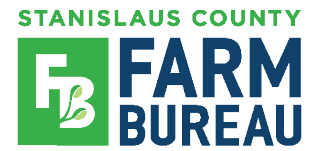


The Stanislaus Farm News

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture



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



**Official Publication of Stanislaus
County Farm Bureau
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*Jake, Bill and Tom Burchell stand in front of a pallet of
bare-root trees waiting to be shipped out.
See article on page 4*

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PHONE (209) 522-7278

FAX (209) 521-9938

email: farmnews@stanfarmbureau.org

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HAPPY NEW YEAR

Welcome 2024!



Celebrating 110 Years

SCFB, founded in **1914**, has accomplished a tremendous amount in **110 years**. Looking forward to bringing in this new year with some big things on the horizon. We couldn't be more excited about celebrating with you on **April 25th, 2024 at our 110th Annual Meeting of Members!** We are beyond thrilled to have guest speaker, **Amberley Snyder** joining us. Amberley, a lifelong horse lover and barrel racer, faced tremendous obstacles after being left paralyzed from a roll over accident in her pick up at 18 years old. She set her goals high to "Walk, Ride, Rodeo" again (also the name of the Netflix Movie about her life). Soon after her accident, she was back in the saddle. We hope you will join us to celebrate 110 years of advocacy!

The SCFB staff will be working hard on advocacy, services and events for you in 2024! Stay Tuned for BIG NEWS coming soon!



Mark Your Calendars!

110th Annual Meeting: April 25th

Night Out with Modesto Nuts: Aug. 1st

Spray Safe: Nov. 22nd

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

Ag Employment Policy

Cal/OSHA Releases Third (and likely Final) Proposed Revision of Indoor Heat Illness Standard: The long and winding journey (since 2017) of Cal/OSHA's proposed indoor heat illness standard seems to be nearing its end with the release of December 22 of a third revision to the proposal with a 15-day comment period ending January 12, 2024. The sole proposed revision is a tweak to the exposure exemptions in the regulation's scope definition. The change initially seems to exempt work locations in vehicles with air conditioning, or shipping or intermodal containers during loading or unloading operations, but only if employees

are exposed to heat in excess of 82 degrees Fahrenheit for less than 15 minutes and any 60 minute period but less than 95 degrees Fahrenheit at all times. Since it is likely that the interior of a parked vehicle or a shipping container will likely exceed 95 degrees Fahrenheit, this change offers little regulatory relief for employers who will have to comply with this standard. FELS' parent organization, California Farm Bureau, will offer comments expressing concern about this overly narrow scope exemption. The Standards Board is expected to approve the Indoor Heat Illness Standard at its March 2024 meeting, and the regulation could be effective as early as the Spring of 2024.

Staff: Bryan Little,
 blittle@cfbf.com

challenges of the rapidly increasing levels of clean energy being sited on agricultural lands and in rural communities.

USDA and DOE seek feedback directly from a diverse set of stakeholders about what the agencies can do through their leadership, program guidance, or research and information sharing to encourage positive clean energy siting outcomes that benefit farmers, rural Americans, the renewable energy industry, and others.

Stakeholders can register to participate in public listening sessions that are available virtually by clicking on the selected date and time:

Government permitting and policy representatives at state, county, and local levels on Jan. 12, 2024, at 12:30 – 2:00 p.m. ET Government Permitting and Policy Representatives

Agricultural producers on Jan. 16, 2024, at 10 – 11:30 a.m. ET. Agriculture Producers

All stakeholders and members of the public on Jan. 16, 2024, at 2:30 – 4:00 p.m. ET. All Stakeholders

Rural electric coops and clean energy developers on Jan. 17, 2024, at 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. ET. Energy Organizations

Stakeholders may submit written comments by Jan. 20, 2024, to CleanEnergySiting@USDA.gov.

To learn more, read full Stakeholder An-

See "REVIEW" on page 6

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Burchell Nursery

By: Vicky Boyd, Writer and Photographer

As a fourth generation nurseryman, Jake Burchell said he never felt pressured to follow in his father's and grandfather's footsteps and join the family-owned Oakdale business after college.

"They really want to make sure I love what I'm doing. As long as that's No. 1, they'll be happy," said Jake, who joined Burchell Nursery a little more than a year ago after receiving his bachelor of plant science degree from California State University, Fresno. "I do feel pressure just because I'm a Burchell and the name's on the wall, but that's a given, and that motivates me."

Tom Burchell, Jake's father and Burchell Nursery CEO, said he had a similar childhood spending time in the nursery and

participating in FFA and 4-H. But Tom said he liked the mechanical side of things and enrolled in mechanical engineering at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo.

"I thought I really wanted to do that," Tom said. "Then I took a class in plant science and I really enjoyed it, so I changed my major. What motivated me is I had a lot of friends in FFA and 4-H that weren't going back to the family farm. I thought that was unfortunate. I didn't want that to happen to our family farm."

And even Bill, the family patriarch and second-generation nurseryman, said he originally wasn't going to pursue a career in the family business.

"I started as a social science

major," he said, laughing. A good friend asked him if he thought about returning to the nursery, and he hadn't made that decision as a freshman.

"It just kind of evolved, and there was no pressure," Bill said. He went on to earn a bachelor of pomology from the University of California, Davis, and joined Burchell Nursery, which his father, Irvin, founded in 1942 on McHenry Avenue in Modesto.

A lot has changed

During their more than 80 years in the nursery business, the Burchells have seen countless changes, both internally with the



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addition of new generations and a new Oakdale location as well as within the farming industry.

From the founding in 1942, the operation grew and had fields scattered throughout Stanislaus County. In 1997, the family bought about 800 acres just east of Oakdale and consolidated their business there, where they remain today.

The bulk of production is in bare-root trees near Oakdale, with most of that being custom grown based on growers' choices of scion and rootstock.

Burchell also has had an operation near Fowler in Fresno County since the 2000s that includes a 150,000-square-foot greenhouse. There, they propagate green potted trees as well as citrus, which must be grown in screenhouses or greenhouses to prevent Asian citrus psyllid infestations. A 0.1-inch-long insect, the citrus psyllid can spread the bacterial disease huanglongbing — also known as HLB or citrus greening — which can kill citrus trees but is harmless to humans.

In addition to selling bare-root fruit and nut trees to growers, the Burchells also sell potted fruit and nut trees to growers. Altogether, the facilities produce and sell about 3 million trees a year.

The stone fruit years

Burchell Nursery has always had an in-house breeding program. In the early years, it yielded several stone fruit varieties that became industry mainstays, including O'Henry and Elegant Lady peaches.

"In the 1950s, the best peach variety was the Fay Elberta," Bill said. "O'Henry came out and it was head and shoulders above Fay Elberta. It's a good peach with a long shelf life."

In addition, the nursery introduced several almond varieties, including Monterey, Fritz, Carmel and Wood Colony. Stone fruit was what got the family operation started, but Tom said they could see

the industry declining while almonds were gaining momentum. In 2018, Burchell sold its stone fruit breeding operation to Wawona Packing Co. of Cutler. As part of the agreement, Burchell became the exclusive licensee to grow and sell the stone fruit varieties except for the Summer Flame 26, 29, 34 and August Flame.

The move also allowed Burchell to focus more energy on developing self-fertile almond varieties. But the industry's quest for almond varieties that don't require pollinizers is nothing new, Bill said, recalling the Self-Set variety developed by Le Grand farmer and fruit breeder Fred Anderson. Unfortunately, Bill said, it didn't yield well and never made it commercially.

Shift to self-fertile almonds

Burchell Nursery introduced the self-fertile Shasta variety, a Monterey or Carmel type, in 2015 as the first of its Summit Almond Series. It blooms and harvests at about the same time or slightly earlier than Nonpareil, the most widely grown almond variety in the state.

The nursery followed in 2019 with Pyrenees, which has a medium-sized kernel that harvests about two weeks after Nonpareil. It has a semi-soft shell and a good seal, making it less susceptible to navel orangeworm damage.

The latest from the Burchell breeding program is Lassen, a patent-pending self-fertile almond that has similar traits to Butte.

Growers have increasingly embraced self-fertile varieties for their potential cost and labor savings. While they will produce a crop without bees, Tom said self-fertile varieties typically yield better with about a half hive per acre. In orchards with pollinizers, University of California Cooperative Extension recommends two hives per acre.

Growers with self-fertile varieties also may significantly reduce harvest expenses by making only one pass in the orchard with shakers, sweepers and harvesters.

As part of its commitment to developing new almond varieties, the family launched Burchell Breeding Inc. in 2021 to advance new breeding techniques and source desirable germplasm from around the world. Among the new entity's goals were creating an advanced phenotype database for germplasm and breeding lines. Phenotypes are observable traits.

In addition, Tom said they've begun using marker assisted breeding. It involves identifying DNA markers associated with desirable traits, such as self-fertility, bitterness, flower timing and drought tolerance based on the number of stomates in the leaf.

After breeders make crosses, they collect seeds and plant them. Once the young plants have at least one true leaf, technicians can conduct genetic fingerprinting to determine whether the progeny have the desirable traits. Breeders then toss those plants without the traits.

With the advent of the technology, Tom said they've been able to cut three and sometimes four years from the breeding process.

But breeders still must plant the selected seedlings in the ground to determine whether they produce trees with desirable agronomic traits. Out of thousands of seedling candidates, only one may make it to commercialization.

Even using DNA markers, Tom said it may take at least 10 years from an initial cross before they release a new almond variety. Because breeding is a long-term endeavor, the Burchells said they're not slowing their efforts with the current downturn in the almond industry.

"The almond industry is still a tremendously viable industry, and almonds will always be a great product," Bill said. "I think the majority of California almond producers will look for self-fruitful varieties, and we must have a good nut to go with it. I see a tremendous opportunity."

Editor's note: Mr. Irvin Burchell paid \$5.00 for his Farm Bureau Membership in 1942. And, the Burchell family have been members ever since. - Anna Genasci, SCFB

From "REVIEW" on page 3

nouncement. Staff: Kevin Johnston, kjohnston@cbbf.com and Karen Mills, kmills@cbbf.com

Forestry and Wildfire

AB 397, authored by Assemblymember Bill Essayli (R - Corona), has been granted reconsideration by the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources for a January 8 hearing. AB 397 would require that the California Air Resources Board (CARB) in its updated scoping plan regarding the state's greenhouse gas reduction strategy, considers the carbon output from wildfire. To date, these carbon emissions are not considered by CARB. The bill failed passage in 2023, but was granted reconsideration, making it a two-year bill. Farm Bureau supports AB 397. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cbbf.com

AB 1554 authored by Assemblymember Joe Patterson (R - Roseville), has been amended and will be heard in the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources for a January 8 hearing. AB 1554 was not heard in 2023, making it a two-year bill. The bill adds wildfire fuels reduction projects to the list of exemptions related to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Farm Bureau supports AB 1554. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cbbf.com

Industrial Hemp

On January 4, 2024, CDFA's Industrial Hemp Advisory Board met to discuss the state of the Industrial Hemp Program, which is under intense financial pressure as a regulatory program. The meeting was recorded and should be available to view, along with the meeting agenda and relevant attachments, here. There were many ideas on how to keep the five-year-old

program solvent (ideas like changing the fee structure to align end use product types to scrapping the program at the state level and allowing USDA hemp regulations to control the industry). As evidenced from the wide variety of viewpoints and lack of consensus from those within the industry, industrial hemp in California faces tremendous pressures from cannabis growers that are providing CBD products, and from nascent undeveloped markets for hemp textiles, seed, and other non-CBD commercial products. Finally, there was a staff review of performance-based sampling where staff has been working to implement more streamlined reporting and submissions, including potentially modeling off of Colorado's sampling structure. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cbbf.com

Pesticides

The Farm Bureau's Chris Reardon partici-

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pated in a last-minute meeting called by the State Board of Food and Agriculture related to Department of Pesticide Regulation's recent notification proposal. The focus of the meeting was to get input from the agricultural community so the board might consider sending a letter to DPR outlining their concerns. After significant discussion from both agriculture and members of the board, the board unanimously agreed to send a letter to DPR! We will continue to watch engage on this issue with written due by close of business on January 12, 2024

Transportation

Last week, CARB released an enforcement notice to inform the public that they will not take enforcement action in regards to the Advanced Clean Fleets Regulation until U.S. EPA grants a preemption waiver applicable to those regulatory provisions or determines a waiver is not necessary. The federal agency is considering the preemption waiver as the ACF regulation sets stricter standards than current federal regu-

lations. CARB encourages fleets to voluntarily report and comply while the waiver request is pending and reserves all of its rights to enforce the ACF regulation in full for any period for which a waiver is granted or for which a waiver is determined to be unnecessary, including (but not limited to) the right to remove non-compliant vehicles added to fleets while the waiver request is pending. CARB will also accept requests for the extensions and exemptions available under the ACF regulation during this period.

As a reminder, vehicle owners are required to report vehicles subject to the Clean Truck Check program in the Clean Truck Check - Vehicle Inspection System (CTC-VIS) reporting database. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) is extending the Clean Truck Check reporting deadline to January 31, 2024, to allow vehicle owners additional time to complete their initial fleet reporting and meet the 2023 compliance fee payment requirements.

tle, and school buses; hybrid vehicles; commercial vehicles; personal vehicles; California-registered motorhomes; single vehicle fleets; and vehicles registered outside of California (not including motorhomes). The Clean Truck Check program does not apply to:

- Zero-emission vehicles,
- Gasoline vehicles,
- Military tactical vehicles,
- Authorized emergency vehicles,
- Motorhomes registered outside of Ca
- Historical vehicles,
- Vehicles operating under a CARB-issued experimental permit, and
- Vehicles operating under an Executive Order or Emergency Declaration.

CDFA FARM EQUITY OFFICE ANNOUNCES VACANCY FOR SMALL-SCALE PRODUCER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

CDFA is announcing a single vacancy for a producer-member on its Small-Scale Producer Advisory Committee. The application period is currently open and will close on January 17, 2024. The committee advises the CDFA Secretary and the California State Board of Food and Agriculture on matters pertaining to small and medium-scale producers related to programs, research, technology, workforce development, technical assistance, and equity issues. Interested small-scale producers can apply through these links: English Español Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers are encouraged to apply.

The committee is comprised of five small-scale producers; one member from a California Native American tribe; one member from an urban agricultural organization; one member of a non-profit representing or serving small-scale producers; one member representing academia; and one technical assistance provider. The committee meets on a quarterly basis. Appointments are for four-year terms. Committee members receive no compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for actual expenses incurred while attending committee meetings.

The Clean Truck Check program applies to nearly all diesel and alternative fuel heavy-duty vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) over 14,000 pounds that operate in California. This includes both in-state and out-of-state vehicles, as well as public vehicles (federal, state, and local government); motorcoaches; transit, shut-

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As another membership service, Farm Bureau members are offered FREE classified advertising in the Stanislaus Farm News. Ads must be 18 words or less and only one ad per month per membership (membership number required.) Ads may be MAILED to the Stanislaus Farm News, or BROUGHT to the SCFB office, 1201 L Street, Downtown Modesto. NO PHONE-IN OR FAX free ads will be accepted. Free ads are restricted to farm machinery or equipment or unprocessed farm products. Farm jobs wanted or offered will also be accepted. No real estate ads and no commercial items or services will be accepted. 209-522-7278

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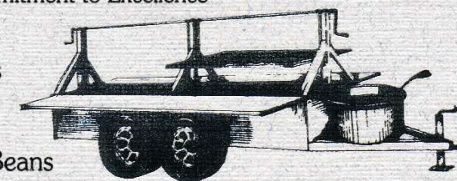
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Source: *California Bountiful magazine*

Story by Linda DuBois
Photos by David Poller

When Carlo Guardado craves a flavorful, satisfying lunch, his favorite go-to is a bowl of beans with a tortilla.

An important staple of his Mexican heritage, beans, packed with protein and fiber, are just as filling as “a big, hefty sandwich,” Guardado says.

As much as he enjoys eating beans, the chef likes cooking with them even more, incorporating them into entrées, side dishes and appetizers. His two favorites are cowboy beans and dirty rice with roasted vegetables.

Having owned and cooked in restaurants

for about 17 years, he recently shifted to working independently, consulting for restaurants and cooking for farm dinners and special events. His preferred cooking method is over live fire on a grill he hauls to events in a chuckwagon.

After living in other states and abroad, Guardado moved back to his San Diego County hometown of Fallbrook about five years ago, shortly thereafter meeting Mike Reeske of Rio Del Rey, a small farm in nearby Valley Center that now supplies him with all his beans. Reeske’s heirloom dried beans have much better flavors and textures than typical store-bought varieties, Guardado says.

An heirloom bean variety is one that was grown continuously over several generations in one small area. Planted today, these beans cultivated by indigenous people still have the same distinct flavors that developed in each variety’s unique growing conditions. In contrast, the bean varieties familiar to most Americans have been bred for mass production and to create a uni-

form product.

Soak and simmer

Guardado’s first step in preparing a dish is to soak the beans for several hours in water with a little salt. The salt adds flavor, keeps the bean skins flexible so they won’t split and helps the beans soak up water and stay soft, he explains.

Soaking beans also can curb gas and other digestive discomfort by breaking down complex sugars and fibers. Studies show it may also break down compounds like phytic acid and lectins that interfere with nutrient absorption.

Once the beans are thoroughly soaked, Guardado discards the salt water and transfers the beans into cold, fresh water and brings them to a gentle simmer, which he says results in a better texture than boiling. He’ll often add spices and other ingredients like bay leaf, fresh thyme, crushed garlic, grilled onion, smoked chilies and oregano. When the beans are soft, he finishes them off with a splash of vinegar, which “brightens the flavor.”

See “Appleseed” on page 10



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From "Appleseed" on page 9

He likes to use a mix of bean varieties with different sizes, flavors and textures in one pot.


"Some stay firm and some get very creamy. Some are sweeter than others and some have rich notes of chocolate. The flavor profile of these is very nuanced. But the cool thing is when you put them all together, they make a very good, flavorful broth," he says.

"Some people that come to these dinners don't eat beans ever," he adds. So, he'll often prepare a bean soup appetizer to get them to "try just a couple of bites and maybe change their opinion and then add them to their diet."

The introduction also helps start a conversation with them about his culture's Alta California cuisine and the farmer who grows his beans. He likes sharing the story of Mike Reeske, a man of many talents dedicated to finding, cultivating and spreading the word about the beans once eaten by native tribes.

Post-retirement mission

It wasn't until he retired from a long career



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as a high school science teacher in 2008 that Reeske turned his attention to farming. He brings to it varied experiences and influences. A researcher and organic chemist, he's co-authored books and developed educational materials dealing with science and sustainability and created programs to teach youths and adults about their local environments. He also was influenced by his parents, who were orange farmers and restaurant owners.

An article about heirloom beans inspired Reeske and his wife, Chris, to put in a few plants on their 2 1/2-acre property.

"I couldn't believe how tasty they were," he says of their first crop. So, the next year, they planted even more. Knowing that few farmers cultivate heirloom beans, they saw a void and officially launched Rio Del Rey in 2013. They now grow from 10 to 15 different varieties per year on 7 acres.

These include two lima-type beans, about seven common beans (pinto type) and five high-protein tepary beans.

"Tepary beans grow from one rainfall in the

desert in poor soil and high temperatures," Reeske says, adding these legumes show promise as a sustainable protein source in a hotter, drier climate.

The Reeskes also developed a new variety of common bean, Anazape. About five years ago, out of 800 pounds of their Anasazi beans, they discovered about 25 unusual-looking seeds. Even though it's rare for beans to cross-pollinate, the Reeskes surmised from the beans' appearance that bees had brought pollen from their nearby field of Rio Zapes and created a hybrid. They planted the seeds and got identical beans the next year and have been growing them ever since.


"We did a tasting with 15 of some of the top chefs in San Diego County, and 13 out of 15 voted that bean No. 1," Reeske says.

Heirlooms' challenges

While deeply committed to organic heirloom bean revival, Reeske says it has its challenges.

About 90% of heirloom beans have been

See "Appleseed" on page 24



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- Almond Weed ID Cards
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- Cover Crop BMPs
- Irrigation Resources
- Nitrogen BMPs
- Salinity Management Guide

Scan the QR code to order you free resources today!



New regulations allow water-rights reviews, impose truck-emission standards

New laws and regulations will affect agriculture in 2024. Senate Bill 389 gives the California State Water Resources Control Board authority to investigate whether rights of a water user are valid and impose sanctions for unauthorized diversions. Assembly Bill 1016 will modernize the certification process for farmers to use drones to spray pesticides and beneficial biological treatments on their farms. The Advanced Clean Fleets rule will phase out most diesel trucks in California over the next two decades, beginning this year.

Farmers in Scott, Shasta watershed face more water curtailments

Even though the clock doesn't run out on winter for another eight weeks, state water officials are bracing for another dry year for the Scott and Shasta rivers in Siskiyou County. At its Dec. 19 meeting, the California State Water Resources Control Board unanimously readopted an emergency drought regulation that curtails water rights in the Scott and Shasta rivers, affecting farmers and ranchers. The order limits surface-water diversions and ground-water

pumping. It also prioritizes minimum flow recommendations to protect threatened coho and other fish.

Wet season, late planting impact California rice harvest

Winter and spring rains brought welcome drought relief in 2023, but they caused rice growers to get a late start planting, and the delay rippled through harvest. Add relatively cool weather in late summer and early fall, and many rice producers said their grain moisture levels appeared stuck or were slow to drop to the desirable 18% to 20% harvest levels. During an average year, the season from planting to harvest spans 145 to 150 days. In 2023, it was 152 days. California growers planted about 501,200 acres of rice in 2023, nearly double the amount in 2022's severe drought.

Study: California farmworkers earned

less after passage of agriculture overtime law

Since California's new overtime law for farm employees began taking effect in 2019, the state's farmworkers worked a total of 15,000 to 45,000 fewer hours and earned a total of \$6 million to \$9 million less on their weekly paychecks than they would have without this law in place. Those are findings of Alexandra Hill of the University of California Berkeley's Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics. Hill's study shows that, on average, there has been a decrease in worker hours and wages. The overtime law, Assembly Bill 1066, was passed in 2016.

Merced, Sonoma poultry farms hard hit as avian flu outbreak spreads

Outbreaks of a highly contagious strain of avian influenza have spiked markedly this winter, leading to the recent destruc-

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tion of 3.78 million birds at poultry farms in Merced and Sonoma counties. Until last fall, the disease appeared to have left California poultry farms relatively unscathed compared to farms in states such as Iowa, the nation's largest egg producer. While California bird losses totaled 751,680 the first year of the outbreak, losses topped 4.7 million in 2023, with most of the cases occurring since October, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Desert farmers are pleased with winter vegetable harvest

Winter vegetable harvest is in full swing in the Imperial Valley and growers say the conditions this season have been close to perfect. Growers say a fall planting season without heat waves and a mild winter have created ideal conditions for leafy greens

and vegetables. Alex Jack of Jack Brothers grows lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower and other crops in the Imperial Valley. "Our crops are looking fantastic," Jack said. "We're pretty much right on schedule." The Imperial Valley and neighboring Coachella Valley produce the lion's share of America's winter vegetables.

Snowfall, rain diminish in early 2024 after California's wet 2023

Unlike early 2023, when nonstop atmospheric river storms built a deep Sierra Nevada snowpack, replenished depleted reservoirs and flooded parts of California, snowfall and rain has sharply diminished so far this year. In the days since the first Sierra Nevada snow survey of 2024 last week, storms added more snow, increasing the early January statewide snowpack figure of 25% of average to 36% of aver-

age as of Monday. At this time last year, the state's snowpack measured 117% of average, which is more than half of the average yearly total. But key precipitation months are still to come.

Organic market is robust for berries, prepackaged salads

The prospects for organic produce remain strong in these inflationary times, according to leaders of some of the largest grower-shipper operations. Statistics gathered by the Category Partners farm market data firm show that organic berry sales increased nearly 7% in the third quarter of 2023 compared to the previous year, while organic prepackaged salads were up 5.4%. Sales of organic lettuce, onions and tomatoes were all up less than 4% year over year, while sales of organic celery, squash and peaches were down.



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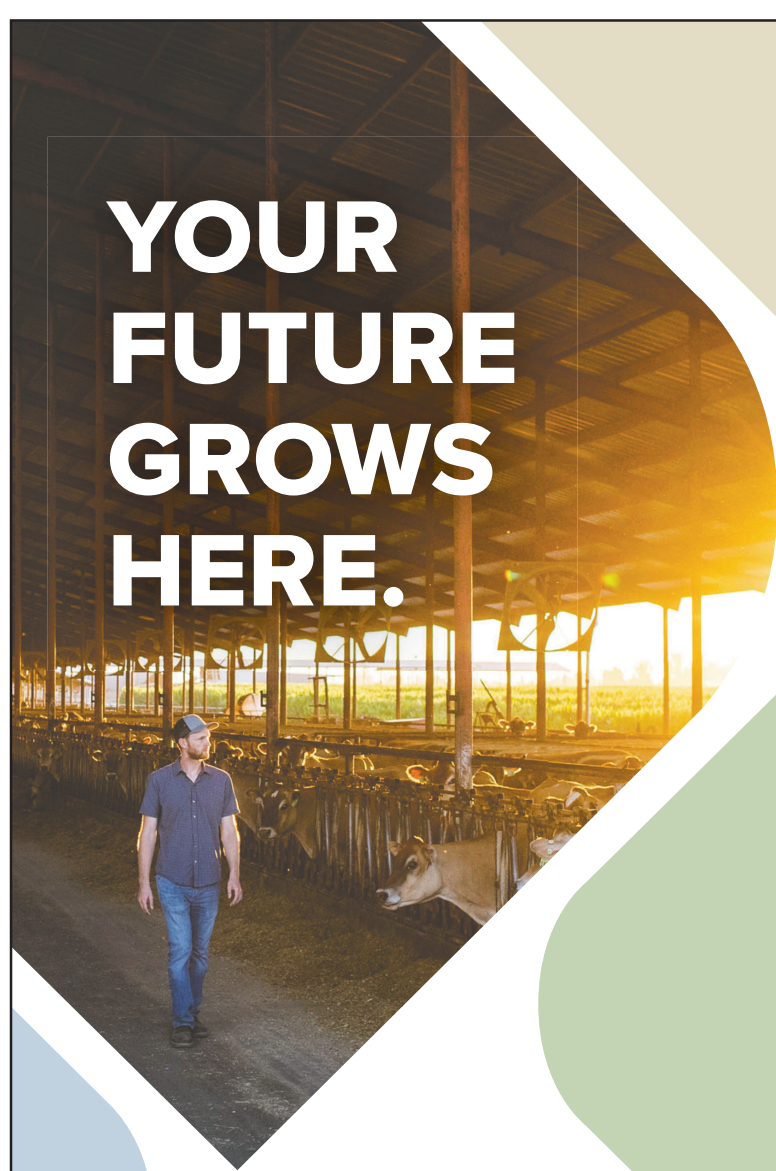
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2024 Farm Bill Expectations

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

What's ahead for the farm bill? One expert says it could be passed early this year.

Brian Kuehl is the Director of Government and Public Affairs with Pinion, an ag business consulting and accounting firm. He, like many others, had wanted to see a farm bill passed in 2023.

"Congress did not get that done, in part because they were distracted by other things: government shutdown, overall government funding, the war in Ukraine, the war in Israel and the Gaza Strip," he said. "So, we're

hopeful that Congress will come back and pass the farm bill early in 2024 and I think there's certainly is bipartisan support for doing that."

Though he said 2023 saw increases in partisanship and politics in ag funding issues, there were some things that gave Kuehl hope.

"Congress traditionally has worked in a bipartisan fashion on agriculture appropriations. This year, we saw the House of Representatives bring an ag bill, a USDA bill, to the floor that had such dramatic cuts to USDA and the farm programs that it failed. They couldn't get the votes within the Republican caucus to support that bill," he explained. "So, a coalition of Democrats

and farm-state Republicans took that bill down and said 'No, those cuts are too draconian'. Once again, we're hopeful that in 2024 we'll see the parties work together to really support US agriculture."

He said legislation as important as the farm bill is a good reason for everyone to work together.

"There's a critical mass of Democrats and Republicans who understand the farm bill is important both for farmers and for food programs," he continued, "for Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Programs, for people in inner cities and frankly, throughout rural America depend on food assistance."



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Miniature Hereford Cattle Growing in Popularity

By Kathleen M. Dutro

As a breed, miniature Hereford beef cattle have a lot going for them. They are compact, efficient, docile, easy to handle and mature quickly. They eat considerably less than their full-size counterparts and produce very tasty meat.

But they also are really cute.

And their popularity is growing, according to Debbie Flohr, breed manager for miniature Herefords at the Indiana State Fair. While much of that growth has so far been in states farther west, such as Colorado, Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas, "It's

kind of making its way east," she said, and there are now reputable breeders in Indiana and Ohio.

As of 2023, the number of miniature Herefords exhibited at the state fair's open show had in just a few years grown from 10 to 28. Only Angus and regular Hereford breeds had higher representation, Flohr said. At the National Western Stock Show in Denver, demand is such that there are both open and junior shows for miniature Herefords. The Miniature Hereford Breeders Association lists more than 500 members, who can be found in nearly every state.

The only difference between a Hereford and a miniature Hereford is the height and overall size. The miniature Hereford was

developed over the last 30 years by selective breeding of stock that was originally imported to the U.S. from England in the early 19th century, according to The Cattle Site, a knowledge-sharing platform for the global cattle industry.

"A female cannot exceed 45 inches at the hip, while for a male, it's 48 inches at the hip," Flohr said. In contrast, a regular Hereford female might be 55 or 60 inches at the hip while a male might be 60 or 64 inches.

But despite their much smaller size, the miniature variety has the same body profile as a full-sized Hereford in terms of proportions.

One of the major attractions of miniature

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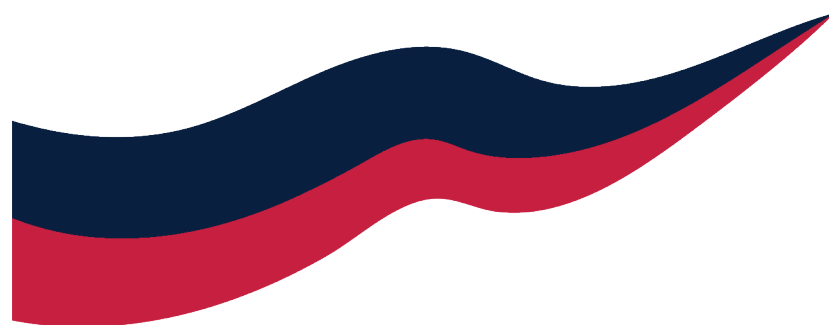
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Herefords is that they are easier to handle and therefore easier to show, particularly for kids. That's why Trent Hostetler got one. Hostetler got interested in miniature Herefords because his granddaughter was interested in showing cattle. But there was a catch.

"She wanted to show by herself," Hostetler said. This past summer, at the tender age of 7, she showed a miniature Hereford named Daisy at the open class show at her county fair in Indiana.

"By the time she gets to 4-H, she'll be very experienced," Hostetler said.

For Hostetler, once he started considering miniature cattle breeds, miniature Herefords were his first and only choice.

"I've always liked the temperament" of

Herefords, he said.

Flohr's path to miniature Hereford ownership is a bit different. Her dad raised regular Herefords while she was growing up, so she's always had an interest in cattle. She and her husband, Rick, eventually purchased Angus cattle for their farm.

"But I didn't connect with them – they're just not what I was used to," she said. Then in 2008, Rick read an article about miniature Herefords.

"I'd never heard of them," she said, adding that originally she wasn't too interested. But then she started seeing them at shows and got hooked. In 2009, the Flohrs bought eight bred heifers. They eventually sold that herd, but Flohr missed it so much that last fall, she bought some new miniature Herefords.

For Flohr, miniature Herefords are really a return to how Herefords used to be. "They are like the original ones that came over from England," she explained. "It takes me back to what my dad had – so for me, it's personal like that."

Kathleen M. Dutro is managing editor – publications at Indiana Farm Bureau. This column was originally published by INFB and is reshared with permission.



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Farmland leases: What you need to know

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For generations, a handshake sealed the deal for most farmland leases. But today, long-term land productivity, growing competition and high costs make it important to sign a written lease.

A lease defined

A written farm lease is a contract that transfers to a lessee the right to use a property for a specified purpose in a defined time frame. It includes key details to both farmland owner and lessee. Farmland leases are renewed at the same time each year. In the

Midwest, it typically happens in the fall and applies to the following crop year.

Why a lease is important for the lessee
A written lease is like an insurance policy for farmland for a specified time frame. It enables annual crop rotation planning and facilitates long-term land improvements. With a long-term lease in hand, a lessee has the assurance that he or she can reap the rewards of a shared investment to make improvements. This includes things like installing drainage tile that helps improve potential crop productivity.

How a written lease benefits the landowner
A written lease also helps manage risk for the landowner. The document normally spells out specific liabilities and responsibilities. Contractual risk transfer is a

critical function of a written farm lease. The lessee typically becomes responsible for operating liabilities during the time frame spelled out in the lease. Identifying and accounting for these variables in writing is key to managing risk for both parties and should be reviewed by your legal representation.

What to include in a farmland lease
The duration and price paid by the lessee are foundational to every lease. Also include:

- Lease structure. A land lease may be structured as cash rent or crop share agreement. Both lease types have pros and cons that should be considered in determining the right structure for you.
- Full terms. Spell out the specific



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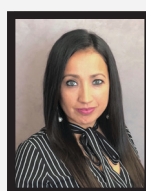
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lease termination date and how that termination will happen whether because of the contract reaching maturity or one party failing to meet his or her obligations.

- Land use. Specific uses of the land should be spelled out whenever relevant. Consider accounting for potential uses like crop production, livestock grazing, hunting and energy generation if they're feasible in the future.

Qualities of land that affect lease rates
Typically, land that is used for high-value

crops can demand a higher rental rate than land for commodity crops or pasture. But other variables contribute to rental rates, including:

- Soil quality
- Field size and shape
- Field conditions
- Location
- Water and infrastructure

Consult your farm's trusted advisers when drafting a new land lease
Account for all specific variables that could

influence each lease's liabilities for both landowner and lessee before signing. Consult with your farm's team of trusted advisers in drafting your next farm lease. That includes your lender, accountant, attorney and insurance provider.

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[1] *A.M. Best Market Share Report 2022.

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Finding Solutions for Farmers and Ranchers in 2024

By Joby Young

In 2023, my first full year serving as executive vice president at the American Farm Bureau Federation, I enjoyed witnessing the complete cycle of the grassroots policy development process, from county Farm Bureau meetings to last year's convention in Puerto Rico. Together, our farmer and rancher members have accomplished much, and we have the potential to do even more in 2024.

Farm Bureau took a giant step forward on the right to repair issue in 2023 by signing memorandums of understanding with five farm equipment manufacturers. The agreements formalize farmers' rights to access tools and parts to repair their equipment. Our members called upon us to find a private solution to this issue, and we answered that challenge. Now, almost three-quarters of agricultural equipment in America is

covered by right to repair agreements.

The U.S. Supreme Court handed down a major victory for America's farmers and ranchers in its Sackett v. EPA ruling. The justices ruled unanimously that EPA overstepped its authority under the Clean Water Act. It forced EPA to rewrite the Waters of the United States rule. Our work continues to create a rule that is clear and concise, while protecting our nation's waterways.

Farm bill

Every American should be urging Congress to pass a new farm bill as a top 2024 priority. This legislation is a critical tool to ensure our nation's food and farm security and to meet new challenges, continue innovating and advance sustainability goals. While Congress passed an extension of the 2018 farm

bill, providing short-term stability and allowing for more time to get revisions right, a new farm bill must be a priority in the new year. Supply chain challenges we experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, trade wars and weather disasters are just a few examples of why we need modernized legislation. The farm bill has always been a bipartisan effort and we encourage lawmakers to work in that spirit to get the job done early in 2024.

Ag labor

Securing labor remains one of agriculture's most frustrating challenges and urgent



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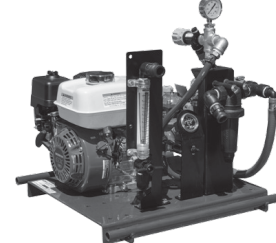
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needs. The H-2A visa program doesn't provide enough workers to meet the demand of many farms, and a flawed wage calculation system makes it difficult for many farmers to afford help. AFBF has long called for a bipartisan, workable solution for labor reform and while we were unable to find that solution in 2023, it must be a top priority for lawmakers in 2024 to create meaningful labor reform.

Trade

Many of the trade issues we faced in 2023 will continue into 2024. The U.S. Trade Representative's case against Mexico to reverse its ban on biotech corn remains open under the provisions of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement. This ban puts food security in Mexico in jeopardy and unfairly disadvantages America's farmers, who

are committed to growing safe and affordable food for families here in the U.S. and around the world. Mexico must live up to its commitments under USMCA.

We're also concerned that the U.S. is falling behind other ag-exporting countries in forming new trade agreements. Trade leaders must refocus on finding new markets and rebuilding relationships with former trading partners in order for the U.S. to be successful in the global marketplace.

Modernizing dairy policy

Last year was a big year for dairy policy, with the start of USDA's multi-part Federal Milk Marketing Order reform hearing, which Farm Bureau called for starting in 2022. As the hearing resumes this year we'll keep boots on the ground for as long as the

process takes to advocate for the right reforms. We may not see the final outcome of the hearing until 2025, but something this important is worth the wait. It's essential that we get this right for our dairy farmers, who haven't seen meaningful

change to the way their milk is priced in nearly 50 years.

Technology and consumer engagement

New and existing technologies, such as artificial

intelligence, drones and gene editing will play an ever-growing role in our future. As social media continues to evolve and expand, consumers are demanding more information on where their food comes from than ever before. It will take all of us telling our agriculture story—to lawmakers, neighbors and consumers on social media—to ensure understanding and acceptance of these technologies that help us grow the most affordable, abundant, safe and sustainable food supply in the world.

These challenges and opportunities await us in 2024. I have no doubt that when the Farm Bureau family comes together to provide our unified voice, we will succeed in advancing priorities that help to ensure a bright future for farmers and for agriculture as a whole.

Joby Young is executive vice president at the American Farm Bureau Federation.



Larry Speed, Stanislaus County Farm Bureau

Larry Speed carefully set up his tripod to capture this shot of a nighttime harvest of almonds, using a long exposure and careful timing to capture the shaking of the trees. But he didn't have to set any alarm to get this photo—he was already awake. "When they're shaking the trees, well, it shakes our house," says Speed, who lives on part of a 400-acre almond farm called Superior Fruit Ranch. Speed makes lemonade during the shaking season, using photography to share the "round-the-clock, necessary things that farmers do to get done what needs to get done."



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Stanislaus County Nursery Program

By: Ag Inspector Trevor Wingett, Lead Inspector/Nursery Program

In the intricate tapestry of life on Earth, plant nurseries emerge as unsung heroes, playing a pivotal role in preserving biodiversity, fostering environmental sustainability, and meeting the growing demands of human civilization. These green sanctuaries serve as cradles for the world's flora, ensuring the propagation of diverse plant species. As we delve into the multifaceted significance of plant nurseries, it becomes apparent that their impact extends far beyond the realms of horticulture, influencing ecological balance and our collective well-being.

The Nursery Service Program is a state-wide program overseen by the California Department of Food and Agriculture. According to the CDFA, this program is

specifically designed to “prevent the introduction and spread of agricultural pests through nursery stock and protect agriculture and the consumer against economic losses resulting from the sale of inferior, defective, or pest-infested nursery stock.”

The CDFA works with each county agriculture commissioner’s office to monitor and enforce sustainable sanitation practices. Private citizens and businesses can both apply for a nursery license through this program and the fees collected for this license pay for county inspectors to inspect their facilities and educate the license holders on resources available to them and what pests might be on the rise.

Stanislaus County currently has approximately 3024 acres of licensed nursery facilities across 59 individual licensed entities. The products cultivated from these nurseries include sod, bareroot trees, ornamental plants and succulents, vegetable seedlings, and grape vines. Most of the license holders are private citizens that propagate and

sell plant material as a small business. The larger license holders are massive firms like The Burchell Nursery, Dave Wilson Nursery, Frantz Nursery and Duarte Nursery. All these license holders are held to the same rules, standards, and inspections regardless of size or inventory.

This program is one of the most important programs in the county. While a large concern for agriculture liability lies in the export and import of plant material, an often over-looked potential for disaster lies in our literal backyards. An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure and the nursery licensing program does



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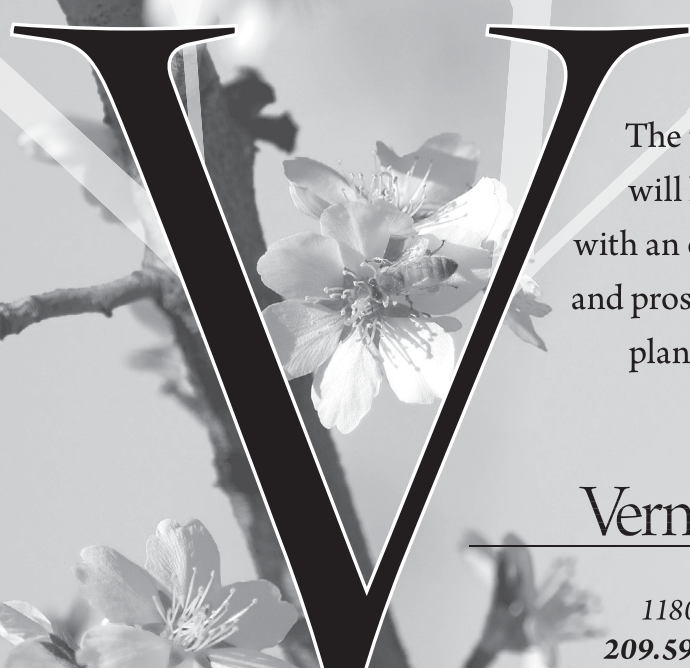


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just that. By conducting annual inspections of propagation grounds, inquiring about sanitation practices, and educating license holders about the resources available to them, these entities can keep our county free of unwanted pests that can inflict major economic and environmental damage.

Nurseries can amplify the success of surrounding agricultural businesses by adhering to strict sanitation standards and practices, just as they can amplify the failure of them by neglecting these same standards and practices. Operating a small nursery gives the community a sense of connection to agriculture that might not exist other-

wise as available farmland continues to be gobbled up by suburban development and urban sprawl. Operating a large-scale nursery creates a local resource for plant material for agricultural operations which reduces costs and road congestion by avoiding long haul shipping efforts. All agriculturalists are deeply invested in three major concepts: the community, the economy, and the environment. These are the three founding reasons for the nursery service program. At the heart of the importance of small-scale nurseries lies their contribution to the preservation of biodiversity. These sanctuaries provide a controlled environment where various plant species, including

endangered ones, can be nurtured, and protected. Through the meticulous cultivation of seeds and saplings, nurseries become defenders of genetic diversity, safeguarding the biological richness that sustains ecosystems worldwide. As natural habitats face increasing threats from human activities and climate change, these nurseries serve as reservoirs of life, ensuring the continuity of diverse plant species for future generations.

Plant nurseries are essential components of efforts to mitigate environmental degradation and combat climate change. They contribute significantly to afforestation and reforestation initiatives, playing a crucial role in carbon sequestration and the restoration of ecosystems as well as fostering interest and options for

xeriscape landscaping to combat drought. By cultivating native plants, nurseries help restore balance to ecosystems disrupted by deforestation, urbanization, and industrial activities. The root systems of these plants help prevent soil erosion, enhance water retention, and create habitats for various species, advancing a healthier and more resilient environment.

Beyond their ecological importance, plant nurseries play a vital role in meeting the ever-growing needs of human societies. As the global population expands, so does the demand for food, medicine, and various resources derived from plants. Nurseries act as hubs for the sustainable production of crops, ornamental plants, and medicinal herbs. By providing a controlled environment for plant growth, nurseries contribute to higher yields, improved crop quality, and the development of new varieties with enhanced resistance to pests and diseases.

Plant nurseries serve as living classrooms, offering valuable educational opportunities for individuals of all ages. They provide a hands-on learning experience, allowing people to understand the life cycles of plants, the importance of biodiversity, and the principles of sustainable agriculture. Nurseries often organize workshops, guided tours, and outreach programs, fostering a deeper connection between people and the natural world. Additionally, these green spaces serve as recreational havens, offering a serene and tranquil environment for individuals seeking respite from the hustle and bustle of urban life.

In essence, plant nurseries are indispensable guardians of life on Earth, contributing to biodiversity conservation, environmental sustainability, and the fulfillment of human needs. Their significance extends far beyond the boundaries of horticulture, encompassing ecological balance, climate resilience, and educational enrichment. As stewards of our planet, it is imperative that we recognize and appreciate the crucial role that plant nurseries play in cultivating life, encouraging a harmonious coexistence between humanity and the natural world.



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From "Appleseed" on page 10

common mosaic virus, which inhibits photosynthesis, leading to small yields and, therefore, higher prices for consumers. The process is also labor-intensive. People, not machines, do the soil preparation, fertilizing, laying of drip irrigation and planting in the spring. In the late summer, they hand-harvest the partially dried beans with sickles and throw them into piles to finish drying. And because each bean variety matures at a different rate, harvesting must be done intermittently from about mid-August to late September.

Then there are relentless weeds. Last year, Reeske lost about 80% of his typical crop because he couldn't find enough workers for this task, forcing him to temporarily halt bean sales on the Rio Del Rey website. Once the harvested beans are completely dried, a small tractor-pulled thresher from Turkey shakes the beans from the pods. When cleaned of dirt and debris, the beans are put in a freezer to kill any weevils, a common bean pest.

Then the Reeskes hand-sort them to pick out beans that are split, moldy or otherwise less than perfect before bagging and labeling them for sale. The packages go to specialty markets and are available on the Rio Del Rey website.

Reeske does his own deliveries to restaurants rather than hiring a distributor. "I decided it was more fun for me to go and meet the chefs," he says. All those steps, though, are only part of his work.

Researcher and advocate
Drawing on his science background, Reeske is working with University of California researchers to learn what varieties of beans are naturally resistant to pests and diseases and what will grow best in the local soils. He's also working on a program to restore the cultivation of certain tribal heirloom beans that are an important part of ceremonies and traditions.

And he's an heirloom bean advocate, trying to convince more small farmers to try growing them. Even though they aren't a big moneymaker, heirloom beans add nitrogen to the soil, giving farmers "free fertilizer," he says.

He's also working to create farm tours and other educational opportunities for the public to get more people to eat beans more often, emphasizing they are an economical, sustainable source of protein, with numerous health benefits.

"For instance, I'm a Type 2 diabetic and after I started eating beans three times a

week, I gave up one of my meds because beans stabilize blood sugar," he says. "I also want to educate people that all beans don't taste the same, and there's a whole variety of flavors you can experience."

Reeske chuckles as he sums up his passion. "I guess I'm like the Johnny Appleseed of beans."

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Farm Bureau photo contest winners illustrate California farm life

A college student from Los Banos majoring in plant and soil sciences has earned First Place in the 42nd annual California Farm Bureau Photo Contest.

Cayden Pricolo, who won \$1,000 for an action shot of the hand harvest of watermelons at a farm in her hometown, noted that photography is an invaluable tool for helping urban and suburban residents understand where their food comes from.

“Photography is a good way to advocate and show the rest of the world how the ag industry is done,” she said. “Without these people doing this manual labor, we wouldn’t be able to have successful farming to provide food for the world.”

The 2023 photo contest attracted hundreds of images from amateur photographers who are members of county Farm Bureaus throughout the state. Contestants used digital cameras and smartphones to capture the winning images.

Ismael (Mel) Resendiz of Fallbrook garnered Second Place and \$500 for a photo of an employee harvesting protea flowers at his 250-acre farm. Third Place and \$250 went to Woodlake resident Mishael McDougal, who submitted a portrait of a Jersey cow that joins her for nutrition education classes at local elementary schools. Timothy Danley of Willows won Fourth Place and \$100 for a drone shot of his father working lime into the soil.

Six photographers earned Honorable Mentions and \$50 each: Jocelyn Brown of Nevada City, Ashley Carreiro of Riverdale, Mariah Earl of Vacaville, Stan Grosz of Fresno, Mary Ann Renner of Ferndale and Larry Speed of Hughson.

In the Budding Artists category for photographers ages 13 and younger, 12-year-old Ashley Jansen won First Place for a closeup of a bee pollinating an almond blossom on her family’s farm in Arbuckle. Natalie Webb, a 10-year-old from St. Helena,

earned contest accolades for the fourth straight year, grabbing Second Place with a shot of green grapes in a vineyard near her home. Both prizes were presented by the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom.

All 12 prize-winning photos were published this week in Ag Alert®, the California Farm Bureau’s weekly newspaper, and California Bountiful®, the organization’s magazine.

Winning images may be viewed and downloaded for publication from Farm Bu-

reau’s “Meet the Winners” profiles here.

The California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of nearly 29,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of 5.3 million Farm Bureau members.



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