obstacles such as limited land availability and the need to manage it for multiple family members. That couple is us. This is our story.

Soil is the foundation of productive, sustainable agriculture. Over 20 years ago, we implemented no-till practices to help improve the soil and reduce our fuel costs. We

were cautioned against running cattle or other ruminant animals on the no-till fields to avoid compaction and the impact of their hooves. Our family farm was founded on cattle, specifically Simmental cattle, so they have been a major part of our 5th generation ranch.

Even though my husband and I don't own cattle, his brothers and father do, and we all operate off the same land. Cattle would be incorporated. With one of the brothers specializing in Ag Business Management and focusing on soil health, the brothers were determined to work together to increase soil health for generations. Implementing climate-resilient agricultural practices such as cover crops and rotational grazing gave us tremendous capacity to decrease emis-

sions and sequester carbon dioxide in the soil. Integrating livestock with cover crops has been a major part of our long-term soil health success.

When it comes to agriculture's impact on our environment, there are often myths and misconceptions that can cloud the conversation.

It can be frustrating when prominent figures highlight agriculture as a significant contributor to climate change. However, it's essential to approach this issue with an open mind and consider the facts.

MYTH: Agriculture is the leading cause of

See "Myths" on page 18

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From "Myth" on page 17

climate change.

FACT: Agriculture's contribution to climate change is minimal. Agricultural greenhouse gases come in at less than 10%, very modest compared to electricity, which is responsible for 25%, transportation at 28% and industrial sectors at 23%.

Agriculture can be a major part of the climate solution and, in the process, improve rural communities, the health of our soil and water, and the lives of those who work on farms and ranches.

MYTH: Soil has no role in climate change.

FACT: Soil has everything to do with the climate! At our farm, we not only monitor and manage the soil health closely, but we help increase the net carbon storage which increases the amount of photosynthesis. We plant hundreds of trees each year, use cover crops and practice no-till conservation tillage practices. Studies have shown that fields managed using no-till for multiple years generally have a higher water-holding capacity, reduce soil erosion, increase soil biological activity and increase soil organic matter.

Agriculture is unique among sectors in its ability not just to decrease its climate impact, but also to sequester carbon to help the climate footprint of other sectors as well.

Heather Lang is a family farmer in North Dakota with local, state and national Farm Bureau leadership experience. She currently serves as president of her county Farm Bureau (Burleigh). Follow her on Instagram (ndpiggytales) to learn more about her journey. This column was originally published on North Dakota Farm Bureau's "On Your Table" blog.



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March 5, 2024 Pesticide Handler & Fit Testing

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

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

July 25, 2024 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 23, 2024 Heat Illness Prevention

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

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

October 24, 2024 Hazardous Ag Materials (HAM)

8:00-9:30am - English
10:00-11:30am - Spanish

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Pricing: Member \$40/Nonmember \$50

June 27, 2024 CPR & First Aid

8:00-12:00pm - Spanish
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Digital Marketing A Boom for the Dairy Industry

By Kathryn Kim Ramos, Sisbro Innovation Website and Digital Marketing Consultant

The dairy industry, a significant pillar of agriculture in Modesto, CA, and the broader Stanislaus County is embracing digital marketing to drive growth and enhance communication with local communities. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements and shifting consumer preferences, dairy farmers leverage websites, social media, and other digital tools to expand their reach within and outside of their local community, boost sales, and foster stronger connections with

their customers and the community.

Stanislaus County, home to a robust agricultural sector, benefits immensely from the dairy industry. The region contributes to California's agricultural output, with numerous dairy farms producing milk, cheese, yogurt, and other dairy products. However, like other sectors, the dairy industry faces challenges such as market volatility, consumer demand for transparency, and the need for effective marketing strategies. Digital marketing steps in as a game-changer, offering innovative solutions to these challenges.

Enhancing Visibility and Market Reach

Digital marketing gives dairy

farmers in Stanislaus County powerful tools to increase their visibility and reach a broader audience. Websites serve as digital storefronts for dairy farms, showcasing their products, sharing their stories, and offering e-commerce options for direct sales. By optimizing their websites for search engines, dairy farmers can attract more visitors, convert leads into customers, and drive sales. For instance, a dairy farm in Modesto can use its website to highlight its organic practices, share recipes, and provide nutritional information, making it easier for consumers to find and choose their products.

Social Media Engagement

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X allow dairy farmers to engage directly with consumers, share behind-the-scenes glimpses of farm life, and promote their products. Regular updates, engaging content, and interactive posts help build a loyal following and foster a sense of community. Through social media, dairy farmers can address customer inquiries, gather feedback, and inform their audience about new products, special promotions, and upcoming events. This real-time in-



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teraction strengthens the bond between farmers and consumers, enhancing trust and loyalty.

Educational Outreach and Transparency

The Stanislaus County Farm Bureau is pivotal in supporting local farmers, including those in the dairy industry, by promoting best practices and facilitating educational initiatives. Digital marketing complements these efforts by enabling dairy farmers to share valuable information with the community. Blogs, videos, and infographics on sustainable farming practices, animal welfare, and

the nutritional benefits of dairy products educate consumers and promote transparency. This educational outreach builds consumer trust and enhances the reputation of the dairy industry in Stanislaus County.

Building Community Connections

Digital marketing helps dairy farmers communicate effectively with their local communities. Email newsletters, online forums, and virtual farm tours offer platforms for farmers to connect with their neighbors, share updates, and solicit feedback. These digital channels

foster a sense of community and allow farmers to address concerns, celebrate successes, and highlight the positive impact of dairy farming on the local economy.

Digital marketing is revolutionizing the dairy industry in Modesto, CA, and Stanislaus County. Dairy farmers are expanding their market reach, engaging with consumers, and promoting transparency by harnessing the power of websites, social media, and other digital tools. Supported by the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau, these efforts are helping to build a sustainable and thriving

ing dairy industry that benefits farmers and the surrounding community.

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Farmers seek replacement crops as vine seed demand plummets

Vegetable seed companies have cut back vine seed production this season, sending Sacramento Valley producers who used to grow them under contract scrambling to find replacement crops. Michael Willey, North America vegetable seeds production lead at Bayer, attributed the reduced vine seed contracts this year to overproduction in 2023. Colusa County Agricultural Commissioner Anastacia Allen said reduced vine seed contracts has resulted in farmers planting more corn—a crop she described as “what you plant when you have nothing else to plant.”

Walnut growers say going organic isn't translating to higher prices

Certified organic crops typically earn a higher price than their conventional counterparts but, for struggling California walnut growers, the organic premiums have not necessarily translated to higher profits. The price of conventional walnuts has plunged to record-low levels in recent years, dragging down organic walnut prices. At the same time, “a steady increase in supply” has also weighed on the organic walnut market, said Teddy Schrier, who markets organic walnuts for Grower Direct Nut Co. in Stanislaus County.

Pest menace for processing tomatoes triggers emergency declarations

In a preemptive move, several county agricultural commissioners have sought emergency declarations for a processing tomato pest so

growers could have in-season access to popular neonicotinoid insecticides. Had they waited for the sugar beet leafhopper to show up in San Joaquin Valley processing tomato fields, it would have likely been too late to begin the emergency declaration process. Emergency declarations in Kern, Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced and Stanislaus counties will allow farmer access to neonicotinoid insecticides to target insects that can migrate to farm fields in spring.

Dan Durham named chief operating officer for California Farm Bureau (pictured right)

The California Farm Bureau Board of Directors has selected Dan Durham as the organization's first-ever chief operating officer after screening more than 1,100 candidates following a comprehensive executive search. Durham, associate vice president of sponsor relations for Nationwide in Columbus, Ohio, previously served in leadership positions with the American Farm Bureau Federation and the Minnesota Farm Bureau over nearly 20 years. California Farm Bureau

President Shannon Douglass called Durham “a longtime champion for agriculture and for Farm Bureau.”

Harvest time arrives for shrinking California apricot sector

After years of removing trees, California's remaining apricot growers say



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they have found a balance between supply and demand, allowing the crop to be profitable. But the downward trend in production has reduced the sector to a fraction of what it once was, even though the Golden State remains the nation's top producer of apricots. So many apricot orchards have vanished that even a slight increase in acreage could "bump you back up into an oversupply situation," said Stanislaus County grower Daniel Bays, who serves as president of Apricot Producers of California.

Grasshopper season is anxiety season for farmers in North State

Grasshoppers and Mormon crickets, which travel great distances and destroy crops, are expected to make another unwelcome appearance in North State farm fields this year. University of California Cooperative Extension farm advisors say the grasshoppers, which lay eggs in the fall and begin hatching by summer, are usually more isolated to rangeland and irrigated pasture than irrigated row crops. Amid dry conditions in recent years, farmers in Siskiyou

and Modoc counties have reported tens of millions of dollars in crop losses due to feeding grasshoppers and crickets.

Concerns by wildlife agencies delay farmers' plans to conserve Colorado River water

Imperial Valley farmers preparing to participate this summer in programs to conserve

Colorado River water have had to put their plans on hold due to concerns from wildlife agencies that reduced farm water use could result in habitat loss for three endangered species that live in the region. The short-term conservation effort would be the largest ever on the Colorado River. But earlier this year, during the environmental review process, wildlife agencies requested a biological consultation to ensure the programs would not violate laws that prohibit killing or harming endangered species.

Study: Reduced flows for farming stir up dust from Salton Sea

The Salton Sea, formed in 1905 after the Colorado River overflowed its banks, has been fed since primarily by water runoff from agricultural operations for almost a century. Now a new research paper in the American Journal of Agricultural Economics finds that, as farmers have reduced water consumption to help increase water deliveries to San Diego County communities, flows to the lake have decreased and dust pollution has increased. The report's co-author said disadvantaged neighborhoods located near the Salton Sea have been most affected by dust.

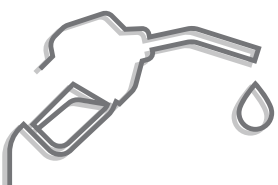


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Bring a Cow to School Day

By Vicky Boyd

It was bring a cow to school day recently at Richard Moon Primary School in Waterford. The bovine show and tell was part of the Dairy Council of California's Mobile Dairy Classroom Program designed to educate elementary school students about where their milk and other food comes from.

Holstein cow No. 229966, nicknamed Buttercup, and mobile dairy classroom instructor Miranda Blagg were the stars of the show, which had special meaning. Blagg attended Moon School from second through fourth grade, and she made the educational presentation in front of her mother, Jay Blagg, who is a preschool teacher.

"It's a surreal feeling, and it's a way I get to give back to my community," Blagg said. "(Students) get to learn about agriculture and what's going on around them. And it's always fun to see teachers I had who are still here."

Educating the public about where their food comes from is gaining importance as an increasing portion of the public has become further removed from agriculture, she said. Even in a town like Waterford, which is surrounded by farms, many people aren't aware of the industry's role in producing their food.

"This is a way to bridge that gap and give them their first look at ag," Blagg said.

Nicole Morris — who with her husband, John, operate JNM Dairy southwest of Modesto — provides the loaner cows to Blagg for her educational efforts. As a dairy science professor at Modesto Junior College, Morris said she is a strong advocate for educating consumers about the importance of dairy and agriculture in general.

"If we're to keep agriculture strong, we have to educate the next generation," said Morris, who also posts as The Milk Diva (@themilkdiva) on Instagram.

Denair dairy producer and Stanislaus County Farm Bureau First Vice President Vance Ahlem said the program is important because it not only educates the students, but also their parents and educators.

"The impact is well worth it for both the school to make the time investment and as an industry to continue the educational investments as well as to teach them about the dairy industry," said Ahlem, who sits on the Dairy Council of California's Board of Directors.

While the council obviously wants to talk about the benefits of consuming dairy products, he said the program has expanded to educate about all forms of better nutrition.

Moon School Principal Maria Tillery said programs such as the Dairy Council's are important to help students learn more about their food and nutrition.

"Kids are not always in the know of where milk comes from," she said.

"I think they have an idea, but they mostly recognize it as coming from the store, from the gallon or the quart. (Milk) plays such a big part in the food chain, and it provides the yogurt and cheeses — all of the great food that we love."

These educational programs also foster closer con-

nections to the "real world" that may some day inspire at least a few students to seek careers in agriculture or related fields, Tillery said.

Still important after all these years

In existence since the 1930s, the Mobile Dairy Classroom Program was one of the first ag in the classroom programs in the state. It currently comprises six mobile dairy classroom instructors who focus on different parts of the state. The Dairy Council of California is funded through producer and milk processor assessments collected



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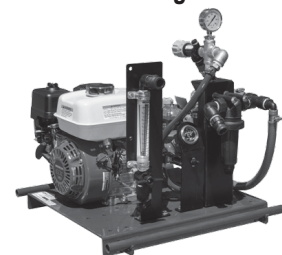
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A four-year veteran of the Dairy Council, Blagg serves schools from Merced north to Yuba City and from Roseville west to Contra Costa County. She and her bovine partner are in high demand, and their schedule fills up quickly during the school year.

In fact, Ahlem said, the Mobile Dairy Classroom is the council's most sought-after program. He credited the program's long-term success to energetic staff members who really engage with their audiences.

Each year, the mobile effort reaches more than 400,000 students from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, said Megan Rush, Dairy Council communications program manager. The council is currently working on an educational program designed for high school students.

In addition, the council has instructional materials, curriculum packages and online options, such as videos, that teachers can use for classroom lessons. And all of it is free to educators, who are becoming more pushed for resources with budget constraints, she said.

"There are virtual field trips and online options basically available 24/7," Rush said. "I really think that since we've been here for so long, it's not just about dairy. It's about ag education and nutrition — it's all encompassing."

For Blagg, the mobile dairy classroom program is a chance to combine her two passions — dairy and ag education. She didn't grow up on a farm but showed replacement heifers in 4-H and FFA. That's where she fell in love with dairy cattle and the dairy industry.

While pursuing an animal science degree at California State University, Fresno, Blagg worked leading tours at Hilmar Cheese during summer breaks. It was there that she discovered her affinity for educating the public.

After graduation, Blagg eventually joined

the Dairy Council, where she currently is one of six mobile dairy classroom instructors in the state. Blagg also is the California Farm Bureau state Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee representative for Stanislaus and Tuolumne counties.



Mobile dairy classroom instructor Miranda Blagg said she is fortunate to work with JNM Dairy southwest of Modesto, which loans the cows used in her educational presentations in Stanislaus County. Holstein cow No. 229966, nicknamed Buttercup and pictured here, was one of those.



Mobile dairy classroom instructor Miranda Blagg and a Holstein nicknamed Buttercup educate students at Richard Moon Primary School in Waterford about where their milk and other food comes from. The effort is part of the Dairy Council of California's Mobile Dairy Classroom Program.

Animal rights comes to ‘America’s Provence’ and farmers are worried

Source: Politico, by BEN FOX
06/2024

What is underway in an iconic food-producing area might soon spread elsewhere as exurban development increasingly encroaches into agricultural regions nationwide. | Terry Chea/AP

PETALUMA, California — Animal rights activists first forced their way onto Mike Weber’s chicken ranch six years ago, seeking to expose what they view as the horrors of egg production in a region known as the “American Provence” for its abundance of vineyards, dairies and organic farms.

That confrontation, which resulted in the arrest of 40 activists for trespassing, turned out to be just an initial skirmish in a battle playing out now over animal rights and farming that will soon move to the Sonoma County ballot. In November, voters will weigh in on a proposal to prohibit large poultry and livestock operations, which activists say are factory farms that pollute the environment and mistreat animals with closely packed confinement. Sonoma would be the first county in the United States to ban such facilities.

“People deserve a say over what happens in the county they live in, and people don’t want that happening here,” said Lewis Bernier, a researcher for Direct Action Everywhere, a Berkeley-based group with a history of confrontational protests that led efforts to get the measure on the ballot. The group has also collected signatures to place a similar question before Berkeley voters this fall, although it is largely symbolic since there are no commercial farms in the Bay Area college town.

In Sonoma, however, a measure pitting people who shop at farmers markets

against those who supply them strikes deep in the terroir. Once-fringe beliefs about animal rights are becoming mainstream just as the nation is facing a rural economic crisis, having lost over a half a million farms since the 1980s. What is underway in an iconic food-producing area might soon spread elsewhere as exurban development increasingly encroaches into agricultural regions nationwide.

“Their ultimate goal is they want to eradicate animal farming entirely and this is a stepping stone,” said Sonoma County Farm Bureau, Executive Director, Dayna Ghirardelli.

“If it can happen here,” said Sonoma State University political science professor David McCuan, “it can get on the ballot anywhere.”

Supporters of Measure J would force at least two dozen Sonoma County poultry and livestock operations to either downsize or shut down within three years. Farmers say it is an effort to push a “vegan mandate” to end animal farming and that the initiative would close more farms and have spinoff economic effects, both immediately and in the future.

“At the end of the day, they want to burn down our farm and every other farm in Sonoma County,” said Weber, whose family has produced eggs in the area since 1912.

The Sonoma Aroma

Sonoma would be the first county in the U.S. to impose

an outright ban on concentrated animal feeding operations, a designation used by the Environmental Protection Agency for regulating agricultural waste discharge. Activists use the phrase interchangeably with “factory farms,” to cover a range of modern poultry and livestock activities in which animals are raised and kept in dense conditions.

Sonoma is dotted with hundreds of farms, large and small, and has deep rural roots. Petaluma, where Weber’s farm is located, has long been tied to the dairy and poultry business and was once known as the “egg basket of the world.” The small city has a quintessential Americana charm. Much of Ronald Reagan’s classic 1984 campaign ad “Morning in America” was filmed in the city as was the 1973 movie “American Graffiti.”

That landscape may not have changed much, but Sonoma’s demographics have. Petaluma and nearby cities have become bedroom communities for people priced out of places closer to San Francisco and the Silicon Valley — filled with newcomers blasted for driving up home prices and ridiculed for grumbling about the odor of manure that occasionally wafts through the area, a scent known as the “Sonoma aroma.” Petaluma is a city of nearly 60,000 people, sprinkled with farm-to-table restaurants catering to foodies.



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The crosscurrents that shape Sonoma today — an area where people are ready to challenge the business of farming even though their local economy remains inexorably tied to it — were on display last month when the county Board of Supervisors held a public hearing after activists gathered 37,000 signatures, more than enough to qualify Measure J for the ballot.

At the May 14 meeting, the measure's supporters decried factory farms for cruelty, polluting the air and water with waste and for being "incubators for disease" such as bird flu. Activists sought to refute a dire local government assessment that projected widespread closures of farming activities and layoffs as a result of the measure's passage.

"These industrial facilities harm animals," said Cassie King, a member of Direct Action Everywhere. "They exacerbate wildfires and droughts. They are incubators for disease, like the avian flu that was mentioned, which has spread to mammals and humans. They pollute our air and water. They most impact the health of workers and people who live nearby these facilities."

Supervisors warmly welcomed Measure J critics, who included local dairy farmers and two well-known local producers that rely on them, Clover Sonoma and Straus Family Creamery — and endorsed the warnings about the likely economic effects of the measure.

"What we're going to do is kill farms and kill jobs," said James Gore, a former U.S. Department of Agriculture official elected to the board in 2014. "And then you're going to push us into a place where it doesn't affect our ability to buy and sell but it does really increase the opportunity for these lands to be transitioned into suburban, urban, or other uses."

In the end, the supervisors agreed to put the measure on the November ballot, but unanimously adopted a joint statement of opposition to the initiative. To the farm industry, the fact that a measure regarded with such local hostility has come so far in Sonoma County is a harbinger of where this fight might go next.

Which Came First

In May 2018, several hundred people organized by Direct Action Everywhere traveled about an hour's drive north from Berkeley to protest Weber Family Farms, which Mike owns with his brother, Scott. Some forced their way inside the chicken houses, seizing dozens of birds including about 10 they claimed were sick and dying. The group argued that their action was legal under a California law

against animal abuse. "Folks, we're about to march into a massive factory farm in the heart of darkness and hell," declared the group's leader, Wayne Hsiung, according to video taken at the time. "We're gonna expose what's happening inside and try to take some of the animals out."

Hsiung, a lawyer and onetime candidate for mayor of Berkeley who has argued that animals should have the same rights under the Constitution as people, held follow-up protests there and at Reichardt Duck Farm, also in Petaluma. The group has tried to make their case with photos showing birds with apparently untreated sickness and injuries.

"We need to stop the most egregious cruelty that's happening," said Bernier. "We need to put an end to it immediately."

Weber disputes allegations of mistreatment, noting that his products receive a "certified humane" label from Humane Farm Animal Care, a nonprofit that says it uses veterinarians and animal scientists to set treatment standards. He said he also takes additional compliance monitoring measures for his company's organic facilities and recycles his waste to sell as fertilizer. "I don't know what we can do better," he said. "The only thing I can do is to go out of business to make them happy."

Measure J would likely have that impact. The initiative language appears to call for phasing out both large and medium-sized concentrated animal feeding operations, or CAFOs. Under that interpretation, the Sonoma County Farm Bureau says at least 60 poultry and livestock enterprises would have to close.

But Bernier says that's a misreading of the initiative and that there are no operations in the county that meet the EPA definition of a medium CAFO because of the way they manage waste. Under the coalition's interpretation, Measure J would cover dairies in the county with 700 cows and egg producers with 82,000 birds.

See "No on J" on page 28



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From "No on J" on page 27

The debate over exactly which facilities would be covered by Measure J is somewhat of a moot point to the local Farm Bureau. "Their ultimate goal is they want to eradicate animal farming entirely and this is a stepping stone," said Executive Director Dayna Ghirardelli.

Weber, who was forced to kill all 550,000 chickens at his main egg-producing facility in December because of an outbreak of bird flu, bristles at accusations that he mistreats animals, which he said would not be in the interest of him or any other farmer.

"It's in our best interest to provide the ideal environment that is stress free," he said.

Many people today, he said, do not understand what it takes to get food from farms into supermarkets. "If voters decide they want to make it illegal to eat meat I'm not going to fight it. That's for the voters to decide," he said. "But they shouldn't be making the decision based on misleading information."

Table-to-Farm Politics

California voters statewide have shown they are receptive to animal welfare initiatives in the recent past. In 2008, voters passed Proposition 2, which prohibited certain types of cramped cages for pregnant pigs, calves raised for veal and egg-laying hens. A decade later, voters went further with Proposition 12, a so-called "foie gras ban" that required farm animals get more space and egg-producing chickens go cage-free. Both passed with more than 60 percent of the vote.

There was also a bill introduced by two Democratic state lawmakers in February 2022 that would have prohibited new CAFOs in California. That measure never made it out of committee, a result of opposition from agriculture interests. (Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey, who is a vegan, has introduced similar legislation at the federal level.) Animal-rights activists

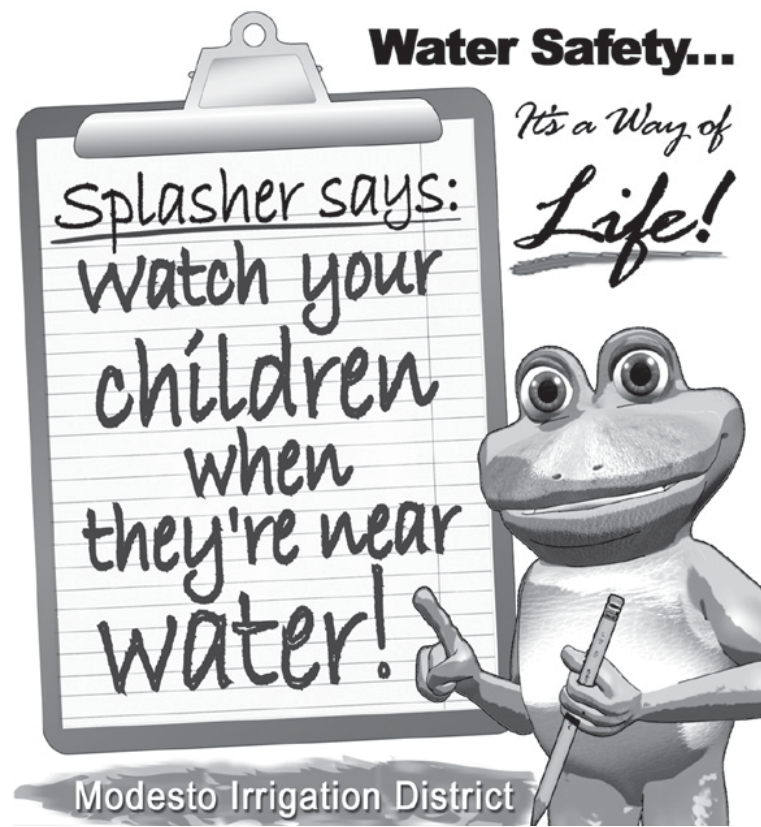
hope that if Sonoma voters bless such regulations this fall, it could help loosen legislative resistance in Sacramento.

"If this passes, in a county that is known as an agricultural county, and prides itself on being a small farm, kind of county, then it opens up political cover to discuss the issue," said Nickolaus Sackett, director of legislative affairs for Social Compassion in Legislation, a California-based animal-rights group. "That means the people want it and we should at least be having these conversations."

Agriculture interests similarly recognize the potential for Measure J to be a threat beyond Sonoma County. Most of the \$176,000 raised by the Family Farmers Alliance, which is sponsored by the Sonoma County Farm Bureau, has come from farming organizations elsewhere in the state.

"Sonoma has grown a lot to where there's a lot of urban folks living there," said Bill Mattos, president of the California Poultry Federation, which is donating to the campaign. "So they need to be educated."

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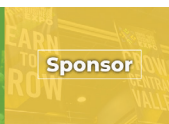
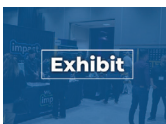
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ees, dairy farm families, the California and Texas agricultural industries and the communities where Hilmar operates.

Qualifying students are encouraged to apply November 1 through February 1, 2025. For more information about Hilmar Cheese Company's scholarship program, visit the About Us Overview section of www.hilmar.com.

Hilmar Cheese Company, Inc. uses the power and promise of dairy to improve lives together. We provide health and nutrition 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 TM 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 and Dalhart, Texas. A third state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Dodge City, Kansas, will open in 2024. For more information, visit www.hilmar.com and Linked In @Hilmar.

Cheese Visitor Center staff, and three children of the dairy farm families who ship milk to Hilmar received scholarships. Thirty-eight students pursuing an agricultural major living in the counties where the company is located also received scholarships. This last category is for students not affiliated with the company; but dedicated to the agricultural industry and living in Merced or Stanislaus counties in California or Dallam or Hartley counties in Texas.

Three part-time visitor center employees, eleven employee children and two children of dairy farmers who ship milk to Hilmar also received an additional scholarship for a second year to help continue their education.

The Hilmar Cheese Company scholarship program reflects the company's ongoing support of higher education and its commitment to employ-

Hilmar Cheese Company Awards 67 Educational Scholarships

Sixty-seven students demonstrating academic performance and community involvement will each receive a scholarship to help fund their higher education goals through Hilmar Cheese Company's annual scholarship program. This program, which has existed since 2003, is one of the many ways Hilmar Cheese helps achieve its company purpose to improve lives together

The scholarship program awarded \$40,000 in four categories – children of employees, children of the dairy farm families who ship milk to Hilmar Cheese, part-time Visitor Center staff and students pursuing an agricultural undergraduate degree in the communities where the company operates.

Eight children of employees of Hilmar Cheese Company, two part-time Hilmar



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