

The Stanislaus Farm News

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture

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Turlock FFA
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Recent Turlock High School graduate Peyton Bruce shows off the 1946 Massey-Harris Model 81 tractor she restored and entered in the Stanislaus County Fair. See page 4

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2025 TRAININGS



Register here:

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February 25, 2025 Food Safety - FSMA

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

What is FSMA? Who does it apply to?
How do I comply? What should I expect during
an inspection?

Pricing: Member \$50/Nonmember \$60

June 5, 2025 CPR & First Aid

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

CalOSHA requires that at least 1 employee for
every 20 employees be trained.

Pricing: Member \$100/Nonmember \$125

March 6, 2025 Pesticide Handler & Fit Testing

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

This is an annual training required by the
Department of Pesticide Regulation.

Pricing: Member \$60/Nonmember \$75

July 31, 2025 Tractor Safety

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

CalOSHA requires that employees who
operate equipment be trained annually.

Pricing: Member \$40/Nonmember \$50

May 1, 2025 Indoor&Outdoor Heat Illness Prevention

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

CalOSHA requires this training annually for
employees.

Pricing: Member \$40/Nonmember \$50

October 23, 2025 Hazardous Ag Materials (HAM)

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

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

Pricing: Member \$40/Nonmember \$50

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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.

Support Ag Youth: Enter the Stanislaus County YF&R Sweepstakes!

The Stanislaus County Young Farmers and

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

and Yosemite Farm Credit.

Whether you're looking to upgrade your backyard BBQ setup, shop for the home, or purchase a new firearm, we've got a package for you! Tickets are \$100 each and give you a chance to win one of the following:

- insureCAL Gun Package: \$1,000 gift card to Alquist Arms
- American AgCredit Backyard Package: Solo stove firepit, Blackstone, and an Ooni Pizza Oven
- Yosemite Farm Credit Home Package: \$500 gift card to Williams Sonoma + \$500 to Home Goods

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

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

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

YF&R Sweepstakes

Support Stanislaus County Young Farmers & Ranchers!



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American AgCredit Backyard Package

Solo stove firepit, Blackstone, Ooni Pizza Oven



Yosemite Farm Credit Home Package

\$500 Williams Sonoma gift card, \$500 Home Goods gift card

ALL PACKAGES VALUED AT \$1,000

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



From Rust to Red: Peyton Bruce Revives Vintage Massey-Harris with FFA Spirit

By Vicky Boyd, SCFB

The tractor that Peyton Bruce recently restored was manufactured just after World War II ended and likely done so by female workers embodied by the iconic Rosie the Riveter.

“When all the men went to war and the women started working, this was probably built by a woman,” she said.

So Bruce said it was only fitting that a woman brought the machine back to life. The recent Turlock High School graduate planned to exhibit the 1946 Massey-Harris Model 81 tractor at the Stanislaus County Fair as well as at the California Youth Ag Expo in Tulare in late July. At the Tulare event, she will have to include a photo album of the project and be interviewed by judges about her work.

Switching to the hands-on trades of agricultural welding and mechanics also was a change for Bruce, who plans to study sustainable agriculture at California State University, Stanislaus, this fall.

“I’m used to showing rabbits at the fair,” she said. “I thought this would be good knowledge to have under my belt when I get older and go into agriculture. Being in FFA, I just wanted to try something new.”

Until this year, Bruce said she had never even changed oil in a car let alone done any other mechanical repairs. Even driving the tractor once it was finished meant learning how to use a clutch and stick shift.

“At first, I was a little nervous,”

Bruce said about driving the tractor. She put her new-found skills to the test as part of Turlock’s July Fourth Parade as she was flanked by members of the Western Heritage Engines Antiques Tractors, or WHEAT, club. Bruce also has been asked to participate in the Turlock Melon Carnival parade in September.

Despite her initial apprehension, Bruce said she knew she had made the right choice about two weeks into Turlock High School Ag Welding Instructor Derek Soares’ welding class during the 2024-2025 school year.

“It’s really been a big learning experience, but it’s been really fun,” Bruce said. She pointed to Soares and Steve Kephart, a volunteer with expertise in ag mechanics, for providing her the guidance she needed to successfully complete tractor restoration.



Turlock High School Ag Welding Instructor Derek Soares, along with volunteer Steve Kephart (not pictured), provided guidance to student Peyton Bruce as she restored a 1946 Massey-Harris Model 81 tractor. She entered it in the Stanislaus County Fair.

A RELATIVELY RARE TRACTOR

As part of the project, Bruce had to research the tractor’s history to make sure they were rebuilding it to match the original model as closely as possible. Only about 1,000 of the MH 81, a 25-horsepower row-crop tractor, were made between 1941 and 1946. Farmers back then could buy one for slightly more than \$800.

During the war, the tractors were painted camouflage. Afterward, many were sold to the Royal Canadian Air Force, where they were painted blue and used as aircraft tugs. The Massey-Harris company later became Massey Ferguson.

MH 81s and others with similar architecture were known as tricycle tractors because of large, wide rear wheels and narrow, angled small front wheels, Soares said. Originally designed to cultivate row crops,

tricycle tractors were phased out because they also were prone to rollovers.

A HILMAR TIE-IN

Turlock High's MH Model 81 was originally owned Robert A. Iverson of Hilmar, who was an airplane enthusiast before he began restoring tractors. He had begun work on the tractor in about 2006 but passed away before he could finish.

It then sat in pieces in a barn for 17 to 18 years before his daughter donated it to Turlock High's FFA program, Soares said. When he went to pick it up, it was in pieces and basically just a frame and tires with a lot of rust. But it ran.

Since then, others have donated two tractors to the Turlock High FFA program for two-year student projects. When the machines are restored, the program can sell them.

This marks a shift from the first three tractors that Turlock High students restored after Soares joined the program in 2021. Kephart allowed students to restore a rare 1936 John Deere DI tractor that was once his grandfather's. It was returned to the family once it was finished.

Two other students refurbished vintage tractors that were also returned to the original owners' families. The MH 81 will stay at the high school to be used in parades and other events.

A 'LEGO SET'

One of the challenges with restoring the MH 81 was trying to figure out what Iverson had in mind with some of the components, Soares said.

Bruce described the project as a big puzzle and laughingly said, "I call it my

Lego set." As she began to put the tractor back together, for example, she ended up welding a plate on each of the rear fenders so she could mount them properly.

Soares said he was surprised to find corks in the banjo arm — part of the vehicle's drive train — rather than metal plugs. Then again, the tractor was built at the end of the war when some metal parts were in short supply.

Bruce also replaced all of the wiring and hoses because they were old and cracked after having sat idle for nearly two decades. She then gave the tractor a new coat of red paint and installed a new chrome-plated exhaust pipe.

With a full school day, including after-school sports, Bruce spent many a weekend on the tractor. Once school was out, she continued working roughly six-hour days to complete the project.

"The engine was tricky," Bruce said. "I had to ask a lot of questions, and it was difficult. Now I feel I have a lot more knowledge. My friends thought it was really cool."

Colleagues of her mom, second-grade teacher Sarah Bruce, wanted regular updates on the tractor restoration, the younger Bruce said. And her grandfather was one of her most ardent supporters.

Businesses and individuals within the Turlock area also stepped up.

"It's been really nice that we've gotten a lot of sponsors for this tractor," Bruce said. The tires, for example, were one of the costliest parts at about \$3,000 for the set.

Soares said Quincy, Illinois-based Titan International donated the tires through its Antique Tractor Restoration Program. It is designed for FFA and 4-H students working to bring older tractors back to life.

Bonander GMC contributed 2 gallons of red paint and 1 gallon of yellow, and the list goes on as many other people donated money.

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Classified Ad's \$4.40 per run.

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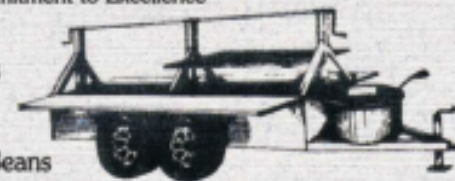
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Am I eligible?

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

How many photos may I enter?

An entrant may submit up to five photos.

What are the prizes?

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

Contest Rules

- Photos must highlight Stanislaus County agriculture.

- Written agreement to terms and conditions is required.

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

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

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

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

Photo requirements and preferences

- Images from mobile devices may be submitted if they are

high resolution.

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

- All photos must be in .jpg format.

What is the entry deadline?

Entries must be entered by September 26, 2025.

How do I enter?

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

Agreement

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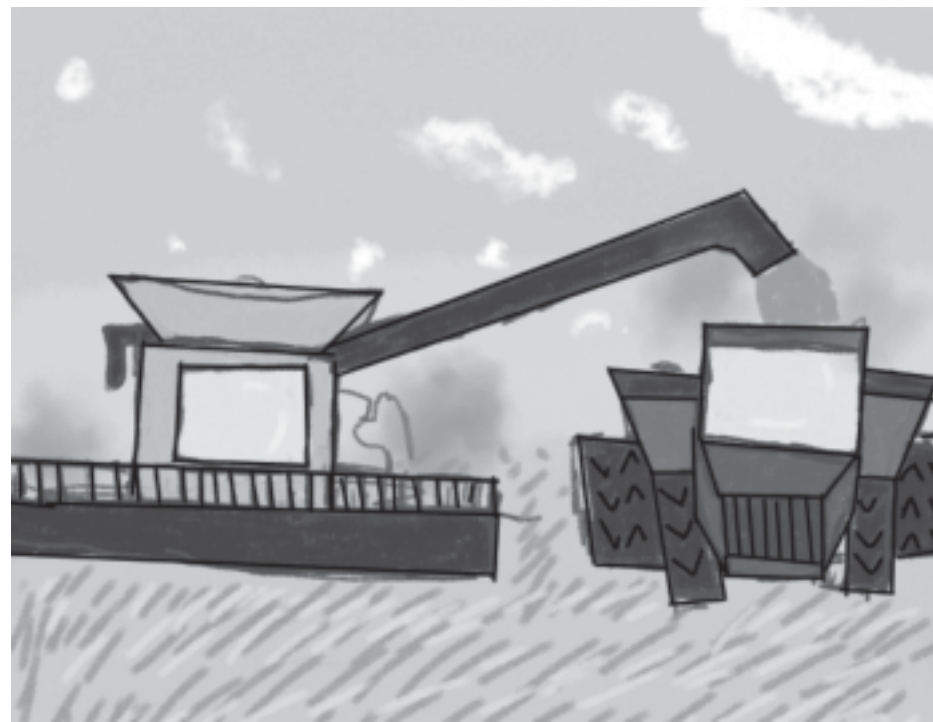
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Whimsical farming tales Summer 2025 California Bountiful magazine

Students tell stories of beekeeping, aquaculture, rice farming and more

Story by Linda DuBois

Using ingenuity to solve problems, coping with grief and struggling to feel at home as an immigrant are among the background themes in the narratives and illustrations California students created for the 2025 "Imagine this..." Story Writing Contest.

Students' agricultural topics run the gamut from fighting a citrus pest to raising an abandoned chick to an almond's journey from the tree to the store shelf.

Hosted annually by the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom, the contest challenges youths to learn about agriculture while developing their writing skills. Participants come from big and small towns, both rural and urban, from throughout the state.

Students in third through eighth grades are asked to pick a topic relating to agriculture, do some research and then use their creative storytelling skills to write a fiction or nonfiction story that educates the reader about the topic.

Winners are selected from each region, and seven of those are chosen as statewide winners: one winner from each of the six grade levels and one Honorable Mention who can be from any



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More winegrape farmers navigate season without guaranteed buyers

Amid a global downturn in wine consumption, an increasing number of California winegrape growers are cultivating their crops without a winery contract this season. Without a guaranteed buyer, Sacramento County farmer Max Francesconi is focused on maintaining grape quality while carefully managing costs. "We are doing our best to keep expenses down," Francesconi told Ag Alert® in a field report. "We made minor adjustments to save a bit of money but still keep up the quality. You still have to do your preventative maintenance and keep it growing and keep high-quality grapes on the vine so you could market them towards the end of the year."

Farmer harvests bountiful blueberry crop in Mendocino County

Mendocino County farmer Taylor Serres Murnig reported harvesting a bountiful blueberry crop in late June and early July.

"We had some of the best quality we've seen in the past couple years," Serres Murnig told Ag Alert® in a field report. The fresh-market blueberry season typically lasts two to three weeks, or four weeks with perfect weather. This year, hot weather on the North Coast shortened Serres Murnig's harvest period, she said, adding that the farm had enough longtime employees to harvest the crop during the short window. "You're having that dance with Mother Nature," she said, "and she is always in the lead."

Tulare County dairy rebounds after recovering from bird flu

At least one dairy in Tulare County has made a full recovery this summer, a year after many in the region suffered losses from bird flu. Blake Wilbur, whose Tulare dairy has 1,600 milking Jersey cows, saw about a 25% reduction in milk production over a two- to three-week period last fall. "We, fortunately, did not lose many, if any, cows. Dairies with Holsteins suffered worse, and those that got bird flu during the summer heat fared much worse," Wilbur said, not-

ing that his dairy's milk production had not only returned to normal this year but surpassed last year's levels, likely due to favorable weather. "Our cows have bounced back," Wilbur told Ag Alert® in a field report.

New resource aims to help aging farmers plan for succession

Nearly half of California farmers are 65 and older, and many have yet to plan for what happens to their farms when they retire. For those without family heirs, that decision can be especially complex. A new set of resources from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, aims to help those producers explore options for succession so that farmland can stay in production and continue supporting local communities. "We are seeing more and more farmers and ranchers who have not identified an heir or person they're expecting to pass the farm or ranch onto," Nebraska Extension educator Jessica Groskopf said. "A lot of resources for succession focus on the next generation, but the reality is that for many of these folks that doesn't apply."

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Del Monte troubles shake up pear season

With harvest underway, California pear growers say there's little doubt that crop yield has improved this year. Looking into the future, however, growers are grappling with uncertainty after Del Monte Foods, which operates one of two pear canneries left in the state, filed for bankruptcy this month. California pear growers typically ship more than half their crop to canneries, selling the rest as fresh fruit. Del Monte's bankruptcy is "going to obviously cause some type of rebalancing" in the sector, said Alex Wilson, who grows pears for his family's Rivermaid Trading Co. in Lodi. "There's a giant question mark on what that rebalancing is going to look like."

Abandoned crops bring pest plague to nearby farms

California farmers are sounding an alarm about a troubling symptom of the state's struggling farm economy. With winegrape and almond prices less profitable in recent years and farmers in the San Joaquin Valley

no longer allowed to burn discarded trees and vines, an increasing number of growers—unable to afford farming or removal costs—have simply walked away from their orchards and vineyards. Tens of thousands of acres have been abandoned, leaving neighboring farms to fight insects and rodents that spill over from the neglected trees and vines. "If you're right next door, it's pretty difficult," said Michael Naito, who grows winegrapes, almonds and pistachios in Fresno and Madera counties.

Grasshopper damage, losses down as infestations decline

Grasshoppers and Mormon crickets, which in past years traveled great distances and destroyed tens of millions of dollars of Northern California crops, have emerged again this year, although farmers say there's been a small reprieve. During the past several years, grasshopper populations were so thick that "the cows had their eyes shut walking across the meadows," Plumas County rancher Susy Pearce said. The infestations forced her to spend upwards

of \$20,000 in pest control from 2021–2023. Pearce said she has seen some grasshoppers this year, "but nothing to panic about."

Foundation provides programs and services for California farmworkers

Joe Garcia, president of the California Farmworker Foundation, founded the organization in 2016 to improve farmworkers' quality of life. A child and grandchild of farmworkers, Garcia said he was motivated to start CFF after seeing a lack of political will to solve problems impacting farm employees. "This inspired me to establish a foundation aimed at addressing the needs of our farmworker communities," he told Ag Alert®. Today, the biggest challenge facing California farmworkers, he said, is the federal government's mass deportation program. "As an organization, our greatest responsibility is to continue standing alongside farmworkers and our communities, offering our support and education," Garcia said. "We aim to be a reliable resource they can trust."

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From Contest on page 9

grade level. The winning tales are bound in a book illustrated by high school art, graphic design and photography students.

Winners, along with their families and teachers, receive a trip to Sacramento for a book signing and an awards ceremony during California Agriculture Day at the Capitol.

Entries for the next contest are due Oct. 1. For more information on entering, visit LearnAboutAg.org.



The Mystery of Luci's Bees
 By Luciana Infante
 Third Grade
 Plaza School, Glenn County
 Teacher: Jennifer Crane
 Illustrator: Sofia Matin
 Millikan High School, Long Beach
 Art instructor: Scott Coppenger

Luci lives on a farm where her family keeps bees. One day, she discovers that wasps are stealing honey from the bees. Worried about the bees, she devises a plan to draw the wasps away from the bees—and it works!

In her research for this story, Luciana

learned that, on average, a bee makes only one-twelfth of a teaspoon of honey in its lifetime and that bees help plants grow by pollinating them.



Not Just Another Nut Story
 By Josiah Wenger
 Fourth Grade
 Shiloh 4-H Club, Stanislaus County
 4-H Club leader: Sheila Amaral

Illustrators: Malakai Newbery and Serena Vining
 Calvine High School, Sacramento
 Art instructor: Corrie Soderlund

Two almonds, Joe and Jack, are in an orchard tree when they are suddenly shaken to the ground. They then dry in the sun, are hulled and go to a processing facility, where they anticipate being packaged whole or slivered, flavored or turned into flour or milk.

Josiah's story was inspired by his dad, who manages an almond huller. Josiah hopes readers learn about the many steps involved in getting almonds from trees to tables.

The Little Farm Dog
 By Josephine Slattery
 Fifth Grade
 Twin Rivers Charter School, Sutter County
 Teacher: Nick Maddalena
 Illustrators: Savannah Farmer and Vivian Ning
 Monterey Trail High School, Elk Grove
 Art instructor: Monica Ortega

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The Buddha's Hand: A Tale of Resilience
 By J.W. Wilds
 Sixth Grade
 Sandburg Middle School, Los Angeles County
 Teacher: Rachel Bizzotto
 Illustrators: Chloe (Mulch) Schell and Rebecca Feng
 Sheldon High School, Sacramento
 Art instructors: Theresa Nguyen Tran Vo and Audrey Russell



Andres' family immigrates to California from a family farm in the Philippines with a piece of a Buddha's hand tree, which they plant. When a citrus-harming pest almost kills the tree, the family finds a solution and the beloved tree connecting them to their homeland survives.

J.W. learned about organic methods of pest control and about a disease he'd never heard of that affects California citrus.

See Contest on page 16

A farm dog named Steiger goes to a rice farm with Farmer Joel and watches a plane plant rice, has fun chasing the migrating birds and rides in a harvester as it collects 80,000 pounds of rice, all within a few hours.

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From Contest on page 15

Chasing a Dream

By Jayna Wenger, Seventh Grade
Shiloh 4-H Club, Stanislaus County
4-H Club leader: Sheila Amaral
Illustrators: Venessa Palofox and
Cherelle Parker, Monterey Trail
High School, Elk Grove
Art instructor: Monica Ortega



Ocean-loving Kate signs up for a college aquaculture class and goes on a field trip on a re-search boat where she learns about how crab is caught and seaweed is grown and harvested. She leaves with a dream of studying to become an aquaculturist.

Jayna picked aquaculture for her topic because she wanted to put the spotlight on a segment of agriculture that's "innovative and unique."

Her Mother's Dream

By Olivia Devereaux
Eighth Grade
Hickman Charter School,
Stanislaus County
Teacher: Natalia Lemos
Illustrator: Djeffterline Jean
Philippe
Florin High School, Sacramento
Art instructor: Alexandra Pease



Katerina faces a dilemma—stay at her new home and live out her recently deceased mother's dream of growing olives or go back to familiar surroundings. A kind and helpful neighbor who explains the process of turning olives to oil helps her decide.

Olivia's story was inspired by her name—coming from the Latin

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3. Provides the opportunity for youth to show market beef cattle through offering (5-6) merit awards per year. Roughly 50 over the last 10 years at \$1500 for each merit award
4. Providing scholarships to our graduating seniors who have applied, interviewed and then attended a post- secondary school. 1-5 scholarships per year at \$500-\$1,500 per scholarship depending on the involvement of the youth.

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Lucky's Life
 By Ava Forsythe
 Honorable Mention
 Turlock Eagles 4-H Club, Stanislaus County
 4-H Club leader: Sheila Amaral
 Illustrator: Amia Newberg
 Elk Grove High School, Elk Grove
 Art instructor: Crystalline Owen

A baby chick, Lucky, is abandoned on a walking trail and then rescued by a girl named Ava, whose family must then learn quickly how to care for young chickens. Lucky grows into a beautiful hen that helps Ava teach other 4-H'ers about raising chickens.

Ava's real-life experience of finding an abandoned chick inspired this story and her love of chickens. To give her story a creative twist, she decided to tell the story from Lucky's perspective.



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Allison Marchy
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Favorite part of showing this year was
being first in her market class.

Norah Schell
Turlock Christian FFA



Showing at Stanislaus Fair for 3 years.
Favorite part of showing was getting
to learn her steers personality and
raising him from the ground up.

Troy Cox
Oakdale FFA



Showing at Stanislaus Fair for 10 years.
Favorite part of showing was getting
to take care of his steer everyday and
being around friends and family.



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The Power of Our Grassroots

By: Zippy Duvall, American Farm Bureau President

One of the great honors of my role as American Farm Bureau president is sharing the stories of farmers and ranchers from across this country with leaders who are making decisions that directly impact our work, our

families, and our livelihoods. From lawmakers on Capitol Hill all the way to the White House, I am humbled to sit across from powerful leaders to help them understand how you grow the food, fiber, and renewable fuel our nation and the world depends on. And I have that seat because of you, because they want to hear your stories. Like all Americans, our nation's leaders, including the President of the United States, want to understand where their food comes from.

Recently, I had the privilege of sitting down for a direct conversation with President Trump in the Oval Office. We had a full discussion about the pressing issues impacting your families, your farms, and the farm economy. He asked me a lot of questions about farming which gave me the opportunity to explain the science behind our farming practices and the tools that we use. Thanks to your grassroots efforts, our nation's leaders are seeing that what matters to agriculture should matter to all Americans. You, as farmers and ranchers, play a critical role in keeping our

food supply secure, providing nutritious food for our families, and protecting our natural resources.

I expressed Farm Bureau's appreciation to President Trump and his administration for the agriculture and tax provisions in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. I shared with the President how this year's crop is the most expensive we have ever put in the ground, and that this law is bringing much-needed relief with increases to outdated reference prices and funding for other risk management tools. But I also emphasized that it's time to finish the job with an updated farm bill to address other programs and policy improvements that are important to farmers and ranchers.

As you might have guessed, we also discussed trade and the importance of opening new markets for farmers and ranchers. I shared that farmers are eager to follow the success of the administration's new deal with the U.K. with even more trade deals to open up markets across the globe. America's farmers and ranchers are growing some of the best products in the world, safely and sustainably, as I shared with the President, and we're long overdue for a level playing field in countries that have thrown up non-scientific barriers to American-grown products. I also emphasized that we are eager to see trade disputes resolved swiftly and that our policy does not support tariffs. The President assured me that boosting U.S. agriculture would remain a priority in negotiating new deals.

The President and I discussed other challenges and concerns weighing on farm families right now. I emphasized that labor is the greatest limiting factor to U.S. agriculture, and without a stable, legal workforce, we cannot continue to grow the healthy food that American families count on. If we want to boost American-grown products, we need to reform our H-2A guestworker program. I shared with him the personal stories that I have heard from farmers on these challenges: how you cannot afford the dramatic hikes in the H-2A wage rate and

See AFBF on page 25



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Protecting America's Livestock Herds

By Greg Doering

If there's one constant in the world, it's every living thing is looking for food while avoiding becoming a meal. Farmers fight weeds, bacteria and fungus from the moment seeds go into the ground until the crop is harvested. Ranchers are on constant alert for predators waiting for the right opportunity to secure an easy meal.

In growing food, there's a constant battle against pests, both seen and unseen. One of agriculture's greatest successes over the past 75 years has come from managing these threats even if they're not eliminated entirely.

The New World Screwworm is a parasitic pestilence of fly larvae that burrows into open wounds on livestock, causing serious to fatal injury to infected animals. NWS was a scourge in the United States until 1966 when a government program used sterile flies to eradicate the breeding stock.

This biological barrier eventually banished the NWS to the Caribbean and South America, but recent sightings in Central America and Mexico have put the United States on alert. Like any fence, the barrier occasionally develops some weak spots. An outbreak occurred in Texas in 1976 and the NWS cropped up again in the Florida Keys in 2016, affecting wild deer there.

Vigilance is key to halting the most recent migration, and officials are working to reverse the course of NWS before it can reestablish in the United States. While not cheap, these efforts provide enormous economic benefits, with one U.S. government estimate showing an outbreak similar to the one in 1976 could cause nearly \$2 billion in losses.

The reemergence of NWS into the public discourse is also an opportunity to highlight how dedicated farmers and ranchers are in caring for their livestock. It's easy for

someone outside of the industry to only see cattle grazing in a pasture as they drive by on the highway and believe the animals are largely on their own.

While this is the time of year cattle are likely to have the least amount of interaction with their caretakers, it's still substantially more than what a passersby can see from the road. There are regular water checks, replenishment of supplemental mineral and salt in addition to periodic fence checks.

This is in addition to more thorough assessments when rotating cattle to fresh pasture. When I was growing up, moving cattle to a new pasture always involved a stop at the pens to spray the cattle with a mild insecticide to combat flies, ticks and other biting insects. This also offered the chance for close evaluation of the herd.

We'd start the day before sunrise so we could move the cattle when it was coolest, and the observation started as soon as we began guiding them to the pen. We studied the strides looking for any sign of a limp or lethargy that could indicate an illness. Once in the pen, we paid close attention to posture, coat, eyes and mouth for any signs of sickness or distress. Any potentially sick animals would be separated for further evaluation and treatment if necessary.

Catching problems early makes them much easier to solve. Screwworms are still a

threat, but through care and vigilance they were spotted early, and mitigation measures are underway to protect all the herds in the United States.

Greg Doering is a writer and photographer at Kansas Farm Bureau. KFB originally published this piece as an Insight column; it is reshared with permission.

A Market Intel published by the American Farm Bureau provides additional details and economic analysis about the impact of the New World Screwworm.

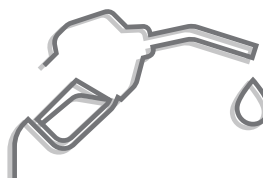


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How artificial intelligence is transforming cattle farming

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AI is a common acronym in the beef cattle business. But we're not talking about artificial insemination.

Artificial intelligence is the science of teaching machines to learn from data. Think of this AI as a co-pilot or assistant for routine processes, data and tasks. AI can help, but it still requires human input. And it's making its way to U.S. ranches at a rapid pace.

How is AI used in agriculture?

For farmers and ranchers, AI tools can spot complex patterns in everything from climate to animal health. An AI model creates new intelligence based on global data sets and can be applied to making well-informed decisions on your farm or ranch.

"If used properly, AI has the potential to help cattle producers," said Dustin Balsley, Chief Operations Officer for Performance Livestock Analytics, a cattle industry data innovation company. "AI can be used for advanced calculations and large data analysis. It can help ranchers create summary reports and monitor patterns. That way, ranchers can make changes to optimize things like feed efficiency and cattle marketing strategies."

How to deploy AI in cattle farming operations
Here are a few ways AI is emerging in beef cattle production:

1. Feed rations and cattle nutrition Sensors (including boluses that when ingested by an animal can monitor ruminal activity) and cameras can collect data on each animal's eating habits, body condition and even chewing patterns. Then, an AI algorithm can recognize patterns and use that data to help ranchers make optimal decisions on things like:
 - Adjusting feed rations in real time
 - Identifying underperforming animals quickly
 - Alerting to possible health concerns or behavioral shifts
2. Cattle herd health
Wearable collars, ear tags and video systems can monitor animal movement and vitals. An AI algorithm can collect that data and apply it to:
 - Spot lameness or illness before you could detect it visually
 - Reduce labor hours spent on pen-checks
 - Enable targeted veterinary intervention instead of broad treatments
3. Reproductive management
Artificial intelligence software now helps track breeding cycles, predict calving dates and identify cows that may need assistance. This results in:
 - Improved conception rates

- Reduced calving difficulties
 - Streamlined record keeping
4. Predictive analytics for business decisions
AI helps crunch environmental, weather and market data to:
 - Fine-tune cattle marketing
 - Purchase feeds at the right time
 - Alter grazing rotations

"AI still has a long way to go. But in some aspects of the cattle business, it can be a game changer in decision-making for ranchers," Balsley said. "On my family farm, we have used AI to aid in heifer selection. We're able to turn mounds of data into quick summaries without building complex spreadsheets or relying on analytics we can't interpret."

Artificial intelligence considerations for ranchers

Before you invest in any new artificial intelligence tool, think about your readiness and ability to employ it as a tool, not a replacement for your own ideas, experience and expertise.

"Not all technology like this is an immediate home run," Balsley said. "AI won't replace you or the advisors around your operation in making decisions. There are too many variables that are specific to your operation which AI can't factor in. I recommend looking at AI as a tool to help with redundant tasks or summarizing large amounts of data very quickly."

AI is transforming cattle farming by enhancing nutrition, herd health, reproduction and business analytics. By managing repetitive tasks and analyzing complex data, AI can serve as a powerful complement to ranchers' expertise. When thoughtfully integrated, it can empower farmers and ranchers to streamline operations, boost efficiency and remain competitive in the ever-evolving agriculture industry.

Visit AgInsightCenter.com for more resources and expert tips to help you run a successful business and maintain the safety of your operation.

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From AFBF on page 21

how farmers, despite extensive efforts, have been unsuccessful in recruiting domestic workers to fill these essential roles.

We also discussed the important role pesticides play on the farm, both in protecting our ability to produce a crop and in promoting regenerative practices on the farm. America's farmers rely on innovative researchers at land-grant universities and the safe regulatory process established by the Environmental Protection Agency to get us the tools we need to grow safe and healthy food. What's more, I underscored to the President that most farmers live on the land where they use these products, so safety is of the utmost importance for our families and the families we're growing food for.

Words can't fully express what an honor this was to speak directly with the President and share stories from Farm Bureau

members. I was also grateful to be joined by Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins and Secretary of Labor Lori Chavez-DeRemer. They have both been strong advocates for farmers and ranchers in their roles in the administration. Secretary Rollins also joined us the next day as the keynote speaker at the American Farm Bureau's Council of Presidents meeting.

Every summer we gather all Farm Bureau presidents from the 50 state and Puerto Rico Farm Bureaus, as well as our national committee chairs, to hear from leaders and lawmakers. This year, our policy team at AFBF worked directly with the White House to hold our meeting at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building's Indian Treaty Room. This was the largest gathering of our state presidents at the White House ever. We heard updates from cabinet members, including Secretary Rollins and EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin, other

administration officials, and senior White House staff. Each speaker took questions from Farm Bureau leaders and expressed their appreciation for the hard work of America's farmers and ranchers.

Each meeting, every conversation—not only last week but across my time in Washington—reminds me of the power of our great federation. The American Farm Bureau, your American Farm Bureau, is the united Voice of Agriculture because of grassroots members who are committed to their farms, their families and their communities. We know that our nation is stronger when agriculture succeeds. And thanks to the tireless work across our federation—from volunteers at the local county Farm Bureau to our dedicated staff to our state and national leaders—your voice is being heard from the local chamber of commerce all the way to the White House.



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AB 1156 Advances Despite Uncertainty; Opposition Seeks Key Farmland Protections

Assembly Bill 1156, authored by Assembly Member Buffy Wicks, D-Berkeley, narrowly passed out of the Senate Environmental Quality Committee on a 5-0-3 vote. State Sens. Melissa Hurtado, D-Bakersfield; Megan Dahle, R-Redding; and Vice Chair Suzette Martinez Valladares, R Santa Clarita, abstained from voting. The author committed to taking amendments, including those from the Senate Local Government committee. However, these amendments are not yet in print, so it remains unclear what specific changes will be made, or whether the bill will be narrowed.

Groups in opposition include the California Farm Bureau and several sustainable agriculture organizations such as American Farmland Trust, Community Alliance with Family Farmers, California Certified Organic Farmers, California Climate & Agricultural Network, California Farmland Trust, California Farmlink and California Rangeland Trust. These groups continue to seek amendments that would protect prime soil and lands of statewide importance from solar conversions, and to maintain the cancellation payment obligation to terminate a Williamson Act contract early. Staff contact: Peter Ansel, pansel@cfbf.com

Three Farm Bureau-Supported Bills Advance to Support On-Farm Composting, Landowner Flexibility and Ag Vehicle Relief

Three California Farm Bureau-supported bills took key steps forward this week in the Legislature. Assembly Bill 411, authored by Assembly Member Diane Papan, D-San Mateo, and sponsored by the California Farm Bureau, has passed out of the Senate Environmental Quality

Committee. The bill would allow for small-scale, on-farm livestock composting under a framework of specific criteria and guidelines.

Assembly Bill 525, authored by Assembly Member Tom Lackey, R-Palmdale, would extend the current exemption for "agricultural vehicle" from the California Highway Patrol's (CHP) Basic Inspection of Terminals (BIT) Program by five years. The BIT Program requires CHP to inspect vehicles, maintenance records and driving records as part of a performance-based system for selecting truck terminals. The bill passed out of the Senate and has been presented to the governor for his signature.

Assembly Bill 518 by Assembly Member Chris Ward, D-San Diego, and supported by the California Farm Bureau would allow low-impact camping on private land. It passed on the Senate Environmental Housing Committee with bipartisan support. Farm Bureau supports the bill because it would give landowners the opportunity to pursue additional income from these short-term stays. Staff contact: Steven Fenaroli, sfenaroli@cfbf.com

U.S. Moves Forward with Antidumping Duty on Mexican Tomatoes

Earlier this week, the White House announced it would move forward with a 17% antidumping duty on Mexican tomatoes, a sign that it will formalize its withdrawal from the Tomato Suspension Agreement (TSA). Effectively in place since the 1990s, the TSA has been criticized by many American growers as providing coverage for illegal and unfair trade practices by Mexican growers. While the 17% is lower than the original 21% plans, it still represents a major step in addressing long-held grievances by fresh tomato producers as it relates to these unfair practices. California Farm Bureau originally sent a letter of support in terminating the agreement during the previous administration. Staff contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cfbf.com

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SB 601 Advances Despite Amendments; Farm Bureau Maintains Opposition

Senate Bill 601, by state Sen. Ben Allen, D-Santa Monica, passed out of the Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials Committee this week and now heads to Appropriations. SB 601 requires the state to adopt water quality control plans for “nexus waters,” which is a new definition referring to waters and wetlands that were previously protected at the federal level prior to the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Sackett vs. EPA* decision in 2023. The bill had previously also included a provision authorizing private citizens to file lawsuits in state

courts alleging water quality violations by any party; this provision was removed, but California Farm Bureau remains opposed to the bill. Staff contact: Alex Biering, abiering@cbbf.com

Assembly Bill 1466 and Assembly Bill 1413—two bills related to how groundwater adjudications are handled by courts in basins under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act—passed out of their final respective policy committees this week. AB 1466 by Assemblyman Gregg Hart, D-Santa Barbara, establishes streamlined processes for courts to address groundwater use by small pumpers in a comprehensive groundwater adjudication. AB 1413, written by Assemblywoman Diane Papan, D-San Mateo, would require a court in a groundwater adjudication to adopt the determinations and findings of the basin’s groundwater agency, including related to “safe yield,” and would limit groundwater users’ ability to challenge those determinations during the adjudication. California Farm Bureau is opposed (unless amended) to both bills. Staff contact: Alex Biering, abiering@cbbf.com.

Farm Bureau-Backed Amendments to SB 616 and SB 629 Ensure Agricultural Lands

Are Part of Wildfire Resilience Strategy
Two wildfire-related bills advanced this week with important amendments secured by the California Farm Bureau to highlight the value of agricultural lands in fire mitigation efforts. Senate Bill 616, authored by state Sen. Susan Rubio, D-Ontario, passed from the Assembly Committee on Emergency Management. The bill was recently amended at Farm Bureau’s encouraging

so that the Community Hardening Commission being formed at the Department of Insurance will consider agricultural lands’ impact of hardening strategies—buffers, defensible space and the like. Staff contact: Peter Ansel, pansel@cbbf.com
Senate Bill 629, authored by state Sen. Maria Elena Durazo, D-Los Angeles, passed out of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources. At the urging of the California Farm Bureau, the bill was recently amended to require that the Office of the State Fire Marshall consider the role of agricultural lands when classifying lands for fire hazard. Specifically, the amendment ensures that agricultural land’s impact on fire spread is factored into hazard assessments. The author accepted the amendment after reviewing data that highlighted the benefits of agricultural lands as “edible buffers” and wildfire models showing agricultural lands positively impacting fire spread into a master planned community. Staff contact: Peter Ansel, pansel@cbbf.com

National Interagency Fire Center Raises National Fire Preparedness Level

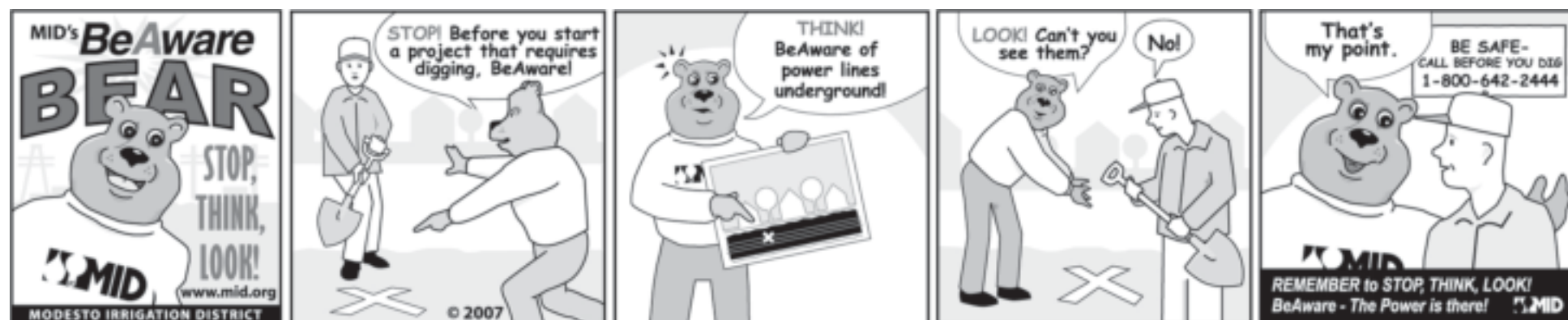
The National Interagency Fire Center raised its preparedness level to PL4 this past weekend, just one level shy of the highest threat and preparedness level. This means it has devoted significant resources to mobilization and mitigation efforts. In its July outlook, much of California is listed as being at an “above normal” risk for significant wildland fire potential. Per Cal Fire, more than 200,000 acres have burned this year, with several large fires currently ongoing. Staff contact: Erin Huston, ehuston@cbbf.com

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California Farm Bureau awards more than \$250,000 in scholarships to support future agricultural leaders

Forty-six students pursuing careers in farming, ranching or other agricultural professions have been awarded a combined \$251,250 in scholarships from the California Farm Bureau Scholarship Foundation.

The scholarships are awarded annually based on students' academic achievements, leadership skills, career goals, extracurricular activities and other factors, with the goal of supporting the next generation of agricultural leaders.

"Our agricultural future depends on young people who are passionate about farming, ranching and contributing to rural communities," said California Farm Bureau President Shannon Douglass. "We are proud to invest in these students who will help ensure the strength and sustainability of California agriculture for generations to come."

Two students from Lassen County earned the Curt and Joan Moran Scholarship, presented to students pursuing higher education in agriculture or attending technical school to learn a related trade such as welding or diesel mechanics. Katelyn Kिरack of Susanville received a \$2,500 scholarship. Tyler DeiRossi Wood of Standish was awarded a \$1,250 scholarship.

In addition, Elizabeth Quintero-Rubio of Dinuba received a \$1,500 scholarship as the recipient of the Carolyn S. Richardson Memorial Award. She plans to earn a degree

in agricultural communications from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, and later attend law school to specialize in agricultural law. The scholarship honors a late California Farm Bureau staff member who advocated for farmers on environmental issues.

The Rustici Livestock and Rangeland Scholarship Award was presented to 43 students pursuing careers in beef or sheep ranching, range management or related fields. Recipients earned scholarships of \$3,000 or \$6,000 to support their educational goals and help sustain California's livestock and rangeland industries.

Rustici scholarship recipients are: Gabriel Abundis, Eureka; Jesse Alves, Half Moon Bay; Paige Beard, Prather; Kassidy Bianchi, Petaluma; Taylor Bigelow, O'Neals; Alexavier Carrillo, Perris; Madysson Cervelli, Yreka; Shelby Criner, Canby; Abby Donovan, Newcastle; Grant Downs, Bakersfield; Grace Elliott, Wasco; Kyleigh Forster, Bakersfield; Kyle Fowle, Etna; Malela Fulton, Fortuna; Corrine Gilman, Sonoma; Kate Grizzle, Holtville; Brandon Gutierrez, Sacramento; Dylan Hanna, Etna; Anton Hester, San Diego; Kennedy Janeway, Redding; Ethan Knechtle, Etna; Kiara Konyn, Escondido; Jenner Laustalot, Redding; Mac Moretti, Santa Ysabel; Zane Naphan, Oroville; Jaycee

Norris, Burney; Claire Pata, Lompoc; Caden Peterson, Turlock; Parker Prior, Hydesville; Carson Pray, Red Bluff; Aubree Roen, Calpine; Shade Satca, Susanville; Adeline Scott, Biggs; Laila Shea, Paso Robles; Travis Smith, San Luis Obispo; Emma Stafford, Petaluma; Quinn Stafford, Live Oak; Malana Unsell, Bakersfield; Kensington Witt, Atascadero; Peyton Wood, Montague; Teagan Wunschel, Plymouth; Anneliese Yanez, Temecula; and Anthony Zinselmeir, Arcata.

Since its founding in 1955, the California Farm Bureau Scholarship Foundation has awarded more than \$4.4 million in scholarships to help students achieve their educational and career goals in agriculture.

The California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of more than 26,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of 5.8 million Farm Bureau members. Learn more at www.cfbf.com or follow @cafarmbureau on Instagram, LinkedIn, X or Facebook.

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From the editors: Celebrating the people who feed us

Source: *Ca Bountiful*

As we present another issue of California Bountiful highlighting our state's agricultural abundance, we pause to recognize the workforce that brings food to our tables every day.

California, the nation's leading producer of fruits, vegetables and nuts, grows more than 400 agricultural commodities. Our farms and ranches employ about one-third of all U.S. agricultural workers—men and women who care for livestock and plant, tend and harvest crops.

Farm employees are the backbone of rural communities. Their work supports thousands of jobs in related industries such as food processing, transportation and equipment supply. Without them, crops would go unharvested, rural businesses would suffer and food prices could rise. They are

critical to both food security and economic stability.

At the California Farm Bureau, which publishes California Bountiful, we believe it is essential to ensure these men and women are recognized and respected. One way that recognition is taking shape is through the Farm Worker of the Year program in Stanislaus County.

Launched during the COVID-19 pandemic by the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau, AgSafe and the Modesto Rotary Club, the award honors those who play an indispensable role in producing, harvesting and packing our food.

This year's honoree is Frank Hernandez of Vermeulen Almond Hulling in Modesto. A multi-skilled professional with more than 40 years of experience, Hernandez operates the almond huller, welds and maintains equipment, removes and plants orchards, installs irrigation and more. He's also a

valued mentor to newer employees.

Hernandez is one of an estimated 800,000 farm employees in California who work tirelessly so we all can enjoy access to fresh, nutritious food. Join us in celebrating them—and in supporting policies that recognize just how vital they are to all of us.



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BEAM Circular Champions Local Talent Through Innovative ~ STEM Career Pipeline

Modesto, CA – BEAM Circular, in partnership with California State University Stanislaus, is proud to share the launch of the Homegrown Heroes summer camp, a local initiative designed to ignite the STEM-oriented leadership potential of K-12 and community college students in California’s Central Valley. The Homegrown Heroes was a full-day summer camp that took place July 14-18, 2025.

The program supported students, particularly from historically underserved communities, as they explore career paths in the bioeconomy and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields through hands-on learning, mentorship, and leadership training. The program was developed with the support of a \$30,000 grant from BEAM Circular’s Bioeconomy Early Career Exposure Fund.

In partnership with Stanislaus State, Merced College, and Merced Scholars Charter School, the Homegrown Heroes initiative bridges academic, industry, and community expertise to create a learning environment in which students use a fabrication laboratory (Fab Lab) to engage in social innovation projects that respond to local concerns in their communities.

“The future of the bioeconomy starts with investing in the talent right here in our own backyard,” said Gloriamar Gamez, Chief Program Officer at BEAM Circular. “Homegrown Heroes is about creating opportunity, confidence, and a sense of belonging in STEM for students who have historically been left out of the conversation.”

Students participated in a weeklong summer camp and a peer-led internship model. Elementary school students worked

with community college students from the MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement) program to understand how science can be used to address real world problems. Through their engagement in design thinking, they designed products that were able to be built at the school Fab Lab and help address local needs in their communities.

“This summer camp is an opportunity to encourage kids to perceive themselves as innovators and realize that STEM is a field where they can build their future careers. We want them to visualize themselves as the future STEM leaders this region needs,” said Dr. Virginia Montero-Hernandez, Professor and Director of the Doctoral Program at Stanislaus State University. “This social innovation summer camp is an empower-



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ing learning space that we hope to replicate at other schools and community colleges.”

Montero-Hernandez said the students attending the summer camp have been recruited through the Merced Scholars Charter School, a public school supported by the Merced County Office of Education. MESA students at Merced College that provided guidance and scaffolding to K12 students,

who were grouped as creative teams during the summer camp. Prior to the summer camp, MESA students engaged in a series of workshops with Stan State faculty to understand how to lead creative teams that think and work collaboratively by using STEM knowledge to address social problems in their communities. Stan State Faculty, Dr. Virginia Montero Hernandez, Dr. Brett Ashmun, and Evelyn Ramos, Director of the Career Center oversaw and designed the general implementation of the summer camp.

The initiative is aligned with BEAM Circular’s mission to build a thriving circular bioeconomy in California’s heartland by investing in local talent, sustainable manufacturing practices, and cross-sector collaboration.

About BEAM Circular:
BEAM Circular is a nonprofit organization that serves as a hub for circular bioeconomy innovation, workforce

development, and industry growth in California’s agricultural heartland. BEAM Circular works with over 100 partners across the North San Joaquin Valley and beyond to develop bio-based solutions that transform waste into valuable products while creating local economic opportunities and addressing environmental challenges.

About Homegrown Heroes Program:

The Homegrown Heroes program addresses key gaps in representation and opportunity in the region. In Merced County, more than 80 percent of students in participating schools come from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, and many are first-generation learners. Through paid internships, FabLab innovation labs, and culturally relevant leadership training, the program reimagines what access and excellence look like in STEM education.

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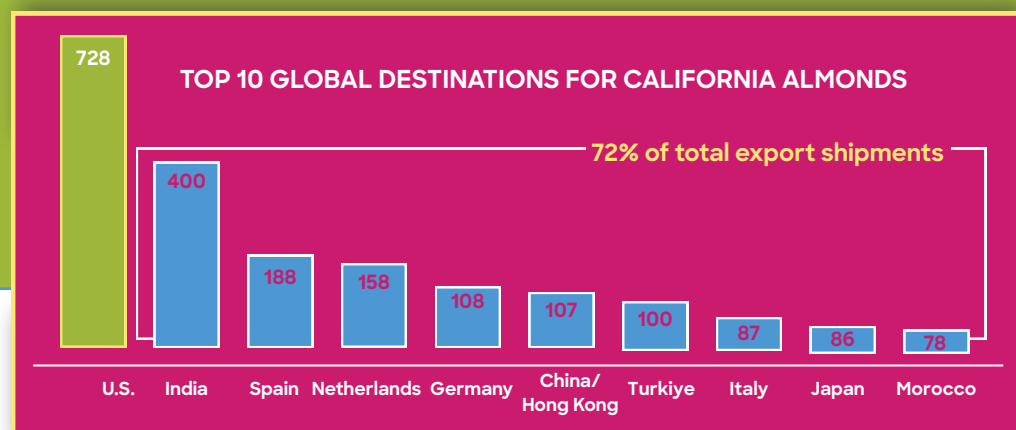
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