

# The Stanislaus Farm News

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture

STANISLAUS COUNTY



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Stanislaus County Farm Bureau Foundation: Expanding  
Agricultural Education and Community Engagement, page 3





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Boardroom, 1201 L Street, Modesto

In person class time **1pm to 4pm**, dates:

- May 14      May 21      May 28
- June 4      June 11      June 18
- June 25      July 2      July 9
- & July 16

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Full Enrollment is required, see below for details.



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:

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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
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7. Selective Service Status (males ages 18 up to 26)
8. 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.

# Stanislaus County Farm Bureau Foundation: Expanding Agricultural Education and Community Engagement

By Vicky Boyd

The launch of the nonprofit Stanislaus County Farm Bureau Foundation will allow the local Farm Bureau to expand educational, training and community outreach efforts in ways it couldn't do before.

"We were already doing things that should have been under a 501(c)(3) non-profit — Ag in the Classroom, scholarships, Ag EdVenture Day and all of the training opportunities for growers," said Stanislaus County Farm Bureau Director of Education and Communication Anna Genasci. "The goal now that we formally have a foundation is to deepen our work in those three areas."

The foundation will increase the types of donations, grants and other funding oppor-

tunities not available to the Farm Bureau before. It also will make it easier for the community to contribute.

"We needed a vehicle to receive funds," she said. "When Wayne Zipser retired, we were approached by two different individuals who wanted to donate in his honor, and we didn't have a mechanism."

In the works since 2023, the foundation is guided by a board of directors composed of Farm Bureau members as well as two representatives from the education commu-

Ag, education represented on board

Suzy Powell-Roos, a three-time Olympian who is part of Roos Tree Nursery with husband Tim Roos, said she agreed to serve on the board because she believed in the foundation's goals.

"It's an opportunity to extend the Farm Bureau's influence from a consumer stand-

point as well as educating young kids in the classroom," she said. "It will even educate our own members, so I think it's an opportunity for us to continue to elevate the awareness of how important ag is."

She recalled her experience as a University of California, Los Angeles, student when acquaintances believed milk came from the supermarket. They weren't aware of all the steps and people behind producing that gallon of milk.

"It's something that really speaks to me — educating young

children and also educating the consumer about farming practices," she said.

Powell-Roos said the foundation's missions and values also align with her own, and she's been impressed with the thoughtfulness that has gone into its development.

"I'm very proud to be part of it," she said. "We're really trying to build and guide it for the future and set it up so it's sustainable."

Deanna van Klaveren, who co-owns Generation Growers in Modesto with husband Roger, brings both an agricultural and educational background to the board. She taught high school ag for four years when Merrill F. West High School in Tracy was new. In addition, she is a California Ag Leadership Foundation alum and serves as CALF's engagement manager.

"I'm fortunate to have those connections, and I hope that kind of background supports this foundation as we get it going," van Klaveren said.

She also pointed to the depth and breadth of the board, which includes retired Stanislaus County Farm Bureau Executive Manager Wayne Zipser and Modesto Junior College Dean of Agriculture Troy Gravatt.

"It really allows us to focus on education and not have to mix and meld with the really good advocacy that Farm Bureau does," she said.

By that, it will not only include educating students in the classroom and through scholarships but also through consumer outreach, van Klaveren said.

Drawing from her experiences with other non-profits, she said establishing a foundation will open new funding opportunities previously unavailable as well as provide ways the community can now financially support agricultural education. To that end, the foundation's inaugural fundraiser, held

See Foundation on page 4

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**From Foundation on page 3**

recently at Gambini Farms in Oakdale, was an overwhelming success. The three pillars

With a board in place, members are now working with a strategic planning consultant to define their mission and values and

to set goals. The foundation already has a logo and is developing a webpage to allow online donations.

The foundation has three overarching goals:

- Cultivate: Support the next generation

of agricultural leaders by providing youth education programs and scholarships for students pursuing careers in agriculture. In addition to the more traditional scholarships, Genasci said she'd like to see financial aid for students seeking ag-related vocational and technical training.



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The Stanislaus County Farm Bureau already hosts Ag EdVenture Day, where more than 1,200 area third-graders spend a day at the county fairgrounds experiencing

local agriculture firsthand. Students get to see farm animals and equipment up close as part of an effort to educate them about food and fiber production.

skills and knowledge of growers and elevate the agricultural industry in Stanislaus County. That also includes worker-focused programs, such as the current Supervisory Development Academy and the English Language Learner at Work.

Genasci said she doesn't see the foundation trying to reinvent the wheel when it comes to educating the next generation about agriculture. She pointed to the great job California Ag in the Classroom program already does as well as the extensive educational resources it produces. Instead, she viewed the local foundation as a conduit to connect the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau to state efforts.

- **Elevate:** Offer training and educational opportunities designed to enhance the

The campaign tells the stories of growers, their local products and how chefs use the commodities in cooking.

- **Elevate:** Offer training and educational opportunities designed to enhance the

"More needs to be done there," Genasci said. "I personally feel like when folks don't know where their food comes from, they don't have an appreciation and there's a disconnect. It's even a matter of food security. We need to do a better job of telling those stories."

Look for updates on the Foundation and its programs @ <https://stanfarm-bureau.org/home/farm-bureau-foundation/>



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## Ag Foundation Expands STEM Education Efforts

By Julia Recko

Since 2006, the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture has been on a mission to build awareness and understanding of agriculture through education. Now we are taking these efforts to the next level to ensure that U.S. agriculture remains a leader in innovation, sustainability and global food security. Our goal is to see agriculture applied in STEM classrooms around the country.

### Bringing Ag into STEM

Nearly all 17 million high school students in the U.S. take a science class to graduate. If those students were introduced to agriculture in science class, imagine how that

could impact their understanding of where their food comes from.

Today, fewer consumers have a connection to farming, leading to misconceptions about how their food, fiber and renewable fuel is grown. But there is also a lot of interest and curiosity when it comes to farming, and a high level of trust in farmers and ranchers. We want to answer that curiosity and build on that trust, starting in the classroom.

Getting agriculture into formal science education will help students form a base knowledge of agriculture—a critical step in creating an informed consumer.

### STEM Fuels Ag

Innovations in agriculture (think AI, advances in precision agriculture and soft-

ware technology) are critical to continued food security and sustainability.

Science is the catalyst to innovation.

Reaching students with real-world and hands-on examples brings science to life, and opens a world of possibilities through multiple career paths.

For agriculture to grow into the future, we need students today to be interested and invested in the future of food.

### Bridging the Ag Gap in STEM

The Food and Agriculture Center for Science Education, a project of American Farm Bureau's Ag Foundation, is focused on three main goals to bridge the agriculture

*See STEM on page 19*

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## Celebrating Agriculture Week ~ The Importance of Building Your Online Presence

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

Every year, Agriculture Week reminds us of the crucial role farming plays in our communities, particularly here in Modesto and throughout Stanislaus County. As the heart of California's Central Valley, this region is home to countless farms and agricultural businesses that provide fresh produce, livestock, and other essential goods to the rest

of the state and beyond. While traditional farming values remain at the core of these operations, modern agricultural enterprises must also embrace digital tools, such as online marketing and social media, to thrive in today's connected world.

Why an Online Presence Matters in Agriculture

Farmers in Modesto and across Stanislaus County have long relied on their skills, hard work, and relationships within the community to grow their businesses. However, with an increasingly digital marketplace, having a

strong online presence has become just as critical as maintaining healthy fields and livestock. More and more customers, both individual consumers and larger clients, are searching for products online, exploring social media for recommendations, and reading reviews before deciding where to buy.

In the Central Valley's competitive agricultural landscape, standing out means meeting your customers where they are. A professional website with up-to-date content, engaging visuals, and clear contact information not only builds credibility but



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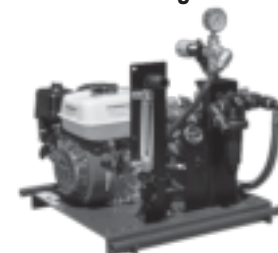
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also positions your business as a reliable partner in the region’s bustling economy. Social media platforms further expand your reach, allowing you to share the unique story of your Modesto-based farm, highlight new products, and connect directly with customers across Stanislaus County and beyond.

### The Benefits of Social Media Marketing for Modesto’s Farms

Social media is an incredibly cost-effective way to showcase what makes your farm unique and to establish yourself as a trusted name in the Central Valley agricultural community. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn allow you to:

- Increase awareness across Stanislaus County: Regular posts keep your business

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- Engage with the local community: Responding to comments, sharing tips and recipes, or highlighting upcoming events foster stronger relationships with your neighbors and clientele.

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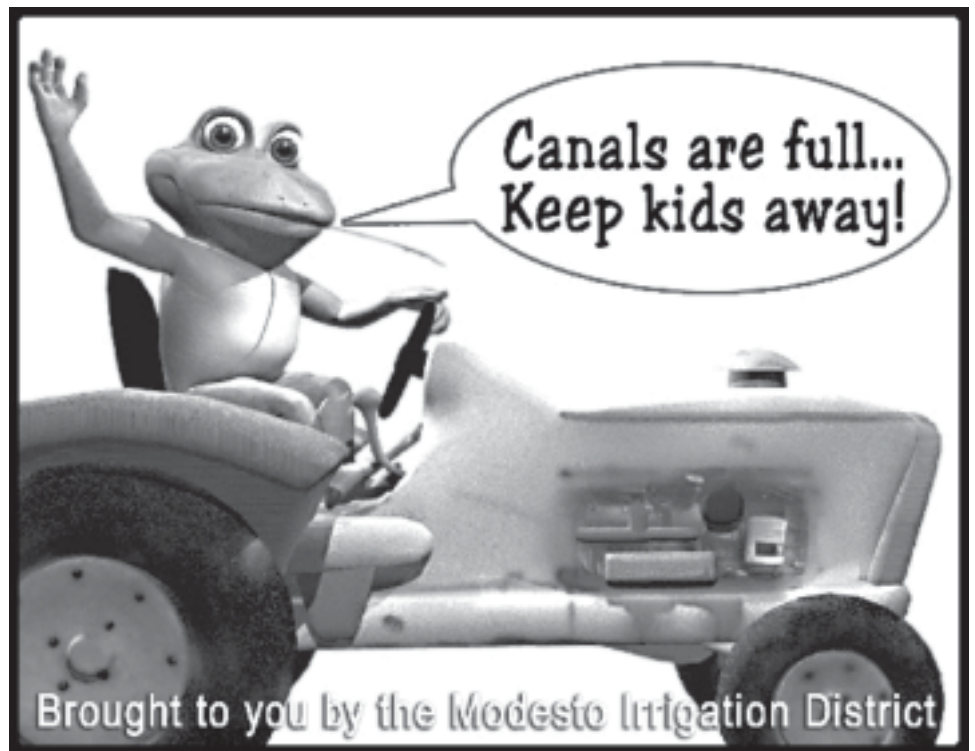
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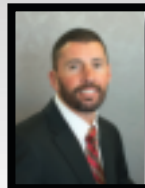
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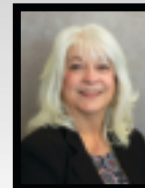


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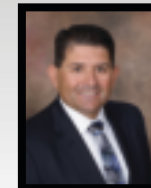
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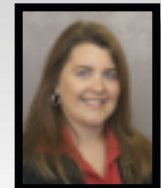
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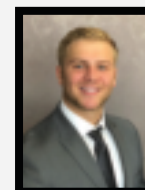
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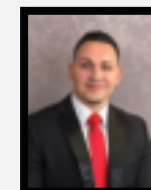
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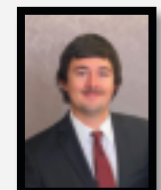
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## Moving Towards Clarity on WOTUS

*By Zippy Duvall, AFBF President*

Farmers and ranchers are committed to stewarding the land and protecting the water we depend on. We know firsthand the importance of clean water: it's essential to our livelihoods and instrumental in providing a safe and abundant food supply. That's why clarity with water regulations is critical and why we're glad to see the Environmental Protection Agency take the first step in providing a clear Waters of the United States rule.

### Understanding Clean Water Act and WOTUS

Farmers have been caught in a regulatory tug of war around WOTUS for years. It seems that a new rule comes with every administration or changing of hands, leaving our farmers in a constant state of limbo trying to understand and comply with new guidelines.

Farm families shouldn't be left guessing or needing a team of lawyers and consultants to help them know what is and what isn't regulated on their land. Imagine planting a field, one you have worked for years,

without knowing whether you risk facing a steep fine or even jail time, but that's been the reality for farmers for years.

Farmers are committed to doing the right thing and keeping our natural resources safe. But these unclear and constantly shifting rules have created unnecessary obstacles, threatened progress and added confusion to working the land many of us have stewarded for decades.

### The Need for Clarity

In recent years, the WOTUS rule has only gotten muddier. The 2023 rule set vague guidelines to expand the EPA and the

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Army Corps of Engineer’s authority far beyond what Congress intended. These vague rules attempted to regulate areas that become wet only in response to precipitation, along with any feature that could be viewed as having a “significant nexus” or direct connection to WOTUS.

Only a few months after this rule was finalized, we saw a landmark victory with the Supreme Court’s unanimous decision in Sackett v. EPA to reign in the regulatory overreach of the “significant nexus” test. But in response to that court decision, the EPA and Corps still failed provide needed clarity. Instead, they reasserted vague and subjective standards, leading to even more

permitting delays, litigation and uncertainty.

### The Road Ahead

Farm Bureau has long advocated for consistent and fair guidelines that uphold the Clean Water Act without overextending federal authority. That’s why we were encouraged to see EPA listen to the concerns of farmers and take the first step this month towards crafting a straightforward WOTUS rule that provides farmers the certainty they need. This progress is a direct result of our Farm Bureau members stepping up and calling for clear rules. We now must remain engaged with the EPA, Army Corps and

Congress to finally achieve new rules that reflect the realities of life on the farm and allow farmers to continue growing the food America’s families rely on.

The work on WOTUS still has a long way to go, but this is a step in the right direction, and Farm Bureau will press forward until clarity becomes a reality.



## Save Water and Money

Financial support for almond growers is available from a variety of federal, state, and local agencies and from non-governmental organizations. ABC’s incentives page can help you search for available funding opportunities for irrigation system improvements to ensure your system is running at peak performance and efficiency.



Scan the QR code to learn more about grants and incentives for almond growers.



Scan the QR code to find your Local RCD for free or low cost distribution uniformity tests for your irrigation system.





## Got Carpophilus Beetle? Make it Official with Ag Commissioner

Source: Almond Board for California

The carpophilus beetle, a serious pest threatening California's almond industry, is officially documented in only four counties — Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, and Kings. However, according to entomologists and industry experts, its presence is far more widespread, raising concerns about the limitations of official reporting and its impact on securing resources for control and mitigation.

Houston Wilson, a Cooperative Extension specialist in the Department of Entomology at UC Riverside, has been surveying reports and conducting research on the beetle in collaboration with other UC and USDA researchers. "We've identified infested or-

chards — both almonds and pistachios — from every county within the San Joaquin Valley," Wilson said. "We're also hearing reports of crop damage from the Sacramento Valley (Sacramento through Butte County), but we have yet to directly confirm it there due to limited survey efforts."

The Importance of Official Documentation Despite mounting evidence of the carpophilus beetle's spread, official state records remain limited. Wilson explains that for a find to be considered "official," the county Agricultural Commissioner must collect a sample and submit it to the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) for verification. The current process means that many beetle infestations, though identified by researchers, remain unofficial.

"While we have unofficial records from our survey efforts, my understanding is that the

official records only reflect what has gone through the CDFA process," Wilson said.

For growers, the discrepancy between unofficial and official findings is more than just a technicality — it could also affect the allocation of resources. According to the Almond Alliance, securing state and federal assistance depends on having documented proof of the beetle's widespread presence.

"The widespread documentation of the carpophilus beetle serves as a vital indicator of the extent and severity of the issue," said Almond Alliance CEO Alexi Rodriguez. "When more counties report official beetle findings, it underscores the pervasive nature of the problem, highlighting its impact beyond isolated areas."

Challenges in Reporting

See ABC on page 20



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**WHEN & WHERE**  
 Stanislaus County Farm Bureau Boardroom, 1201 L Street, Modesto

**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
- May 29, 2025
- **Must attend all 5 sessions**

**UPDATE**

To Register: Use the QR Code, Call our office at (209) 522-7278, or email Anna Genasci [anna@stanislausfarmbureau.org](mailto:anna@stanislausfarmbureau.org)

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The funding requires full enrollment, that requires the following:

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3. Review/complete the SCWD Eligibility Packet
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**Questions?**  
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**What Happens During a WIOA Eligibility Appointment?**

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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)

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## Investing in Ag's Future: Turlock Chamber Awards \$48,000 in Scholarships

*By: Vicky Boyd, Stanislaus County Farm Bureau*

Over the past 24 years, the Turlock Chamber of Commerce has invested nearly \$458,000 in agriculture's future through 431 scholarships awarded to high school seniors planning to study ag-related fields.

In keeping with the annual tradition, chamber members recently awarded about \$48,000 through 24 scholarships during their 25th Annual Ag Scholarship Luncheon at the Stanislaus County fairgrounds.

Spearheaded by the chamber's Ag Scholarship Committee, the program has evolved from what the original four members envisioned — they wanted to recognize the important role that agriculture played in the local economy.

"What started out to be a scholarship program grew into a program that not only

provides scholarships but also supports educational functions in our schools and at the fair," said committee member Bart Muller. "And we added a relationship with Stan State."

New this year is underwriting an internship program for one Turlock High and one Pitman High School student who will spend a semester working at the Turlock Unified School District farm.

The scholarship program is for graduating high school seniors from nine area high schools: Delhi, Denair, Hilmar, Hughson, Livingston, Pitman, Turlock Christian, Turlock and Waterford. It is open to students who plan to study an ag-related field at a state junior college or four-year school.

With the way agriculture is evolving, Muller said eligibility isn't limited to just production agricultural majors anymore. Accounting, computer programming, law, engineering and marketing are just some of the other fields that are critical for the industry's continued success.

During the 2025 ceremony, scholarship recipients said they planned to study a wide range of ag-related fields including diesel science, ag education, ag business, animal science and pre-veterinary medicine.

"We just want to educate the community and the kids and encourage kids to come back and participate in our industry," said Muller, who grows almonds near Denair. "You can build all kinds of infrastructure but human capital is vital to our industry, and we're just trying to make that investment."

The first stepping stone

Anthony Agueda, a 2021 Hughson High School graduate and previous scholarship recipient, described the financial assistance as the first stepping stone of opportunities



**All 22 scholarship recipients stand in front of the tractor donated by event sponsor Garton Tractors Inc.**

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available during the college experience. He is a first-generation student.

“It opened doors for me at Modesto Junior College and Fresno State,” said Agueda, who plans to graduate this spring with high honors and a bachelor’s degree in ag business. “You always feel a sense of connection anywhere you go in the ag industry.”

With a passion for dairy farming from his upbringing on a dairy farm, he channeled it into becoming an agricultural advocate. He is a member of California State University, Fresno’s Agricultural Business Club, Dairy Science Club and the California Dairy Leaders Program.

During college, he also coordinated milk drives that were part of the California Milk

Advisory Board’s Give-a-Gallon Challenge. Agueda personally delivered thousands of gallons of milk to local food banks.

Partly because of that work, he was named the CSU Trustee Emeritus Peter G. Mehas Scholar and received the CSU Trustees’ Award for Outstanding Achievement in October 2024. Each of the 23 CSU campuses annually chooses one outstanding student for recognition.

As the only ag student standing among the other award recipients at the ceremony in Long Beach, Agueda said he felt like an imposter.

But afterward, “Everyone wanted to meet the ag kid. I realized I wasn’t an imposter.” Agueda challenged scholarship recipients at the luncheon to share the amazing story of agriculture.

“Get outside the bubble and advocate to those who don’t know what we do,” he said. “As the next generation, we have very big shoes to fill, and this scholarship is just the beginning.”

After graduation, Agueda plans to return to the dairy farm that’s been in his family for three generations, using what he’s learned to expand the business for future generations.

### Scholarship fundraisers

The luncheon, held annually the third week of March, is the scholarship program’s main fund raiser. Local businesses and individuals commit to various sponsorship levels. For the past few years, Garton Tractor has been the luncheon’s main sponsor.

Luncheon ticket sale proceeds also go toward the scholarships. Muller said the chamber tries to have as much of the food and related items donated so they can channel funds toward helping students. In addition, the Ag Scholarship Committee hosts a golf tournament fundraiser. This year, the 19th annual golf outing is slated for Sept. 8.

For the past three years, the committee also has put on the Ag in the Valley Farm to Table dinner at the fairgrounds to benefit the scholarship program. It is scheduled for June 5.

Muller became involved about 15 years ago after attending the scholarship luncheon and giving committee member Jim Booth a hard time for not having any Denair student recipients. Booth good-naturedly responded by volunteering Muller to help raise funds in the Denair area.




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## Legislation introduced to battle smoke taint in wine industry

Legislation coming out of both houses of Congress has been introduced to protect winegrape growers against wildfire smoke damage. Reps. Mike Thompson, D-St. Helena, and Doug LaMalfa, R-Richvale, have partnered with Sens. Alex Padilla, D-California, and Jeff Merkley, D-Oregon, to introduce the Smoke Exposure Research Act of 2025. The bill would authorize \$32.5 million annually over the next five-year Farm Bill cycle to better understand the impacts of prolonged wildfire smoke exposure on vines and wineries and provide fair insurance products for growers.

## New farmer-focused survey reveals barriers to sustainable groundwater

Researchers at California State University Water Advocacy Towards Education and Research, or CSU-WATER, surveyed hundreds of farmers in five counties in the San Joaquin Valley about their perceptions of California's landmark groundwater law, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. CSU-WATER recently published results from the survey, which revealed barriers farmers have faced learning about SGMA and adapting to the law. Experts have predicted that SGMA will transform California's agricultural landscape within the next 15 years and cause as much as a million acres of farmland in the San Joaquin Valley to be taken out of production.

*On the Record: Juan Alanis talks serving on legislative committees*

Assembly Member

Juan Alanis, R-Modesto, spoke with Ag Alert® about the role legislative committees play in the California State Legislature's policymaking process. "Committees provide a space to hold discussions on issues. We try to engage in bipartisan conversations, see what questions come up and hopefully find some solutions," said Alanis, who represents District 22 in the California State Assembly and serves as vice chair on the Assembly Agriculture, Natural Resources and Public Safety committees. "Public testimony about how constituents may be affected can have a huge impact on how the members view bills."

## ICYMI: Adding automation helps lower farm risk

To address labor shortages, reduce costs and improve efficiency, farmers are looking for ways to add more mechanization. Tim Chiala, chief operations officer of Morgan Hill-based George Chiala Farms Inc., has invested in more technology at his family-run farming and food-processing company. Chiala Farms is testing machines such as an automatic jalapeño

de-stemmer and another with robotic arms that remove the tops, tails and peels of bulb onions. "The supply of labor fluctuates like crazy, but hopefully by adding robotics, it will give us some stability," Chiala said.

## Adding automation helps lower farm risk

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## State Senate hears about response to bird flu outbreak

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experience in animal disease surveillance and detection, there's little disagreement in agricultural circles that the state was well prepared for bird flu. But agricultural officials, farmers and other industry representatives also acknowledge that the latest outbreak—which began in 2022 and has become the largest in U.S. history—has been no cakewalk. They spoke during an informational hearing last week on the state's response to bird flu, which has led to the destruction of more than 166 million birds nationwide, record-high egg prices and the disease infecting most of the state's dairies.

**Initial Central Valley Project water allotment may not increase plantings**

Farmers south of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta who irrigate with water sup-

plied by the federal Central Valley Project say they are thankful for a 35% water allocation announced in February. But due to the timing of the announcement and lower crop prices, they say the initial allocation by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation may not lead to more planted acres. "Water use factors a little bit into it as far as what crop you're going to grow," Stanislaus County farmer Daniel Bays said. "With the current condition of the ag economy, a lot of it just depends on what we can get contracts for."

**Young farmers fight hunger through Harvest for All**

People facing hunger are being fed, young farmers are honing their skills, and communities throughout the state are engaging with agriculture and learning more about

its importance. These accomplishments are made thanks to members of Farm Bureau's Young Farmers & Ranchers program and its Harvest for All campaign, which began nationally in 2003 in collaboration with local Feeding America affiliates across the country. Last year, members of California Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers logged more than 1,500 volunteer hours, donated 78,839 pounds of food and raised more than \$95,300 in monetary contributions.

**From STEM on page 7**

gap in STEM education:

- Connect agriculture experts with STEM education leaders to build trusted relationships so that agriculture scientists can have an impact on STEM education.
- Create high-quality learning materials to reach more students and teachers, increase knowledge about science and agriculture and prepare students for future careers in these fields.
- Use local agriculture resources to support STEM education to build local partnerships that help bring science to life in the classroom and build long-term connections to local agriculture.

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We can't bring every student out to the farm, but we can bring the farm to every student. The Ag Foundation is on a mission to do just that.

Julia Recko is managing director of the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture.

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**FARM BUREAU**



*From ABC on page 14*

Wilson acknowledges that the reporting process can be complicated, but he and his team actively assist growers. "If a grower contacts me about suspected beetle damage, I usually visit the farm to assess the situation," he said. "If we confirm the presence of the carpophilus beetle in a county that hasn't had an official report, we advise them to contact their Agricultural Commissioner and guide them through the reporting process."

Rodriguez recognizes the difficulties growers face in reporting. "I want to acknowledge that the reporting process is not easy; however, expanding the network of official findings will allow us to advocate for more effective solutions by highlighting the problem's regional and national significance," she said.

#### Identifying the Carpophilus Beetle

For growers looking to detect the beetle, Wilson advises examining nuts in windrows, where nuts can be easily sampled. "The most apparent sign is a fine, powdery white frass on the nut, which results from

beetle larvae tunneling into the kernel," he said. "If you blow that frass away, you might see a circular hole in the shell where the adult beetle chewed through to lay its eggs. Inside, the larvae create distinctive oval-shaped tunnels in the kernel itself."

Wilson is part of a team that last year developed a pest identification guide to help growers differentiate carpophilus beetle damage from other pests, such as navel orangeworm or ants.

#### Securing Support for Growers


To address the growing concern, the Almond Alliance continues to work

with officials at both the state and federal levels. "This engagement is expected to lead to more coordinated and robust interventions, mobilizing the necessary support and funding to mitigate the impact of beetle infestations on ecosystems, agriculture, and local economies," Rodriguez said.

Meanwhile, research efforts continue. "We've secured funding from the Almond Board of California and the California Pistachio Research Board for a second year, and we've now leveraged that into a larger pool of funding from the USDA," Wilson said.

Growers can also take advantage of upcoming pest identification workshops organized by the Almond Board of California in March, where they can learn more about identifying carpophilus beetle damage.

#### A Call to Action



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With the evidence pointing to a much wider distribution of the carpophilus beetle than official records reflect, the push for more growers to report infestations is crucial. "If we don't have official documentation, we can't make the case for more resources," Rodriguez emphasized. "We urge growers to work with their local Agricultural Commissioners to ensure the beetle's spread is formally recognized."

By increasing official reports, the almond industry can strengthen its efforts to combat the carpophilus beetle, securing the necessary funding and support to protect California's valuable almond crops.



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# FLORAL FASHION FINALE! Floral Design at the Enochs Agriculture Department

*Submitted by: Kristi Short, Retiring Enochs Ag Teacher*

Each year the advanced floral students host a Floral Show, with each year focusing on a theme; weddings, bouquets, floral staging, table settings, etc. This is my last year (I'm retiring in June), the students wanted to do something Grand for their last floral show. They chose to create life size floral dresses. This event challenged their creativity and designing on a large scale. It tested their knowledge on how to create textures with flowers, petals, leaves and stems. And building the mechanics of their dress form, definitely tried their patience. They wanted their last show to be GRAND, and boy was it!!!! They hit it out of the park.





## California Farm Bureau president highlights urgent challenges facing agriculture

Sacramento, CA – California Farm Bureau President Shannon Douglass identified critical issues facing the state's farmers and ranchers, stressing immediate action is needed to support small and mid-sized farms, streamline regulations and invest in innovative water management practices.

"Agriculture has been the backbone of California's economy for generations," Douglass said. "However, today, our sector is facing significant challenges that (not only) threaten our state's economy but the very future of food and farming."

On behalf of the California Agricultural Coalition, Douglass spoke during a press conference Wednesday at the California State Capitol. She was joined by fellow

coalition members Michael Miiller, director of government relations for the California Association of Winegrape Growers, and Roger Isom, president/CEO of the California Cotton Ginners & Growers Association and Western Tree Nut Association.

California has lost 15,000 farms between 2012 and 2022, according to the most recent U.S. Census of Agriculture, Douglass said. Pointing to the rising regulatory pressures facing farmers, she cited a Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, study that found regulatory costs and the cost of compliance by agriculture have increased nearly 1,400% in less than 20 years.

"We must examine and streamline the regulatory framework that governs agriculture. While there are regulations that are needed, they should be tailored to support farming and not drive up costs," Douglass said. "We need to find a better balance that

supports sustainable farming practices without putting an undue burden on our growers."

Citing high costs of labor, energy, transportation, litigation and water availability challenges, Miiller of CAWG said, "California is no longer affordable for many growers." He added there is a commitment from many state lawmakers to make affordability part of the conversation when crafting legislation.

"Our farmers face challenges that nobody else in the world faces," Isom said. "Frankly, we can't compete on a level playing field with states across the country or other nations."

The coalition, which includes 32 statewide agricultural organizations, Isom said, is asking the California Legislature for \$600 million a year for five years to fund pro-

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grams to help farmers through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. "This is a win-win to help ag and the environment," he said.

Douglass concluded that the challenges facing California agriculture are urgent but not insurmountable. "By working together, with farmers, regulators and policymakers, we can create a more sustainable and resilient agricultural system that continues to feed our state and nation."

The California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of more than 26,000 members state-wide and as part of a nationwide network of 5.8 million Farm Bureau members.



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