

The Stanislaus Farm News

STANISLAUS COUNTY



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

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture



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*Flying M Ranch 1972 with Bob Larsen
Pictured Above,
See page 20 for full story.*

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STANISLAUS COUNTY



WATER COALITION REQUIREMENTS REMINDER

It's that time of the year again, time to complete your East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition requirements. Stanislaus County Farm Bureau has a 21 year history of being the resource for our growers, helping them to comply with another burdensome regulation, while making it as efficient and easy to comply as possible.

ESJ will be offering 3 in person **member meetings** this year, the closest will be **Friday, February 9th at the MJC ACE Pavilion at 9am**. All growers are required to attend one member meeting per year, this requirement will also be **available online**. With the online option you can watch at any time between March and December 31st to get full credit.

Additionally, we want to remind everyone about the **requirement deadline, March 1st**. It is absolutely important to get your paperwork in on time. The Water Board will be targeting late submitters for inspections in the coming year. Submitting your paperwork on time is a good way to keep yourself off the radar.

We continually try to make submittal of your requirements as easy as possible. Complete your Summary Report on paper, with your PCA, call us with your numbers and we will complete over the phone, make an appointment for us to complete your report in person, or even log into the portal to complete it online! **Let us know how we can assist you to make this process as painless as possible!**

Call us when you need us, Caitie Diemel (209) 846-1662

Mark Your Calendars!

ESJ Merced Member Meeting: Feb 5th

ESJ Madera Member Meeting: Feb 7th

ESJ Modesto Member Meeting: Feb 9th



SCFB MISSION STATEMENT

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



FRIDAY REVIEW

LEGISLATIVE AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Insurance

The Senate Committee on Insurance held an oversight hearing this week focused on the California Department of Insurance's (CDI) Sustainable Insurance Strategy. As has been previously discussed at length, CDI is pursuing a set of new regulations to be fully implemented by December 2024 to restore competitiveness to California's property insurance market and force the depopulation of the FAIR Plan.

The hearing featured testimony from Insurance Commissioner Lara, with additional details provided to Senators by Michael Martinez, Deputy Director at CDI, and a

featured speaker during Farm Bureau's recent Annual Meeting. Some interesting facts from the hearing:

- Last year, Consumer Watchdog earned \$9 million through intervenor actions against rating plans. Part of the new regulations will be focused on limiting time delay and the scope of intervenor comments in an effort to more timely complete rate filings.
- CDI will use both emergency rule-making and regular rulemaking (following the full Administrative Procedures Act) in order to meet the December 2024 timeframe.

further by requiring comprehensive plan offerings, instead of forcing consumers to purchase Difference in Condition coverage and by increasing per structure limit to \$20 million from the current \$20 million parcel limit. The latter will exponentially increase FAIR Plan exposure in the specific places where insurers have pulled back from the market. We hope that Farm Bureau's sponsored SB 505, establishing the commercial clearinghouse in the FAIR Plan, will be implemented quickly in 2024 to help depopulate FAIR Plan policies back to the admitted market.

The Senators expressed support for CDI's efforts to date, and public comments except that from Consumer Watchdog, expressed optimism that CDI is acting and that the Senate Committee on Insurance is pushing CDI to meet the December 2024 goal. Farm Bureau provided public comment, noting that insurance coverage and costs are having significant impacts on farmers across the state. You can watch the entire oversight hearing here. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cbbf.com

Pesticides

Assemblymember Damon Connolly (San Rafael) introduced AB 1864 related to pesticide applications near schools. This bill would require a commissioner to require a notice of intent to be submitted before a person applies a pesticide within 1/4 mile of a school site, as specified. The bill would require the Department of Pesticide Regulation to require a separate site identification number for the portion of an agricultural

- Commissioner Lara and Senators agreed that continued investments in wildfire fuels mitigation must continue, as those are having direct impacts on addressing the risks that insurers are modeling into rating plans that will significantly increase costs for property coverage. These fuels reductions investments are a direct path to control statewide insurance costs increases.
- The FAIR Plan has grown too large, with over 350,000 homeowner policies now in the FAIR Plan. It is no longer an insurer of last resort, and CDI plans to push the FAIR Plan



STANISLAUS COUNTY FARM BUREAU ANNUAL MEETING
GUEST SPEAKER

Amberley Snyder

Thursday, April 25, 2024



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field that lies within 1/4 mile of a school. The bill would also require the department to modify and amend permit applications for pesticide use, notices of intent, and pesticide use reporting forms and procedures, as they pertain to the portion of an agricultural field that lies within 1/4 mile of a school, to include reporting on the specific method of applying the pesticide and the exact date and time of the start

and end of the period during which the pesticide is to be applied. The bill would require the director, in evaluating a county's pesticide use enforcement program, to evaluate the county's effectiveness in enforcing the laws and regulations regarding applying pesticides near school sites. The bill would require the director, on or before December 31, 2026, to expand the scope of specified related regulations to also apply to private schools serving pupils in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive. Staff: Chris Reardon, creardon@cfbf.com

Taxation

AB 1867 authored by Assemblymember Kate Sanchez (R Rancho Santa Margarita) has been introduced. The bill would for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2024, and before January 1, 2029, create a new income personal income gross tax deduction, by allowing a deduction in computing income for the amount paid by a taxpayer as premiums on a homeowners' insurance policy on the taxpayer's primary residence. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com

SB 927 authored by Senator Brian Dahle (R Bieber) has been introduced. The bill would, for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2023, provide an exclusion from gross income taxes for amounts received in settlement by a taxpayer to replace property damaged or destroyed by a natural disaster that was declared a state of emergency by both the Governor and the President of the United States. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com

SB 952 authored by Senator Brian Dahle (R Bieber) has been introduced. The bill would allow credits against personal income tax beginning on or after January 1, 2025, and before January 1, 2030, to a qualified taxpayer for qualified costs relating to qualified costs related to wildfire fuels and fire risk reduction activities including home hardening and vegetation management, not to exceed an aggregate amount of \$500,000,000 in credits per taxable year. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com

Wildfire

SB 945 authored by Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil (D Modesto) and sponsored by the California Farm Bureau has been introduced.

The bill can be referred to and acted upon after February 18, 2024. The bill, the Wildfire Smoke and Health Outcomes Data Act, would require the State Department of Public Health, in consultation with the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force, and the State Air Resources Board to create, operate, and maintain a statewide integrated wildfire smoke and health data platform that, among other things, would integrate wildfire smoke and health data

from multiple databases. The bill would require the State Department of Public Health to develop the data platform. The goal of the bill builds on a report from the California Council of Science and Technology indicating that there is insufficient data to understand if the billions of dollars in state investments towards wildfire fuels mitigation is having any impacts on health outcomes from attributed smoke events. SB 945 would develop that data source for policy makers to better understand all of the benefits derived statewide from those investments. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com

AB 1819 authored by Assemblymember



DIRECTAPPLIANCE

209-238-3000

Marie Waldron (R San Diego) has been introduced. The bill would authorize an enhanced infrastructure financing district that are at least partially in high or very high fire hazard severity zones designated by the State Fire Marshal to finance heavy equipment to be used for vegetation clearance and firebreaks, fortification of utilities against wildfires, and equipment used for fire watch, prevention, and fighting. The bill has been referred to the Assembly Committee on Local Government. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cbbf.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CDFA ANNOUNCES GRANT FUNDING FOR HEALTHY SOILS PROGRAM

CDFA is pleased to announce the availability of approximately \$12 million in grant funding for Healthy Soils Program Incentive Grants. The objectives of the program are to increase statewide implementation of conservation management practices that improve soil health, sequester carbon, and reduce atmospheric greenhouse gases. California farmers, ranchers, business entities, California Native American tribes, and non-profit organizations can apply for awards. Applicants may request up to \$100,000 per project. Priority will be given to applicants who are considered Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers. The program is currently accepting grant applications and will continue to do so until 5 p.m. PST, Friday, February 9, 2024.

“The Healthy Soils Program was developed to partner with farmers and ranchers and facilitate their preferred methods to draw

down carbon onto their lands and store it in our soils,” said CDFA Secretary Karen Ross. “Building up soil’s organic matter and biodiversity promotes its lasting health and productivity, while also reducing the possibility for erosion. With tremendous thanks to our Governor and the California Legislature for their ongoing support, the Healthy Soils Program has awarded more than \$105 million to fund more than 1,500 projects over its lifetime, resulting in a combined greenhouse gas reduction of more than 1.1 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions over the projects’ lifespans. That’s like removing 24,000 gas-powered cars from the road for 10 years.”

CDFA will hold two online workshops to provide information about the application process. Participants register for the webinars using the links below. Each workshop will cover the same content, and for those unable to attend, a PowerPoint presentation along with other relevant materials will be posted on the Healthy Soils Program Incentive Grants webpage: <https://www.cdca.ca.gov/oefi/healthysoils/IncentivesProgram.html>.

- Tuesday, January 23, 2024, at 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm PST https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/WN_qsjlPbedQ-m8B6UFqOrZgA
- Wednesday, January 24, 2024, at 10:30 am – 12:00 pm PST https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/WN_VUI60B10SRy7tVte08td1A

Free technical assistance (TA) is available to applicants. TA providers’ contact information, and other details, can be found at:

https://www.cdca.ca.gov/oefi/technical/docs/2023_hsp_taps.pdf and <https://ciwr.ucanr.edu/Programs/ClimateSmartAg/TechnicalAssistanceProviders/>.

“Through our strong relationships with diverse farming communities, our team supports the implementation of practices that build soil health, use water more efficiently, and provide an alternative for manure management,” said Amber Butland, a TA Provider who works through the CES group. “We strive to provide the best assistance possible by offering translation services, grant application support, computer access, and one-on-one farm visits.” The Healthy Soils Program stems from the California Healthy Soils Initiative, a collaboration of state agencies and departments that promotes the development of healthy soils on California’s farmlands and ranchlands. The Healthy Soils Program is part of California Climate Investments, a statewide program that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing GHG emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment – particularly in disadvantaged communities. For information on eligibility and program requirements, prospective applicants should visit the HSP Incentive Grants website at www.cdca.ca.gov/oefi/healthysoils/incentivesprogram.html.

DEFINING REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE WORK GROUP ESTABLISHED

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has established a Regenerative Agriculture Work Group to assist the State Board of Food and Agriculture in defining “Regenerative Agriculture” for State Policies and Programs. The 13-member group represents a diversity of agricultural stakeholders and members of the State Board and EFA SPA.

Regenerative Agriculture Definition Working Group: 1. Doria Robinson, State Board of Food and Agriculture (member) 2. Bryce Lundberg, State Board of Food and Agriculture (member) and certified regenerative organic farmer 3. Derek Azevedo, Bowles

See “REVIEW” on page 7



The Clock is Ticking for Specialty Crop Growers

By Caleb Herrygers

My family's fourth-generation farm has been growing asparagus in West Michigan for decades, but that could soon be changing.

Simply put, there are too many hurdles that block my path to growing this nutritious crop efficiently and sustainably.

The two largest hurdles are surging foreign imports from Mexico and Peru, and disastrous U.S. labor policies. These problems have led many of my neighbors – as well as other farmers across the nation – to stop growing specialty crops, which include fruits, vegetables and nuts, and some other

commodities not covered under current farm safety net programs.

First, foreign competitors in the fresh fruit and vegetable sector have slowly encroached on our domestic markets, squeezing out U.S. farmers. The U.S. imports 60% of our fresh fruit and 40% of our fresh vegetables and the numbers are climbing. My family farm simply cannot continue to grow asparagus without relief from the market pressures of underpriced, subsidized imported asparagus being sold in our own backyard. Enhancements to U.S. trade law, or other stopgap remedies, must be advanced.

On top of that, recent changes requiring payment of non-farm wages to farm employees are taking a devastating toll on my family's livelihood.

We employ around 70 guestworkers through the H-2A visa program to pick asparagus in the spring. We rely on these workers and appreciate them. Frankly, we couldn't farm without them in light of the labor shortage. But the red tape and unrealistic requirements our government has wrapped around the program are forcing many of us to reconsider using it, which forces a more consequential assessment of how we can continue farming.

A federal wage formula called the Adverse Effect Wage Rate sets mandatory wages and is sending them sky high on a year-over-year basis. Our finances just can't keep up with that. I expect to pay an additional \$75,000 in labor costs in 2024. That's after a 15% increase in 2023... and another sizable one in 2022.

See "CLOCK" on page 23

FLORY

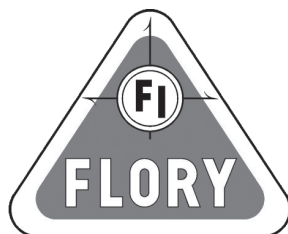
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Farm 4. Dr. Daniel Rath, Natural Resources Defense Council 5. Dr. Cynthia Daley, Director, Chico State University Center for Regenerative Agriculture 6. Elizabeth Whitlow, Regenerative Organic Alliance 7. Dr. Jeff Dlott, Chair, CDFA Environmental Farming Act Science Advisory Panel 8. Dr. Qi Zhou- California Association of Resource Conservation Districts 9. Matt Byrne, Byrne Cattle 10. Blake Alexandre, Alexandre Family Farms 11. Eric Morgan, Braga Fresh 12. Krystal Acierto, Deputy Secretary for Public Policy, California Environmental Protection Agency 13. Virginia Jameson, Deputy Secretary for Climate and Working Lands, CDFA The Regenerative Agriculture Definition Work Group will consider input from the public and CDFA's Environmental Farming Act Science Advisory Panel proposed framework to draft a recommendation for a definition of regenerative agriculture. The draft definition is anticipated to be submitted to the State Board for consideration in June 2024. The department antici-

pates up to three public meetings in Sacramento for the group. These meetings, estimated to be three hours each, will allow the review of feedback provided through public listening sessions, discussion on key elements of a regenerative definition and development of a draft definition for consideration by the California State Board of Food and Agriculture. In October of 2022, in response to growing interest in "regenerative agriculture" and use of the term in legislation, CDFA's State Board of Food and Agriculture initiated a public process to define the term for the purpose of state policies and programs. In addition to the three working group meetings, the public process will include a series of five public listening sessions, two of which have been held so far; for information about future listening sessions, please visit <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/RegenerativeAg/>. The first meeting will take place on January 31 from 12:30 to 3:30 in the CDFA Auditorium at 1220 N Street. The final 30 minutes of the meeting

will be open for public comment. An option to listen to the meeting and make public comment remotely will be available. Registration for online participation will be available on the CDFA website at <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/RegenerativeAg/>.

VACANCIES

CDFA ANNOUNCES TWO VACANCIES ON THE RENDERING INDUSTRY ADVISORY BOARD

CDFA's Meat, Poultry and Egg Safety Branch is announcing two vacancies on the Rendering Industry Advisory Board. The Board makes recommendations to the Secretary on matters pertaining to:

- Adoption, modification, and repeal of regulations and procedures
- Rate and collection of license fees and penalties
- Posting and noticing changes in bylaws, general procedures, or orders
- All matters pertaining to Food and Agricultural Code including, but not limited to, the inspection and enforcement program, annual budget, necessary fees to provide adequate services, and regulations required to accomplish the purposes of the chapter.

Current vacancies:

- Industry member – requirements for this vacancy include: o Licensed by the Department including but not limited to the following: licensed renderers, dead haulers, and transporters of inedible kitchen grease.

Public member – requirements for this vacancy include: • Experience and expertise in water quality, publicly owned treatment works, and water infrastructure, or law enforcement These vacancies were created because of an upcoming term expirations. The membership terms for both vacancies will be 36 months. Board members receive no compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for transportation to and from meetings and for per diem expenses for lodging, meals, and incidental expenses. Applicants interested should submit resumes by March 1, 2024, to: Mrs. Penny Arana Meat, Poultry and Egg Safety Branch 1220 N Street Sacramento, California 95814 penny.arana@cdfa.ca.gov



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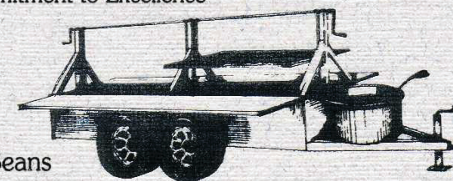
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Celebrating National Meat Week

By Dawn Smith-Pfeifer

I must have missed the memo. In celebration of #NationalMeatWeek (Jan. 28 – Feb. 4), I'm pleased to share a few facts about beef and pork, below.

Beef and pork have been staples in human diets for centuries, gracing our tables in various forms and flavors. While many of us are familiar with the basics of these meats, there are some fascinating and lesser-known facts that add an extra layer of intrigue to our favorite dishes. How many of these facts did you know?

What is Wagyu?

When it comes to beef, Wagyu is in a league of its own. According to the American Wagyu Association, Wagyu were originally

draft animals used in agriculture and were selected for their physical endurance. This selection favored animals with more intramuscular fat cells, what we call "marbling." It's the marbling that gives Wagyu beef its tenderness and flavor.

Pigs, in space?

Well, not literally. But both beef and pork have ventured beyond our planet. Astronauts aboard the International Space Station have enjoyed beef and pork dishes, specially prepared and packaged to withstand the challenges of space travel.

Why is pork the other white meat?

We've all heard the slogan "Pork: The Other White Meat," but do you know why pork is classified as such? Unlike red meats such as beef, pork is leaner and has a lighter color due to lower levels of myoglobin, a protein responsible for the meat's red hue. At the time, chicken was all the rage and the campaign was designed to position pork as a "healthy" alternative to beef.

Interestingly enough, studies have shown that beef is a great source of 10 essential vitamins and minerals.

What's the ZIP in beef?

ZIP stands for zinc, iron and protein. A three-ounce serving of beef, which is about the size of a deck of cards, supplies 53% of our recommended daily intake of zinc, 14% of our daily iron needs and 51% of our protein needs. That's a lot of ZIP!

Why are pigs associated with saving?

Ever wonder why saving money is often associated with piggy banks? The connection between pigs and saving dates back to the Middle Ages when European potters crafted clay containers shaped like pigs to store money. The idea was that the pig, a symbol of abundance and good luck, would help the owners accumulate wealth over time.

What do you get when you mix beef and pork?

America's favorite pizza topping – pepperoni – is beef, pork and spices like paprika, all rolled into one tasty ingredient.

So...there you have it. Beef and pork, with their rich histories and diverse culinary applications, continue to captivate our taste buds and spark our curiosity. So, the next time you savor a perfectly cooked steak or indulge in a succulent pork dish, remember the hidden tales that make these meats not just food but fascinating chapters in the book of culinary wonders.

Oh and it all starts on a farm! ;)

Dawn Smith-Pfeifer is content and communications director at North Dakota Farm Bureau. This column was originally published by NDFB and is re-published with permission.



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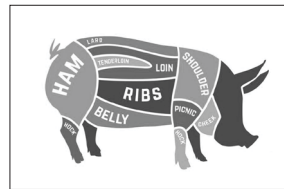
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Commodity Fact Sheet

Pork

Information compiled by California Pork Producers Association

How Produced – While a majority of California farms use modern farming practices, some farms are specific niche markets. Today's farming combines the best of traditional farming practices with the benefits of modern technology. Many California farmers believe that raising pigs in barns helps them to better care for their animals by controlling their environment. Many California pigs are raised in barns that use technology like fans and heaters to keep them comfortable all year long. Pigs are kept in clean living conditions and provided fresh feed and water. Most pigs eat a diet that consists of corn and soybeans and is called a ration. Nutritionists carefully develop pig rations based on the age, size, and nutrient requirements that changes throughout their lifetime. Pigs have stages of growth from birth to market: farrowing, weaning, growing, and finishing. Baby pigs are raised by their mother or sows, for the first month, then they are weaned. Weighing between 12-15 pounds, they go to a nursery where they are fed solid food, provided fresh water, and kept warm. They stay there for four to six weeks and are fed a grower ration. They will complete their growth cycle at an average market weight of 270 pounds around six months of age.



pigs were bred for superior meat quality and adaptability. In European pigs, fatness was selected for. The genetic crossbreeding of these two varieties in the 18th and 19th centuries formed a broad genetic basis for today's domestic pig. There are over 180 species found in every continent of the world except Antarctica. The top eight breeds are Yorkshire, Hampshire, Berkshire, Landrace, Duroc, Chester White, Poland China and Spot. In California, crossbreeds are the most desirable animal in weight, conditioning, and carcass quality.

Commodity Value – In 2021, California ranked 28th in the United States in pork production with an inventory of 82,000 pigs valued at over \$13 million dollars annually. Although California makes up less than one percent of the total U.S. pork production, it accounts for 13% of the national pork consumption. The U.S. is the third largest producer and consumer of pork and pork products globally, exporting over five billion pounds of pork annually. Pork production and pig prices vary in a predictable manner during the calendar year. Such variation is called seasonality or seasonal variation.

History – There are fossils indicating wild pig-like animals roamed the earth 40 million years ago. Pigs were domesticated in China around 4900 BC and were raised in Europe by 1500 BC. Columbus took pigs on his trip to Cuba in 1493. Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto, the "father of the American pork industry" was the first person to bring pigs to America in 1539. With just 13 pigs he settled in Florida. Once in America, de Soto's pig herd grew to 700. Explorers used the pigs not only for eating as fresh meat but for salt pork and preserved pork. When de Soto died, some pigs ran off and became ancestors to today's feral or razorback pigs and some were given to Native Americans as gifts. The pork industry in America had begun. Pig production spread quickly through the colonies. Hernán Cortés brought hogs to New Mexico in 1600 and Sir Walter Raleigh brought sows to Jamestown Colony in 1607. As pioneers moved west, they took their pigs with them in crates that hung from covered wagons. Pork processing facilities started popping up in major cities. Pigs were first processed in Cincinnati, which became known as "Porkopolis."

Varieties – There are two major forms of domestic pigs, European (*Sus scrofa*) and Asian (*Sus indicus*). Chinese

Top Producing Counties – There are four top processing plants that are located in the counties of Los Angeles, San Joaquin, Glenn, and Merced providing more than 11,000 animals per day. Many swine operations provide breeding pigs, project pigs, roaster pigs, and/or products and services for sale. Pigs are raised in every county in the state. Many agriculture colleges like CSU Fresno, CSU Chico, Cal Poly SLO, UC Davis, Modesto Junior College, and Reedley College breed, raise, and sell pigs.

Nutritional Value – A 3-ounce portion is an excellent source of protein, thiamin, B6, phosphorus, and niacin, and a good source of potassium, riboflavin, and zinc. It contributes six percent of the calories in a 2,000 calorie diet. Pork is 16% leaner and has 27% less saturated fat than 20 years ago due to improved breeding and feeding methods, as well as advancements in processing.

For additional information:
California Pork Producers
(916) 441-2249
Website: www.calpork.com



Commodity Fact Sheet

Beef

Information compiled by the California Beef Council

How Produced – There are approximately 670,000 beef cattle on about 11,000 ranches in California. In addition, there are 1.72 million dairy cows, which also play an important role in the state's beef industry. Cattle are ruminants, which means they have a four-chambered stomach. Most beef cattle in California graze on land that cannot be used for raising other crops. There are four types of cattle operations; cow-calf, seed stock, stocker, and feedlot. Many producers have a combination of these operations.

Cow-calf producers make up the largest segment of California cattle operations. These ranchers have a herd of breeding cows, replacement heifers (young cows), and bulls. The cows are bred to calve in the spring or fall. Calves are usually sold after they are weaned, at about seven months. After weaning, cattle are sent to feedlots for approximately 120 days where they are fed a high-energy ration of grain and hay. Nineteen percent of cropland in the nation is used to raise feed grains for livestock. Cattle are good recyclers and are often fed agricultural by-products such as almond hulls or rice straw.

Once cattle weigh approximately 1,200 to 1,400 pounds, they are processed. Ninety-eight percent of each animal is used, but less than half is eaten as beef. Cattle provide a multitude of by-products that consumers use every day, including photographic film, soap, tires, leather, and pharmaceuticals.

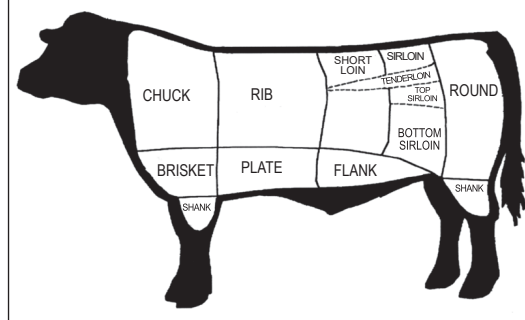
Breeds – There are 275 recognized breeds of cattle throughout the world. Most breeds in California originated from Europe or have a Brahman influence. Brahman cattle from India are known for their tolerance to heat.

Cattle brought to the Western Hemisphere by the early Spanish explorers were the ancestors of the Texas Longhorns. While extremely hardy, these cattle did not produce a palatable product. As a result, nineteenth century cattle producers imported purebred cattle, including European Angus and Hereford, to improve the quality of their herds. During the twentieth century, breeds such as Charolais, Limousin, and Gelbvieh became more prevalent due to their leaner meat characteristics.

Commodity Value – The sale of cattle and calves accounted for \$195.8 billion in cash receipts in 2021 and was fourth in terms of value in the state's top 10 commodities in 2021. Nationally, California ranks fourth in

total cattle numbers behind Texas, Nebraska, and Kansas. Beef and beef products are in the top 10 of California exports, bringing in \$413 million in 2020.

– BEEF CUTS – Where They Come From



Top Producing Counties – Beef cattle are raised in every county in California except San Francisco. Top beef cattle producing counties include Tulare, Kern, Merced, and Imperial.

History – The introduction of cattle to North America mirrors the exploration and settlement of the continent by Europeans. Columbus introduced cattle to the Western Hemisphere on his second voyage to the New World in 1493. Spanish explorer Hernando Cortez took offspring of those same cattle to Mexico in 1519. In 1773, Juan

Bautista de Anza brought 200 head of cattle to California to supply the early California missions.

The hide and tallow trade sustained the California economy while it was still under Mexican rule and hides were used as currency to buy supplies from Boston trading ships. When James Marshall discovered gold in 1848, the beef business boomed, feeding the fortune seekers who came to the gold fields. Many of the miners soon realized there was more money to be made in cattle than in prospecting.

Nutritional Value – Beef is a nutritionally dense, high-quality protein. One three-ounce cooked serving of lean beef provides 10 essential nutrients and about half your Daily Value of protein. Beef is an excellent source of zinc, selenium, niacin, vitamin B12, and vitamin B6, and a great source of phosphorous, iron, choline, and riboflavin. There are more lean cuts available today than ever before. More than 60 percent of beef cuts found in a supermarket are considered lean by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) standards. Beef is also a primary source of monounsaturated fat in diets which is the same type of healthy fat found in avocados and olive oil.

For additional information:

California Beef Council
(916) 925-BEEF
Website: www.calbeef.org



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When it's Spring time in the Valley
 And the buds begin to swell,
 Oh, what a beauty; oh, what a picture
 And the fragrance, what a smell –
 Soon the Winter's rain will stop its
 pouring
 For the grounds are soaking wet
 But thank God, He is still in control
 Man has very little to say as of yet. –
 Now the winds have ceased from blowing
 And man can start working the ground

Everything has a season, it's getting
 time for sowing
 Soon the Robins will come signing
 And the Meadowlark, how sweet.
 With their nest up high a swinging.
 For everything has a season
 And the Bible tells us so.
 For everything there is a reason,
 God would have told us if it were not so

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What: 2024 North San Joaquin Valley Almond Day
When: April 4, 2024
Where: Modesto Centre Plaza
 1001 K Street
 Modesto, CA 95354

Snow Survey Shows Conditions Remain Below Average


Source: Brian German, Ag News Director / AgNet West

The second snow survey of the season at Phillips Station highlighted a lack of snow for the current water year. "Even though the storms during January slightly helped out our snowpack, we're only about half of where we should be for this time of year," said Sean de Guzman, Manager of the Flood Operations Section at the California Department of Water Resources.

The results from the snow survey recorded 29 inches of snow depth and a snow water equivalent of 10 inches, which is 58 percent of the average for this location. "Our statewide snowpack is currently at 52 percent of average based off of our automated snow sensor network," de Guzman explained.


While still below average, the snow readings reflect an improvement from just 28 percent of the average on January 1. However, it is also far below the levels recorded in 2023. At this time last year, the California snowpack was measured at 214 percent of the average. During the February snow survey at Phillips Station last year, officials were standing on seven feet of snow. The lower-than-average snowpack can be partially attributed to warmer storm systems compared to last year.

"Most of the storms we've had this year have been on the warmer side, meaning that that rain/snow transition line has been creeping up further and further compared to years past," said de Guzman. "It's very possible we could see above average rainfall combined with below average snowpack, which is also referred to as a 'snow drought.'" Although snow conditions are trending lower than average, water storage levels continue to remain strong. "During the month of January reservoirs have actually captured about 1.5-million-acre feet of storage, which puts our statewide reservoir storage at roughly 116 percent of average to date," said de Guzman.



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Imperial Valley farm harvests jalapeños as Sriracha supplies improve

A vegetable farmer in the Imperial Valley has pulled off an improbable feat that may be helping to solve an urgent supply shortage—at least for those who crave some extra heat in their rice, soup, noodles or stir-fry. If you tried to buy a bottle of Huy Fong Foods' Sriracha in recent years, you may have gone home emptyhanded. The company shuttered its processing plant in 2022 after running out of its key ingredient: fresh jalapeños. Now, Huy Fong is in production again, and a mystery buyer contracted massive quantities of the pepper from Imperial Valley grower Alex Jack of Jack Brothers, Inc.

Farmers are turning to automation for transplanting

With farm labor costs increasing, growers continue to look to automation to do jobs traditionally done by people. In vegetable farming, equipment commonly used to plant delicate seedlings still requires a crew. Manufacturers of fully automated transplanters want to change that, and early adopters such as Yolo County farmer Ray Yeung say the machines are ready for prime time, though they may be cost prohibitive for some farms. Yeung was the first in California to acquire the Agriplanter by Agriplant, one of several fully automated models now used in the state.

Desert lettuce trials show promise for shallow drip irrigation

Desert lettuce growers may be able to save more than 10 inches of water by converting to shallow buried drip irrigation. Two years into a three-year study, University of California Cooperative Extension Irrigation and Water Management Advisor Ali Montazar said shallow irrigation paired with high-tech moisture sensors have shown promise for significantly reducing water and nitrogen use. Preliminary results show that converting to drip does not significantly affect yield. And Montazar said drip produces higher quality lettuce by reducing disease pressure.

Report: Fresh produce supply chain still faces challenges

Global challenges, including weather extremes, geopolitical tensions and a decreasing and more expensive workforce continue to affect players along the fresh produce supply chain, including growers and suppliers of fruits, vegetables, nuts and flowers. These observations were reported by RaboResearch Food and Agribusiness, a market research division of Rabobank, in its report, "The state of the global fresh produce industry." Blueberries were especially hard hit, the report said, noting that the berry was absent last fall in many U.S. supermarkets.

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2024 TRAININGS



Register here:

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

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

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

June 27, 2024 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

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

October 24, 2024 Hazardous Ag Materials (HAM)

8:00-9:30am - English

10:00-11:30am - Spanish

Everyone operating a class C vehicle carrying hazardous material must be trained.

Pricing: Member \$40/Nonmember \$50

November 22, 2024 Spray Safe - Save the Date

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FARM BUREAU

Northeast Regional Meeting

Monday, March 11, 2024
Dying Breed Brewing
Guest Speaker- Sheriff Jeff Dirkse
6:00PM

Join us for a great dinner,
guest speaker and to elect
your Westside Board
Members.



STANISLAUS COUNTY
FARM BUREAU

Eastside Regional Meeting

Tuesday, February 27, 2024
The Fruit Yard Restaurant
Guest Speaker- Vito Chiesa
6:00PM

Join us for a great dinner,
guest speaker and to elect
your Eastside Board
Members.



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STANISLAUS COUNTY
FARM BUREAU

Southern Regional Meeting

Friday, February 23, 2024
Dust Bowl Brewing
11:30AM

Join us for a great lunch, guest
speaker and to elect your
Southern Board Members.



STANISLAUS COUNTY
FARM BUREAU

Westside Regional Meeting

February 22, 2024
Almond Wood, Banquet Room
Guest Speaker- Sheriff Jeff Dirkse
6:00PM

Join us for a great dinner,
guest speaker and to
elect your Westside Board
Members.



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101+	50%



WHEN & WHERE

Stanislaus County Farm Bureau Boardroom

English 7:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Spanish 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

- March 7
- March 21
- April 4
- April 18
- May 2



Call our office to sign up!
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Anna Genasci
annag@stanfarmbureau.org



California Farm Bureau-Sponsored Bill Targets Health and Economic Impacts of Wildfire Smoke across California

SACRAMENTO – Over the past five years, California has experienced unprecedented wildfire activity that has devastated nearly ten million acres across the state. Wildfire smoke has poured in from hundreds of miles away, severely impacting air quality around regions unaffected by the wildfire itself.

This is a direct result of years of mismanaged forest and wildland strategies that have created a new reality for California – one in which wildfires burn faster and hotter than ever before, presenting grave dangers to the environment and residents. As a result, many people suffered from health and economic impacts as they have been forced to shelter in place, with businesses and schools shutting down, and other daily operations coming to a halt.

Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil's Senate Bill 945 (The Wildfire Smoke and Health Outcomes Data Act) would allow state agencies to track and monitor air pollution, population exposure, and cases of adverse health outcomes due to wildfire smoke.

Using the compiled data, the appropriate agencies would be able to facilitate future research efforts to better understand the negative impacts of wildfire smoke on the environment and California's population. Currently, there is insufficient

data by the state and medical community on these health impacts.

"Ensuring the well-being of our communities means understanding the true impact of wildfire smoke. Our bill aims to unveil the impacts on our population, emphasizing the urgent need to address forest health for a resilient and healthier California," Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil stated.

The California Council of Science and Technology recently published a report stating that improving the health of California's forests not only reduces the risk of wildfire, it can also benefit people's health.

Shannon Douglass, President of the California Farm Bureau, weighed in on the significance of the bill saying, "Farming and ranching communities have been hit directly by wildfire smoke. At a time when state and federal governments, including private landowners, are making substantial investments to mitigate wildfire hazards in our forests and woodlands, it is imperative that policy makers understand how neglecting to invest in our wildfire-prone communities can impact health outcomes -- from bringing on respiratory illnesses to pregnancy complications -- across the state's population."

It is essential that we work with our environmental partners to create and maintain a resilient California, where informed research guides our actions, and a commitment to forest health becomes the foundation for a safer, cleaner, and brighter future for all.

Senator Alvarado-Gil represents the 4th Senate District including the Counties of Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Inyo, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Stanislaus, and Tuolumne.

The California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of nearly 26,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of 5.3 million Farm Bureau members.

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An interactive learning opportunity to explore resilient almond farming in California

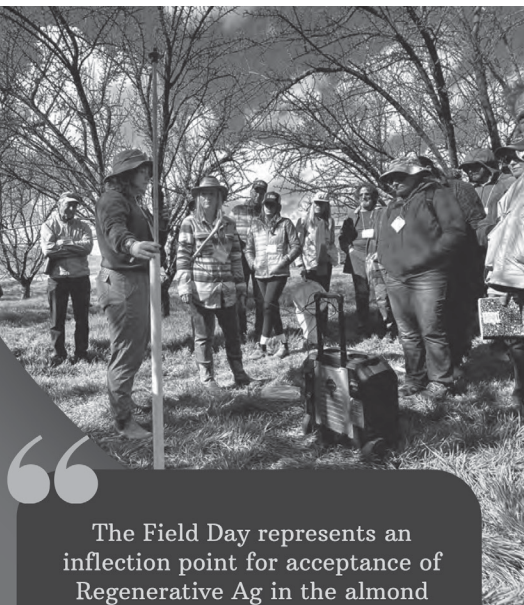
FEBRUARY 22, 2024

Join us for an interactive field day that will offer farmers at every level the opportunity to learn from practitioners on the ground, get the latest information from researchers, ask questions of each other, and connect with folks committed to growing a food system that is healthy for our land and communities.

WEDNESDAY FIELD DAY | 9am-3pm

- Tour and explore the orchards with demonstrations
- Learn and connect through farmer-to-farmer panels
- Hear research updates from experts in the field
- Learn about sap sampling and interpretation
- Enjoy meaningful conversation over a nourishing and delicious lunch
- Engage with businesses that can help on your regenerative journey during the trade show.

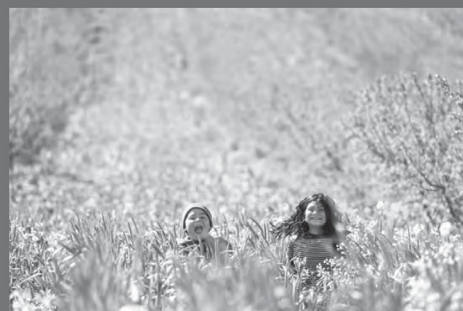
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<https://bit.ly/regen-almonds>



"The Field Day represents an inflection point for acceptance of Regenerative Ag in the almond industry. The day was a huge success, with real data, real-life stories of success, and real demonstrations of orchard benefits.

- 2022 PARTICIPANT

The 2022 Almond Field Day attracted 300+ registrants!



LOCATION

Burroughs Family Orchards
22323 E Monte Vista Ave
Snelling, CA

I.J. Larsen Pumps - A Legacy of Service and Community Support

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

In the heart of Stanislaus County, California, a remarkable company has been serving the community since 1910. I.J. Larsen Pumps, founded by the Larsen family brothers, Ivan and Bob Larsen, has a rich history and a legacy of commitment to its customers and the community.

In 1990, a dedicated employee named Mike Humble joined the ranks of I.J. Larsen Pumps as a Technician and eventually rose to the position of General Manager.

Mike's journey to this role was marked by his service in the United States Navy from 1975 to 1981, where he honed his skills as an aviation electrician. In addition to his exemplary service in the United States Navy, Mike Humble holds an honorable

discharge, a testament to his dedication and commitment to serving his country and, ultimately, his community and fellow Veterans through I.J. Larsen Pumps. Little did he know that his path would ultimately lead him to a new chapter as the owner of the company.

In October 2002, Mike Humble and his wife, Vicki Humble, took over the reins of I.J. Larsen Pumps. This transition marked the beginning of a new era for the company, characterized by a deep commitment to providing the best service to its customers and making a positive impact on the community. Mike's Navy background instilled in him the values of discipline, attention to detail, and unwavering dedication, qualities that continue to define the company's approach to serving its customers.

One of the remarkable stories that emerged from I.J. Larsen Pumps is the friendship between Mike Humble and Bob Larsen. Both veterans, Mike and Bob, shared a bond that extended beyond their work at I.J. Larsen Pumps. Their shared love for planes and their strong sense of camaraderie exempli-

fied the company's dedication to teamwork and unity.

Another valuable member of the family is Mark Crist, affectionately known as "Uncle Buck." Mark has been an integral part of the company for 36 years and currently serves as the Shop Foreman. His dedication and support have been valuable and irreplaceable to I.J. Larsen Pumps.

One of Mike Humble's enduring legacies was his commitment to teaching and providing the best service to customers. His passion for his customers was evident in every aspect of the business, and this commitment became a cornerstone of I.J. Larsen Pumps.

While Mike Humble was out in the field, ensuring the pumps were in top shape, Vicki Humble worked her magic in the community. Vicki's dedication to her faith and her genuine love for the community made her a strong advocate for local causes and initiatives that support the Stanislaus County area. The Humble family's involvement in community service has helped



shape I.J. Larsen Pumps into more than just a business; it's a symbol of community support and a testament to the importance of giving back.

Robin Velthoen, the company accountant, has been with the Humble family since the beginning and plays a vital role in keeping the company's financial affairs in order. Her dedication, wisdom and support have been instrumental in the company's growth and success.

The Humble children grew up around pump trucks, imbibing the spirit of dedication to the family business from a young age. Kari Santos, the daughter of Mike and Vicki Humble, now serves as the Director of Operations at I.J. Larsen Pumps. Kari, along with her husband Joshua Santos and nephew Josiah Humble, continues the legacy of the company and has introduced automated green systems to improve the company's operations. Kari's passion for working alongside her parents, and Business partners is a testament to the tight-

knit, family-oriented culture at I.J. Larsen Pumps.

I.J. Larsen Pumps specializes in the installation and repair of water well systems for residential, industrial, commercial, and agricultural properties. Their dedication to providing top-notch service has made them an integral part of the community and earned them recognition as proud members of the Modesto Chamber of Commerce and Stanislaus County Farm Bureau.

Being committed to the community, I.J. Larsen Pumps during Coffee Hours events raised awareness of the needs of the Salvation Army and collected toy donations. The company's commitment to supporting local businesses aligns with its broader mission of community betterment.

Kari Santos and Josiah Humble are quick to acknowledge that I.J. Larsen Pumps owes its success to its faithful customers. The enduring relationships with those they serve have been a driving force behind the company's growth and continued impact on the Stanislaus County community.

I.J. Larsen Pumps stands as a shining example of a family-owned business with deep community roots, a commitment to excellence, and a legacy of service that has spanned over a century. Their story is one of resilience, camaraderie, and unwavering dedication to their customers and the community they call home. As they persist in their service to the residents of Stanislaus, San Joaquin, and Merced counties, I.J. Larsen Pumps stands as a symbol of what can be achieved when a business wholeheartedly integrates itself into the community, putting their faith in God to support Stanislaus, San Joaquin, and Merced counties, and fostering Hope and Faith for a better future.

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MJC Dairy Heifer Sale Continues Strong Traditions

Written by Paris Cabral and Nicole Morris

Months of hard work in preparation for the 20th Modesto Junior College Dairy Heifer Sale came to fruition on October 21st, 2023. The sale featured 30 lots of dairy replacement heifers, 2 registered Holstein bulls, and 9 lots of semen, accompanied by a silent auction. Guests were treated to a delicious meal prepared and sponsored by Yosemite Farm Credit. Student chairmen for the event included Paris Cabral – Turlock, Logan Silveira – Chowchilla and Lauryn Young – Washington, who led under the direction of Nicole Morris, Professor of Animal Science. Over 50 student volunteers have spent the past two semesters caring for and working with the heifers, which were graciously donated by local dairy families. This program is made possible with the support of the incredible agriculture community surrounding Modesto Junior College.

The very first MJC Dairy Sale took place in 1985. Hal Carlton, Professor of Dairy Science, enacted this program to provide students with more opportunities for hands-on experience with dairy cattle. Mr. Carlton's vision and leadership 38 years ago

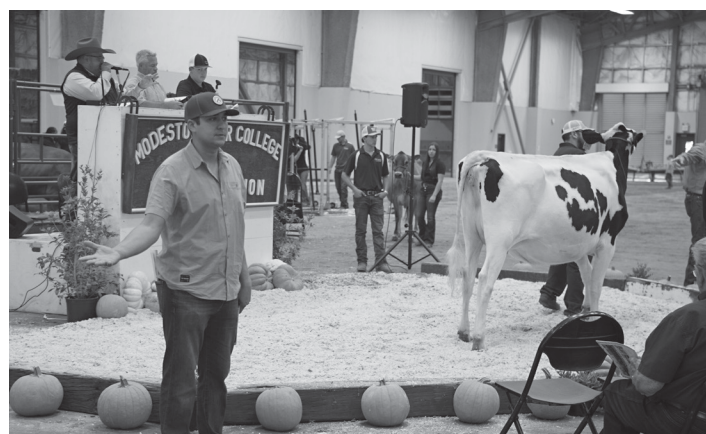
has served as the foundation for continued success in Dairy Science education at MJC.

In 2021, the MJC Dairy Legacy Award began to honor those who have positively impacted the dairy program. The idea is to award recipients every 2 years at the sale for their dedication. Hal Carlton was the inaugural recipient, and this year he presented the 2022 award to the Genasci Family, recognizing Bill, Jim and the late Edwin for their continued support of MJC agriculture, especially the dairy science program. The honorees for 2023 were the Carl Ott Family including sons, Tony & Tom Ott who have been donors and advisory members for the program.

Today this legacy continues, as our heifers prove valuable in connecting students to real-life dairy care and management. Furthermore, the funds raised through the sale

of the heifers are utilized in all aspects of the dairy science program. Through the donation or purchase of a heifer, our benefactors help our dairy judging team travel and compete on a national level, provide scholarships for dairy science students to attend MJC and transfer to universities, cover the operating expenses of the west campus dairy facilities, and support our curriculum for two years. The 2023 sale raised over \$76,000 for the program and the average sale price for the heifers was \$2,550. This year, the highest-selling heifer sold for \$4,100, which was purchased by John Pires Dairy from Gustine, California.

This event was achieved through the cooperation of heifer donors, buyers, local businesses, MJC faculty, and students. The generosity of all involved is greatly appreciated. With this support, Modesto Junior College Dairy Science continues to educate and develop the future producers, stakeholders, and leaders of tomorrow's dairy industry.



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From "CLOCK" on page 6

In fact, compared to just eight years ago, our farm is paying an additional \$400,000 for the same hourly labor. Other farmers across the country are also facing dramatic increases in labor costs. That's just not sustainable.

Labor costs have skyrocketed, while fresh asparagus revenues have been stagnant or

decreased during this same period, even before accounting for inflation. We cannot raise prices to account for the increased cost and decreased margins because of the import pressure.

It's worth noting that the recent change to federal rules is just one of eight rulemakings in the last 18 months to directly affect agricultural employers. We're facing an avalanche of unclear government mandates and red tape.

The reality farmers are facing is that the federal government has the tools and capabilities to alleviate these problems confronting the U.S. specialty crops sector, but nothing has been done.

It is heartening that the farm bill is strengthening its track record on specialty crop needs, as highlighted in a 2023 column by Jon Iverson, a specialty

crop farmer in Oregon.

The research dollars, grant funding and export marketing programs within the bill have been vital to developing better resilience to the unique pressures faced by our sector nationwide. Even USDA is exploring ways to improve existing programs within their current authority. But these programs must be legislatively bolstered, and new funding sources must be considered. Now, with a one-year extension of the farm bill, Congress has the additional time it needs to forge policy solutions long past due.

But these problems cannot be effectively addressed if staked on the farm bill alone.

Congressional action is also needed to modernize our agricultural workforce and support our farmers against unfair trade practices. Without it, U.S. farm families who have relied on fruit and vegetable production to put food on their own tables – and tables across the country – will be forced to consider abandoning this tradition altogether.

As we enter the new year, I hope we can resolve as a nation to preserve two traditions in particular: protecting the farm family and sustaining domestic food production as a core national security strategy. Why national security? Because if a country can't feed itself, it isn't secure. Remember the panic we saw over empty grocery store shelves during the COVID-19 pandemic? Thank goodness that was temporary.

Here's the bottom line: without changes, consumers won't have the choice to buy fresh, locally grown produce — and instead will be forced to rely solely on imported options for their family meals.

There are many opportunities for Congress to improve this situation. I encourage them to act before it's too late.

Caleb Herrygers is a Farm Bureau member and asparagus grower in Michigan.



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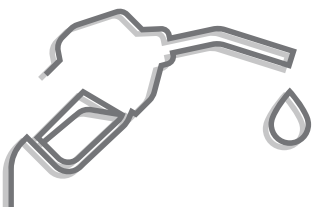
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State program to compensate ranchers for wolf attacks runs out of money

Less than a year after the state fully implemented a pilot program to compensate ranchers for livestock losses and other economic impacts caused by wolves, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife says it has run out of money. Ranchers say the \$3 million allocated for the program does not begin to pay for the rising financial damage created by the presence of wolves, apex predators that are protected under state and federal endangered species acts. In an announcement, the department said it had received 102 applications for compensation and that there may not be enough money to cover future applications.

As rice planting surges after drought, waterfowl flock to fields

The return of fully planted rice crops to the Sacramento Valley following years of drought has restored another essential feature of the region: migrating waterfowl. After harvest, reservoirs replenished by last year's historic storms enabled farmers to flood more of their fields this winter, creating wetland habitat for birds. "You can't drive down the road without seeing thousands of geese," said Kim Gallagher, who grows rice along Highway 45 in Yolo and Colusa counties and participates in government-funded programs that incentivize rice farmers to flood their fields for wildlife conservation.

American Farm Bureau Federation sets policy agenda

The American Farm Bureau Federation has wrapped up its annual convention in Salt Lake City by approving policy changes to guide

the organization's legislative priorities for the year. AFBF delegates reversed policy by allowing caps on the annual number of temporary guest worker visas, as long as they do not restrict farmers and ranchers from using the program to meet labor needs. Delegates also agreed to address the growth of artificial intelligence in agriculture, which has the potential to enhance farming practices but raises some privacy rights concerns.

Researchers: Wet weather could increase almond orchard threat

University of California researchers are warning almond growers to be on the lookout for a rare disease that can cause severe damage to their orchards. Phytophthora, soilborne microorganisms dubbed "water molds" because of their dependence on water, can cause root and crown rot at the base of trees. With heavy rains in the forecast for late January and early February, one species—Phytophthora syringae—was drawing attention due to an unprecedented outbreak last winter, fueled by the atmospheric rivers that lashed California.

Grant funds awarded to help citrus farmers enhance pollinator habitat

The California Farm Bureau and its partners have received \$5 million from the California Department of Food and Agriculture to implement climate-smart farming practices in citrus groves in 11 counties. The project, which is part of CDFA's Healthy Soils Block Grant Pilot Program, will focus on hedgerow planting, carbon sequestration and soil management practices, all of which create safe pollinator habitat in citrus groves. It will fund citrus groves in Fresno, Imperial, Kern, Kings, Riverside, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara, Tulare, San Diego, Placer and Ventura counties.

Research takes aim at using farm by-products for fuels and more

University of California researchers are sharing new findings on how to access the sugars locked up in plant materials to convert byproducts into new feedstocks to produce fuels, materials and chemicals. The findings, published in the journal Green Chemistry, can help lower the technological barrier and make it easier for the sustainable conversion of plant material, including agricultural byproducts, said Tina Jeoh, a professor of biological and agricultural engineering at the University of California, Davis, which led research on the project.



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UC Davis launches center to study cultivated meat and proteins

The University of California, Davis, is establishing a new Integrative Center for Alternative Meat and Protein. The center will work toward large-scale commercialization and technological advancement of alternative proteins, including cultivated meat from animal cells grown in large fermentors, plant- and fungal-based foods and hybrids that combine conventional meat products with alternative proteins. The world's demand for meat is expected to increase 50% to 100% over the next 25 years, said Center Director David Block.

USDA announces \$207 million effort to boost fertilizer, renewable energy production

The U.S. Department of Agriculture will invest \$207 million in renewable energy and domestic fertilizer projects in an attempt to lower energy bills, generate new income and strengthen competition for U.S. farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers. The plan was announced by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack at the American Farm Bureau Federation convention in Salt Lake City. Vilsack said the investments "will expand access to renewable energy infrastructure and increase domestic fertilizer production."

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Save the
Dates!

What: 2024 Tree & Vine IPM Breakfast Meetings

When: Every 1st and 3rd Wednesday from March through June

Where: Old Mill Café
600 9th Street
Modesto, CA 95354

University of California, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors Cooperating



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Hi, my name is Bronc Balaam. I am 13 years old and one of the reporters for Sierra 4-H. This is my 7th year in Sierra 4-H. I wanted to give you a little inside on things that have been going on with the club. Recently the Stanislaus County 4-H offered Proficiency Day for the kids to take a test and get a pin for their hat. There were 105 kids who had the chance to participate between Beef, Dairy Cattle, Dairy Goats, Market Goats, Market Lambs, and Swine. The test is on the kids' knowledge of the animals. There are 4 levels of the test per species: 90% of the kids earned a pin and 24 kids earned an extra achievement pin. Sierra 4-H is having a big fundraiser. It's the Valentine's Box Social Dessert Auction February 19th @ 6:30 pm @ IMDES Hall in Oakdale. We would like to invite you! Come out and see the kids and support Sierra 4-H and get some yummy treats.

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Join us for our biggest fundraiser of the year!

Our February Valentine's Box Social



Dessert
Auction

Monday, February 19th @ 6:30pm
IMDES Hall 5748 Albers Rd, Oakdale

Please come and support the auctioning off of sweet treats made and brought in by our Sierra 4-H members!

Desert Themes: Chocolate, 4-H, Valentine's - Awards will be given to the most creative deserts chosen by our a set of judges and then the Auction Begins! Hope to see you there!

We are one of the largest clubs in Stanislaus County. Our kids participate in many community events and participate heavily at fair. All money raised will go straight to Sierra 4-H Club. Contact Gina with questions (209) 840-1924

Introducing Kattie Schmidig-Sanchez

By: *Joslyn Horton & Anahy Yepez-Saenz*

Modesto Junior College Student Writers

Modesto Junior College was lucky enough to add a new professor to the School of Agriculture this past Fall. Professor Schmidig teaches environmental horticulture and plant science at MJC. Schmidig chose these specialties because she enjoys a classroom environment where she can teach hands-on curriculum.

Schmidig comes from a family of educators with her mom being a special education teacher and her dad being a high school ag teacher. She witnessed how rewarding the profession

of teaching was growing up and the impact she could have on students, if she followed in her parents' footsteps.

in Escalon High School where she graduated and afterwards, she continued on to California State University, Chico where she obtained her bachelor's degree in Ag Science and Education, along with a master's degree in Agricultural Education. In addition, she has a teaching credential from CSU, Chico and an administrative credential through CSU, Stanislaus.

Before obtaining her position at Modesto Junior College, Schmidig taught high school agriculture, but she transitioned over to college teaching after a year of high school Agriculture. She was interested in joining the team at MJC because it is a special place that truly values student's education and personal growth which attracted her to teach at the college. The School of Agriculture has a rich history in the community and has established relationships throughout. She loves the students, instructors, and staff at MJC and that makes her workdays enjoyable and rewarding.

Her hands-on style of teaching is why she enjoys teaching the subjects of horticulture and plant science so much. In her opinion students learn best when they are able to apply what they learned in the classroom and physically get their hands on the concept in a lab setting. Because of this, she tries to bring as many "real world" experiences into her teaching and remains up to date with industry standards. While she likes to keep her instruction very engaging, she shared with us that the most difficult part of teaching for her is being able to get students to see and reach their full potential. Schmidig is the type of teacher that wants her students to succeed, and she is more than willing to be a big resource for them to lean on.

As she was growing up, she was also involved in FFA and 4H which is why she decided that teaching agriculture was a natural fit and topic for her to teach.

Although Schmidig is a new addition to the School of Agriculture at MJC, she fits right in and will be a great asset for them in the future. She is caring, determined, and passionate about her students and her teachings which makes her very approachable in the classroom as well as out.

Her education started

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Supporting Farm Operations Act Introduced in Congress

*SOURCE: Brian German
Ag News Director / AgNet West*

The Supporting Farm Operations Act, H.R. 7046, was introduced in the U.S. House Representatives last week. It seeks to address the high cost of agricultural labor by freezing the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR). Introduced by Congressman John Moolenaar, the proposed legislation would freeze the AEWR for H-2A nonimmigrant workers for two years. Wages established in 2023 would be maintained until the end of 2025.

Several agricultural industry groups have expressed support for the legislation, not-

ing the continually increasing cost of farm labor. American Farm Bureau Federation Director of Government Affairs, John Walt Boatright said the legislation would offer some short-term relief to uncertainty in the labor market. "It's a step in the right direction to creating a wage standard that benefits farmers and employees alike. Along with this effort, AFBF will continue to press Congress on the full reforms that deliver certainty and parity to farmers who produce food for America's families," Boatright noted.

Moolenaar was also among more than 70 lawmakers who recently raised the issue of the AEWR with House and Senate appropriations leaders. The AEWR has been increasing steadily over the past 20 years, more than doubling since 2005 to a national

average of \$17.55 an hour in 2024. Other groups including the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives and the U.S. Apple Association have also highlighted a need for adjusting the AEWR through the Supporting Farm Operations Act.

"This Bill is not everything we need, but it is a necessary step, and one that Congress can, and must, take to provide immediate relief to farmers across the country," Director of US Government Relations for the International Fresh Produce Association, John Holloy said in a press release. "Congress has failed for more than four decades to address the agriculture labor crisis. While we will continue to push for the system wide reform that is needed, this bill can provide immediate relief and ensure that we do not lose any more farms across America."

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