

The Stanislaus Farm News

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture

STANISLAUS COUNTY



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(from left to right), Joey, Riley, Maverick, Mike and McCoy Gonsalves are involved in the family's livestock and farming operation. Brothers Maverick and McCoy show animals at the fair, while Mike and Riley take care of day-to-day duties with the cattle or tree crops. While Joey works off the farm, he remains a partner in the operation and describes working cattle as "stress relief." See page 14 for the full story.

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PHONE (209) 522-7278

FAX (209) 521-9938

email: farmnews@stanfarmbureau.org

advertising@stanfarmbureau.org

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Scan to nominate!



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.

California's Thanksgiving dinner costs higher than national average

Californians preparing traditional Thanksgiving dinners are expected to spend more than families in most other parts of the country, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation's 40th annual Thanksgiving dinner survey. The classic Thanksgiving dinner for 10 guests in California

will cost \$72.61—well above the national average of \$55.18 and significantly higher than the Western regional average of \$61.75.

The shopping list for Farm Bureau's informal survey includes frozen turkey, pumpkin pie mix, whole milk, veggie tray, dinner rolls, frozen pie shells, frozen green peas, fresh cranberries, whipping cream, sweet potatoes, cubed stuffing and miscellaneous ingredients, all in quantities sufficient to serve a gathering of 10. California costs reflect higher prices across most Thanksgiving staples, including frozen turkey, whipping cream, whole milk and sweet potatoes.

Shoppers will pay:

- Frozen turkey, 16 lbs. (California \$29.72; U.S. \$21.50)
- Pumpkin pie mix, 30 oz. (California \$4.90; U.S. \$4.16)
- Whole milk, 1 gallon (California \$5.57; U.S. \$3.73)
- Veggie tray (½ pound carrots and ½ pound celery) (California \$1.56; U.S. \$1.36)

- Miscellaneous ingredients (California \$4.75; U.S. \$3.61)

- Dinner rolls, 12 (California \$4.18; U.S. \$3.56)

- Frozen pie shells, 2 (California \$4.47; U.S. \$3.37)

- Frozen green peas, 1 lb. (California \$3.16; U.S. \$2.03)

- Fresh cranberries, 12 oz. (California \$2.69; U.S. \$2.28)

- Whipping cream, ½ pint (California \$2.66; U.S. \$1.87)

- Sweet potatoes, 3 lbs. (California \$5.33; U.S. \$4.00)

- Cubed stuffing, 14 oz. (California \$3.64; U.S. \$3.71)

Although grocery bills continue to climb, farmers see only a small portion of each dollar spent on food. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, the national farm share in 2023 was 15.9 cents of every dollar spent on domestically produced food, a slight decrease from 16 cents in 2022.

At the same time, the cost of producing crops and raising livestock has surged. Rising costs are especially apparent in California, according to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, with the state accounting for 10.5% of U.S. total production expenses in 2024—the highest share in the nation.

See 'Costs' on page 4



“We are blessed with the most fertile farmland on the planet, but our most valuable assets are the farm and ranch families of Stanislaus County. Like the founders of this great nation, our county's farmers have the grit, determination and dedication to drive our local economy. Our family is proud to be part of this great industry.

The Withrow Family



From 'Costs' on page 3

“California farmers and ranchers continue to provide high-quality food for families across the nation,” said Shannon Douglass, president of the California Farm Bureau, which represents more than 23,000 farmers and ranchers statewide. “Despite rising costs and slim margins, our farmers remain committed to ensuring a bountiful supply of fresh, nutritious food. California Farm Bureau is proud to support the agricultural community that makes that possible.”

The Thanksgiving dinner cost survey is part of the American Farm Bureau marketbasket series, which also includes the popular Fourth of July cookout survey. AFBF analysis indicates the national cost of cooking a Thanksgiving dinner for 10 in 2025 decreased by 5% compared to last year. Details about the national Thanksgiving dinner cost survey can be found here.

California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches as part of a nationwide network representing more than 5 million Farm Bureau members. Learn more at www.cfbf.com or follow @cafarmbureau on Instagram, LinkedIn, X or Facebook.



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America's Biggest Farm Boom: 1860-1910

Source: *Ag Net West*

A Half-Century That Transformed American Agriculture

From the Civil War era to the early 20th century, the United States experienced the most dramatic growth in agricultural development in its history. As Mark Oppold explains in his American Agriculture History Minute, the 50-year span between 1860 and 1910 reshaped the nation's farming

economy, population distribution, and land value in profound ways.

Farms Triple in Just 50 Years

One of the most striking indicators of this transformation was the rapid multiplication of farms across the nation.

- In 1860, the U.S. recorded 2 million farms.
- By 1906, that number had soared to 6 million.

This tripling of farms reflects several pow-

erful forces that drove westward agricultural expansion, including:

- The Homestead Act encouraging land settlement
- The spread of railroad infrastructure
- Immigration and population growth
- Increased demand for food and fiber

These developments fueled both opportunity and rapid settlement across the American frontier.

See 'American Farms' on page 7

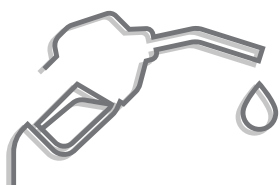


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From 'American Farms' on page 5

Farm Population Growth Reshapes the Nation

Photo courtesy of PBS

The number of people living on farms grew just as quickly. In 1860, about 10 million Americans lived on farms. That figure rose dramatically to:

- 22 million by 1880
- 31 million by 1905

This explosive population growth shows how deeply agriculture was woven into American life during this era. For decades, nearly one-third of the U.S. population lived and worked on farms, producing the food and raw materials that drove national economic expansion.

Farmland Value Skyrockets

Economic growth paralleled demographic expansion. Farmland value skyrocketed as agriculture became a pillar of the national economy.

- In 1860, American farmland was valued at \$8 billion.
- By 1906, that number jumped to \$30 billion.

This increase reflects growing productivity, improved market access through railroads, and the rising importance of agriculture to America's developing industrial economy.

The Legacy of America's Most Dramatic Agricultural Expansion

The years between 1860 and 1910 fundamentally shaped American farming. The surge in farm numbers, population, and land value laid the foundation for the modern agricultural systems that sustain the country today.

As Mark Oppold concludes in this American Agriculture History Minute, understanding this pivotal period provides essential context for how American agriculture evolved—and why these 50 years remain the most significant era of farm expansion in U.S. history.



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Stanislaus County Farm Bureau Foundation Champions Ag Education and Community Pride in Stanislaus County Ag

Source: AgNetWest

The November 20 edition of the AgNet News Hour brought an energetic, heartfelt conversation as hosts Nick Papagni and Josh McGill sat down with Anna Genasci, Communications and Education Director for the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau. Genasci, a longtime advocate for agriculture and community outreach, shared exciting updates about educational programs, Farm Bureau growth, and a brand-new agricultural mural being unveiled in Modesto.

Genasci began by highlighting the dual mission of Stanislaus County Farm Bureau: advocacy and education. While Farm

Bureau itself handles policy and membership, Genasci spearheads the organization's new 501(c)(3) Education Foundation, which focuses on youth programming, grower education, farmworker training, and—uniquely—consumer outreach. "California agriculture cannot survive unless we spend time teaching people where their food comes from," she said. "It's about creating pride in what our state produces."

Stanislaus County Farm Bureau recently earned recognition as the largest county Farm Bureau in California, edging out Fresno County by just nine members. Genasci praised her team, especially Membership Coordinator Abi, for helping families, growers, and ag-adjacent businesses understand the value of joining. "Every member matters," she said. "All ships rise together."

A major highlight of the interview was Genasci's passion for ag education for

children. Just three weeks ago, she helped organize a field trip day where 1,200 third-graders visited the Stanislaus County Fairgrounds to learn about nutrition, see animals, climb on tractors, and explore agriculture through hands-on learning. "Those experiences are foundational," she said. "Kids connect



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Next summer, the Stanislaus County Library and the Farm Bureau Foundation will introduce agriculture-themed books as part of the countywide reading program, expanding agricultural literacy beyond the classroom.

But one of the most exciting projects is happening at the Vintage Fair Mall, where Genasci and the Farm Bureau partnered with Modesto Irrigation District to create a large, agriculture-themed public mural celebrating the region’s top crops and the farmers who grow them. The mural is already installed, and the official unveiling takes place November 25 at 10 a.m. “It’s a beautiful, positive piece,” Genasci said. “It’s not political—it’s just celebrating the people

who feed us.”

Papagni and McGill praised the project, noting how rare it is for a major shopping mall to dedicate space to agriculture. “Everyone in that mall is connected to ag somehow,” Papagni said. “They sell to ag, serve ag, or live in ag communities.”

Later in the conversation, Genasci discussed the ongoing fallout from Proposition 50 and applauded Farm Bureau leaders statewide for standing up against a measure that threatens rural representation. “I’m proud to be part of an organization willing to take tough stances,” she said.

She also encouraged listeners to get involved: “Whether you love policy, want to educate kids, or work in crop advising, there’s a place for you in Farm Bureau.”

The interview ended with an invitation to the November 25 celebration and a reminder of what drives Genasci’s work: “Agriculture is precious to California. We need to tell that story—loudly and proudly.”

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Whole Milk May be Coming Back to Schools

By Daniel Munch, AFBF

More than a decade after USDA regulations banned whole milk from school menus, Congress is considering a comeback. The Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act would overturn 2012 rules that limited schools to fat-free or 1% milk, aiming to revive a category losing ground and reconnect kids with milk's taste and nutrition.

Behind the debate is a market challenge: U.S. milk output is hitting record highs while fluid consumption falls. Allowing whole milk could provide a small but meaningful outlet for butterfat — key to farm revenue — and create new opportunities for local dairies.

Shifting Dairy Trends

Americans drink far less milk than they used to — down nearly 50% since 1975 and 28% since 2010. Cheese, butter and yogurt consumption has surged, but fluid milk use continues to decline, partly due to changing breakfast habits. Whole milk is the exception: from 2013 to 2024, sales grew 16% while skim and reduced-fat options plunged. Whole milk's share of fluid sales rose from 27% to 38%, driven by interest in protein-rich and minimally processed foods and even appetite-suppressing drug regimens that prioritize fuller-fat, higher-protein options for satiety and sustained energy.

How Whole Milk Disappeared
The National School Lunch Program serves nearly 30 million students daily and accounts for about 7.5% of U.S. fluid milk sales, making its standards influential. In 2012, USDA rules under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act restricted school milk to fat-free or 1%, banning whole and 2% options.

Later updates allowed 1% flavored milk, but higher-fat varieties remain prohibited.

Milk consumption dropped sharply after the change. From 2008 to 2018, weekly servings per student fell 15%, with the decline accelerating 77% after the restrictions. When kids skip milk, schools miss nutrition goals, dairy demand weakens and unopened cartons add to food waste and costs.

The Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act

The bipartisan Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act would let schools serve whole, 2%, 1%, or skim milk, flavored or plain, as part of reimbursable meals. It also exempts milkfat from saturated-fat limits and bars sourcing from Chinese state-owned enterprises. The Senate approved the bill in mid-November and it now moves to the House. Importantly, it doesn't require schools to switch — just gives them the option. Adop-

tion would likely be gradual, shaped by local preferences and budgets.

Market Impact

Even partial adoption could shift dairy demand. In 2024, schools served nearly 4.9 billion lunches, with 85% of students choosing milk — mostly skim or 1%. Whole milk contains about three times more fat than 1%, so reintroducing it would pull more butterfat into fluid use instead of butter, cheese, or powder. If 25%, 50%, or 75% of schools adopt whole milk, annual butterfat demand could rise by 13–18 million, 25–36 million and 38–55 million pounds, respectively. A near-universal shift could divert 45–66 million pounds of butter — about 2–3% of U.S. production — into bottled milk.

Even small increases matter in an oversupplied market. More whole milk shifts butterfat into higher-value fluid milk channels,

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simplifying processing and reducing the amount of lower-value skim powder produced. For smaller dairies, it could create local farm-to-school opportunities.

Bottom Line

The Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act wouldn't dramatically change overall milk

use, but it targets one of the few areas where demand can grow. Even modest gains in school milk sales strengthen fluid milk markets, boost butterfat utilization and improve returns to farmers. With milk production at record highs, giving schools the option for whole milk helps absorb supply where it matters most — connecting kids with milk they enjoy and farmers with

stronger milk checks.

Daniel Munch is an economist at the American Farm Bureau Federation. This column was adapted from a Market Intel report published by AFBF.

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Farm Family, The Gonsalves Family

By Vicky Boyd

Cattle run deep in the blood of the Gonsalves family, which ranches west of Modesto. Spend just a few minutes talking to the fourth and fifth generations, and you quickly learn of their passion for producing registered Angus bulls and cows, Simmental-Angus cross bulls and commercial black beef cattle.

But they don't just raise animals for sale. The Gonsalves family has worked hard over the years to improve the genetics as well as the carcass traits of their animals. To that end, they've dubbed their operation on Maze Boulevard the Bull Development Center and just celebrated their 25th annual bull sale in September.

Their operation isn't limited to cattle, either. The family planted their first almonds 32 years ago and have since added walnuts in an effort to diversify.

THE FIVE GENERATIONS

One of the fifth generation, Riley Gonsalves is the newest member of the family operation. He takes care of many of the day-to-day chores, like feeding cattle and irrigating, fertilizing and spraying the tree crops. Riley was attending Modesto Junior College when the pandemic shut down in-person classes and transitioned everything to on-line. The setting didn't suit him, Riley said.

Fortunately, a full-time position opened up on the ranch so he jumped at the chance. Since he was 9 or 10 years old, Riley said he's always "been excited to work cattle." Fourth-generation Mike Gonsalves oversees the ranching and farming operations and took over when his father retired last year. An MJC graduate, Mike has two sons, McCoy and Maverick, both of whom are interested in agriculture. McCoy, the older of the two, has shown cattle and sheep, while Maverick has shown rabbits.

Joey Gonsalves, Mike's older brother and Riley's father, had always planned to return to the ranch after attending MJC and California State University, Fresno. When he graduated CSU Fresno, he found there wasn't a full-time position available. So he went to work off the farm but still remains a partner in the operation.

"I wanted to get into sales and marketing," said Joey, ag seed manager at Valley Agromomics. "I enjoy the change of pace, and the cattle have become more of a stress relief in a way."

To keep family-owned operations like theirs viable, Joey realized the importance of advocating for agriculture when he joined the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau Board of Directors more than 20 years ago. During his tenure, he graduated from Leadership Farm Bureau as well as served as county president beginning in 2014.

"Obviously, I kind of enjoy politics and I like what Farm Bureau is doing," he said, referring to the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau. "I like the relationships we've developed with politicians. Hopefully, we'll be able to have more of an open door and not be attacked all of the time. I think we need that voice for all of ag."

CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

Joey and Mike's great-grandparents moved to Stanislaus

County in the late 1920s from the Azore Islands, Portugal. Like many of their compatriots, they started a dairy.

In 1929, the Gonsalves family moved the dairy from Whitmore Road to Maze Boulevard, where Mike and his family still live in the family farm house today. They also farm the same ground his great-grandparents purchased.

Their grandfather, who had started a commercial beef herd on the side in the early 1960s, sold the dairy in 1974.

The Gonsalves family's main focus today is breeding registered Angus bulls and heifers and continuing to improve the genetics of their stock. With the advent of artificial



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insemination, they can select from among catalogs of bulls that have the traits they seek and order semen from those animals.

“It’s important to select the bulls we do because we’re using top-of-the-line genetics,” Riley said “We’re breeding them to our (registered) cows and using our own bulls on our commercial cows.”

Every year on the third Saturday in September, the Gonzalves family holds a sale that features their bulls as well as some open heifers. What’s impressed Riley is the number of repeat customers.

The family also has begun keeping the steers and heifers not selected as replacements and feeding them out after weaning in their own feedlot. The animals are sent to a finishing yard in Oregon.

This allows them to see first hand how the cattle perform in the feedlot and during carcass evaluation.

The Gonzalves family actually started with Hereford cattle on the beef side decades ago. In 1982, Joey showed a purebred An-

gus, and the family quickly moved to the black breed. The venture into the SimAngus cross was more by accident when Mike got a Simmental bull from MJC.

About 15-18 years ago, they bred a couple of their commercial Angus heifers to the Simmental bull and liked the results, Mike said.

The SimAngus bulls offer the best of both worlds for many ranchers, he said. From their Angus parentage, they brings calving ease, good milk production, fleshing ability and excellent carcasses. The cross adds hybrid vigor, muscling and overall performance.

“You just have more growth, but you don’t sacrifice the carcass qualities,” Mike said.

“It gives you a little bit different twist on genetics. It makes the demand a little bit better, and it makes us stand out next to other breeders.”

HIGH BEEF PRICES CONTINUE

Like many other cattle raisers, the Gon-

zaves family has enjoyed higher prices for the past few years. But they also are quick to point out that input costs have risen significantly during the same period.

While their annual September bull sale was not the highest average in the state by any means, California in general did set record sale averages across the country. And the bull market tends to follow the commercial market, Mike said.

“The market this year was unreal,” Riley said.

How long high beef prices will hold remains to be seen. The current market stems largely from droughts in 2019 and 2020 in the Midwest, where most of the beef cattle are produced, Mike explained.

Rather than pay for high-priced feed, many cattle producers chose to reduce their herd size. Continued dry conditions in many parts of the country forced producers to further liquidate their herds, often more than intended. This pushed slaughter rates to record highs in 2022.

As a result, the nation currently has the smallest herd size since 1951, he said. The simple law of supply and demand has pushed up beef prices on the retail end. While consumer demand continues to grow, beef supplies remain low.

Herd rebuilding is expected at some point, but it could lead to even further, but temporary, reductions in beef production. That’s because producers who would have normally sent heifers to slaughter will retain them as replacements for breeding and to produce calves.

At least in California, Joey said he believed rebuilding cattle numbers will be even more challenging because of increased urbanization. Pastures that historically have been grazed are being lost to development.

“There are less pastures today then there historically were, and tomorrow there’s going to be even less,” he said.



California peach growers file half-billion-dollar claim

California cling peach growers face an uncertain future after long-term contracts worth more than a half-billion dollars in total were voided by Del Monte Foods, which filed for bankruptcy in July. In August, the major canned foods company exercised its right under federal bankruptcy law to reject its contracts with members of the California Canning Peach Association, which represents about 70% of the state's cling peach growers. Del Monte's rejection of peach contracts has left several dozen growers without a future buyer for their fruit, exposing some to steep losses should they fail to recoup the upfront cost—typically several thousand dollars per acre—of developing their orchards. "We have lots of anxious peach growers not sure what the future holds for them," said Rich Hudgins, president and CEO of the peach association. This month, the association filed a claim seeking \$555 million in damages.

State proposal to require reporting on treated seeds

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation plans to add pesticide-treated seeds to the monthly use reports growers already must file with county agricultural commissioners. As part of the proposal, the state would also limit seed treatments to those products registered both federally and by the state. Under a lawsuit settlement between DPR and environmental groups, the state must develop and finalize a rule to label and track pesticide-treated seed use by Jan. 1, 2027. Paul Sanguinetti, who farms tree and row crops with his sons near Stockton, has for years relied on pesticide treatments on corn seed to control soil-borne pests such as wireworms. Should the proposal be adopted as written, Sanguinetti said it would add more recordkeeping at times to an already cumbersome task. "It's another reporting job when you're trying to plant," Sanguinetti said.

Report maps impact of wine market woes on vineyard acreage

California winegrape growers removed nearly 40,000 acres of vineyards—roughly 7% of the state's winegrape acreage—between October 2024 and August 2025, according to a new report commissioned by the California Association of Winegrape Growers. The 2025 Standing Winegrape Acreage report, which was conducted by Land IQ and released earlier this month, provided the most detailed view yet on the location and amount of acreage growers have pulled out in response to a global downturn in wine sales. "We have a lot of information now about the acreage in the state, and we have a good basis and foundation to go forward now in having more accurate numbers and being able to make better predictions about where we're going in the future," said Jeff Bitter, president of the grower-owned marketing group Allied Grape Growers.



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On the Record: Jeff Gonzalez shares insights on state policymaking

California Assemblymember Jeff Gonzalez, R-Indio, spoke with Ag Alert® this month about his observations following his first year in the Assembly. “There is a lot of talk about protecting our farmers and ranchers here in California, but there’s very little action,” said Gonzalez, whose district encompasses Imperial County and parts of Riverside and San Bernardino counties. “California needs to be competitive in farming and ranching, and we need to make a significant change in the way we look at the people who feed us.” The first-term lawmaker, who is a Marine Corps veteran and a former pastor, said he has sought opportunities to implement “pragmatic” policies that make a difference for Californians. He is part of the Problem Solvers Caucus, a bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators—13 Democrats, 13 Republicans—that pursues policy solutions across party lines.

Farmers plant less cotton in face of stagnant market

With cotton prices around the world continuing to stagnate, California growers planted fewer acres this year than almost any time in the past century. “Upland cotton is at 85 to 90 cents a pound right now. That’s the same darn price as when I started 30 years ago,” said Roger Isom, CEO of the California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association. “It’s tough out there for our farmers.” California farmers planted 91,000 acres of pima cotton and 15,968 acres of upland cotton this year—a 38% drop in pima but a 30% increase in upland from 2024, the CCGGA reported. Overall, cotton acreage declined 33%. Kings County continued to lead in plantings, with 47,753 of the state’s 106,968 acres. “Quality is great, but the demand is down,” Merced County farmer Jeff Mancebo said.

Natural wine trend revives old-fashioned methods

A cadre of California grape growers and winemakers crafts wine as it was made hundreds if not thousands of years ago. No filtering, no fining, no additives. Just grapes, wild yeast, a barrel and time. Darek Trowbridge of Old World Winery in Sonoma County farms biodynamically—an organic practice that treats the vineyard as a living system. To make his natural wines, Trowbridge uses a practice called head training, which allows vines to grow freely from the trunk without a trellis. He also mows rather than tills the soil and spreads composted mulch of his own design at the base of the vines to conserve water, boost nutrients and increase yield. “This is a beautiful way to grow a vine on its own,” he said. “Just let it be. Let it do its thing, organically. And it works.”

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UCCE's Work with Small Farms in the Northern San Joaquin Valley

Jarin Tasnim Anika- UCCE Stanislaus, Merced & San Joaquin Counties

The Northern San Joaquin Valley, encompassing Merced, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin counties, is home to a diverse population of small-scale farmers. According to the 2022 USDA census of agriculture, these counties have roughly 5,422 farms under 50 acres. A subset of these farms is operated by the socially disadvantaged and historically underserved small-scale farmers who have operating areas as small as one acre yet contribute significantly to the community's needs. Many of these farms are operated by Hmong and Lu Mien/Mienh growers and are migrants from the mountainous regions of Vietnam, Thailand, and Laos. There are also Spanish-speaking and Punjabi growers. These farmers are often beginning, immigrant, and refugee farmers not covered by traditional extension-based programs. They often lease land or share space with multiple farmers to grow a mixture of seasonal fruits and vegetables. The diversity of crops they grow is remarkable, including strawberries, mel-

ons, eggplants, beans, garlic, onions, okra, squash, tomatoes, and more. Their produce rarely travels far; most is sold directly at farm stands and farmers' markets, with some venturing to the Bay Area in search of better prices. These farmers manage every aspect of farming, from planting to harvesting to marketing. Along highways, small farm stands with displays of fresh fruits and vegetables might appear as roadside attractions. But, working closely with them, I've come to understand that behind each farm stand, there are untold stories of hard work and resilience. This community introduced me to a completely different but essential side of agriculture rooted in tradition, diversity, and culture.

The socially disadvantaged and historically underrepresented

small-scale farmers lack commodity-based representation and industry support. Their voices are often absent in policy discussions, making it even more critical to recognize the contributions they make to the region's food system and cultural landscape. Many are unaware of critical regulations, programs, and funding opportunities unless outreach directly targets them. Barriers such as technical jargon, limited access to technology, language, and a lack of representation further widen the gaps between these farmers and the resources they need. Recognizing the unique needs and challenges of this community, the UC ANR small farms network plays an essential role in supporting them with research, education, outreach, and technical assistance. In my role as a Small Farms Community



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Education Specialist serving Stanislaus, Merced, and San Joaquin counties, I work to ensure these farmers have access to vital information on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) in California. My responsibilities include, but are not limited to, delivering accessible outreach materials on SGMA rules and regulations. I offer one-on-one consultations, arrange field days, and visit the farms to assess crop water use, check irrigation facilities, and

refer them to available resources based on their specific needs and concerns. Additionally, I actively analyze groundwater policies and attend important regional meetings. These engagements allow us to bring field observations and concerns forward, so we can better support the small-scale farmers in the policy framework.

Our small farm team in Stanislaus County also includes Vong Moua, a bilingual Staff Research Associate who supports these farmers by provid-

ing technical assistance, education, and outreach on food safety, pesticide safety, and associated regulatory compliance. He also assists them in navigating and applying for various incentives and funding opportunities, such as extreme weather reimbursement grants, drought relief grants, etc. As a team, we contribute to statewide research projects on topics driven by grower needs. We focus on building trust within the community and are readily available to our clients. Our mission is to connect socially disadvantaged and historically underrepresented small-scale farmers to the research,

resources, and opportunities they need to thrive in California's evolving agricultural sector. Working with these groups has shown me that agriculture is not only about growing food, but it is also about growing community. The journey toward a better agricultural future starts with recognizing the invaluable contributions of everyone who contributes to our food systems.

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Key California Lawmakers Join Farm Bureau for Ventura County Ag Tour

Earlier this week, legislative leaders, including Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas and Senate President Pro Tem Monique Limón, joined California Farm Bureau President Shannon Douglass and local producers for a farm tour in Ventura County. The visit gave lawmakers a firsthand look at the challenges farmers face—including regulatory pressures, workforce shortages and rising production costs. “California Farm Bureau values its ongoing dialogue with legislators to tackle the regulatory challenges facing farmers and ranchers,” Douglass said. “By meeting with farmers where they live and work, our representatives gain a clearer understanding of the real, on-the-ground impacts of these policies and what’s at stake for rural communities across the state.”

USDA to Open Stage 2 Disaster Relief Enrollments

Next week, enrollments will begin for “Stage 2” of the Supplemental Disaster Relief Program, which provides financial assistance to those impacted by natural disasters in 2023 and 2024. Many specialty crops fall under the Stage 2 portion, making it more relevant to states such as California. Originally set to open earlier this fall, delays and the federal government shutdown pushed back the enrollment period even further. Members are encouraged to learn more here to see if they are eligible for assistance. The enrollment period will open Nov. 24 and run through April 30. Staff contact: Erin Huston, ehuston@cbbf.com.

USEPA Announces New WOTUS Rule

Yesterday, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers published a proposed rule that would make new changes to the definition of “waters of the U.S.,” or WOTUS, under the Clean Water Act. The new proposal appears to narrow what qualifies as protected waters under this act. It follows a key Supreme Court case (Sackett v. EPA) from 2023. Some ill-defined areas from that ruling compounded with updated guidance from the Biden administration has led to continued challenges with interpreting the regulation. In an announcement earlier in the week, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin said, “No longer should America’s landowners be forced to spend precious money hiring an attorney or consultant just to tell them whether a Water of the United States is on their property.” The published rule will go through the regular rulemaking process, with public comments due by Jan. 5. Staff contact: Erin Huston, ehuston@cbbf.com.

CDEA Announces \$500,000 For New World Screwworm Surveillance, Training and Integrated Pest Management

The California Department of Food and Agriculture Office of Pesticide Consultation & Analysis, or OPCA, is amplifying efforts

to protect ranchers and livestock from the threat of the New World screwworm, or NWS. The screwworm has been detected within 70 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border and poses a significant risk to the U.S. cattle industry.

To optimize early detection and rapid response, OPCA has awarded \$507,421 in funding for one project through its Adaptive IPM for Invasive Agricultural Pests grant program.

Led by Dr. Amy Murillo, the three-year project will collaborate closely with CDEA’s Animal Health Branch to establish a coordinated framework for rapid detection and response to any screwworm threat. The project will:

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- Develop integrated pest management guidelines for prevention and control of infestations.
- Initiate an educational training program to help veterinarians and livestock producers recognize, address and report screw-worm infestations in animals.

CDFA's preparedness efforts extend beyond this funded project, involving consistent, multifaceted coordination and protocol development. CDFA's Animal Health Branch is actively working with a series of partners—including other border states, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and private veterinarians—to establish the best prevention, detection and response practices. CDFA collaborates with key state agencies, including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Public Health and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services to develop NWS protocols for a comprehensive emergency response plan. This preparation involves

hosting planning exercises to clarify roles and developing specific response protocols such as the use of fly traps, IPM, sterile fly release techniques, alternative carcass disposal methods and animal movement control.

An NWS infestation would be a foreign animal disease, and swift and accurate reporting remains a crucial component of the state's defense and must be reported to state or federal animal health officials within 24 hours of detection. Upon diagnosis, CDFA would work with the producer or animal owner to immediately quarantine the premises and the infested animals, ensuring daily care and treatment until the larvae are eliminated.

The goal of the Adaptive IPM for Invasive Agricultural Pests Program is to develop IPM program(s) or components that can be rapidly deployed when new invasive agricultural pests arrive and become established in California, or when recently arrived invasive pests expand their range

or host species. The program supports research to refine and optimize existing IPM strategies to improve their effectiveness, and it explores additional control measures against established invasive agricultural pests that drive extensive pesticide use but remain uncontrolled due to developed pesticide resistance.

Detailed information on the program, including the application process and application requirements, is available at: www.cdfa.ca.gov/oars/opca/adaptive-ipm.html More Information about on the Office of Pesticide Consultation and Analysis is available at: www.cdfa.ca.gov/oars/opca/ Federal Coordination Complementing these state efforts, USDA recently announced the opening of a new sterile fly dispersal facility in Tampico, Mexico. The expansion supports ongoing binational work to control NWS, which—despite being eradicated in the U.S. since the 1960s—has re-emerged in Mexico and

See 'Updates' on page 22

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From 'Updates' on page 21

raised significant concern among American cattle producers. The facility will enhance USDA's capacity to suppress the pest and prevent its northward spread.

Staff contact: Steven Fenaroli, sfenaroli@cbbf.com.

DPR Seeks Input on New Treated-Seed Reporting Requirements

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation has released early concepts for a new rule that would require growers to report the use of pesticide-treated seeds as part of their monthly pesticide use reports to county agricultural commissioners. The effort stems from a 2024 legal settlement and Assembly Bill 1042 (Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, D-San Ramon), which adds new state requirements for the sale and use of pesticide-treated seed.

DPR emphasized during its recent webinar that the department is still working through several implementation questions, including how enforcement will work, whether pest control adviser recommendations would be required and how treated-seed fields would be classified. DPR also noted that use of treated seed appears to be increasing in California, although data are currently limited because the state has not historically tracked this information.

Many seeds used in row crops, such as small grains, rice and corn, are some of the most commonly treated prior to planting. However, DPR has not yet released commodity-specific use data for California, and current reporting requirements do not provide enough clarity on how widely treated seeds are used across specialty crops.

In addition, the fields where pesticide-treated seeds are planted would be considered treated fields, and pesticide handler training would be required. At this stage, DPR has not proposed limits on the use of treated seeds beyond existing registration requirements. The department indicated it is seeking stakeholder feedback to ensure the regulatory intent matches the final rule language, with public comments being accepted through Dec. 1.

Farm Bureau seeks input from members who currently plant seeds or anticipate their operation being affected by the new reporting requirements.

Staff contact: Isabella Quinonez, iquinonez@cbbf.com.

White House to Limit Scope of Some Tariffs

Late last week, the White House announced an executive order modifying the scope of tariffs originally announced in April. As a follow-up to newly announced trade deals and ongoing negotiations, it expects reciprocal tariffs to be dropped on the following agricultural goods: coffee, tea, tropical

fruits and juices, bananas, oranges, tomatoes, beef and some fertilizers. A full fact sheet can be found here. The announcement likely follows continued pressure via consumers on elevated costs on several popular grocery items impacted by tariffs. While some countries had previously worked to limit disruptions via new trade negotiations and deals, much of the world's economic supply chains have been impacted by the U.S.'s trade practices and its reactionary actions by countries such as China.

Staff contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cbbf.com.



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LOCAL AG KIDS WIN \$500 FOR BEING "FARM-TASTIC"

Four young aspiring agriculturalists from San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties each won \$500 as the first-ever "The Farm-Tastic Four". Tyler Araujo from Tracy, Abigaill Fellion from Lodi, Lianna Cabrales from Turlock, and Natalie Giuntoli from Escalon were recognized for their achievements in agriculture and their future as farmers and industry leaders.

Cumulus Media's KAT Country Radio Sta-

tion hosted the contest for all kids aged 5-19 years old in the listeners' range. Students active in agriculture organizations such as FFA, 4-H, Grange, and Young Farmers & Ranchers submitted applications. The radio station selected four deserving kids and awarded each with \$500 and the title of "The Farm-Tastic Four". Each winner was interviewed in the radio station studio and explained in detail their accomplishments and their future goals in agriculture.

"The inspiration for the Farm-Tastic Four came directly from the heartfelt letters we received from young leaders in FFA, 4-H, and Grange seeking support for their agricultural projects. As the San Joaquin Valley

continues to serve as the breadbasket of the world, it was only natural to create a platform that celebrates and invests in the next generation of agricultural innovators. We were truly moved by the intelligence, drive, and passion these young ag superheroes bring to the field. The future of agriculture in Northern California is not just promising—it's extraordinary," said Andy Winford, Program Director for KAT Country 103/KATM-FM.

Tyler Araujo, Tracy FFA Chapter president, is active on the grapevine pruning and marketing co-op judging teams. Although he does not come from a family in agriculture, Mr. Araujo is the ag business manager for the Tracy High School Chicken Co-Op

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Project, where he tracks the money and eggs collected each day. He plans to use the prize money to fund his market lamb project for the San Joaquin Junior Livestock Show & Auction.

Abigaill Fellion is a 12-year-old and a member of the Live Oak 4-H Club in Lodi. She raises and shows sheep, rabbits, and covies. At the 2025 AgFest Livestock show, Miss Fellion won breeding and market showmanship for rabbits and cavy showmanship. This allowed her to compete in the Small Animal Master Showmanship and place second. At her club, she is the historian and takes photos and records all activities throughout the year. Miss Fellion plans to use her winning funds to increase

her breeding rabbit project and sell those offspring to other exhibitors.

Lillianna Cabrales is the Turlock High School FFA 2025 President. She is studying advanced floral, welding & fabrication, ag science, and ag business. As a sophomore, she joined the vine pruning team and found her passion for grapes. She plans to attend college and double-major in viticulture and oenology, with a minor in soil science. She started showing swine as a 4-H member and grew a variety of plants and flowers. Miss Cabrales will use the \$500 to purchase feed and shavings for her market swine project that she is raising for the Stanislaus County Fair next summer.

Natalie Giuntoli was born into an agricul-

tural family. She is currently a student at Modesto Junior College with aspirations to work in the field of embryology for beef and dairy cattle. She was in 4-H, FFA, and now a Young Farmer & Rancher. At Escalon FFA, she served as a chapter officer, competed in livestock judging, and traveled to the National FFA Agronomy judging contest with her team members. Miss Giuntoli has a cattle show string that she exhibits at various fairs and can continue to show until she is 22 years old. She will use the extra cash to feed her cattle.

Three local businesses sponsored the contest: Discount Ag, Farmers Feed Stockton, and Pump Pros. The station hopes to make the contest an annual event and increase the prize money.

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