

The Stanislaus Farm News

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture

STANISLAUS COUNTY



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Kris and Emily Melgard stand in front of a field of Rouge de Bordeaux, a 19th century French heirloom hard red winter wheat variety sought after by artisan bread bakers.

See full story on page 3

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

Freshly Milled and Farmer Grown: Inside Melgard Farms

By Vicky Boyd, SCFB

Kris and Emily Melgard have borrowed the concept behind estate-grown wines and applied it to the estate-grown flour they produce and mill on their farm near Turlock.

“We had a desire to bring a product to the consumer where we controlled everything,” Kris said. “We wanted to do something where we could control the price, we could control every aspect of the product. It’s frustrating being a farmer in a commodity market because you have zero control.”

A second-generation farmer, Kris said he and his wife also wanted to connect more to the consumer to educate them about what goes into producing the foods they eat. By selling their freshly milled flour directly to consumers via their website, [www.mel-](http://www.melgardfarms.com)

[gardfarms.com](http://www.melgardfarms.com), and at farmers markets in Turlock, Ripon, Livermore and Campbell, they can have those conversations.

“Part of what we’re trying to do is repair that farmer-to-consumer relationship,” Emily said. “We value the markets and get to speak with people and talk about how we farm.”

The Melgards also sell their flour retail at Bloomingcamp Ranch in Oakdale and in bulk bags to cottage bakers and small bakeries from Fresno to Lodi. They occasionally receive inquiries about larger orders, but they’re currently too small to fill them. One day that may change, but for now they’re taking growth and market expansion slowly so they can maintain quality and not overextend themselves.

When the couple first started their endeavor two years ago, they thought long and hard about how they’d price their product.

In the end, their flour is priced comparably to high-quality brands found in grocery stores, such as Bob’s Red Mill and King Arthur Baking Co.

“We want local people to buy fresh, local flour, but not at a price that’s double,” Kris said.

NOT ALL FLOURS ARE CREATED EQUALLY

Kris, who works off the farm in an agriculture-related job, grew up on the same ground that the couple is farming today. Emily spent two years working in a bakery where she developed her passion for baking before the couple started their vertically integrated enterprise.

Initially, they planted a small amount of wheat and milled it with a small mill to see if they could even pull it off. The answer was a resounding yes.

Even though the Melgards are just handling one ingredient — flour — they had to obtain a processed food registration from the California Department of Public Health. The state inspects them annually.

In addition, they obtained a certified producers certificate from the Stanislaus County Agricultural Commissioner. It allows farmers to sell their own ag products directly to consumers at certified farmers markets without meeting standard packaging and labeling requirements.

With her baking background, Emily knew the general grain types to produce specific flours. Pastry flour, for example, has relatively low protein and comes from soft white winter wheat. Also called cake flour, it is known for producing delicate, flaky pastries, cakes and cookies.

Hard red wheat, on the other hand, produces a bread flour with a higher protein content. With a slight nutty flavor, it is ideal for artisan or rustic breads. It also has higher gluten, a naturally occurring protein found



Emily Melgard cleans the screens in a mill after she finishes milling flour.

in wheat, rye and barley that's responsible for dough rising and the structure needed for breads.

Durum wheat produces a very high-protein Semolina flour with a malty flavor. Because of the protein levels, the dough requires a lot of kneading but it also has high elasticity that lends itself to rolling or putting through a pasta machine.

The Melgards' pizza flour is a blend of all three types, with the more-golden color of the durum but the nuttier flavor of the hard red.

They offer each class of flour as both whole wheat and regular. For whole-wheat flour, they mill the entire kernel, including the nutrient-rich bran, germ and endosperm. Regular flour involves screening out the bran and germ during milling. But unlike

commercial white flour, the Melgards don't enrich their products nor do they bleach them, so they still have a slightly creamy color.

Emily continues to harness her baking passion to develop new recipes that use their flours, and each bag is imprinted with one of her favorites.

BACK TO THE OLDEN DAYS

Kris is in charge of figuring out the varietal mix to plant.

"It's been a lot of research and a lot of challenges just trying to source some of these varieties that are hard to find," he said.

Ultimately, they found Grain R&D in Arizona to be a valuable seed source.

This year, they have 10 varieties of mostly wheat, along with a field of Danko rye.

The couple leaned heavily into heritage varieties, such as Sonora soft white winter wheat and Red Fife hard red wheat, that date back to the 1800s or earlier. While they may give up a bit of yield compared to modern varieties and hybrids, Kris said it's worth it for the flavors and other traits the older varieties bring.

The Melgards also are experimenting with Einkorn and Emma, ancient non-hybridized wheat varieties that have been grown for thousands of years. Einkorn is coveted for its ease of digestibility and low-glycemic index, meaning it doesn't spike blood sugar easily, Emily said.

Unfortunately, Kris said, the plants are low vigor. The seeds were slow to germinate,

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Agricultural Commissioner's Office & Stanislaus County Farm Bureau 2026 Continuing Education Schedule

Stanislaus County Agricultural Commissioner's Office is happy to announce our continued partnership with the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau for the 2026 Continuing Education Series. With this partnership will come the ability for us to host a wide variety of other topics and increase your access to continuing education credits. All in-person classes will be held in Harvest Hall at 3800 Cornucopia Way, Modesto, CA 95358.

In-Person Class Schedule

May 28, 2026 10am-12pm 2hrs. L&R

- Contracted Employees: Determining the Responsible Employer
- Pesticide Handler Safety Training

June 10, 2026 5pm-7pm 2hrs. L&R

- Common Violations
- Notice of Intents & Pesticide Use Reports

June 25, 2026 10am-12pm 1hr. L&R/1hr. Other

- Bees & Neonicotinoids
- Best Management Practices for Bees

July 9, 2026 10am-2:30pm 2hrs. L&R/2 hrs. Other

- What to Expect During a Use Monitoring Inspection
- Drift Prevention & Best Application Practices
- Calibration Demonstration
- New Technology with Drones

August 25, 2026 10am-12pm 2hrs. L&R

- Commodity Fumigation Inspections
- Field Fumigation Inspections & Regulatory Requirements

October 13, 2026 10am-12pm 2hrs. L&R

- New Grower Regulatory Expectations
- Permit Conditions/Alternatives & Mitigations

November 4, 2026 10am-12pm 1hr. L&R/1 hr. Other

- How to Read a Label & Label Review
- Agricultural Pest Updates

December 8, 2026 10am-12pm 1hr. L&R/1hr. Other

- Burrowing Vertebrate Fumigation Requirements
- Rodent Control: Carbon Monoxide Demonstration

Online Webinar Schedule

April 21, 2026 5pm-6pm 1hr. L&R

- High VOCs and Label Review

July 29, 2026 5pm-6pm 1hr. L&R

- Regulatory Reminders & Updates

September 17, 2026 5pm-6pm 1hr. L&R

- Worker Health & Safety General Standards of Care

October 22, 2026 5pm-6pm 1hr. L&R

- School Notification & Regulations

Please visit our website <http://www.stanag.org> and click on continuing education to register for your spot at our continuing education class. Once you register for the class, you will receive an email confirming your spot has been saved.

All classes are still pending approval from CDRP. For verification of CE hours and category approval, please call (209) 525-4730 one week prior to the class or work-shop. If you need Spanish translation of any of our scheduled classes, please contact our office one week prior and we will make arrangements. Si desea una traducción al español de una de nuestras clases programadas, comuníquese una semana antes de la fecha de la clase, para intentar hacer acomodación.

allowing weeds to get ahead of them. It also has been slow growing and hadn't even begun to head in early May while all of their other varieties had headed out and some were already drying down.

Although the Melgards are not certified organic, they apply no synthetic inputs to their grains. They also have adopted regenerative practices, such as using compost to provide nitrogen and improve soil health.

SLOWLY BUT SURELY

Two years in, the Melgards have expanded to two stone mills that can produce whole-wheat as well as regular flours. Their latest model was designed in France but built in California. The granite stone used to mill the flour came from near Yosemite.

They've also built a "flour shop" on the farm to house their mills and grain awaiting milling. Throughout their journey, the Melgards said they've found the milling community nationwide to be very open and willing to share when they had questions or encountered challenges. The Melgards also have had to learn skills outside of the direct milling, such as bag designing, marketing and web maintenance.

"It's been a lot of learning," Kris said. "All of these things that we haven't been exposed to, even the website, have been a learning curve."

Why rocket scientists began counting nuts in California

For decades, experts have done their best to estimate the size of California's almond crop prior to harvest. With the state producing most of the world's supply, the global market rises and falls with the fate of the Central Valley crop. Expectation of a shortage can stoke competition among buyers and raise prices, while a large crop forecast can achieve the opposite. "It affects many lives," said Jasbir Sidhu, who grows almonds in Fresno and Madera counties. But the expansion of California's almond industry, which brought greater variation from one orchard to the next, made it harder to forecast statewide yields by sampling a subset of orchards. In December, the Almond Board of California's directors voted to stop funding a key forecast provided for decades by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Instead, the industry is looking to private entities to find new ways to estimate the crop. While counting nuts may not be rocket science, some firms have leveraged experience in aerospace engineering—using technologies such as remote sensing and machine learning—to forecast crop yields.



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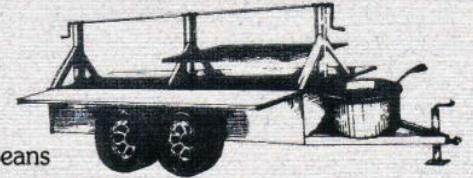
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Member Engagement Needed - Perspectives on CD-FW's Wolf-Livestock Compensation Program Survey

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife, along with the University of California, Berkeley, and University of California Cooperative Extension, is seeking input from livestock producers and California residents on the future of the state's Wolf-Livestock Compensation Program.

The anonymous survey is intended to help inform improvements to the pilot compensation program established in 2021 and gather feedback from those directly impacted by wolf activity and livestock management challenges across the state. Responses will be securely maintained by UC and shared only in aggregate form with CDFW and the public. This survey is separate from the UC survey distributed in July 2025.



The survey takes approximately 20 minutes to complete and will remain open through June 11.



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Late-season Rain for Processing Tomato Growers: An Alert for Impaired Harvest Quality

Zheng Wang, UCCE Stanislaus Farm Advisor – Vegetable Crops and Irrigation

A rainstorm in August or September when processing tomatoes in our county are ready to harvest is uncommon.

But when it happens, processing tomato growers will face the risk of fungal pathogens to damage fruit quality near harvest. Black mold fruit rot is a destructive late-season fungal disease mainly caused by *Alternaria alternata*. The pathogen, triggered by high humidity and moisture, can cause dark, velvet-like lesions on ripe tomato fruit that severely downgrade yield and fruit quality (See the image). It just takes about 3 to 5 hours of wetness for black mold spores to germinate. And then the spores infect fruit by directly penetrating tomato epidermis. Heavy and widespread fruit infection (excessive mold counts) can occur within 5 days, possibly leading to the whole field being unharvestable because of the high probability of load rejections by the processing facility.

With the late-season rainfall that brings humidity and moderate temperature, there is also risk of late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*). While it is not common in California, the issue does occasionally happen and devastate processing tomato yield and quality. Like black mold, the pathogen also thrives in cool, wet, and humid conditions when the average temperature range is between 60 and 78 °F at 90% humidity. Infection can occur in about 10 hours.

Field management of black mold includes cultural practices and preventive chemical applications.

- Irrigation and water management: Keeping fruit surface dry can prevent or slow down fungal spore germination.
- Timely harvest: Timely harvest remains a critical measurement to reduce the risk of fruit black mold. Delays in harvest expose ripe fruits to rain or dew for a longer period, elevating the chance of infection.
- Canopy management: Tomato varieties that develop and sustain dense canopies at maturity may protect fruit from dew. However, a dense canopy can be a double-edged sword as dense canopy also retains high humidity and blocks airflow.
- Fungicides: Fungicides have shown some benefits but definitely have some limitations. Treatment can prioritize late-harvest fields, in rainy years, fields at higher risk to sunburn damage, or varieties producing small canopies and without EFS/EFH (Extended Field Storage/Holding) traits.
- Post-rainfall applications are usually not as effective as those made in advance of the rain.
- Keep in mind that there are limitations that pesticides can do. Even the best materials may only reduce the disease incidence by half. Good coverage and careful selection of materials are important for fungicide efficacy. As usual, always read and follow the labels.
- Utilize the UC IPM Tomato Pest Management Guidelines for black mold as your reference (<https://ipm.ucanr.edu/agriculture/tomato/black-mold/>).





Black mold on processing tomatoes. Source: UC IPM.

Almond Board of California Board of Director Elections

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**BALLOTS DUE
May 21, 2026**

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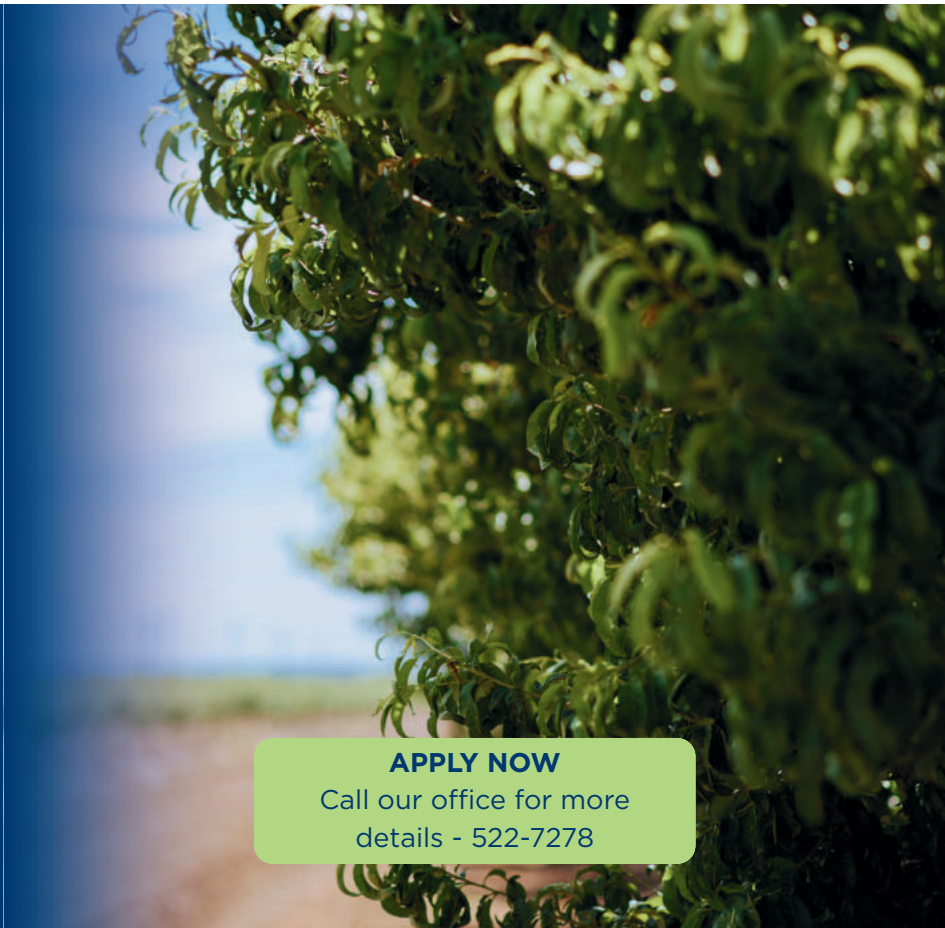
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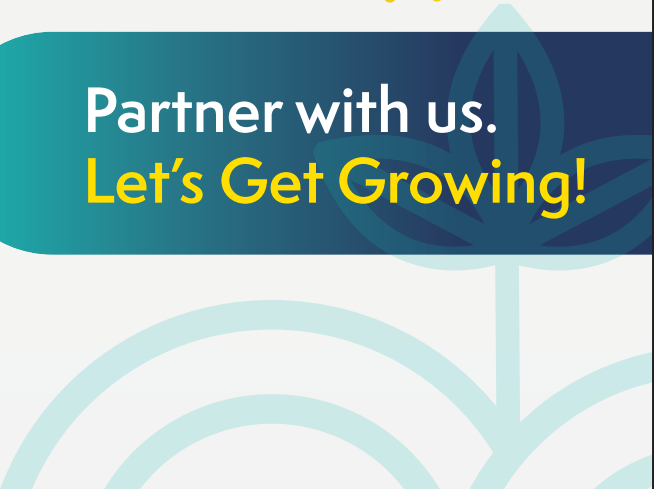
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Experts seek methane-cutting solutions

Private companies and researchers at the University of California, Davis, are working with farmers to develop new ways to reduce methane emissions from cattle. To address methane from cow burps, or enteric methane, UC Davis professor of animal science Ermias Kebreab is studying a compound in red seaweed as a feed additive that has been shown to lower methane production in the animals' rumens. Kebreab is also exploring gene-editing technology that could permanently decrease methane production. At the same time, dairy farms have adopted methane digesters and waste-treatment systems that turn emissions from manure into renewable energy and other usable products. Farmers say it's crucial that these solutions make financial sense for their operations so that the technologies could be broadly implemented. "Sustainability always has to start with financial sustainability," Merced County dairy farmer Simon Vander Woude said.



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Movement on Three Cal/OSHA Regulatory Proposals

Recent developments involving the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health, or Cal/OSHA, and the California Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board brought positive movement on two regulatory issues impacting agriculture, while a third proposal remains under review.

First, Cal/OSHA and standards board staff have agreed with stakeholders on updates to first-aid kit requirements under General Industry Safety Orders 3400 and 3439. For decades, regulations required employers to have first-aid kits individually reviewed and approved by a healthcare professional, though the rule was rarely enforced. Under the proposed modernization, employers would instead be allowed to rely on compliance with American National Standards Institute standards for first-aid kit contents and packaging. Once formally adopted later this year, the change is expected to provide employers with clearer and more practical guidance for maintaining compliant first-aid kits at worksites.

Second, standards board staff announced they will revisit their March 2025 proposal regulating swinging powered and unpowered workplace gates, an issue that raised significant concerns for agricultural employers. The board now plans to hold an advisory committee later this year to gather additional stakeholder input before moving forward.

Lastly, Cal/OSHA recently released draft revisions to workplace violence prevention plan requirements. The proposal would formally incorporate workplace violence prevention requirements enacted by the Legislature in 2024 into Cal/OSHA regulations. California Farm Bureau continues to review the draft language and will provide updates as the regulatory process develops.

NACTA 2026

NORMAL, IL

Modesto Junior College (MJC) School of Agriculture prepared for the annual North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) competition, held April 22–25, 2026, in Normal, Ill. More than 40 community colleges and universities brought over 900 competitors to the event. MJC was represented by 36 students and seven instructors competing in more than 15 contests.

CROP JUDGING

Preparation for the competition began April 16, when the MJC Crops and Soils teams traveled to Purdue University for training with Dr. Gerber, head of the Crops Department, and Dr. Bradford, head of the Soils Department. This ongoing collaboration has continued for the past three years.

While at Purdue, students toured campus facilities and participated in a joint study session led by university teams. The session focused on contest structure, preparation strategies, and expectations for success at the national level. Following the lecture, Dr. Gerber led a crops lab while soils students worked separately with Dr. Bradford.

The MJC Crops Team practiced seed identification, fertilizer calculations, pesticide and herbicide label interpretation, and general plant science knowledge. The NACTA Crops Judging Contest includes applied math problems, identification of crops, weeds, seeds, insects, and equipment, as well as an agronomy exam covering crop production, soils, plant science, and pest management. After practice, Purdue students and Dr. Gerber reviewed answers and shared additional study strategies.

SOIL JUDGING

Meanwhile, the MJC Soils Team trained with Dr. Bradford, focusing on soil texture classification, soil survey interpretation, and soil profile evaluation. Students analyzed soil monoliths and practiced soil pit assessments alongside Purdue students, gaining hands-on experience in full soil profile analysis.

Students also participated in a greenhouse tour, where they worked with Purdue peers to identify weeds, crops, grasses, and forage species from official contest identification lists. The hands-on experience allowed students to ask questions and reinforce identification skills in a real-world setting.

After completing training at Purdue, both teams traveled to Normal, Ill., to continue preparation. Additional collaboration with Iowa State University and the University of Wisconsin-Platteville further strengthened student readiness and confidence.

DAIRY JUDGING

On April 19, the dairy judging team traveled to St. Paul, Minn., where they trained through April 21 and toured the University of Minnesota. Later that evening, they joined 17 additional MJC students in Chicago, Ill. On April 22, teams toured Fair Oaks Farms before traveling to Purdue University and continuing on to Normal for the start of competition.

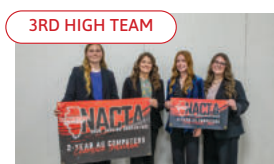
Following the week of competition, MJC School of Agriculture was named Reserve Champion Community College of Agriculture in the nation. The program extends its gratitude to the college and community for their continued support of its teams.



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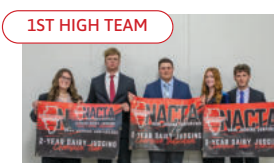
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USDA Announces Tree-Pull Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced plans to provide up to \$9 million to fund a cling peach tree removal program following financial impacts tied to the Del Monte Foods bankruptcy. The program is intended to help displaced cling peach growers transition acreage to alternative crops as nearly 50,000 tons of fruit production are affected.

In addition to the USDA funding, the California Cling Peach Association will contribute \$1.5 million toward the effort. USDA is expected to release proposed program rules soon, followed by a 15-day public comment period before final regulations are issued.

Once finalized, CCPA will begin accepting applications on a first-come, first-served basis. Participating growers will receive payments of \$175 per ton based on their 2025 production, with payments ranging from a minimum of \$1,500 per acre to a maximum of \$4,000 per acre. Farm Bureau also recognizes the efforts of Mike Thompson, David Valadao, Adam Schiff and 38 members of California's bipartisan congressional delegation for supporting the request to USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins. For more information, contact: treepull@calpeach.com.

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BLM Repeals Public Lands Rule

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management officially repealed the Conservation and Landscape Health Rule (also known as the Public Lands Rule). The Biden-era regulation drew opposition from many agricultural organizations due to concerns about expanded conservation-related requirements and potential impacts on grazing and other multiple-use activities on federal lands.

California Farm Bureau previously submitted comments during the rulemaking process raising concerns about how the regulation could affect grazing operations and land management flexibility on multi-use public lands. Farm Bureau also supported the current administration's efforts to reverse the rule. According to the agency's announcement, the repeal is intended to restore a "multiple use and sustained yield" approach to federal land management by prioritizing access, local decision-making, and alignment with existing statutory requirements and national energy policy.

MEMBERSHIP

1,326 members
in 2025



Largest county Farm Bureau
for the **second year in a row**

ADVOCACY & POLICY



26 letters sent to legislators,
outside news sources and
others **on your behalf**



Sit on the **Predator
Committee** to **stay informed**
and **influence policy**



Staff members sit on **8**
different **committees or
boards** to stay connected



Created the **Pesticide Committee**
to share **accurate information**
with our community

EDUCATION & COMMUNICATION

22

issues of the **Farm
News** sent with **local
stories and updates**

46

E-News emails sent
to keep members
informed

YF&R

ACTIVE young
Farmers & Ranchers
group

9 meetings a year

124 gallons of milk
donated

373 pounds of fruit
donated

EVENTS



7 EXPERT SPEAKERS

brought in to speak
at events

FOUNDATION

INCREASED

money given in
scholarships

LAUNCHED

Summer Library
program to bring ag to
our community

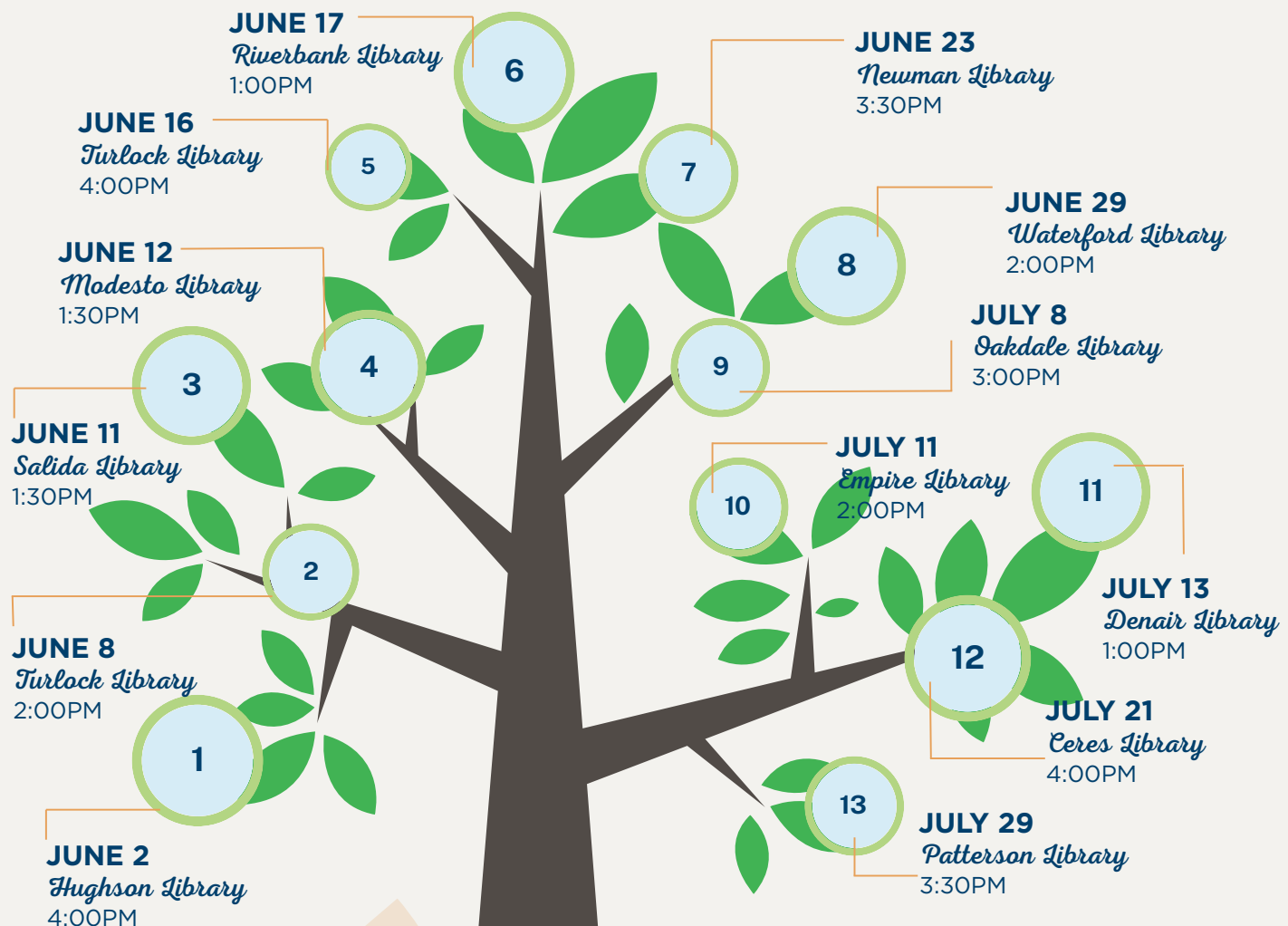
REVEALED

Agriculture mural at
the Vintage Faire Mall

EXPANDING

AgAdventure Day to
double the size

Summer Library Program



The Stanislaus County Farm Bureau Foundation, in partnership with the Stanislaus County Library and Modesto Irrigation District, is excited to launch a new Summer Library Program for local families!

Bring your kiddos for a fun and interactive agricultural activity while learning about the top 10 commodities grown in Stanislaus County. Each program will include hands-on learning, fun take-home goodies, and a chance to discover how agriculture helps feed and fuel our community.

Join us this summer for learning, fun, and a celebration of local agriculture!

See you there . . .



Gene Editing Opens New Doors for Agriculture

Source: Zippy Duvall, American Farm Bureau President

Farmers know better than anyone that agriculture never stands still. Every growing season brings new challenges, whether it's weather, pests, disease, or rising costs. That's why innovation and farming go hand in hand. Farmers are constantly looking for better ways to care for our crops, protect our animals, and keep our farms sustainable for the next generation.

Take for example last month's approval of a new gene-edited citrus rootstock designed

to help fight citrus greening disease. This new tool is an important step forward for agriculture. For farmers, it's another example of how innovation can help us tackle problems that once felt impossible to overcome.

Gene Editing Benefits Farmers and Consumers

For generations, farmers have worked to improve crops and livestock through careful breeding and selection. Gene editing allows scientists to build on that work by making those same kinds of changes that otherwise would take decades through traditional breeding.

I think one reason this conversation matters so much is because farmers are being asked to do more with less. We're facing tighter margins and navigating the pressure from weather and disease. Gene editing offers another tool to help farmers meet those challenges.

Gene editing can help farmers grow crops that are better equipped to withstand drought, insects and disease. It can also help improve livestock health by reducing the threat of devastating illnesses without the need for antibiotics. A good example of that came last year, when the Food and Drug Administration approved the use of gene editing to help pigs resist PRRS, a costly disease with no cure that has caused

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Introducing the new Ag Waste Burning Solution, designed by a local farmer and manufactured by the experts at P&F Metals. It's truly MOBILE! Now you can bring your burner to the waste – not the other way around! It's approved by the San Joaquin Valley Air District, and they're built right here in the Valley.

The original Mobile Ag Burner is fast becoming THE Ag burning solution. The Mobile Ag Burner can travel behind your pick-up truck or tractor so it's easy to take to a site. Its huge capacity can handle 35 tons of agricultural waste per day!

It's simple to use and requires minimal training. This patented, light-weight burner is designed with just six lubrication points and a single fan belt—so it's easy to maintain and assures reliability and long-term performance. California's strict new open burning restrictions are met with this patented burner. The Mobile Ag Burner is built to last and priced affordably.



- Low purchase price
- Active Air-Cooled Incinerator
- Minimal training needed
- Low maintenance — Only six grease fittings and a single drive belt
- Portable – The Mobile Ag Burner can be towed with a 3/4 Ton pick-up or larger
- All steel construction
- Fully Welded
- PTO Driven (Tier 4 Tractor Compatible)
- Removable Road Wheels for On-Site Set-Up
- Steel Wheels for On-Site Movement
- Easy Loading with a Standard Orchard Tractor with a Brush Rake
- Large Rear Barn Doors for Ease of Unloading
- Brush Striping Spikes for Ease of Unloading Brush Rake
- Compatible with Basic Farm Equipment
- Patented Air Cooling
- Lightweight. Just 11,000 Pounds
- Handles Agricultural Waste Easily
- Product Comes Fully Built & Ready to Drive Away
- Complies with Strict Air Quality Control Standards
- Approved by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District
- Huge Capacity. Up to 35 Tons a Day of Agricultural Waste



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major losses for pork farmers for decades.

These kinds of advancements can help farmers grow healthier, more sustainable food. At a time when families have a greater interest in healthy food and how it's produced, farmers need access to tools that help us continue improving the way we grow food.

Gene Editing Fights Disease

The citrus rootstock approval by the Environmental Protection Agency last month is a good example of how gene editing can help agriculture solve real-world problems. Citrus greening has devastated America's citrus industry for years. Production has dropped dramatically, and many growers have struggled to keep orchards alive. The newly approved rootstock gives farmers another option to help protect trees from the disease while potentially reducing reliance on conventional pesticide applications.

That's important because crop disease has an impact beyond the farm. Crop losses affect the food supply, food prices, and rural communities that depend on agriculture.

For farmers, innovation isn't about replacing tradition. It's about protecting our ability to keep farming. Agriculture has always evolved, and farmers have always adapted. Gene editing is simply another example of how innovation can help us meet the challenges ahead while keeping America's farms strong.



SHAPE TOMORROW, VOTE TODAY!

The candidates below have received the Tuolumne County Farm Bureau endorsement.



- ✓ **SUPERVISOR DISTRICT 2**
Rayanne Tamayo
- ✓ **SUPERVISOR DISTRICT 3**
Anaiah Kirk

CAST YOUR VOTE BY JUNE 2ND



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Industrial
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PATRONAGE

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1% cash patronage, putting a record
\$50.6 million back in members' pockets.***

