

The Stanislaus Farm News

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Based on grower input, Carbon Robotics moved its computer vision, laser and robotics technology from a self-propelled machine to LaserWeeder G2 modular components that can be towed by tractors. Pictured here is the original self-propelled LaserWeeder demonstrated at a technology field day at Hartnell College in Salinas.
See Article on Page 3

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WHEN & WHERE

Stanislaus County Farm
Bureau Boardroom,
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English 7:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Spanish 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

- March 25, 2025
- April 8, 2025
- April 22, 2025
- May 6, 2025
- May 20, 2025
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Full Enrollment is required,
see below for details.



The Supervisory Development Academy is **FREE** this year because Stanislaus County Workforce Development (SCWD) secured grant funding.

The funding requires full enrollment, that requires the following:

1. Register in CalJobs
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Questions?

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1. Workforce Specialist and client meet in-person or by telephone.
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What Happens AFTER Eligibility has been completed?

1. Meet with a Career Services Specialist
2. Provide Identity & Employment Authorization
3. Verification, if you are a veteran
4. Selective Service Status (males ages 18 up to 26)
5. Family income for the last 6 months example: paycheck stubs

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.

Balancing Innovation and Regulation: The Future of Driverless Tractors in Ag

By Vicky Boyd

Tractor rollovers are one of the leading causes of fatal on-farm accidents. For Farm Employers Labor Service Chief Operating Officer Bryan Little, removing operators from the seats through self-driving machinery seems like a common-sense approach to significantly improve on-farm safety. Using autonomous sprayers also would go a long way to minimize worker pesticide exposure, while self-propelled weeders could reduce the number of workers with hoes hand-weeding fields, he said.

But the California Occupational Safety and Health Agency Standards Board continues to follow a 1970s-era rule that severely restricts use of autonomous farm equipment. In recent months, the board's stance appears to be softening, Little said during a recent webinar hosted jointly by the Stanislaus County Farm

Bureau and San Joaquin Farm Bureau. FELS is a California Farm Bureau affiliated organization.

How quickly the regulations will be updated to reflect today's real-world adoption of autonomous technology remains to be seen.

Known as Title 8, General Industry Safety Orders §3441(b), the rule requires all self-propelled equipment to have an operator at the controls.

Autonomous petitions denied

The standards board entered the fray when the Association of Equipment Manufacturers, on behalf of its members, petitioned in November 2018 to allow use of highly automated and autonomous agricultural equipment. The board subsequently denied the request in May 2019, saying there was a dearth of information about the equipment's safety.

Livermore-based Monarch, which manufactures an all-electric driver-optional tractor, obtained an experimental variance from the

California Department of Industrial Relations in August 2021.

Under the variance, Monarch was to begin collecting data related to driverless tractors in trials at Wente Vineyards in Livermore and at Crocker & Starr estate vineyards in St. Helena. The trials were to last up to five years, at which time the data would be used by the state to evaluate possible regulatory changes.

Unfortunately, Little said, the machines were run in remote areas where workers were not present. As a result, the trials have not demonstrated the tractors' abilities to avoid obstacles.

Monarch also petitioned the board in December 2021, requesting to be allowed use of driver-optional tractors without a human operator at the controls.

"This specific section of Title 8 regulation dates back to the 1970s and has not been altered in the 50 or so years since it entered into law," Monarch CEO Praveen Penmetsa wrote to the board.

He pointed out the plethora of safety measures the new machinery has including sensors, computers and advanced artificial intelligence that greatly enhance obstacle avoidance.

See Tractor on page 4

Based on grower input, Carbon Robotics moved its computer vision, laser and robotics technology from a self-propelled machine to LaserWeeder G2 modular components that can be towed by tractors. Pictured here is the original self-propelled LaserWeeder demonstrated at a technology field day at Hartnell College in Salinas.

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From Tractor on page 3

“Unlike their mechanical counterparts from the previous century, today’s driverless tractors present many advantages to growers and farmworkers alike,” he wrote. “They’re more efficient, incredibly precise, and perhaps most important of all: safe.”

The board denied the petition in June 2022, but it did allow the temporary variance to continue.

“The dataset is still too small to conclude that equal safety to that of a sentient operator at the tractor controls will be provided,” the board stated in its ruling.

Already, a number of self-driving machines are working the fields, including the autonomous GUSS sprayer, which is manufactured in Kingsburg. An operator outside the spray zone controls up to eight rigs at a time using a computer tablet.

In August 2024, Cal-OSHA clarified use of autonomous equipment in remote areas where no workers are present. Without workers, it said the location would not be considered a workplace within the agency’s regulatory jurisdiction.

The memo supported the use of GUSS, since workers aren’t at the pesticide application site for safety reasons, Little said. Based on grower input and the state’s regu-

latory climate, at least a few other manufacturers have pivoted away from autonomous self-propelled weeders they originally demonstrated to modular high-tech implements towed by tractors.

The weeders use various optical and laser sensors as well as machine learning and artificial intelligence to differentiate weeds from the crop. They then remove the offending plants with precision implements or lasers.

Autonomous advisory committee OK’d

At the standard board’s Nov. 21, 2024, meeting, members voted to establish an autonomous equipment advisory committee composed of stakeholders to examine Cal-OSHA regulations on their use.

The group will be charged with making recommendations to update current standards to allow autonomous equipment use in workplaces regulated by Cal-OSHA. The board has yet to formally

appoint the committee, and the group’s first meeting date has not been set. But Little said he expected it to be later this year.

At the November meeting, Cal-OSHA staff said they believed lightweight (under 500 pounds), low-power and slow autonomous vehicles that go less than 2 mph would be appropriate for advisory meetings and potential rule making. This class of vehicles already is on the market and is designed to work collaboratively alongside workers.

Known in some circles as “buddy robots,” they ferry fruit lugs from in-field pickers and packers to the ends of rows or transport nursery flats around a facility. They typi-



An operator using a computer tablet can control up to eight GUSS self-propelled autonomous sprayers at once. At the World Ag Expo demonstration pictured here, a GUSS airblast sprayer navigates a mock orchard.




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cally are equipped with multiple sensors and several anti-collision safety features. One example is the Burro from Philadelphia-based Augean Robotics.

Because these smaller vehicles work closely with people, there would be ample opportunities to collect data about person-vehicle interactions, according to a Cal-OSHA memo presented at the Nov. 21 meeting. But the agency did not recommend studies with larger tractors as they are more likely to cause injury.

“Once sufficient data is collected and studied, a determination can be made about expanding the use of autonomous technology to larger vehicles,” according to the memo. Another reason for the board’s hesitancy is worker advocates fear autonomous equipment will take jobs. But Little said the high-tech machinery actually opens up opportunities for workers to learn new skills and elevate their positions.

“Not having people out there hand weeding with a hoe you’d think would be something that worker advocates would be all over, but they’re not,” he said. “We run into worker advocates that express concern about having jobs eliminated. I think they’re looking at the problem through the wrong end of the telescope.”

Advocacy in Action: State Affairs, Federal Policy and Legal Services

Source: California Farm Bureau

Energy

The state Senate Energy, Utilities and Communications Committee held a hearing this month on addressing electricity utility bill affordability while advancing the state’s clean energy goals.

During the hearing, Public Utilities Commission President Alice Reynolds blamed the rise in rates largely on wildfire mitigation spending and cost shift from legacy net energy metering, with investments in utility transmission and distribution infrastructure cited as secondary driving factors.

The California Farm Bureau has frequently reminded the PUC that the net energy metering cost shift is from residential customers, not from agricultural net energy metering or net energy metering aggregation customers.

The California Farm Bureau is already scrutinizing several bills to ensure costs are not unfairly shifted to agricultural customers. One is Assembly Bill 332 by state Sen. Aisha

Wahab, D-Silicon Valley, which would limit residential rate increases to inflation and lead to costs being shifted to other customer classes. Farm Bureau will advocate for its amendment.

The bill does have positive aspects, such as reducing ratepayer contributions to the wildfire fund and increasing utility accountability. State Sen. Josh Becker, D-Menlo Park, the new chair of the Senate Energy, Utilities and Communications Committee, indicated he is working on a bill or bills with state Sen. Mike McGuire, D-North Coast, on affordability.

Livestock and predators

The California Fish and Game Commission delayed action this month on limiting coyote hunting, agreeing to refer the matter back to the Wildlife Resources Committee for further review.

The commission first approved a motion last month to consider removing coyotes from the nongame mammal code section and consider taking limits on coyote management. The California Farm Bureau and its FarmTeam members submitted more than 1,000 comments opposing the change and talked about the threat coyotes pose to livestock.

The Wildlife Resources Committee will revisit the issue on May 15.

Meanwhile, the Farm Bureau has been meeting with key legislative members and budget staff to ensure resources are available to implement the wolf compensation fund that was put in place in 2021.

The fund has run out of money, and



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Spider Mites in Almond Orchards: The Importance of Monitoring

Source: Almond Board of California

Almond growers are all too familiar with the challenges posed by pests in their orchards. Despite not being on the top of a grower's concern list, spider mites can inflict serious damage to an almond orchard, and rather quickly if populations get out of control. However, effective monitoring and the use of beneficial insects can play a crucial role in managing these pests and ensuring a healthy almond harvest.

Understanding Spider Mites

Spider mites are tiny arachnids that thrive in warm, dry conditions, making almond orchards an ideal habitat. These pests feed on the leaves of almond trees, causing stip-

pling, yellowing, and eventually leaf drop. Severe infestations can lead to reduced photosynthesis, weakened trees, and lower yields. Therefore, it is essential to keep a close eye on spider mite populations and take timely action to prevent economic losses.

The Role of Beneficial Insects

One of the most effective natural treatments for spider mites is the use of beneficial insects, such as six-spotted thrips. These tiny predators feed on spider mites and can significantly reduce their populations. David Haviland, a University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) entomology farm advisor, emphasizes the importance of relying on six-spotted thrips for mite management. These thrips are highly adaptable, reproduce quickly, and provide numerous operational benefits. They occur naturally,

are free, and do not leave residues, pre-harvest intervals, or worker safety issues to worry about.

In addition to six-spotted thrips, other natural enemies of spider mites include predatory mites and lady beetles. These beneficial insects can help maintain a balance in the orchard ecosystem, reducing the need for chemical interventions. However, it is crucial to monitor the populations of both spider mites and their natural enemies to make informed decisions about pest management.

Effective Monitoring Techniques

Monitoring for spider mites involves regular inspections of the orchard, particularly in dusty or water-stressed areas where

See ABC on page 9

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New Legislation Aims to Boost Farmworker Pay and Support Agricultural Employers

SACRAMENTO, February 26, 2025 – Last week, Senator Shannon Grove (R-Bakersfield) introduced legislation to create a tax credit for agricultural employers to help cover the costs of providing overtime wages to farmworkers. SB 628, co-sponsored by California Association of Winegrape Growers (CAWG) and California Farm Bureau, aims to ensure that farmworkers have more opportunities to earn overtime pay while also providing relief to struggling agricultural businesses.

“California’s farmers and farmworkers are the backbone of our agricultural economy. Unfortunately, overtime mandates have made it harder for farmworkers to get the hours they need and for growers to get their product to market,” said Senator Shannon Grove. “SB 628 is a commonsense solution that ensures farmworkers have more opportunities to earn, while providing relief to our agricultural businesses who sustain the world’s food chain supply.”

SB 628 would do the following:

Establish a payroll tax credit allowing agricultural employers to offset the cost of overtime wages paid to their ag employees. NOTE: “Overtime wages” means the difference between the employees’ overtime rate of pay and their regular rate of pay. Help increase available overtime hours for farmworkers, boosting their take-home pay, and supporting much-needed financial stability in rural California.

“In 2016, when AB 1066 (Gonzalez) was approved to phase in agricultural overtime, growers warned that this new law would ultimately reduce farmworkers’ earnings,” said Natalie Collins, President of the California Association of Winegrape Growers. “Today, with the smallest winegrape harvest in 20 years, growers are struggling to

stay in business. If legislators genuinely want to increase take-home pay for farmworkers, growers are going to need support from Sacramento to make it possible. CAWG thanks Senator Grove for her leadership on this important issue.”

“California farmers are incredibly resilient, but it is no secret that agriculture faces significant economic challenges,” said California Farm Bureau President Shannon Douglass. “Research has shown that placing the burden of overtime wages on farmers came at the expense of both farming operations and the families of farm employees. Senator Grove’s agricultural overtime tax credit bill is a sensible solution that will enable farmers to continue producing food while providing a real and richly deserved boost in take-home pay for farm employees. It is an investment in our food security and rural communities and in the long-term sustainability of production agriculture in California.”

Recent research supports these concerns. A 2023 study by the University of California, Berkeley (“California’s Overtime Law for Agricultural Workers: What Happened to Worker Hours and Pay?” ARE Update 27(1): 1–4. University of California Giannini Foundation of Agricultural Economics) found that California farmworkers have been earning less since the “Phase-In Overtime for Agricultural Workers Act of 2016” became law. The study concluded, “This early evidence suggests that the law may not be benefiting the workers they aim to protect.”

SB 628 follows the lead of other states that have recognized the unintended consequences of agricultural overtime laws and acted to ensure farmworkers can still earn overtime pay:

Oregon offers a refundable personal or corporate income tax credit for employers based on overtime wages paid to agricultural workers through

2028.

New York offers a similar tax credit through 2032 that is based on the eligible overtime agricultural businesses pay.

Together, Senator Shannon Grove, CAWG and the California Farm Bureau are advocating for a policy that both increases farmworker earnings and provides relief to an industry facing unprecedented financial challenges. California must ensure that policies designed to help farmworkers do not inadvertently reduce their wages.

###

About the California Association of Winegrape Growers: CAWG is a statewide nonprofit trade association advocating for California’s winegrape growers to ensure the sustainability of the winegrape industry. CAWG promotes the industry’s long-term success by advancing the adoption of sound public policies and fostering



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awareness and understanding of winegrape growers' contributions to the economy, environment, and California communities. Learn more at cawg.org.

About the California Farm Bureau: 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 cbbf.com.

About Senator Shannon Grove: Representative of California's 12th Senate District, which encompasses large portions of Fresno, Kern, and Tulare counties.

From ABC on page 7

mites are most likely to thrive. Checking on the underside of leaves for the presence of spider mites is the most effective way to identify them in the orchard. According to the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program, growers should check for spider mites at least weekly during the warmer months. Presence-absence leaf sampling is a useful tool for determining whether treatment is necessary. If there are 1.4 mites per leaf or 38% of leaves are infested, it is time to consider intervention to prevent the population from reaching damaging levels.

To-Do List for Growers

1. Seasonal Monitoring: From March to early May, monitor orchards for both

predators and spider mites at least once every two weeks. Increase monitoring frequency to at least once a week from June to September when mite populations can rapidly increase.

2. Weekly Inspections: Regularly inspect your orchard, especially in dusty or water-stressed areas, to check for spider mites. Use a hand lens to detect mite eggs, hatched spider mites, and predators.

3. Presence-Absence Leaf Sampling: Use this method to determine if treatment is necessary. If there are 1.4 mites per leaf or 38% of leaves are infested, take action.

4. Monitor Beneficial Insects: Assess the populations of natural enemies like six-spotted thrips, predatory mites, and lady beetles to ensure they are sufficient to control spider mites.

5. Consider Selective Miticides: If natu-

ral predators are not enough, consider using selective miticides that are less harmful to beneficial insects.

6. Follow ABC Guidelines: Utilize resources and guidelines provided by the Almond Board of California (ABC) for effective mite management.

Spider mites could pose a significant threat to almond orchards, but effective monitoring and the use of beneficial insects can help manage these pests without increasing inputs. By relying on natural predators like six-spotted thrips and other beneficial insects, growers can reduce the need for chemical interventions, lower costs and promote a healthier orchard ecosystem.



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- June 25 July 2 July 9
- & July 16

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The English at Work Class is **FREE** this year because Stanislaus County Workforce Development (SCWD) secured grant funding. The funding requires full enrollment, that requires the following:

- **Register in CalJobs**
- **Watch Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Orientation Video on SCWD website**
- **Review/complete the SCWD Eligibility Packet**
- **Gather income verification and required data from last 6 months.**

What Happens During a WIOA Eligibility Appointment?

1. Workforce Specialist and client meet in-person or by telephone.
2. Workforce Specialist completes the step-by-step WIOA Title I Application wizard with the client to establish Adult or Dislocated Worker eligibility.
3. Client signs Application and signs and completes forms included in the Eligibility Packet (if not done previously)

What Happens AFTER Eligibility has been completed?

4. Meet with a Career Services Specialist
5. Provide Identity & Employment Authorization
6. Verification, if you are a veteran
7. Selective Service Status (males ages 18 up to 26)
8. Family income for the last 6 months example: paycheck stubs

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Farm Safety & Compliance: How Do I Comply?

By: Kelsey Keeler, Precissi Ag Services, Food Safety/Farm Safety Consultant

In today's world safety plays a key part in every industry. In the agriculture industry, safety is paramount. In fact, the ag industry has a significantly higher rate of fatal injuries compared to other industries. From tractor roll overs to heat illness, employers and employees need to work together to maintain a safe workplace.

CREATING SAFETY CULTURE AT YOUR OPERATION

- **SCHEDULE TRAINING-** A simple way to start your journey to safety compliance is to schedule training for your employees and schedule them often! The average person needs to hear information 5-7 times before it becomes part of their long term memory. Using a subcontracted trainer/training company can be helpful in achieving information retention. OSHA and other regulatory agencies will request to view training records when they are performing inspections. Keeping your training records organized and filed will help you to maintain compliance.
- **REVIEW SAFETY PROGRAMS-** Reviewing your safety programs required by regulatory agencies is a great way to assess how well your program is working. Are you logging injuries into the OSHA Log 300 form? Have you performed a hazard assessment of your operation? This is more documentation that will be requested during an inspection (should one arise) and having it before you actually need it is vital.

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New legislation aims to boost farmworker pay and support agricultural employers

A new bill in the California state Legislature aims to improve work opportunities and take-home pay for farm employees. Senate Bill 628, introduced last month by state Sen. Shannon Grove, R-Bakersfield, would create a tax credit for farmers to offset the cost of paying overtime wages. "Senator Grove's agricultural overtime tax credit bill is a sensible solution that will enable farmers to continue producing food while providing a real and richly deserved boost in take-home pay for farm employees," said Shannon Douglass, president of the California Farm Bureau, which co-sponsored the bill.

Leadership Farm Bureau class announced for 2025

Eight agricultural professionals have been chosen for the California Farm Bureau's 2025 Leadership Farm Bureau program. Leadership Farm Bureau class members will participate in a yearlong educational and development initiative that prepares them for leadership roles in Farm Bureau and agriculture. Participants will learn about government and legislation, media and communications, public speaking and team building. They will also attend lobbying sessions in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., and meet with lawmakers and administrative and regulatory officials.

Investing in healthy soils strengthens farm resilience

Soil health isn't just a buzzword. It's the foundation of productive farms, resilient crops and long-term sustainability. Farmers face many challenges: unpredictable weather, water restrictions, rising input costs and shifting regulations, all of which make soil management feel like one more hurdle in an already demanding industry. Yet, healthy soil is an investment. It directly impacts yield stability, disease resistance, water efficiency and overall farm resilience. The California Bountiful Foundation, a nonprofit research affiliate of the California Farm Bureau, administers the Healthy Soils Block Grant Program, which helps farmers implement soil health practices.

Podcast discusses bee thefts during almond pollination

On the Voice of California Agriculture podcast, Placer County beekeeper Jason Miller discussed the bee shortage facing California almond growers this year as farmers scramble to find enough bees to pollinate the year's crop. With a shortage of pollinators and rising prices for bees, Miller said the theft of bee boxes has become a greater concern. "We have dealt with some very large bee thefts," he told podcast host Gary Sack on the California Farm Bureau-produced show. The episode also discussed the importance of export markets for California farmers and state regulations restricting the use of driverless tractors on farms.

Purge of federal support jolts agriculture

The Trump administration's mass firing of federal employees and its withholding of federal funds during the past month have impacted farmers who for decades have partnered with the federal government for conservation, infrastructure and equipment upgrades, research and other work critical to agriculture. "We have been constantly assessing the impacts because these actions touch so many areas of the federal government that farmers and ranchers interact with," said Erin Huston, natural resources and land consultant for the California Farm Bureau.

State water board delays probation for Kern subbasin

Groundwater agencies in Kern County have been given more time to im-

prove their groundwater sustainability plans and potentially avoid state intervention. Citing significant progress in the agencies' plans to bring the critically overdrafted Kern County Subbasin into sustainability by 2040 under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, or SGMA, the California State Water Resources Control Board last week continued its hearing to Sept. 17 on whether to place the subbasin in probationary status.

Heavy bee mortality puts almond pollination at risk

California almond orchards have turned snowy white, signaling the start of bloom. However, beekeepers say that bee mortality rates are at an all-time high, and they are concerned there may not be enough honeybees to pollinate the 2025 almond crop. "The commercial beekeeping industry is experiencing significant hive losses nation-



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wide,” said Ryan Burris, president of the California State Beekeepers Association.

Record winegrape acreage left unpicked last season

California’s winegrape sector continues to reel from a shrinking market that has left the state with too much vineyard acreage and, year after year, an oversupply of grapes. Last year, more than a tenth of the state’s crop was left unpicked, according to industry estimates presented last month at the Unified Wine and Grape Symposium in Sacramento. “I don’t think there’s ever been a time when we left that many acres of grapes on the vine,” said Jeff Bitter, president of Allied Grape Growers.

Why Farmers Care So Much About Trade

By: Zippy Duvall, AFBF President

An important lesson I’ve learned over the years is that success is built on the foundation of strong relationships. We are stronger when we work together, building trust, exploring new opportunities and navigating challenges. The same idea of relationships can also be said for our trading partners and if we want to keep agriculture moving forward, we need to ensure those connections remain strong.

With 95% of the world’s consumers living outside of the U.S., keeping strong ties with global partners ensures our farmers have access to the markets they need. In fact, over 20% of U.S. farm income is derived directly from exports, and every dollar of those exports generates more than two dollars in additional domestic economic activity. With the new tariffs introduced this week, however, farmers are concerned about the impact on our agricultural exports, along with imports of essential farm tools, as our trading partners announce retaliatory tariffs in response.

Farmers have long supported efforts to ensure fair trade and are looking to expand access to more global markets. We understand that tariffs can be used as a short-term tool to keep U.S. products competitive, and we are hoping to see these tariffs resolved quickly before farmers bear the brunt. That’s why in a recent letter to the administration, we urged leadership to consider the full impact these tariffs could have on our farmers, ranchers and rural communities.

Tariffs on Mexico, Canada and China
The top destinations for our farm exports are Mexico, Canada and China. In 2024 alone, we sent over \$30 billion of agricultural goods to Mexico, \$28 billion to Canada and \$25 billion to China. If you were to add the export value of these top three trading partners, it would account for half of our total agricultural exports. The disruption of any of these markets would lead to higher costs, fewer customers to buy our products and ripple effects across our entire economy.

Beyond exports, our trade relationships are also critical for agricultural imports as many farmers rely on access to essential tools and resources for their farms. For example, approximately 85% of potash fertilizer used on U.S. farms comes from Canada, and the increase of cost for a tool like that, especially during planting season, will make it even harder for farmers oper-



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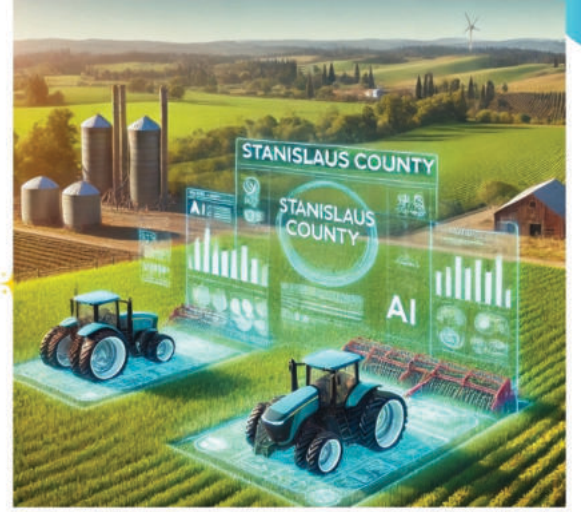
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2025 TRAININGS



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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

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

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

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

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

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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SprayDays California

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) is anticipating the statewide launch of SprayDays California on March 24, 2025. SprayDays California is a first-of-its-kind statewide system designed to provide transparent, accessible and timely notifications and information about the application of specific pesticides, called “restricted material pesticides,” used on farms.

The regulations that support the implementation of SprayDays California go into effect on February 24, 2025, requiring growers and applicators to electronically submit Notices of Intent (NOIs) for restricted material pesticide applications in production

agriculture via CalAgPermits or third-party partner platforms. A DPR information sheet is available in English and Spanish for compliance guidance.

SprayDays California will provide information online, and through email and text message notifications, 48 hours before the intended use of soil fumigants, a type of restricted material pesticide, and 24 hours before the intended use of other restricted material pesticides used on farms. Website visitors can search for scheduled applications anonymously using a map or enter any California postal address to view applications planned within a one-square-mile area. Users can also opt in to notifications about planned applications near a specified address using a mobile phone number or email.

DPR will provide updates on its website in advance of the statewide launch of SprayDays California.

What information will be shared with the public from the NOI through SprayDays California?

The SprayDays California website will share:

- The intended date and time of the pesticide application. (Notifications and the website will clearly state that applications may begin within a four-day window or may not occur at all.)
- The location of the application within a 1x1 mile grid, consistent with information listed on NOIs and reported through Pesticide Use Reports (PURs).
- Application information including pesticide product name(s), active ingredient(s), application method, number of treated acres, and U.S. EPA registration number. This information will be publicly accessible concurrent with NOI submission and will remain on the website for four days following the intended application date.




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State and Local Water Agencies Complete Initial Plan Determinations to Advance Groundwater Sustainability

Source: California Department of Water Resources

DWR Approves 15 Groundwater Sustainability Plans in Latest Round of Determinations

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Marking a major milestone towards sustainably managing California's groundwater supplies, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) today announced determinations for groundwater sustainability plans in 16 basins across the state. These plans are expected to present a roadmap for how local agencies will sustainably manage groundwater, a critical water supply for millions of Californians, over the long-term.

These customized plans are a critical piece towards implementing the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) which is centered around the local control of groundwater basins. Passed in 2014, the law calls for local groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) to develop and implement plans to achieve the sustainability goals of groundwater basins over a 20-year period.

California's groundwater basins, which collectively make up a massive underground reservoir, provide a critical water supply for over 15 million people, especially during dry years when surface water supplies are lacking. As California adapts to a hotter, drier future, these groundwater supplies will become a more vital resource for local water agencies and agriculture.

This release marks a significant SGMA milestone, completing all initial plan determinations for high and medium priority basins in California that are required to comply with SGMA.

"It's incredible to think about the tremendous work local groundwater sustainability agencies have put into these plans to ensure a long-term groundwater supply for communities, agriculture, and the environment

across California," said DWR Deputy Director of Sustainable Water Management Paul Gosselin. "As we continue on our journey towards sustainability, we look forward to our ongoing partnerships with local groundwater agencies to support their implementation strategies."

Of the 16 plan determinations announced today, DWR has approved 15 plans and deemed one plan inadequate. DWR has approved plans for the following basins:

- Antelope (Tehama County)
- Big Valley (Lassen and Modoc Counties)
- Bowman (Tehama County)
- Butte Valley (Siskiyou County)
- Carpinteria (Santa Barbara and Ventura County)
- Colusa (Glenn and Colusa Counties)
- Corning (Glenn and Tehama Counties)
- Fillmore (Ventura County)
- Los Molinos (Tehama County)
- Modesto (Stanislaus and Tuolumne Counties)
- Montecito (Santa Barbara County)
- Piru (Ventura County)
- Red Bluff (Tehama County)
- Tulelake (Modoc and Siskiyou Counties)
- Turlock (Merced and Stanislaus Counties)

DWR has deemed the following basin plan Inadequate:

- Pleasant Valley (Fresno County)
- Several of the plans approved today were previously deemed incomplete in prior reviews and had 180 days to revise and resubmit. Working together, DWR staff facilitated 46 consultation meetings totaling over 100 hours to provide technical guidance for addressing plan deficiencies with Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) from 13 basins.

In total, 86 basins are now operating under an approved plan or alternative plan, with seven deemed inadequate and subject to state intervention. Basins that have not taken sufficient action to address deficiencies in their plans are

deemed inadequate and require consultation with the State Water Resources Control Board for possible state intervention.

The approved plans announced today provide direction to the local GSAs, including recommended actions, to ensure the basins remain on a path to long-term sustainability. Plans will be updated over time as new data and information becomes available and as groundwater conditions change. DWR will review annual reports from the GSAs and conduct periodic reviews at least every five years to determine if basins are on track to meet their sustainability goals. DWR will continue to support GSAs as they move forward in the SGMA implementation process.

*For more information, Contact:
Allison Armstrong, Information Officer, Public Affairs, Department of Water Resources
916-820-8083 | media@water.ca.gov*

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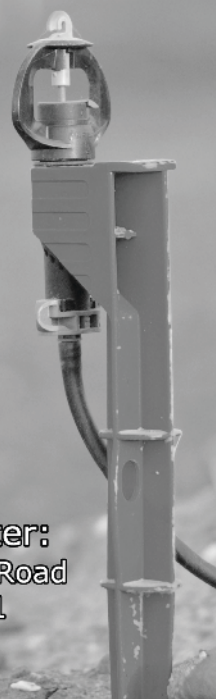
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From FB on page 5

with wolf populations continuing to grow, California ranchers cannot afford to lose a program that they can use to mitigate challenges the predators pose and to offset the impacts on their livestock, said Chris Rear- don, vice president of policy advocacy for the California Farm Bureau.

“While we understand this is a tough budget year, we are working to ensure we continue the program without interrup- tion,” he said.

Water

The California Farm Bureau joined with the Pacific Legal Foundation to file an amicus brief in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Ap-

peals in San Luis Obispo Coastkeeper v. County of San Luis Obispo in January. San Luis Obispo County was sued by environ- mental groups alleging that Lopez Lake dam threatens steelhead trout under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

A federal judge determined that operation of the lake threatens the trout and ordered the county to immediately release more water from the lake. Farm Bureau and the PLF argued that the lower court incorrectly issued injunctive relief under the ESA.

In another case before the 9th Circuit, California Farm Bureau joined Nevada Farm Bureau and Idaho Farm Bureau in an amicus brief to address water rights. The case has nationwide importance, including determination of when a state water rights decree is comprehensive, said Karen Mills, vice president of legal advo-

cacy for the California Farm Bureau.

The litigation arose from a matter in Ne- vada in which federal claims on water rights surfaced after agricultural interests had relied on adjudicated rights. State adjudication laws, such as those adopted in Nevada and throughout the West, are pre- cisely the types of comprehensive statutes that Congress had in mind when it passed the McCarran Amendment, Mills said.

Specialty crops

The House Agriculture Committee held a hearing this month examining the econom- ic crisis in agriculture. The hearing aimed to identify key challenges agricultural businesses have faced in recent years and explore potential solutions.

Among the panelists was San Luis Obispo County farmer Ryan Talley, who represented the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance, of which the California Farm Bu- reau is a member. The alliance has long advocated for ex- panding farm bill provisions to better support specialty crops. A common concern among Western producers is that the farm bill primarily fo- cuses on traditional row crops such as corn, cotton and soy- beans, offering limited ben- efits to specialty crop growers. Talley emphasized the critical need for increased support for specialty crops, particularly as rising labor costs continue to challenge California farmers.

Farm Bureau remains commit- ted to ensuring specialty crops receive stronger consideration as the organization pushes for a full farm bill reauthoriza- tion this year. Key priorities include expanded crop insur- ance opportunities, research funding and improved market access for specialty crops.



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Enhancing Agricultural Safety ~ How AI and Smart Practices can Transform Stanislaus County Farms

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

Ensuring Agricultural Safety in the Age of AI

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of our economy and community, especially in regions like Modesto and Stanislaus County. Yet, despite its essential role, farming is consistently ranked among the most dangerous professions. From operating heavy machinery to handling hazardous materials, the potential risks are significant. That's why agricultural safety is a pressing concern—not just for individual farms, but for entire communities. Fortunately, the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) is bringing new, innovative solutions to help protect workers, reduce accidents, and create a safer environment for everyone involved.

The Risks and Challenges of Agriculture

Agriculture safety has long been a critical focus for farms in the Central Valley. Whether it's ensuring proper training on equipment or mitigating the risks of pesticide exposure, local farmers know that safety is non-negotiable. In Stanislaus County, where agriculture is one of the primary industries, farm owners often implement a range of protocols to keep their workers safe. However, human error, unpredictable weather conditions, and equipment failures can still lead to injuries or even fatalities. Addressing these risks requires not only adherence to safety standards but also the adoption of new technologies that can complement traditional safety measures.

How AI Enhances Agricultural Safety

AI's potential in agriculture extends far beyond yield optimization and pest management; it's also a game-changer for safety. AI-driven solutions can proactively monitor equipment, detect potential hazards, and provide real-time alerts, helping farmers stay one step ahead of dangerous situations. For example, machine learning algorithms can analyze data from sensors on tractors, combines, and other heavy machinery. If a piece of equipment begins to operate outside normal parameters, indicating a possible malfunction or safety risk—an alert can be sent immediately to operators, allowing them to address the issue before an accident occurs.

In addition to machinery, AI is making strides in monitoring environmental conditions. Advanced sensor systems can detect harmful levels of dust, heat, or chemical exposure in barns, greenhouses, and processing areas. By continuously analyzing this data, AI can help farmers ensure that working conditions remain safe, reducing the risk of long-term health issues for agricultural workers.

See AI on page 21



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Suppress farm fires with EnforcerOne: A success story

Source: Nationwide

"It was just another day on the farm, baling hay under the summer sun," begins Wesley, recounting the harrowing experience that unfolded on his family's Montana farm in late July 2022. "Suddenly, my father-in-law saw flames in the field behind him. Without hesitation, he dumped the hay from the baler and turned the tractor around to fight the blaze."

The fire caught up to his baler quickly, threatening to consume it. "My father-in-law, a lifelong farmer, had never used the Enforcer® 10 before. I had only shown him how it worked once after we installed it," Wesley continued. "But in that critical moment, he remembered everything. He

rushed to the front of the tractor, activated the Enforcer 10, and within seconds, the fire on the baler was out."

Fighting fire with foam

Mounted on the front of his tractor, the Enforcer 10 utilizes high energy compressed air foam technology to produce 200 gallons of FIREBULL® firefighting foam that can be discharged from a distance of up to 45 feet.

It not only saved the tractor and baler, but also helped Wesley's father-in-law create a safe zone amidst a blazing field. "He used the remaining foam to fend off the ground fire around him, buying just enough time to drive himself and the equipment to safety," Wesley said.

The aftermath was a testament to the effectiveness of the Enforcer 10. "My father was amazed. When he pulled the trigger, the fire went out and stayed out. Not a single flame reignited on the baler or the ground where the FIREBULL foam had been applied," the son marvels.

Nationwide and EnforcerOne join forces to

protect agriculture customers

With an estimated 20,000 agricultural fires each year, the need for fire safety awareness and planning has never been greater. EnforcerOne and Nationwide recently announced a new partnership to help. Through the partnership, Nationwide's agriculture customers can receive a 20% discount on a suite of EnforcerOne and FIREBULL products, including the Enforcer 10.

"This partnership with EnforcerOne is more than just about business; it's a commitment to safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of our customers everywhere," said Brad Liggett, president of Agribusiness at Nationwide. "We're thrilled to add these state-of-the-art fire suppression devices to our array of tools and resources customers and agents can use to arm themselves against the unpredictable threat of fire." As neighbors and volunteer fire departments arrived to help with the fire, they too were impressed by the Enforcer 10's performance. "Many marveled at its simplicity and power. It's clear to us now; without the Enforcer 10, we would have lost much more than hay that day," Wesley added.

"EnforcerOne has a long history of providing unique fire suppression offerings for fire departments," said Ron Thames, president of EnforcerOne. "By getting these easy-to-use firefighting tools directly into the hands of customers to quickly extinguish fires in their incipient stage, we can help better protect customers and get them back to work safely and quickly."

Don't let a fire define your legacy. Visit EnforcerOne.com to discover how you can integrate these vital fire suppression solutions into your farm and protect what matters most.

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 **TRADE** on page 13

ating on razor thin margins. That's also just one example of a squeeze on farmers that could extend to our rural communities and prices at the grocery store.

Retaliatory Tariffs

It's important to keep in mind that tariffs don't happen in a vacuum and other countries retaliate. Already, China has placed up to 15% additional tariffs targeting farm exports and Canada has announced retaliatory tariffs of 25% on many products. Farmers are often first to get caught in the crossfire and these retaliatory tariffs will begin to price us out of many countries, such as Mexico, Canada and China, and they will go looking for better deals without us.

Going Forward on Trade

The stakes are high when it comes to trade, and we need to expand our markets, not reduce access. Farmers and ranchers are already up against rising supply costs, inflation and low commodity prices, and we simply cannot afford to lose ground in global markets. We're hopeful the administration can limit trade disruptions and continue working with international partners to resolve disagreements quickly. The success of farmers, the strength of our rural communities and the stability of America's food supply are all depending on it.



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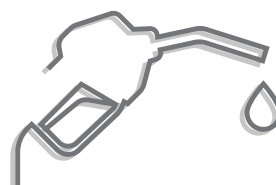
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See AI on page 18

A Simple Safety Tip Farmers Can Start Using Today

Farmers looking to improve safety without large investments in new AI systems can begin by conducting regular equipment checks. Establish a consistent schedule for inspecting machinery, tools, and protective equipment. A quick visual check before each use—combined with a more thorough inspection every week or month—can identify wear and tear, leaks, or other potential hazards before they cause accidents. By making these routine checks a habit, farmers can significantly reduce risks while they explore how AI solutions might further enhance their safety practices.

Supporting the Local Community with AI Safety Measures

When farms in Modesto and Stanislaus

County adopt AI-driven safety tools, the benefits ripple outward into the local community. Improved safety measures not only reduce the likelihood of accidents but also contribute to a more stable, resilient workforce. Workers who feel secure in their jobs are more productive, more committed, and more engaged in community activities. This, in turn, strengthens the fabric of Stanislaus Farms and other agricultural operations throughout the region.

Moreover, AI's ability to gather and analyze safety data in real time means that farms can share best practices with one another, creating a culture of safety that benefits everyone. By using AI to identify patterns and trends, local farms can collaborate on solutions to common safety challenges, fostering a spirit of innovation and mutual support within the agricultural community.

Looking Ahead: A Safer Future for Agriculture
AI is not a one-size-fits-all solution, but its applications in agricultural safety are rapidly expanding. As technology becomes more accessible and afford-

able, farms across Modesto and Stanislaus County will continue to find new ways to integrate AI into their safety protocols. By embracing these innovations, while also practicing simple, effective safety habits, farmers can create safer working environments, protect their most valuable assets, their workers, and ensure that the local community thrives for generations to come.

Sisbro Innovation provides a range of cost-effective AI solutions designed to enhance your business operations, including:

- **AI Virtual Agent:** An advanced tool that handles incoming calls and provides responsive customer service.
- **AI Website Widgets:** Interactive features that engage visitors directly on your website, improving user experience and conversion rates.
- **AI Database Reactivation:** A system designed to re-engage inactive leads, helping you recover previously dormant opportunities.

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**ATTENTION
STANISLAUS COUNTY
FARMWORKERS**

**We are Accepting Farmworker
Advisory Committee Applications!**

14-Member Committee:

- 10 Farmworker Representatives
 - 2 from Each of the County's 5 Supervisorial Districts
- 1 Agriculture Industry Representative
- 1 Agriculture Advisory Board Member
- 1 Farm Labor Contractor
- 1 Community-Based Organization Dedicated to Serving Farmworkers

Committee Goals:

- Provide a forum for sharing information and understanding issues facing the County's farmworker population, including:

- Housing
- Access to safety-net services
- Health
- Employment Conditions
- Immigration

What to Expect:

- Participate in up to 6 meetings per year
 - \$100/meeting stipend for Farmworker Representatives
- Evening and/or weekend meeting times to be determined by the committee
- Participate in training on effective and productive committee meetings
- Language interpretation will be available



**APPLICATION DEADLINE:
FEBRUARY 28, 2025**

*Interested applicants
should contact the
Stanislaus Agricultural
Commissioner's Office*

Linda Pinfold
Agricultural Commissioner
209.525.4735
lindap@stancounty.com

Scan the QR code or visit
stancounty.com/board
to learn more and apply!



28TH ANNUAL AG AWARE
Modesto City Schools FFA Scholarship Fundraising Luncheon



Thursday, April 17th, 2025
11:30 AM - 1:00 PM - MJC ACE Ag Pavilion

Join us for the 28th Annual Ag Aware Voss-Berryhill Scholarship Luncheon, where we come together to support the next generation of agricultural innovators. This meaningful event highlights the incredible achievements of Modesto City School's FFA students and raises crucial funds to provide them with scholarships that will shape their future careers. Enjoy a fantastic meal while connecting with local farmers, industry leaders, and community members who share a passion for agriculture and education. Don't miss the opportunity to invest in the future of agriculture.

Stay tuned for the exciting announcement of our keynote speaker, a prominent figure in agriculture, who will share invaluable knowledge on the future of farming and new innovations shaping the industry.

"Learning to do, doing to learn, earning to live, living to serve!"

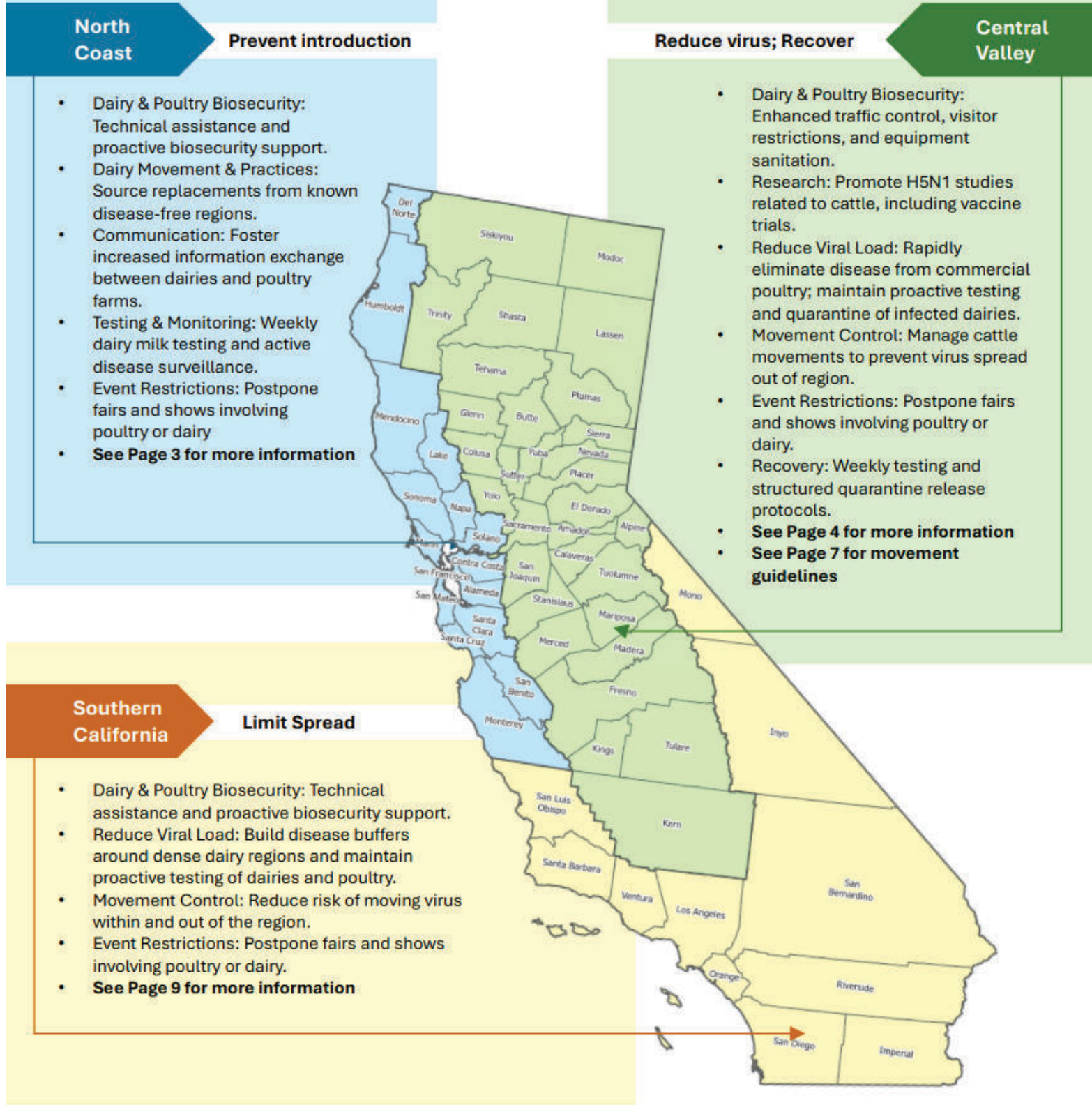


- NETWORK**
Network with fellow industry professionals and community leaders who share a passion for agriculture.
- FFA STUDENT PROJECTS**
See first hand the hard work of students, and have the opportunity to take home a project.
- SUPPORT EDUCATION**
Hear from current students and how they have been positively impacted by being in FFA.

Sponsorship opportunities are now available Register today!
bit.ly/3EuEgt3



California Department of Food and Agriculture H5N1 Regional Strategy



North Coast

Prevent introduction

- Dairy & Poultry Biosecurity: Technical assistance and proactive biosecurity support.
- Dairy Movement & Practices: Source replacements from known disease-free regions.
- Communication: Foster increased information exchange between dairies and poultry farms.
- Testing & Monitoring: Weekly dairy milk testing and active disease surveillance.
- Event Restrictions: Postpone fairs and shows involving poultry or dairy
- **See Page 3 for more information**

Central Valley

Reduce virus; Recover

- Dairy & Poultry Biosecurity: Enhanced traffic control, visitor restrictions, and equipment sanitation.
- Research: Promote H5N1 studies related to cattle, including vaccine trials.
- Reduce Viral Load: Rapidly eliminate disease from commercial poultry; maintain proactive testing and quarantine of infected dairies.
- Movement Control: Manage cattle movements to prevent virus spread out of region.
- Event Restrictions: Postpone fairs and shows involving poultry or dairy.
- Recovery: Weekly testing and structured quarantine release protocols.
- **See Page 4 for more information**
- **See Page 7 for movement guidelines**

Southern California

Limit Spread

- Dairy & Poultry Biosecurity: Technical assistance and proactive biosecurity support.
- Reduce Viral Load: Build disease buffers around dense dairy regions and maintain proactive testing of dairies and poultry.
- Movement Control: Reduce risk of moving virus within and out of the region.
- Event Restrictions: Postpone fairs and shows involving poultry or dairy.
- **See Page 9 for more information**



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Foundation Plant Services**
Davis, CA 95616

MODESTO TOWN HALL

MARCH 6, 2025
8:00am – 11:00am

Stanislaus County Ag Center
Modesto, CA 95358



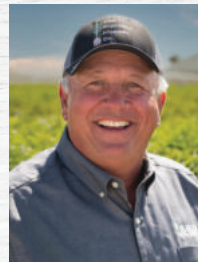
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