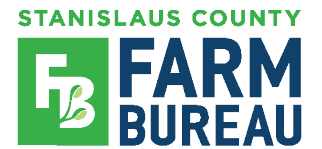


# The Stanislaus Farm News

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture



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



**Official Publication of Stanislaus  
County Farm Bureau  
Vol.75 No.4 March 8, 2024**

*"Agriculture is our wisest pursuit because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals, and happiness." - Thomas Jefferson*

*In this Issue, Agriculture Safety and Compliance*

Published Fridays by the  
Stanislaus County Farm Bureau

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**GUEST SPEAKER**  
*Amberley Snyder*  
Thursday, April 25, 2024

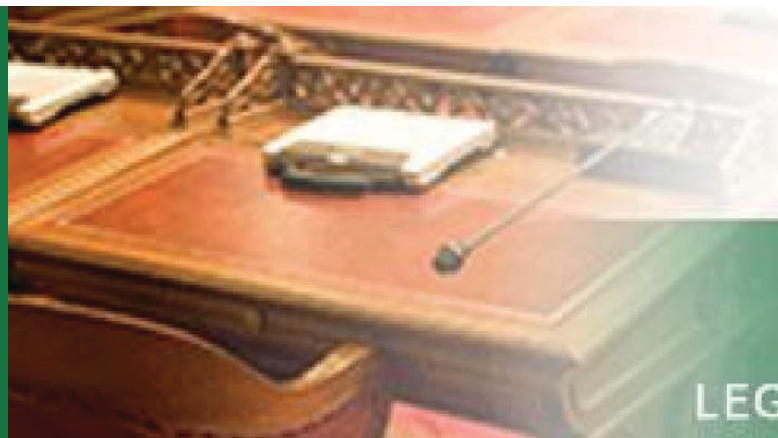
## SCFB MISSION STATEMENT

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



# FRIDAY REVIEW

## LEGISLATIVE AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS



### Air Quality

CARB offers downloadable calendars for meetings they hold regarding Drayage, Advanced Clean Fleets (ACF), Clean Truck Check, Transport Refrigeration Unit (TRU), Zero-Emission Airport Shuttle, and Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) regulations. You can access the calendars at [this link](#). Staff: Steven Fenaroli, [sfenaroli@cfbf.com](mailto:sfenaroli@cfbf.com)

CARB is holding the second session of the Truck Regulation Implementation Group (TRIG) meeting to discuss infrastructure and rule provisions on March 11 at 1 PM. Registration is required. Participants can register at [this link](#). Staff: Steven Fenaroli, [sfenaroli@cfbf.com](mailto:sfenaroli@cfbf.com)

### GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENTS TRAINING

California Farm Bureau is holding a Gubernatorial Appointments Training on April 1, 2024 at 7:30 PM. The training with Chief Deputy Appointments Secretary Morgan Carvajal from the Governor's office is a stellar opportunity for Farm Bureau members to learn the ins and outs of applying for board and commissions. The training is possible because of our partnership with APAPA who are facilitating the training through the Governor's office. Registration is required. Participants can register at [this link](#). Staff: Steven Fenaroli, [sfenaroli@cfbf.com](mailto:sfenaroli@cfbf.com)

### Budget

Senate Subcommittee 2 met this week to go over some key departments for their budget this coming year. Farm Bureau testified to ensure that we continue funding both the Wolf Compensation Fund and the Farmer program. Both programs directly benefit farmers and ranchers and while

this is a challenging budget year, let us at least ensure we provide some funding until the budget picture looks better!  
Staff: Chris Reardon, [creardon@cfbf.com](mailto:creardon@cfbf.com)

### Forestry

#### 2024 FOREST LEGACY GRANT SOLICITATION UPDATE

Within the next few weeks, CAL FIRE's Forest Legacy Program will release up to \$10 million in funding for Forest Legacy Grants to conserve and protect environmentally important privately-owned forestland. The purpose of the Forest Legacy Program is to protect environmentally important forestland threatened with conversion to non-forest uses. The primary tool CAL FIRE uses to conserve forest lands in perpetuity is permanent Working Forest Conservation Easements (WFCEs).

Under this competitive grant program, CAL FIRE purchases or accepts donations of conservation easements or fee titles of productive forest lands from willing sellers, to encourage long-term conservation throughout the state.

The 2024 Forest Legacy Grant Solicitation will launch in two parts, including a pre-application, which will be ranked and scored, with successful pre-applicants invited to complete a full application. When the funding is released, the Forest Legacy Program web page will be updated to include the grant guidelines, eligibility requirements, and deadlines.

Please direct any questions to [forestlegacy@fire.ca.gov](mailto:forestlegacy@fire.ca.gov).

Thank you,  
Forest Legacy Team  
[forestlegacy@fire.ca.gov](mailto:forestlegacy@fire.ca.gov)

### Water

#### FIRST BATCH OF STATE WATER BILLS FOR 2024

Friday, February 16 was the deadline for new bills to be introduced in the California Legislature. As of month's end, there are 17 substantive bills Farm Bureau is tracking specifically for their water- or water-related aspects. None of these bills have yet been heard in committee. An additional 20 "spot bills" related to water were introduced, with substantive language yet to be amended in. One bill, AB 828 (Assemblymember Damon Connolly, D San Rafael), was introduced in 2023 but the author waited to take it up until this past January. The bill is related to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. It would exempt disadvantaged communities and managed wetlands from fees imposed by groundwater sustainability agencies and would omit them from compliance with pumping restrictions imposed on other well owners in a basin. AB 828 passed the Assembly on January 29. Farm Bureau opposes. The newly introduced water-related bills of relevance to Farm Bureau members are:

- AB 1798 (Assemblymember Diane Papan, D San Mateo) – Would require the California Department of Transportation to develop a programmatic environmental review process and establish a pilot project to prevent 6PPD and 6PPD-quinone from entering salmon- and steelhead-bearing surface waters of the state.
- AB 1827 (Assemblymember Diane Papan, D San Mateo) – Would allow water utilities/local governments to increase water service

*See "REVIEW" on page 4*

From "REVIEW" on page 3

fees and charges if a parcel's increased water use results in higher costs for the utility.

- AB 1998 (Assemblymember Devon Mathis, R Porterville) – Would require the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to track and account for separately from other departmental budgeting any revenue it collects or costs it incurs during the environmental review process under the California Environmental Quality Act. For example, such revenue could include CEQA filing fees, and costs could be staff time for document review and consultation.
- AB 2060 (Assemblymember Esmeralda Soria, D Fresno) – Would exempt projects to divert water during flood periods from the requirement to obtain a streambed alteration permit from the Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- AB 2162 (Assemblymember Diane Papan, D San Mateo) – Would direct the Department of Fish and Wildlife to develop an expedited permitting process for aquaculture operations and marine restoration projects.
- AB 2196 (Assemblymember Damon Connolly, D San Rafael) – Would require the Department of Fish and Wildlife to develop a beaver restoration program statewide develop a licensing scheme to issue and administer permits for the capture, handling, transport, and release of beavers on public and private lands.
- AB 2318 (Assemblymember Diane Papan, D San Mateo) – Would require the State Water Board post on its internet website by January 1 of each year a report describing the receipts and expenditures of the State Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account.
- AB 2409 (Assemblymember Diane Papan, D San Mateo) – Would require the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to establish a public website that would track and provide information about every permit issued by state agencies for any project.

- AB 2450 (Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, D Winters) – Would adopt and approve the Lower Cache Creek Flood Risk Management Project.

- AB 2501 (Assemblymember David Alvarez, D San Diego) – Would authorize the State Water Board, on behalf of itself or a regional board, to accept funds from public agencies, foundations, or other not-for-profit entities for planning, permitting, or providing technical support for projects of public benefit in the state board's or regional board's jurisdiction.

- AB 2875 (Assemblymember Laura Friedman, D Glendale) – Would declare that it is the policy of the state to ensure no net loss and long-term gain in the quantity, quality, and permanence of wetlands acreage and values in California.

- ACA 16 (Assemblymember Isaac Bryan, D Los Angeles) – Would amend the California Constitution to declare that the people have a right to clean air and water and a healthy environment.

- SB 973 (Senator Shannon Grove, R Bakersfield) – Would allow county boards of supervisors to cancel Williamson Act contracts without paying a 12.5% fee if the parcel will be used for a solar development project and the landowner commits to permanently reducing the parcel's water right or allocation.

- SB 1088 (Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil, D Jackson) – Would establish a Rural and Small Community Fire Resilience Program for the distribution of state matching funds to communities within the Wildland Urban Interface, or WUI, to improve water system

infrastructure.

- SB 1156 (Senator Melissa Hurtado, D Sanger) – Would require executive staff and board directors at groundwater sustainability agencies to annually disclose any economic or financial interests pursuant to the Political Reform Act of 1974 that may reasonably be considered to affect their decision-making related to groundwater management.

- SB 1218 (Senator Josh Newman, D Fullerton) – Would declare that it is the established policy of the state to encourage and incentivize the development of emergency water supplies, and to support their use during times of water shortage.

- SB 1390 (Senator Anna Caballero, D Merced) – Would extend the period of eligibility for use of the recently-enacted emergency recharge diversion permit exemptions by five years, to 2034, and allow for the exemptions to apply under local or regional flood declarations instead of statewide flood declarations only.

**Neto's Chicken BBQ Dinner Fundraiser Benefitting**



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Address checks to: Stanislaus County 4-H Summer Camp  
Donation checks can be mailed/dropped off at the office, or brought to the Neto's dinner.

## Almond Update: Upcoming Pest Management Workshops

By: Brian German  
Ag News Director / AgNet West

The Almond Board of California (ABC) is gearing up to host a series of pest management workshops in the coming weeks. ABC Outreach and Education Specialist Gary Castillo said the events will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. with check-in beginning at 8:15 a.m. A total of four workshops are scheduled throughout the state, to give industry members more opportunities to participate.

“The target audience for this is anybody that’s involved in some of the pest management decisions inside the field,” Castillo noted. “That can range from PCAs to grow-

ers as well as anybody kind of involved in that decision making process.”

The first of the “Management of Key Pests in Your Orchard” workshop series will be held on March 12 at the Glenn Success Conference Center in Orland. The following day in Modesto, the March 13 workshop will take place at the Stanislaus County Harvest Hall. April 2 will be the third workshop in the series and will be held at the Merced County Farm Bureau. The final event will take place in Bakersfield on April 3 at the Kern Agriculture Pavilion.

Presentations will cover current integrated pest management (IPM) practices for new and emerging insect pests. “We’ll have a numerous amount of speakers ranging from Lauren Fann from the Almond Board, Abigail Welch from Semios, Thomas Mar-

tin from Trécé, Houston Wilson from UC Riverside, David Haviland and Jhalendra [Rijal] from UC ANR, and then Jesse Roseman from the Almond Board as well,” said Castillo.

Speakers will be highlighting pests such as navel orangeworm and the Carpophilus beetle. There will also be information on IPM incentives that are available from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Castillo said the workshops will be a more intimate event to allow for more interaction among participants. “With some of these smaller events that we put on, we definitely encourage engagement from the audience,” Castillo explained.

Registration information for the pest management workshops is available at [Almonds.com/events](http://Almonds.com/events).

## FLORY

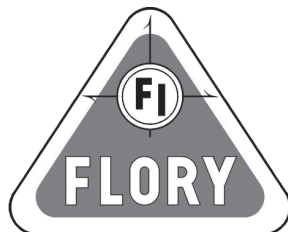
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**FREE ADS FOR FARM BUREAU MEMBERS**

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

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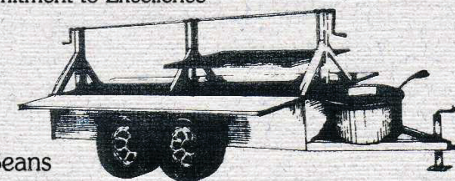
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**Over 140,000 Farms Lost in 5 Years**

*Source: American Farm Bureau*

Between 2017 and 2022, the number of farms in the U.S. declined by 141,733 or 7%, according to USDA's 2022 Census of Agriculture, released on Feb. 13. Acres operated by farm operations during the same timeframe declined by 20.1 million (2.2%), a loss equivalent to an area about the size of Maine. Only 1.88% of acres operated and 1% of farm operations were classified under a non-family corporate farm structure.

Conducted every five years, the Census of Agriculture collects data on land use and ownership, producer characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures. USDA defines a farm as an operation that produced and sold, or normally would have sold, \$1,000 or more of agricultural products during the census year.

While the number of farm operations and acres operated declined, the value of agricultural production increased, rising from \$389 billion in 2017 to \$533 billion in 2022 (40% nominally and 17% adjusted for inflation). These updated numbers highlight the continuing trend of fewer operations farming fewer acres of land but producing more each year.

In addition to Ag Census data, USDA releases

survey-based estimates on farm numbers once every year. Using this annual survey data dating back to 1950, the trend of fewer operations farming fewer acres becomes even more obvious. Since 1950, the number of farm operations has declined by 3.75 million (66%) and the number of acres farmed declined by 323 million (27%) – slightly less than twice the size of Texas. Technological advancements that have increased productivity, such as feed conversion ratios in livestock and yield per acre in crops, have allowed farmers and ranchers to produce more with less even as the U.S. population more than doubled, going from 159 million in 1950 to 340 million in 2023, and the global population more than tripled (2.5 billion to 8 billion) during the same period.

**Farm Operations**

Between 2017 and 2022 all states but five (Alaska, Delaware, Iowa, Maryland, New Jersey and Rhode Island) lost farms. Texas had the largest numerical loss – nearly 18,000 farm operations – followed by Oklahoma (-8,153) and Missouri (-7,433). Iowa gained the most farm operations (+807) followed distantly by Alaska (+183). In terms of percentage loss of farm operations, New Mexico experienced the largest decline (-16.2%) followed by Arizona (-12.5%) and Wyoming (-11.7%). Alaska's 183-farm gain was

the largest percent increase at 18.5%. Though the presence of regional trends in farm operation losses appears limited, drought conditions that battered much of the West in 2021 and 2022 may be responsible, in part, for higher farm loss percentages in those states. Across states that gained farms, most were within the category of earning over \$1 million in sales except in Alaska where the biggest gains were in farms earning between \$5,000 and \$50,000.

**Area Operated**

The 2022 census also indicates a decline of just over 20 million acres (2.2% of total) in acreage operated. Colorado led in terms of numerical decline, with 1.6 million fewer acres being farmed in 2022 compared to 2017, followed by Texas (-1.56 million), and Oklahoma (-1.26 million). Only three states, Alabama, Alaska and Rhode Island, had increases in operated area. By percent decline, the map of operated acreage looks quite different. Hawaii leads with a loss of 7.2% of operated area followed by Virginia and Maine both experiencing a loss of 6.3% and Washington experiencing a loss of 5.6% between 2017 and 2022. Counties in the West had the largest swings in acreage operated, likely linked to the sheer size of counties with

*See "Census" on page 16*

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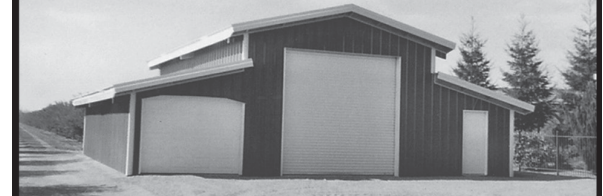
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## Safeguarding Success: Safety Program Essentials

By: Theresa Kiehn, AgSafe President/CEO

Since 1991 all California employers with ten or more employees are required to have a written Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP). Even though it has been over 30 years since the regulation went into effect, the IIPP is still one of the most cited violations by Cal/OSHA across all industries, including agriculture. The citations under this code vary greatly, from not having a plan at all to failing to review it with your employees on a regular basis. The beginning of the new year is a great opportunity to give your safety program time and attention before the season kicks off. In this article, we will cover the basic elements of your required programs and pitfalls you should avoid.

### #1 Basic Elements of an IIPP

An effective IIPP improves safety and health in your workplace and reduces costs

through good management and employee involvement. The eight required Injury and Illness Prevention Program elements are:

- Responsibility – this section identifies who in your operation has the authority and responsibility for implementing the provisions of the IIPP.
- Compliance – this component outlines the system that ensures all workers comply with the rules for maintaining a safe work environment.
- Communication – this element captures the plan for facilitating a continuous flow of two-way communication between management, supervisors and employees.
- Hazard Assessment – periodic inspections of the workplace are essential to evaluating and reevaluating safety concerns; this section outlines the formalized plan for timely assessments.
- Accident/Exposure Investigation – this section identifies the actions to be taken in the case of an actual incident or near-miss to help identify the root cause and then take corrective action.
- Hazard Correction – this component identifies the process for correcting unsafe or unhealthy workplace conditions, prac-

tices or procedures.

- Training and Instruction – as with any plan, there needs to be training to aid in implementation. This element provides details as to who, when and what needs to be trained.
- Recordkeeping – this section outlines documentation requirements.

To be effective your IIPP must address the following areas:


- Fully involve all employees, supervisors and management.
- Identify the specific workplace hazards to which employees may be exposed.
- Correct identified hazards in an appropriate and timely manner.
- Provide effective training.

For useful tools in creating or updating your IIPP, take advantage of Cal/OSHA's IIPP e-tool at: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/etools/09-031/how.htm>.

### #2 Heat Illness Prevention Plan


The employer must develop, put in writing, and implement effective procedures for complying with the requirements of

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T8 CCR 3395, the Heat Illness Prevention Plan (HIPP). Each company needs to have a written heat illness prevention plan at the worksite, that contains the following elements, and include specific details as to how you will ensure that the provisions are met:

- The designated person(s) that have the authority and responsibility for implementing the plan in the field.
- Procedures for providing sufficient water.
- Procedures for providing access to shade.
- High-heat procedures.
- Emergency response procedures. (including lone workers)
- Acclimatization methods and procedures .

Remember to consider the size of your crew, the length of the work day, ambient temperatures, and any additional personal protective equipment (PPE) that contributes as additional heat sources. The plan needs to be in English and also the language understood by the majority of the employees. Like the IIPP, Cal/OSHA has an HIPP e-tool to assist with drafting your program: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/etools/08-006/index.htm>.

### #3 COVID-19 Prevention Plan

Employers are also required to have COVID-19 Prevention Plan included in their IIPP or as a standalone safety program until February 3, 2025. The elements of your plan should include the following:

- Determine measures to prevent COVID-19 transmission and identify and correct COVID-19 hazards.
- Provide COVID-19 training to employees.
- Investigate and respond to COVID-19 cases in the workplace.
- Exclude from the workplace COVID-19 cases until they meet return to work criteria and implement effective policies to prevent transmission after close contact.
- Make testing available at no cost to employees.
- During an outbreak make COVID-19 testing available to all employees within the exposed group.
- Notify employees who had close contact in the workplace.
- Require and provide face coverings and respirators in the manner and in the circumstances specified in the COVID-19 Prevention regulations.
- Advise employees they can wear face coverings at work regardless of their

vaccination status, and that retaliation by the employer is illegal.

- Improve indoor ventilation and air filtration to prevent COVID-19 transmission.
  - Require respiratory protection during aerosolizing procedures.
  - Keep records of COVID-19 cases at the workplace.
  - Maintain records of COVID-19 cases, and report serious illnesses and outbreaks to Cal/OSHA and to the local health department when required.
- Cal/OSHA has posted Model COVID-19 Prevention policies and procedures on its website for employers to use.

### Coming Soon: Workplace Violence Prevention Program

By July 1, 2024, employers must develop a written program addressing workplace violence prevention. Just as with the other required programs, Cal/OSHA released a model program in February, along with a fact sheet for agricultural operations. To review these materials, please visit <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/puborder.asp>.

### Reminders

It is important to develop an IIPP that fits the unique needs of your operation. When including specifics in your plan, ensure you can meet those benchmarks and appropriate documentation is occurring. Cal/OSHA will cite an operation based on what was included in their IIPP and review your training records. Additionally, make sure to review programs with your team annually and make it available upon request. If you should need assistance with creating or implementing any of your safety programs, please connect with our team via email at [safeinfo@agsafe.org](mailto:safeinfo@agsafe.org) or call (209) 526-4400.

AgSafe is a 501c3 nonprofit providing training, education, outreach, and tools in the areas of worker safety, human resources, labor relations, and pesticide safety issues for the agricultural community. Since 1991, AgSafe has educated over 100,000 employers, supervisors, and workers on these critical issues.



## Weekend Storm System Brings California Snowpack Up to Average

By: Brian German  
Ag News Director / AgNet West

The recent storm system that came through California has pushed the state's snowpack up to average. Last week when the Department of Water Resources conducted their manual snow survey, the statewide snowpack was measured at just 81 percent of the average. The Northern Sierra was in the best condition, at 91 percent of the average. The Central and Southern Sierras were at just 77 percent of the average.



Thanks to the cold stormfront that California experienced over the weekend, the statewide snowpack was measured at 104 percent of the average on Monday. The Northern Sierra remains in the best condition, at 111 percent of average. The Central Sierra increased to 104 percent of the average and the Southern Sierra improved to 94 percent of the average. Overall, the statewide summary shows the snowpack at 94 percent of the April 1 average, with a snow water equivalent of 24.4 inches.

Another storm system is also forecasted to come through the state. The National Weather Service shows multiple areas of northern California are still under a winter storm warning as of Monday. Expectations from the Weather Prediction Center are for "additional very heavy snowfall expected for higher mountain elevations." Between 12 and 24 inches of snow is forecasted in the Northern Sierra by Wednesday.

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# Sharing knowledge

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Farm Bureau in 2023 provided educational opportunities for members and aspiring farmers and ranchers and supported school agriculture programs. Along the way, we made benefits available to our members and helped celebrate agriculture—from honoring farmland scenes to saluting the quintessential farm dog.

Farm Bureau Extension's 2023 series attracted **1,901 class registrations** from **313 participants** for **10 continuing education sessions**. Meanwhile, Farm Bureau held **4 retirement plan webinars** and conducted **27 farm and ranch health and safety seminars** in English and Spanish.

The California Farm Bureau Scholarship Foundation awarded **\$195,000 in scholarships** to **40 students** who intend to pursue careers as farmers, ranchers or in occupations related to agriculture. Farm Bureau also awarded **75 collegiate memberships** to California FFA members who attended the Sacramento Leadership Experience conference. Our Young Farmers & Ranchers organization hosted **32 attendees** at the YF&F Leaders Meeting in Fresno in July, which included farm tours, leadership development sessions, networking and program planning.

In a partnership with Nationwide, Farm Bureau members **raised nearly \$34,000** for the Blue Jacket Bonanza program. Throughout the year, Farm Bureau **awarded over 200 FFA jackets** to regional and sectional officers in California.

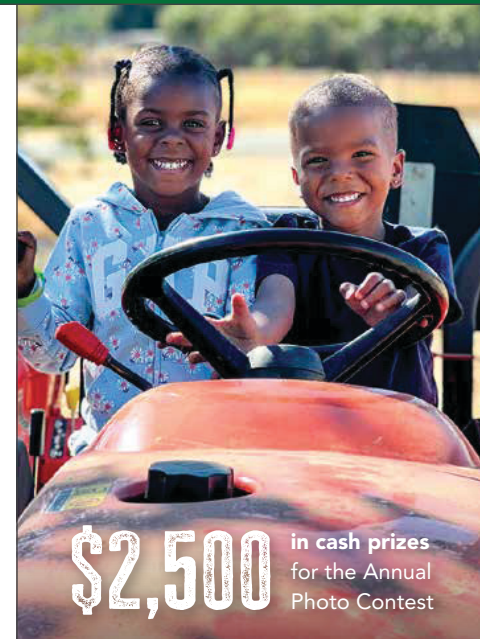
The California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom program, supported by Farm Bureau, attracted **20,000 students throughout California** to tune into California Farm Day presentations to celebrate agriculture and learn how the weather impacts California agriculture. **213 agriculture teachers** attended the state Ag in the Classroom Conference in Sacramento, **65% being first-time attendees**.

Ag in the Classroom awarded **\$52,500** to **425 educators** throughout California through grants to expand agricultural literacy efforts in 2023. **25 teachers** were awarded Literacy for Life grants, and **400 teachers** received Taste and Teach Grants. **12,031 teachers** viewed Ag in the Classroom resources on the Teachers Pay Teachers online marketplace, downloading more than **15,723 resources and lesson plans**.

**More than 100,000 copies** of Agriculture in the Classroom's **16-page** educational newspaper *What's Growin' On?* were distributed.

Meanwhile, Farm Bureau hosted its **42nd annual** photo contest, awarding **\$2,500 in cash prizes**. The contest drew **64 participants**, including **4 budding artist contestants**, with **183 photos** submitted, **double** the number of submissions from 2022. The 4th Annual Farm Dog of the Year contest drew **45 canine contenders**, with **\$1,000 awarded** to the grand prize winner.

In 2023, Farm Bureau provided **32 benefit offerings** for members. They included Farm Bureau Retirement Plan benefits administered by Nationwide, citizenship services through the National Immigration Forum for employees of Farm Bureau members, plus home, auto, apparel and travel discounts, including **savings up to 30%** at Great Wolf Lodge resorts.



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## Agricultural Pesticide Safety Culture for Pesticide Applicators

*By: Judith Arroyo, Deputy Agricultural  
Commissioner/Sealer  
Stanislaus County Department of Agri-  
culture & Weights and Measures*

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Agriculture ranks amongst the most hazardous industries. This is not necessarily the best marketing headline for an industry which has already struggled over the last three years with farm labor availability, even long before COVID existed. However, in relation to pesticide component of safety, over the last few years in California, the focus of agricultural pesticide related safety has been shifted from the agricultural workers to the residents of the rural communities and community exposure.

While our goal at the Stanislaus County Agricultural Commissioner's Office is to encourage safe and legal pesticide use to protect all stakeholders and the environment, the shift in direction of focus is concerning to me, not only because of my current job and past work experience, but as a Californian in general.

I recently had the opportunity to translate and present the Private Applicator Certificate PAC review session in Spanish. Over the last 7 months, the Stanislaus County Agricultural Commissioner's Office has presented a two-hour review session of the currently recommended study guide, Pesticide Safety: A Study Manual for Private Applicators, 3rd Edition, published by UC IPM and Burrowing Vertebrate Pest Fumigation, published by California Department of Pesticide Regulation.

Both manuals are available in Spanish.

Having noticed the challenge that English learners have encountered in passing the test, we spent several hours trying to ensure our delivery included several definitions of the vocabulary words that we ourselves also had to ensure we understood. We created a dedicated Spanish PAC review and testing session in hopes to helping make the review information more relatable to this sector of our community while attempting to help them succeed in face of this challenge.

When I stood in front of the group, for my portion of the review session, I realized what having this certificate meant for the audience. For some of them, it was the importance of having the access to the Restricted Materials, for others perhaps a requirement of their job as pesticide handlers. But for all of them, it meant having a basic understanding how to be safe and minimize risk while applying pesticides. So, upon introduction, we made the purpose of the review session two-fold, achieving the knowledge required to stay safe and make safe spraying decisions, while also obtaining the certificate.

The first session gave us some learning opportunities. Independently of the effort made by my team and the candidates, the results revealed we still have some work to do. So therefore, we will try something different next time because "the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results" is one quote that is commonly used within our team. Upon evaluation, the time needed to explain the vocabulary terms and ensure the participants understood these words and concepts, was not enough, and there is additional work

that needs to be done to ensure the participants understand how to properly read a label which needs to happen before they come to the review session.

I encourage all stakeholders involved in agricultural pesticide safety to consider if the current methods or procedures are not giving the desired pesticide safety results, why are they not working? This is a very specific process for each farm, since there is no “one size that fits all” approach. But a few questions to begin with can be, are you encouraging your family, business partners and your employees to be safe with pesticides? Are your actions and words while engaging with pesticide applicators

enough to make an impact to encourage them to be safe and act safe? Conducting at random site safety inspections can also help to reveal potential gaps.

The reality is that pesticide applicators do not need to hear about pesticide safety from their pesticide inspectors during an inspection, or from the trainers once a year, they need to hear about it from their work partners, family members, and supervisors and bosses, on the daily. More importantly, it should not only be heard but modeled. Pesticide safety on the farm, it’s not information you write on a paper post to pass an inspection. It’s not a decontamination box that has soap, paper towels and water and you must ensure is refilled before each job. Pesticide safety on the farm, is a way of being and bringing into consciousness that the safety of the person

matters, and that the task being conducted in a safe and risk minimizing manner matters, for the safety and well-being of others and for risk management of the farm itself. In most instances, personal protective equipment is not comfortable to wear. However, for an employee to hear the need for and the reason to wear it, from someone directly involved and engaged in their workplace, may be more meaningful than just following a checklist or hearing it during one of our Continuing Education presentations. It is exponentially more effective to see peers and supervisors wearing it as well and modeling effective pesticide safety culture of the farm.

Under the threat of trivializing worker/appliator health and their knowledge empowerment over pretentious hashtags and buzzwords, let’s not lose focus of those

who are indeed at the greatest risk and pose the greatest risk of pesticide exposure - pesticide applicators. Ensuring understanding and engagement using what works for your pesticide applicator team can help to empower them to be more safety conscientious and make safe decisions. Employing sufficient training, knowledge retention, reinforcement, and sometimes those short but meaningful one on ones, can help to ensure pesticide applicators become the best farm risk management team.



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# 2024 TRAININGS



Register here:

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

## March 5, 2024 Pesticide Handler & Fit Testing

8:00-12:00pm - Spanish

1:00-5:00pm - English

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

Pricing: Member \$60/Nonmember \$75

## July 25, 2024 Tractor Safety

9:00-10:00am - Spanish

10:00-11:00am - English

CalOSHA requires that employees who operate equipment be trained annually.

Pricing: Member \$40/Nonmember \$50

## May 23, 2024 Heat Illness Prevention

9:00-10:00am - Spanish

10:00-11:00am - English

CalOSHA requires this training annually for outdoor employees.

Pricing: Member \$40/Nonmember \$50

## October 24, 2024 Hazardous Ag Materials (HAM)

8:00-9:30am - English

10:00-11:30am - Spanish

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

Pricing: Member \$40/Nonmember \$50

## June 27, 2024 CPR & First Aid

8:00-12:00pm - Spanish

1:00-5:00pm - English

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

Pricing: Member \$100/Nonmember \$125

## November 22, 2024 Spray Safe - Save the Date

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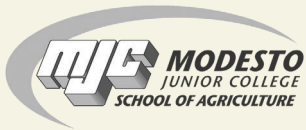
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## Preventing AG Equipment Theft with GPS Tracking Devices

*By: Stanislaus County Sheriff's Office*

A tractor can easily cost over \$100,000, but smaller less expensive tractors are also popular targets, too. Smaller tractors are often a more popular target for thieves, as stealing them is much easier.

Thieves are able to load smaller tractors onto a trailer that can easily be pulled with a pickup truck. Smaller tractors are also easy to hide and store. Sometimes, this equipment is stored in a rural location for a few years until the perpetrator thinks it's safe to resell. Sometimes it's also shipped across the border to Mexico where it can't be tracked.

With all of that in mind, farm equipment theft is a very real threat to modern farms. So, what can be done to prevent it and how can a GPS tracker for farm equipment play a role in reducing the risk and associated costs?

To put it simply, a GPS tracker is your best bet at getting your equipment back if it goes missing. Since 2022, the Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department has investigated countless tractor theft investigations where the stolen tractor had a GPS device attached prior to the theft. As a result of the GPS device, the Sheriff's Department has had a 100% recovery rate on all those cases.

A GPS tracker is very small and extremely lightweight. It's also portable and wireless, allowing you to attach it to an object—like somewhere discreet on your farm equipment, so that you can track its location in real time. You'll likely need to sign up for a cheap subscription to keep the device active, but most work around the world and have a handful of features to make tracking easier.

Majority of GPS tracking devices allow you to set a geofence that will alert you the moment the tracker goes beyond it. They also send a notification as soon as the device detects movement or vibration, such as the engine starting up. Most devices will send a text message or email the moment you piece of equipment leaves the designated geofence area or starts to move.

As equipment theft grows in popularity manufacturers have adapted to the current trends and have begun offering tracking devices to be purchased as an add on for new equipment or to be placed on your current equipment.

If you decide to install a GPS tracking device, please look for a discreet location, as thieves often search a piece of equipment for a GPS tracking device. If installed properly, thieves may not be able to locate the device, resulting in successful recovery and arrest after the theft.

The Stanislaus County Sheriff's office Rural crimes unit has been designed to be a quick and efficient resource to our Agriculture community. With the use of GPS thieves have little to no chance of retaining stolen equipment and it significantly increases our recovery time and successful apprehension of the criminals involved.

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## Northeast Regional Meeting

Monday, March 11, 2024

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Guest Speaker- Sheriff Jeff Dirkse

6:00PM

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guest speaker and to elect  
your Westside Board  
Members.



**From "Census" on page 7**

a significant proportion of open and undeveloped land.

Even minor declines in farmed area can have a significant impact on the rural identity of states with smaller acreage and higher rates of commercial and residential development. The more land shifted out of agriculture production, the harder it is to return those acres to farming. Diminished production capacity within specific states and regions heightens dependence on purchases from other states or countries. For instance, Hawaii faces a unique situation with only enough production and food storage capacity to sustain itself for seven days, exacerbated by a 7% loss in actively farmed land over the past five years. In New England, on a weight basis, farmers produce only about 21% as much food as the states consume (with a portion of that going to outside buyers). Researchers have estimated that in order to reach 30% self-food-sufficiency, the six New England states would have to maximize the use of

401,000 existing underutilized acres and clear an additional 588,000 acres of land. Instead, acres operated in New England dropped by 145,000 between 2017 and 2022. Local regulatory dynamics, land use pressures and costs, and variations in cultural interests contribute to the shifting landscape of farming, often pushing it farther away from population centers.

**Economic Class**

New Ag Census data also allows analyses of farm numbers and area operated by economic class and the market value of agricultural products sold. Economic sales classes are defined by summing the sales of agricultural products and government program payments; and the market value of agricultural products sold represents the gross market value before taxes and production expenses of all agricultural products sold or removed from an operation in 2022. Between 2017 and 2022 the number of farms in the \$0 - \$4,999 economic class dropped the

most, by 120,970 (13%), followed by the \$5,000 - \$49,000 category, which lost 32,215 operations (5%). The category of farms in an economic class over a million grew by 28,566 operations (36%). The number of farms in lower economic classes shrunk at a faster rate than those in higher economic classes. That said, most ag production is generated by farms in higher economic classes. In 2017, 69% of the value of agricultural products sold was products by farms in the million-dollar-plus economic class. In 2022 this increased to 79% (Figure 8).

Farmers and ranchers currently face the highest production expenses on record, in addition to increasingly complex local, state and federal regulations and growing competition from lower-cost foreign markets. These dynamics shrink margins for producers and often more significantly impact farms in lower economic

*See "Census" on page 21*



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## Determining the right Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for your farm

The following information is provided by Nationwide®, the #1 farm and ranch insurer in the U.S.\*

Farm machinery, chemicals, stored manure and livestock are just a few injury or illness hazards on farms and ranches. The right personal protective equipment (PPE) helps minimize exposure and the risk these types of hazards pose to health and safety.

“I remind myself and others to stop and think about the hazards of every job we do on the farm, then think about PPE that might protect you,” said Nationwide Risk Management Consultant, farmer and agronomy specialist Derek Hommer.

### Identifying hazards and risks

Think about these types of hazards in assessing what poses you the greatest physi-

cal risk on your farm or ranch:

- **Chemical.** Pesticides, fertilizer, stored manure and cleaning products can generate toxic fumes. Read and follow any product labels and follow any PPE guidelines. Likely PPE includes chemical-resistant gloves, eye protection, long pants and long-sleeved shirts, face coverings, aprons, closed-toe shoes and respirators.
- **Physical.** Safety goggles, ear protection, welding aprons/chaps, leather gloves and steel-toed boots all help prevent injuries when working with power tools and farm machinery that create physical injury risk.
- **Biological.** Exposure to bacteria, viruses or parasites from animals, manure, water or grain can cause serious illnesses. Wearing PPE like nitrile gloves and face coverings (surgical, N95 or full-face respirators) can help minimize risk of infection and illness.
- **Environmental.** Extreme temperatures, high noise levels and UV rays can lead to long-term adverse health effects.

Match PPE to the specific environmental hazards you face, like sunscreen when working in direct sunlight. Be aware of temperature extremes, dress appropriately and work in teams so workers can monitor one another for heat- or cold-related illness.

Confined spaces  
Confined spaces on the farm like manure pits and grain bins pose specific

hazards. Most farms host a variety of confined spaces including grain bins, silos, manure pits, culverts, water tanks, tanker trucks and more. Confined spaces are often oxygen-deficient environments where self-rescue can be very difficult.

“Entering a confined space on the farm is serious business. You owe it to yourself to learn how to enter safely,” Hommer said. “This this includes air monitoring, lock out/tag out, spotters, rescue harnesses and wearing the correct PPE.”

PPE maintenance and farm worker training  
Maintenance of PPE is important to making sure it’s effective in protecting you from potential hazards. Here are some key steps in maintaining PPE:

- Inspect your PPE before and after each use. Replace it if you notice any damage.
- Follow all rules on safe respirator use and maintenance. Pay attention to fit testing, serviceable life periods, inspection and cleaning. Use the correct respirator/cartridges.
- Clean your PPE according to manufacturer’s instructions. Certain chemicals and dirt can degrade PPE material and reduce its effectiveness.
- Store PPE in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight and extreme temperatures. Improper storage can lead to degradation and reduce PPE’s lifespan.
- Replace PPE at regular intervals depending on use or as suggested by the manufacturer.

Finally, provide PPE use and maintenance training for all farm workers. Post clear signage reminding workers to use PPE in areas where hazards are present.

Visit [AgInsightCenter.com](http://AgInsightCenter.com) for more resources and expert tips to help you run a successful business and maintain the safety of your operation.

\*A.M. Best Market Share Report 2022. Nationwide, the Nationwide N and Eagle, and Nationwide is on your side are service marks of Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company. © 2023 Nationwide



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### ***Number of farms continues to drop in California, mirroring national trends***

Small-scale farmers continue to struggle to stay in business in California and across the country, according to the results of the 2022 Census of Agriculture, which was released last week by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In California, the overall number of farms decreased 10% from 2017 to 2022, while the average acreage per farm increased 10%. The USDA conducts the census every five years. The number of farms in California peaked at 87,991 in 1997. Since 2007, the number has declined in each census, falling to 63,134 in 2022.

### ***Dairy herds shrink to 20-year low as farmers breed more cows for beef***

Dairy farmers looking to buy young heifers to replace their older milking cows should get used to the sticker shock for a while, as the nation's dairy heifer inventory has plummeted to a 20-year low. Reduced supplies of dairy heifers could limit the nation's ability to produce more milk, people in the industry say, and reversing the trend will take at least two to three years. How soon farmers respond will depend on market conditions—for milk and for beef. Dairy replacement heifers have dwindled because dairy farmers have turned to breeding more of their dairy cows with beef genetics.

### ***Bees go to work, pollinating California almond orchards***

Dealing with a mix of extreme weather during bloom, California growers and beekeepers are hopeful that Mother Nature provides plenty of sunny days so honeybees can leave their colonies and pollinate the 2024 almond crop. Pollination of the state's 1.37 million bearing acres of almonds requires 2.5 million beehives provided by California and out-of-state beekeepers, according to the Almond Board of California. Heavy rainfall this month caused headaches for some beekeepers who had trouble accessing muddy orchards and dealt with stuck equipment when moving bees.

***2024 water-delivery pledges remain low, but don't account for recent storms***  
State and federal water officials last week

announced preliminary water deliveries of 15% of requested supplies for 2024 from the State Water Project and the federal Central Valley Project. But both the California Department of Water Resources and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation said the water-delivery pledges don't take into account recent and anticipated storms expected to add to California's water supply. The recent storms boosted water levels in some key reservoirs as well as snowpack in the Sierra Nevada.

### ***Winegrape production outpaces demand***

California winegrape growers may be victims of their own success after harvesting a larger than average crop last fall during a cool growing season that has experts optimistic about the quality of the vintage. The 2023 crop came in at nearly 3.7 million tons, up from 3.3 million tons in 2022. But the production increase comes as U.S. wine sales dropped 9% in 2023, the third consecutive year of decline after more than a decade of flattening growth. The weakened consumer demand and the large bulk wine inventory has made it harder for growers to sell their fruit on the spot market.

### ***Fertilizer prices stabilize, but worries persist over weather, global factors***

After sharp spikes in fertilizer prices in 2022, farmers saw some relief last year as prices stabilized. With the 2024 planting season nearing, analysts say they're watching weather issues that could disrupt spring planting and transportation of fertilizers, as well as geopolitics that could affect fertilizer trade and production. Lower prices last year increased demand for fertilizer, and usage is expected to continue growing in 2024, but only by 1% or 2%, said Veronica Nigh, senior economist at The Fertilizer Institute in Arlington, Virginia.

### ***World Ag Expo highlights high-tech solutions for farm challenges***

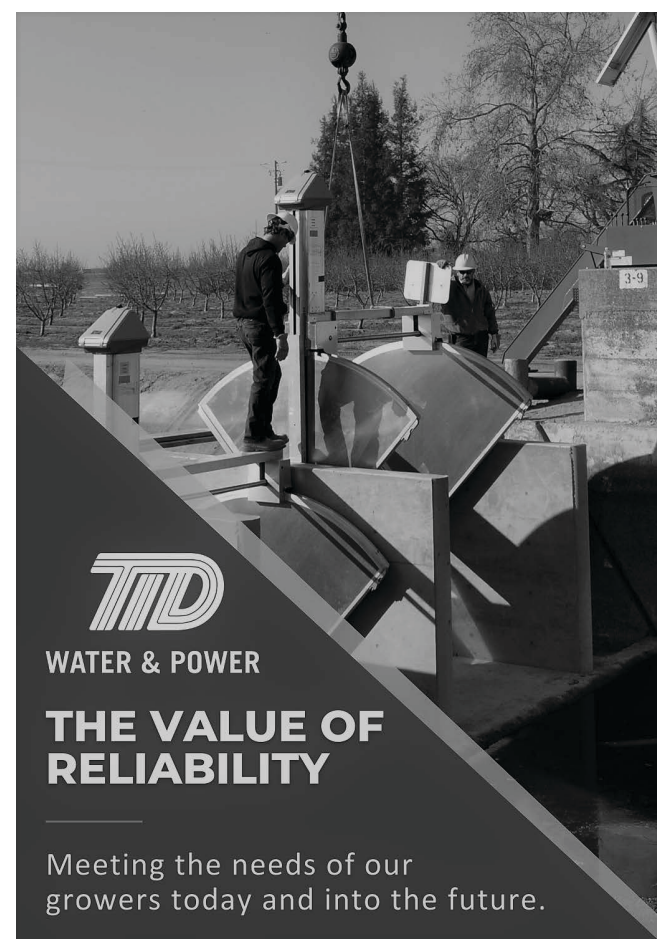
The World Ag Expo, celebrated as the largest outdoor farm trade show on the planet, lured throngs of attendees last week eager to see the latest in agricultural technology. Amid field demonstrations

and more than 1,200 exhibits at the Feb. 13-15 event at the International Agri-Center in Tulare, expo presenters pitched agricultural innovation as a means to address farm labor challenges. Numerous equipment manufacturers showed off autonomous or efficiency-enhancing machinery as potential answers to farmers' struggles with rising labor costs and decreasing worker availability.

USDA approves use of phosphine gas on citrus in quarantine areas

### ***California citrus growers and packers***

within the Redlands Oriental fruit fly quarantine area of San Bernardino and Riverside counties now have a new postharvest treatment option. The U.S. Department of Agriculture earlier this month approved the use of phosphine fumigation in combination with five days of cold treatment as a postharvest treatment. That will allow growers to move fresh fruit from noncore areas of the quarantine to areas outside the quarantine. USDA said it approved phosphine fumigation because existing postharvest treatment options are not "economically viable."



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## Harvesting Safety ~ The Role of Digital Marketing in Enhancing Agricultural Safety Practices

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

In the rapidly evolving landscape of agriculture, the integration of digital marketing into agricultural safety (Ag Safety) initiatives presents a transformative opportunity. Adopting digital tools and platforms can significantly enhance the effectiveness of safety programs, providing innovative ways to educate, engage, and protect those involved in the sector.

Agriculture, known for its critical role in feeding the global population, is also an industry that poses significant risks to its workforce. The challenges are vast, from the operation of heavy machinery to handling chemicals and exposure to extreme weather conditions. However, with the advent of digital marketing, there is a new frontier for promoting safety practices that can reduce accidents and health issues among agricultural workers.

Digital marketing, with its wide reach and dynamic capabilities, offers an unparalleled platform for Ag Safety campaigns.

Through social media, email newsletters, blogs, and interactive websites, information about best practices, safety equipment, training programs, and regulatory changes can be disseminated quickly and efficiently to a broad audience. This immediacy and breadth of reach were unimaginable a few decades ago, providing a unique advantage in spreading critical safety information.

One of the strengths of digital marketing in Ag Safety is its ability to target specific audiences with tailored messages. Farmers, agribusinesses, and agricultural workers can receive customized information directly relevant to their daily activities and risks. For instance, a digital campaign could target vineyard workers with specific safety tips for pesticide use or grain farmers with guidance on silo safety. This level of specificity enhances the relevance and impact of the safety messages, increasing the likelihood of adoption and behavioral change.

Moreover, digital platforms facilitate interactive and engaging learning experiences. Through online training modules, virtual reality simulations, and instructional videos, agricultural workers can gain a deeper understanding of safety practices in a more engaging way. These interactive tools improve knowledge retention and allow for a hands-on approach to learning safety

protocols without the associated risks.

The analytics capabilities of digital marketing also play a crucial role in enhancing Ag Safety initiatives. By analyzing data on engagement, reach, and the effectiveness of different messages, organizations can continuously refine their strategies to improve outcomes. This data-driven approach ensures that resources are focused on the most effective tactics, maximizing the impact of safety campaigns.

The fusion of Ag Safety and digital marketing represents a powerful approach to mitigating the risks associated with agricultural work. We can create a safer and more informed industry by leveraging digital tools to spread awareness, educate, and engage the agricultural community. As digital marketing continues to evolve, its role in promoting Ag Safety will undoubtedly grow, offering new opportunities to protect those who work tirelessly to feed the world.

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## Why are EU Farmers Protesting?

By Dave Salmonsens

Tractors are in the streets in Paris, Rome, Brussels and many other cities and towns across Europe this winter. The continuing farmer protests in several European countries have many motivations, some common to all and some particular to specific nations. European farmers are burdened by debt, the continuing economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, lower grain prices due to disruptions from the war in Ukraine, climate-driven regulations, import competition and an agricultural support system that is not able to cope with these challenges.

It is also an election year in the European Union – for the EU Parliament in June 2024, with the formation of a new EU Commission also on the horizon. There are also upcoming national elections in several countries, including Austria, Belgium and the United Kingdom.

Specific nations have their individual reasons for protests. Farmers' top concerns vary from Germans protesting government cuts in diesel subsidies to French protests against trade deals and environmental rules that add costs and lower production.

Polish farmers have blocked border crossings to stop imports of lower-priced grain from Ukraine. Farmers in Belgium, Italy, Greece, the Czech Republic and Spain are also taking to the streets to show the public their anger about new and costly rules that are being imposed on farmers. They are fed up with mandates and regulations designed without their input.

Farmers across Europe are urging EU officials to deal with farmers' concerns over prices and bureaucratic rules that limit their ability to produce food and prosper. In response, the EU Commission is taking action to stop a new rule, part of the EU's so-called Farm to Fork strategy to deal with climate change, which would have required

farmers to cut their pesticide use in half by 2030.

A sign of what was to happen began in 2019 in the Netherlands. Farmers drove their tractors to a protest of the Dutch government's plan to sharply reduce nitrogen emissions from farms by halving the number of livestock in the country. Farmers formed a new political party that has achieved enough support to become a part of the government.

Across the pond, farmers in the U.S. are dealing with some of the same issues as their European counterparts, but in a different way. Through the Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance, farmers worked with other groups to muster support for voluntary, market-driven and incentive-based programs to include sustainable practices in their farming operations. And farmers and ranchers are continuing discussions with Congress about the farm bill, pressing for assurance that the legislation is fiscally sound and responsive to producer's needs.

One thing seems certain – old lessons have to constantly be learned by those in power: working with your nation's farmers, instead of imposing top-down regulations, remains the best way to maintain a necessary and productive agriculture. Leaders must listen to those closest to the issues.

Dave Salmonsens is senior director of government affairs at the American Farm Bureau Federation.



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## From "Census" on page 16

classes. Farms that are able often expand in size to capitalize on economies of scale, a concept rooted in the efficiency often gained as production increases. Larger farms can benefit from reduced per-unit costs due to bulk input purchasing, streamlined operations and enhanced bargaining power with suppliers. Mechanization and modern technology, which often come with substantial upfront costs, are more economically justifiable for larger operations, further boosting productivity. Unsurprisingly, the latest census data underscores that farms making such investments tend to fare better. Notably, farms in the \$0 - \$4,999 and \$5,000 - \$49,999 economic classes, constituting over 70% of total farms, often rely on alternative income sources. Those in the \$0 - \$4,999 economic class, especially, are more likely to be operations participating in agriculture for leisure or personal interest as opposed to income reliance. Declines in operations in these categories may be linked to the cost associated with supporting a side business that may no longer be sustainable but has limited impacts on total domestic food production.

### Farm Typology

USDA also reports the number of farms and acres operated by farm type. This section of the report captures the different ownership structures of farming operations and includes: family-held corporations, family and individual filings, partnerships, corporations (excluding

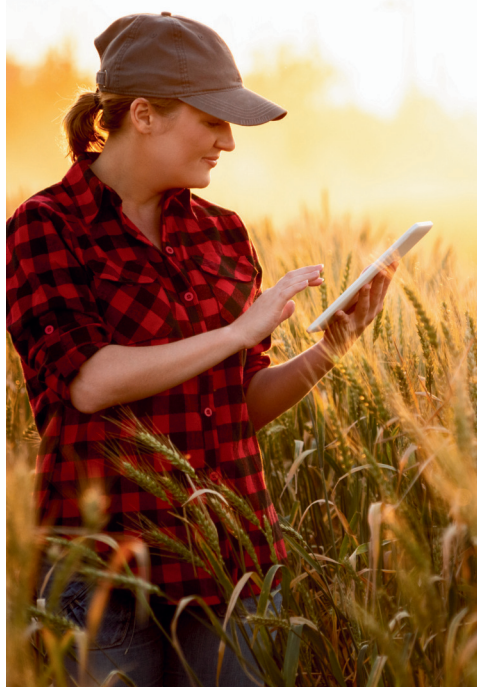
family held) and "other" which includes institutional, research, reservations and other owner entities. Family and individual filings, partnerships and family-held corporations represented 97% (1,884 million) of all farms in 2022 (down from 97.2% in 2017). Corporations other than family held made up 1% (18,960) of all farms and the "other" category made up the remaining 2.2% (37,480) farms.

Analyzing in terms of acreage managed by these operation types provides a better understanding of the proportion of agricultural production in the category. In 2022, family and individual filings, partnerships and family-held corporations represented 91% (801 million) of all acres operated in the U.S. Family and individual filings represented 58% of operated acreage alone (down slightly from 60% in 2017). Non-family-held corporations represented 2% (16.6 million) of acreage operated, up from 1.4% in 2017. "Other" entities operated 7.1% (62.4 million) of acres in 2022, much of which was concentrated in Western states with substantial land in American Indian reservations. The overwhelming majority of farmland in the U.S. continues to be operated by family-based ownership structures. By state, Hawaii had the highest percentage of acres operated by non-family-held corporations (28.5%), followed by Rhode Island (17.3%) and Florida (7%). In Alaska and New Hampshire no farm acreage was managed by non-family-held corporations.

### Conclusion

The 2022 Census of Agriculture provides an in-depth look at the U.S. farm landscape over the past five years. With a loss of 141,733 farm operations, representing a 7% decline, and reduction of 20.1 million acres under cultivation, equivalent to the size of Maine, the agriculture sector has faced significant shifts. Though the data shows an ongoing consolidation of farms into fewer, larger operations, it also highlights the adaptability of farmers and ranchers. Despite fewer farms and reduced acreage, the value of agricultural production has increased by 40% (17% in inflation-adjusted dollars), reaching \$543 billion in 2022. This increase in productivity underscores the impact of technological advancements and efficiency gains, allowing farmers to produce more with fewer resources. The magnitude of changes is not uniform across states, with the Southwest experiencing a much higher percentage loss in farms than states east of the Mississippi. The challenges faced by farms of all sizes has raised calls for a robust and comprehensive farm bill that could provide support to the operations most at risk and to those providing the lion's share of the American food supply, helping both to navigate economic uncertainties and regulatory complexities, to undertake innovative and sustainable practices, and to promote the long-term viability of a diverse agricultural landscape across the nation. The Census of Agriculture paints the picture of what we have lost, and of what more could be lost without firm support.

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## New CalOSHA Requirement, Workplace Violence Prevention

By Vicky Boyd

Nearly all employers in the state will have to develop and implement a workplace violence prevention plan by July 1 under legislation passed in 2023.

Known as Senate Bill 533, it requires employers to provide annual employee training, with the first round beginning before July 1, as well as maintain logs of workplace violence incidences.

To help provide employers with information about the new law, the Stanislaus Farm Bureau, San Joaquin Farm Bureau and California Farm Bureau-affiliated Farm Employers Employment Service hosted a virtual seminar recently. More than 1,000 people logged on to view it.

Providing a legal perspective was Rebecca Hause-Schultz, a partner in the Sacramento office of the national labor relations law firm of Fisher Phillips.

Bryan Little, CFBF director of employment policy and FELS chief operating officer, has been urging the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration to develop a template employers can use to develop their own individual programs before the July deadline. Based on recent conversations with the state, he expected it by the end of March.

Until then, Little recommended employers not draft their own plans because they can only guess what the state expects of them. "I think it's going to be close to impossible to create one on your own that's going to be compliant," he said. "That's why I suggest people wait for the agency to publish their template.

"If you're using a plan that's based on the agency template, it's going to be really difficult for them to say you're not complying as long as you're doing the things that the plan says you're going to do."

Once the template is available, FELS will provide it and additional information to its subscribers and clients.

As with other previous safety programs, Little recommended employers develop a discreet plan for violence prevention and keep it separate from their illness and injury prevention plan, heat illness prevention plan and wildfire smoke protection program. And every step, from identifying and remediating hazards to employee training, should be documented.

"One of the maxims of living in California is if you don't have a written record of that, it didn't happen," Little said.

### Workplace violence defined

The legislation broadly defines workplace violence as a "threat of physical force in a place of employment" whether the employee sustained injury or not. This could include two co-workers — one a Warriors fan and the other a Sacramento Kings fan — getting into a verbal argument about a recent basketball game. It also covers more serious potential violence, such as a disgruntled customer threatening an employee or an intimate partner coming onto the worksite intending to cause bodily harm, Little said.

Upon first glance, the workplace violence plan may appear similar to the illness and injury prevention plan the state required beginning in 1991. But Hause-Schultz said the violence program expands employers' requirements to not only identify the hazards but track and record each incident and their responses. In addition, they must keep the records for five years.

The law is the first of its kind in the nation. "They have to have a plan for hazard identification and investigation, so this is a heavy lift on employers and a real new framework for employers to be navigating," she said.

Developing and implementing a workplace violence prevention plan also differs from



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previous accident and illness prevention efforts in that employees now need to be involved. But Little said it doesn't have to be formal and instead could be something as simple as having conversations with employees about their on-site security concerns.

Their input could be something as straightforward as the unlocked front door poses a risk and there's not always somebody at the front desk to screen visitors. What can we do to restrict building entry?

Because workplaces evolve throughout the year, Little said employers should talk to workers periodically about potential new considerations.

And violence concerns and ways to address them will vary with the environment. Workers harvesting crops in the field will likely have different worries than those working in a packinghouse or office setting.

## Identifying hazards

Much like other worker protection plans, the violence plan requires that employers identify potential hazards and then document how they were addressed, including a date. Little said attaching a photograph, if possible, provides additional documentation.

Should a violent act occur, the employer would also need to document it and their response. In the example of the sports fans who were arguing, Little said employers may want to separate the workers and discuss with each separately that this is not appropriate workplace behavior.

Afterward, the employer would document the discussion, including a date and any possible recommendations, in the violence prevention plan binder. Some employers also like to have workers sign a statement saying they understood the issue and the suggested improvements.

Should an emergency occur, the employer is required to provide immediate medical care and counseling afterward, if needed, to affected workers.

The legislation also requires an incident investigation, although Little said it essentially is a follow-up that described the incident, the response and any possible changes that could prevent it from happening again.

## Annual training

Like the other worker protection plans, the violence prevention plan requires employees receive at least annual training to make sure they fully understand. This includes knowing how to spot unsafe behaviors, how to report concerns and the actions to take should workplace violence occurs.

As part of documentation, employers should record who conducted the training, when it was conducted and who attended. Even after training, Little said, employers need to ensure employee compliance with periodic evaluations of who is and isn't following workplace violence prevention practices. For those who have become lax, additional training may be warranted. He said Cal-OSHA takes these laws seriously and has continued to increase fines, which top out at \$158,000 for willful violation.

Despite the additional time and paperwork, Little said these worker protection plans also have had some positive effects.

"There are a lot of ongoing conversations about issues like harassment and discrimination corrections that get people back to exercising appropriate decorum and appropriate behavior in the workplace," he said.

"In the professional work environment, how do we make sure that some of the behavior that was tolerated in the past can't be tolerated now?"

In addition, the legislation requires the violence prevention plan to include procedures on how to respond to workplace violence emergencies, warning systems, contacting appropriate law enforcement or other security personnel, and sheltering protocols.

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