

The Stanislaus Farm News

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture

STANISLAUS COUNTY



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Official Publication of Stanislaus
County Farm Bureau

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See Dumping the Sticks, page 12B
Almonds, Almond Pollination and Walnuts all made the 2023,
Top 10 Commodity List in Stanislaus County

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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 pears hit fresh market as cannery demand plummets

Packinghouses in California's pear-growing districts are running at full tilt as growers box more of their fruit for the fresh market this year and ship less to canneries. The pivot came after one of the state's two pear canneries, with weakened demand and inventory bolstered by last year's bumper crop, slashed its orders. Pear growers said the Walnut Creek-based cannery asked the farmers in the spring to undershoot their contracted tonnage—some by as much as 45%. "They wanted as little as possible," said Ryan Elliot of Stillwater Orchards in Courtland.

Growers seek guidance after ban on herbicide used in vegetable fields

Reacting to the emergency suspension of an herbicide used to control weeds in vegetable crops, farmers and agricultural representatives are asking for more guidance as the sector considers effective alternatives, disposal of existing inventory and potential liability issues. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency acted on Aug. 6 to immediately restrict the use of Dacthal, which is used by growers as a preplant treatment in crops including broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and onions.

Agricultural officials say state is now free of invasive fruit flies

State and federal agricultural officials have announced that they have succeeded in eradicating all populations of invasive fruit flies from California. Officials say the

state's 2023 invasive fruit fly outbreak was the worst ever recorded. That led to a joint eradication effort by the California Department of Food and Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. APHIS deployed hundreds of employees to join forces with CDFA and the agricultural commissioners for trapping, fruit removal and survey activities.

Salinas Valley research seeks answers to new Fusarium stain affecting lettuce

Researchers say an unfolding trial may offer hope that lettuce varieties can soon be bred with resistance to a new variant of Fusarium wilt, which has recently appeared

See "NEWS" on page 10

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2024 California Walnut Industry Crop Estimate Released

(Folsom, CA) - The USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released the official 2024 California Walnut Industry Objective Measurement Report on Wednesday, September 4, 2024. The 2024 California walnut production is forecasted at 670,000 tons (607,814 MT), down 19% from 2023's production of 824,000 tons (747,520 MT). The forecast is based on 370,000 bearing acres, down 4% from 2023's estimated bearing acreage of 385,000 acres.

The September 4th announcement from USDA provides the industry with an objective crop volume estimate. Using scientific methodologies, USDA field staff counted, measured, weighed, and evaluated thousands of walnuts from major growing regions in July and August for use in a statistical acreage model to establish the annual walnut crop estimate.

In addition to the updated acreage and crop estimate, the CA walnut industry is finalizing the close out of the 2023 crop year. While final shipment and inventory figures will be released later this month, preliminary data indicates that the 2023 crop is vir-

tually sold out.

"As anticipated, the upcoming 2024 crop is lower than the historic record crop of 2023 and will deliver the high quality that defines California walnuts globally," said Robert Verloop, Executive Director and CEO of the California Walnut Board and Commission. "The 2024 estimated crop size, while moderate, is similar to the 2019 crop. In addition, due to strong summer demand, we expect the end of season shipment report to show the carry-in volume to be substantially less than last year. Combined, the carry in and new 2024 crop volumes are very manageable, providing improved seller and buyer confidence and stable markets.

"As an industry, based on the favorable

crop statistics and overall market conditions, we feel confident about the upcoming crop year. We continue to focus on delivering quality all the way to the consumer, with enhanced handling of walnuts through the supply chain and increasing our demand-building initiatives to drive more sales and excitement for California walnuts. We continue to work to make walnuts more relevant to consumers as a nut for every day eating occasions and partnering with retailers, bringing visibility and excitement to walnuts with expanded offerings of package size options, flavors, and more walnut products. Together as an industry, we are focused on building more consumer demand while delivering



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About the California Walnut Board and Commission

The California Walnut Board (CWB) and

California Walnut Commission (CWC) represent more than 4,600 California walnut growers and nearly 70 handlers, grown in multi-generational farmers’ family orchards. California walnuts, known for their excellent nutritional value and quality, are shipped around the world all year long,

with more than 99% of the walnuts grown in the United States being from California. The CWB, established in 1948, promotes usage of walnuts in the United States through publicity and educational programs. The CWB also provides funding for walnut production, food safety and post-harvest research. The CWC, established in 1987, is

involved in health research with consuming walnuts as well as domestic and export market development activities.

To explore recipes and learn more about California walnut growers, industry information and health research, visit walnuts.org.



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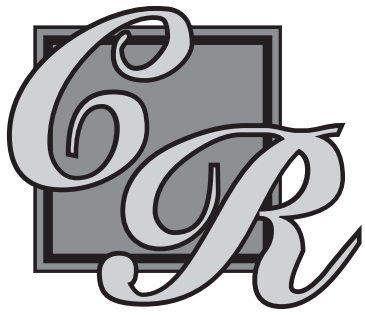
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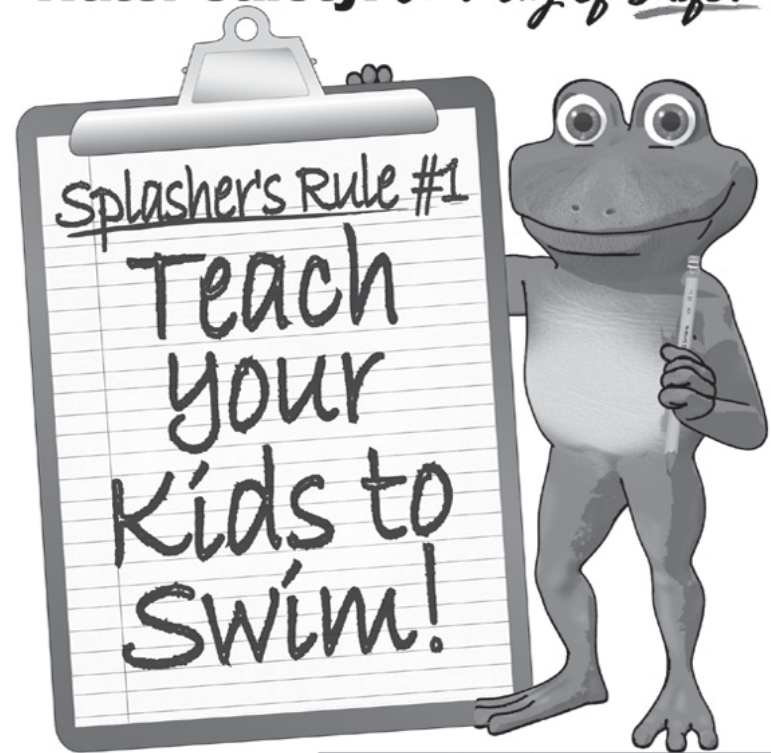


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Navigating the 2024 Almond Harvest with Donny Hicks

As the 2024 almond harvest comes to an end, growers are reflecting on the season's challenges and opportunities. In a recent conversation on the Almond Alert podcast, Donny Hicks, Grower Relations for RPAC, LLC., shared his insights on the season, including the progress of the harvest, technological advancements, and strategies that ensured a high-quality yield.

Harvest Outcomes and Challenges

The 2024 harvest started strong, with growers in the South San Joaquin Valley shaking trees early in the season. As the harvest moved north to the Sacramento Valley, growers faced various challenges, particularly intense heatwaves that caused temporary stress to the trees. Despite these hurdles, the harvest progressed smoothly and stayed on track overall.

One of the critical concerns this season was pest management. While the threat of navel orangeworm was lower than expected, the presence of the Carpophilus beetle in some orchards was a concern. Hicks emphasized that early intervention and vigilant monitoring helped many growers prevent significant damage and maintain the quality of their crops.

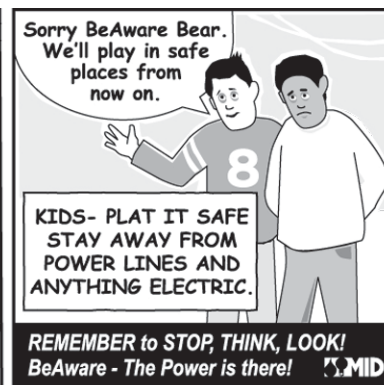
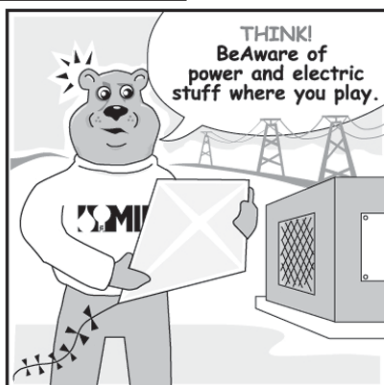
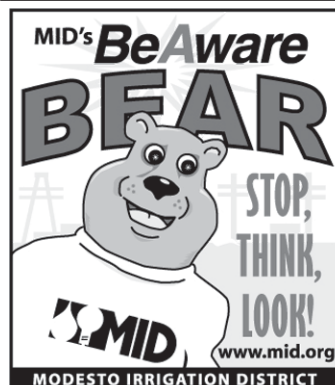
Quality Control and Technological Innovations

Quality control played a crucial role in this year's harvest success. Hicks highlighted how proper sanitation practices, especially in older orchards, helped reduce reject rates. Many growers also benefited from the use of conditioners, which removed foreign materials and ensured that only the highest-quality nuts reached processors.

Technological advancements in irrigation management were also pivotal. Hicks discussed how neutron moisture sensors and automated irrigation systems optimized water use, particularly during the critical hull split phase. Given this year's extreme heat, effective water management was essential to maintaining tree health and achieving optimal yield.

Looking Ahead: Preparing for 2025

With the 2024 harvest behind us, growers are already planning for the next crop season. Hicks suggests focusing on post-harvest activ-



ities such as pruning, nitrogen and potash application, and cover cropping to improve soil health and maximize yield potential for 2025. Additionally, with the increasing importance of pollinators in the almond industry, establishing pollinator habitats will be key to supporting future crops.

The almond market has shown some positive developments, with prices beginning to rebound after a challenging few years. Although the 2024 crop was substantial, the manageable carryover from last year and improved market conditions provide hope for better times ahead.

You can catch the full interview with Donny Hicks on all major podcast platforms or by visiting almondalliance.org/almond-alert-podcast. Stay informed on the latest almond industry updates by tuning into Almond Alert, the Almond Alliance's bi-monthly podcast.



The Almond Alliance is the leading authority in state and national policy, championing American almond farmers, industry, and community for the continued global growth, innovation, and success of American almonds and agriculture.

Established in 1980, the Almond Alliance is a non-profit trade association with a local and international network of almond processors, hullers/shellers, growers, and allied businesses.

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From "NEWS" on page 3

in farm fields in the Central Coast region. At a field belonging to vegetable producer D'Arrigo California, a study team is evaluating lettuce resistance to a new strain of Fusarium. Largely resulting from soil-borne pathogens, Fusarium wilt can cause lettuce plants to stunt and fail to form heads or result in seedlings wilting and dying. Lettuce plants suffering from water stress are most vulnerable.

Avian flu cases put three California dairies under quarantine

Three Central Valley dairy herds remain under quarantine after cows in the herds tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza. The positive findings, which the U.S. Department of Agriculture confirmed on Aug. 30, mark the first time highly pathogenic avian influenza, or HPAI, has been detected in California dairy cows. Since March 25, 13 other states have detected HPAI in dairy cows, with a total 197 confirmed cases as of Sept. 9. The sick cows have been isolated, CDFA said, and healthy cows have been cleared to continue shipping milk.

As prices drop, almond growers diversify to other crops

As almond prices have dropped, growers say they are focused on


their bottom lines, looking for ways to diversify their crop portfolios and identify other income to shore up narrowing profit margins. Fresno County farmer Matt Efird, who grows almonds, pistachios, walnuts, canning peaches and feed crops, said, "If a grower can have a diversified portfolio, that's the way to go because you can hopefully cover the lows with income from other crops." The average almond price per pound has fallen from \$2.45 in 2019 to \$1.40 last year.

Biotech wheat variety gets USDA approval for cultivation

A transgenic wheat variety with increased drought tolerance and resistance to the herbicide glufosinate has been given the green light for cultivation by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In its review of HB4 wheat, the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspec-

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tion Service last month determined the wheat “is unlikely to pose an increased plant pest risk” compared to similar wheat plants. Completion of the regulatory review paves the way for HB4 wheat to be grown for food and feed, though other steps are needed before the product can be brought to market.

House panel hears concerns over water supplies for agriculture

California’s role in U.S. food security took center stage last week at a hearing in the Central Valley, where lawmakers and industry experts discussed impacts of environmental regulations on agricultural water needs. Jason Phillips, CEO of the Friant Water Authority, said regulatory decisions and legislative inaction have forced the state away from water abundance. “These decisions have been taking water away from farms and communities,” Phillips testified at a Santa Nella hearing of the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries.



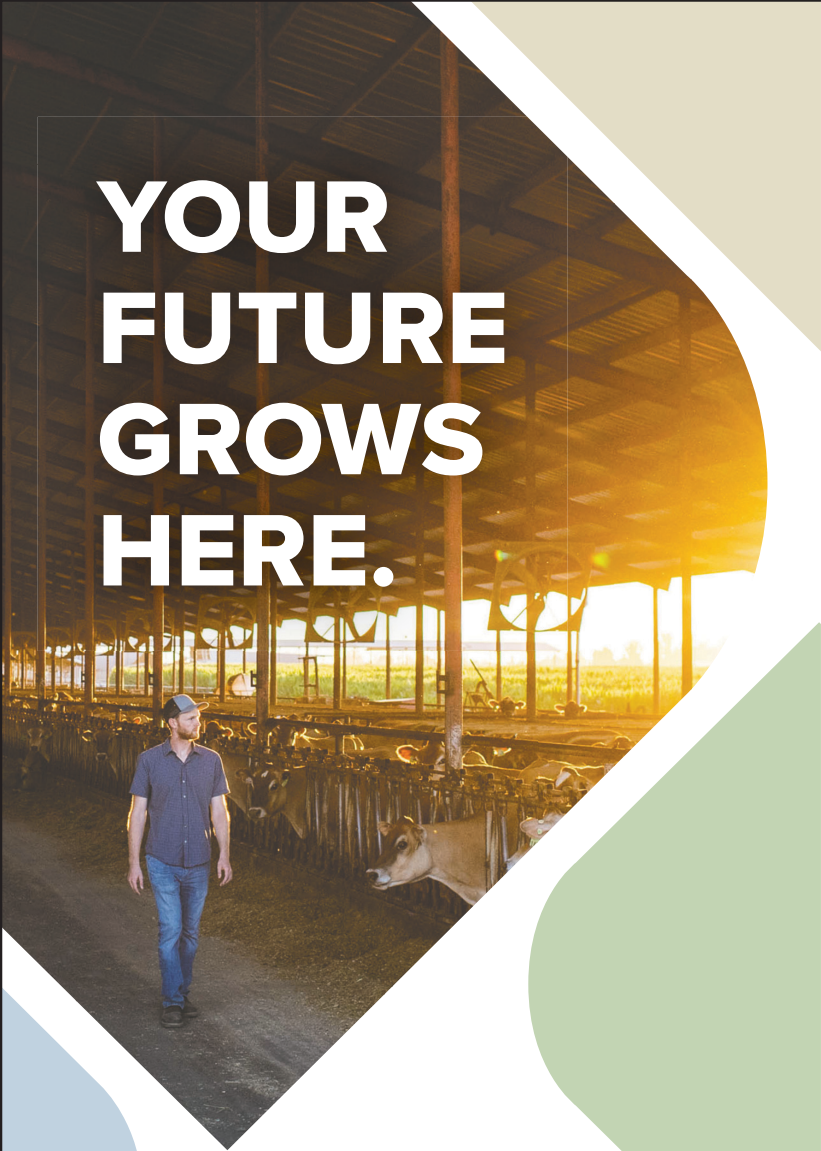
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Beat the Heat: Staying Compliant Indoors and Out During Late-Season Heat Waves

As September heat waves continue to hit California, nut processors must remain vigilant in adhering to the state's newly implemented indoor and existing outdoor heat regulations. These laws, aimed at protecting workers from heat-related illnesses, are now in full effect. Whether your employees are working indoors in non-air-conditioned facilities or outside in the fields, maintaining compliance and safeguarding your workforce is essential to keeping operations running smoothly during these high-temperature periods.

New Indoor Heat Regulations: What You Need to Do Now

The California Division of Occupational Safety and Health introduced new indoor heat regulations this summer, mandating compliance for all indoor work environments where temperatures exceed 82°F. For nut processors, this means paying close attention to non-air-conditioned areas such as processing plants, storage sheds, and warehouses, where indoor temperatures can easily rise above the threshold.

Key Indoor Heat Regulation Requirements

- **Written Plan and Training:** Employers must have a written plan for heat as part of their IIPP, and all employees must receive train-

ing on heat illness prevention. Per regulation, at least one employee per 20 employees must be trained in CPR/First Aid and schedules should account for this.

- **Provision of Cool Drinking Water:** Employees must have access to cool drinking water throughout their shifts to prevent dehydration and heat-related illnesses.
- **Cooldown Areas:** You must designate specific areas where employees can cool down. This space must be kept at least 82°F and shielded from other high-radiant heat sources.
- **Cooldown Breaks:** Employees are entitled to cooldown breaks when needed, and supervisors must monitor these breaks to ensure safety.
- **Record-Keeping:** Employers must keep detailed records of temperature and heat index readings.
- **Heat Index Monitoring:** Monitoring the heat index, which includes temperature and humidity, is critical. Invest in reliable tools such as the ThermoPro TP62 or the Taylor Precision 5154 to accurately measure indoor conditions.

Workplaces where employees wear heavy or restrictive safety gear, such as protective clothing, must adjust their cooling strategies as these garments increase heat retention and can lower the threshold at which heat illness becomes a concern.

Special Considerations for Storage Sheds

See "HEAT" on page 19



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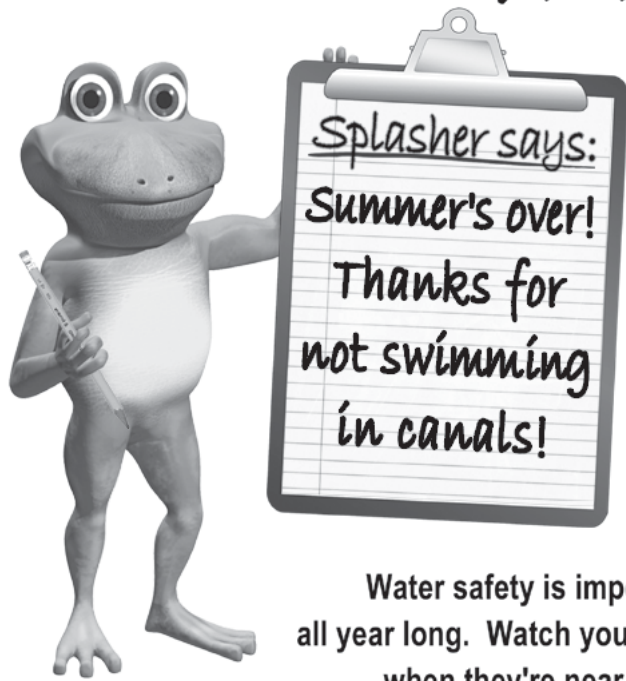
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From "HEAT" on page 14

Even though storage sheds are generally exempt from indoor heat regulations, compliance measures are triggered if an employee enters a shed where temperatures exceed 95°F, even briefly. This is especially relevant during late-summer heat waves, where high temperatures can persist well into the evening.

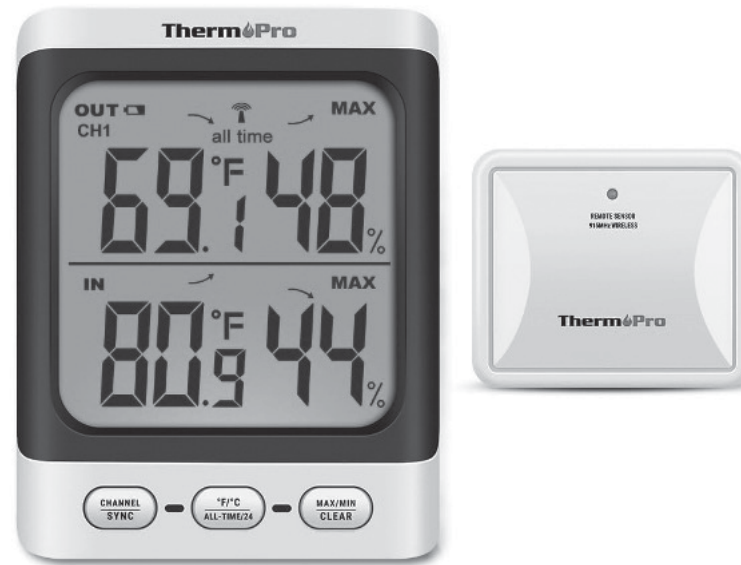
Outdoor Heat Regulations: Protecting Field Workers

For those working outside in the fields, California's outdoor heat regulations remain in effect and are necessary during ongoing heat waves. Supervisors must ensure that workers have access to shade, cold water and regular cooldown breaks to prevent heat stress and illness.

Key Outdoor Heat Regulation Requirements

- **Shade Access:** When temperatures are greater than 80°F shade must be available. workers must be provided with shade upon request. Once temperatures reach 95°F, shade must be available at all times, and workers should be encouraged to take regular breaks in these shaded areas.
- **Water Availability:** Employers are required to provide enough fresh, cool drinking water to workers at all times. Water should be readily accessible, and employees should be encouraged to drink water regularly—typically at least one quart per hour—to prevent dehydration and reduce the risk of heat stress.
- **Cool-Down Rest Periods:** Workers must be allowed to take cool-down rest periods in a shaded area to help prevent overheating. These rest periods should last long enough for the worker's body to recover from the heat and should be provided whenever workers feel the need to cool down.
- **High-Heat Procedures:** When temperatures reach or exceed 95°F, specific high-heat procedures must be implemented.

These include increased monitoring of workers for signs of heat illness, ensuring workers take more frequent breaks, encouraging the buddy system to check in on each other, and maintaining effective communication with supervisors. Additionally, employers should provide training on recognizing the symptoms of heat illness and how to respond in case of emergencies. Workers should be reminded to drink water frequently and take advantage of the shade and rest periods.



Cal/OSHA has increased inspections, particularly focusing on heat illness compliance. Frontline supervisors are often interviewed to ensure they understand the regulations and are properly enforcing them in the field.

What You Should Do to Stay Compliant and Keep Workers Safe

To remain compliant with California's heat regulations and ensure the safety of your workforce, here are key steps you should take:

1. **Ensure Compliance with Training and Monitoring:** Confirm that all employees have received up-to-date training on heat illness prevention and that your supervisors are fully aware of their responsibilities. Regularly check that heat index monitoring tools are functioning properly and that you are keeping accurate records of temperature readings.

2. **Strengthen Supervisor Knowledge:** Supervisors are your first line of defense in preventing heat-related illnesses. Make sure they are equipped to handle Cal/OSHA inspections and are fully trained on when and how to implement shade and cooldown breaks, especially for outdoor workers.

3. **Keep an Eye on High-Risk Areas:** Storage sheds, processing plants, and any areas with poor ventilation or restrictive safety gear are particularly vulnerable to high temperatures. Ensure you have protocols in place to address these specific areas.

4. **Stay Informed and Proactive:** As regulations evolve and inspections increase, stay informed by visiting Cal/OSHA's Heat Illness Prevention Resources and following AgSafe updates. By staying proactive, you can prevent violations and protect your workers.

Why Compliance Matters: Protecting Your Workers and Your Business

Compliance with California's heat regulations isn't just a legal requirement—it's critical to the safety and well-being of your workforce. Heat-related illnesses can lead to severe health issues, reduced productivity, and increased operational risks. By ensuring that your workers have access to cooling area, water, shade, and regular breaks, you are safeguarding both their health and the success of your operation. As heat waves continue to impact the agricultural community, we must remain vigilant in adhering to both indoor and outdoor heat regulations. AgSafe is here to provide guidance and resources to help you maintain compliance and protect your workers during these challenging conditions.

If you should have specific questions about indoor or outdoor heat illness prevention, please contact the AgSafe team at 209-526-4400 or email safeinfo@agsafe.org.

AgSafe is a 501c3 nonprofit that provides training, education, outreach, and tools in safety, labor relations, and human resources for the food and farming industries. Since 1991, AgSafe has educated over 100,000 employers, supervisors, and workers about these critical issues.



That's led a lot of shellers to increase prices in a year when increased prices are not welcome for most almond growers.

At this time last year, almond hulls were worth about \$150 a ton. Today's price is about \$48 a ton. All almond hullers use the income that they sell the hulls for to offset the cost of the

operation. Hullers have lost about three-quarters to two-thirds of their income from the hulls, so they've had to increase prices to the growers.

thing that everyone is battling. That definitely increases costs because mite sprays are quite expensive.

In shelling, the demand and marketability for hulls significantly decreased. The price of hulls dropped along with most feed commodities.

From the Fields - Paul Vermeulen

By: Paul Vermeulen, Stanislaus County almond grower and huller

Almond harvest is 10 to 15 days earlier than last year. We're about a quarter of the way through harvest, which will probably be over the first week of October. There has been some movement in the price in the upward direction. I know all almond farmers are hoping it continues in that trajectory.

The crop is lighter than people had hoped, but not lighter than they had expected. I'm seeing great quality in well-maintained fields and some navel orangeworm in some older fields. But overall, the crop is a lot better quality than last year in the early almonds.

Last year was a difficult year for (orchard) sanitation because the rain started at the end of December and didn't stop until mid- to late March. The (lower) worm pressure (this year) is probably due to increased attention to sanitation but also better timing and weather that doesn't lend itself to growing navel orangeworm.

The dust mite pressure this year has been the worst I've seen since I was a kid. It is everywhere. Even people that sprayed the expensive materials are having lots of mite pressure. I haven't talked to anyone that seems to know why, but that's some-


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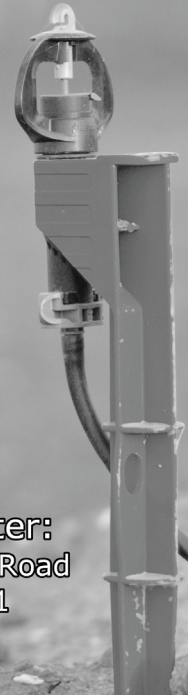
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Preliminary Injunction Against DOL Rule Allowing H-2A Workers to Unionize

Source: Brian German
Ag News Director / AgNet West

A federal court in Georgia has temporarily blocked the Department of Labor (DOL) from enforcing a new regulation that would allow H-2A visa farmworkers to unionize. The preliminary injunction, requested by the Southeastern Legal Foundation on behalf of various agricultural organizations and 17 states, halts the DOL's rule, which was set to take effect.

The National Council of Agricultural Employers (NCAE) praised the decision, arguing that the DOL had overstepped its authority by attempting to create rights that Congress has not legislated. NCAE President Michael Marsh stated that the ruling is a victory for farmers who are already struggling to compete in a challenging market.

The court's decision applies only to the 17 states involved in the lawsuit. NCAE said it will continue to monitor the situation and may pursue further legal action if necessary to protect the interests of U.S. farm and ranch families.

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2024 General Election • Tuesday, November 5

The California Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors adopted the following recommendations on statewide ballot measures that will be before California voters in the Nov. 5 general election.

PROPOSITION	POSITION
<p>PROPOSITION 2: Issue \$10 Billion in Bonds to Fund Construction and Modernization of Public Education Facilities</p> <p>New construction and modernization of education institutions will cost \$8.5 billion for K-12 and \$1.5 billion for community colleges.</p>	<p>OPPOSE</p> <p><i>REASONING: California is already paying off billions in bond debt, all at a cost to the general fund to service the debt payments.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 3: Removes Outdated Language Regarding Marriage from State Constitution</p> <p>Repeals the unenforceable constitutional provision that marriage only between a man and woman is valid or recognized in California.</p>	<p>NO POSITION</p> <p><i>REASONING: CAFB does not have policy on this topic.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 4: The Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act</p> <p>Allows for the issuance of \$10 billion in bonds to fund safe drinking water; drought, flood, water resilience; wildfire and forest resilience; nature-based climate solutions; climate-smart, park creation and outdoor access; and clean air programs among other programs. Allows for funding to be shifted from the state budget to bonds for ongoing programs.</p>	<p>OPPOSE</p> <p><i>REASONING: Shifting government program costs from general tax revenues to additional public indebtedness through bond issuance to mitigate budget shortfalls is bad fiscal policy.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 5: Lower Supermajority Requirement to 55% for Local Bond Measures to Fund Housing and Public Infrastructure</p> <p>Amends the constitution to lower the threshold from 2/3 vote to 55% to allow a local government to impose a parcel tax for the purpose of issuing bonds to build or rehabilitate public infrastructure and affordable housing, including downpayment assistance, or permanent supportive housing.</p>	<p>OPPOSE</p> <p><i>REASONING: The 2/3 vote for taxes and fees is paramount and should not be weakened.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 6: Amend the California Constitution to Bar Involuntary Servitude in Correctional Facilities</p> <p>Removes a constitutional provision allowing jails and prisons to impose involuntary servitude as criminal punishment. It prohibits the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation from disciplining inmates for refusing work assignments while allowing inmates to voluntarily accept work assignments for credits to reduce their sentences.</p>	<p>NO POSITION</p> <p><i>REASONING: CAFB does not have policy on this topic.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 32: \$18 Minimum Wage Increase</p> <p>Increases the minimum wage from \$16 per hour to \$18 per hour by January 1, 2025.</p>	<p>OPPOSE</p> <p><i>REASONING: California is already a difficult and costly state to do business in without an increasing minimum wage.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 33: State Limitations on Local Rent Control</p> <p>Allows a city or county to enact rent control by repealing the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act of 1995.</p>	<p>OPPOSE</p> <p><i>REASONING: Private property rights are paramount.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 34: Restrictions on AIDS Healthcare Foundation Support</p> <p>Ensures that health care providers spend 98% of revenues on direct patient care if their spending on items other than patient care exceeds \$100 million over 10 years.</p>	<p>NO POSITION</p> <p><i>REASONING: CAFB does not have policy on this topic.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 35: Permanent Managed Care Organization (MCO) Tax</p> <p>Makes permanent the existing tax on managed health care insurance plans, currently set to expire in 2026. The revenue generated pays for health care services for low-income families with children, seniors, disabled persons and other Medi-Cal recipients.</p>	<p>NO POSITION</p> <p><i>REASONING: CAFB does not have policy on this topic.</i></p>
<p>PROPOSITION 36: Drug and Theft Crime Penalties and Treatment-Mandated Felonies</p> <p>Allows for felony charges and increases sentences for certain drug and theft crimes, including organized theft.</p>	<p>SUPPORT</p> <p><i>REASONING: Law enforcement should have all the tools necessary to prevent crime from occurring.</i></p>

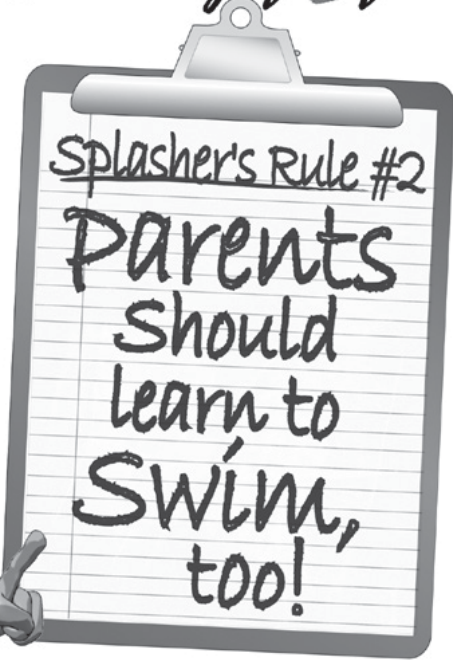
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Austin Stephenson is the first Grace Davis student to attend the National FFA Convention for a Proficiency Competition in over 50 years!

Austin Stephenson has dedicated countless hours to working on his application for national proficiency in agricultural processing over the past several months. While working alongside Grace Davis's Ag teacher Mrs. Abraham, Austin crafted a twenty-five-page application to the National FFA for agricultural proficiency.

His proficiency is based on meat processing, which he learned while working at California Halal Meats & Farmer's Fresh Direct. He has worked at California Halal Meats & Farmer's Fresh Direct for over five years and logged over 2000 hours and \$40,000 into his AET. His hard work paid off earlier this year when he was made the 2024 California Agriculture Processing State Winner in March.

However, the journey continued with this state-level achievement. Winning first place in California only put him in the running to be chosen for Nationals; he had to compete against thirty-two other first-place State Agriculture Processing Winners. After a rigorous selection process, Austin was handpicked as one of four National Finalists in the country, a testament to his hard work and determination.

Austin Stephenson is the first Grace Davis student to attend the National Convention for a Proficiency Competition in over 50 years, making his

accomplishments even more impressive. If Austin is chosen as this year's national winner it would make him the fifth person from Modesto to win a National Proficiency Award.

Austin graduated from Grace Davis High School in 2024. He graduated as an Agri-Science Pathway Completer and a 4-year Ag Completer. He had attended Davis for 4 years where he was extremely active and successful in the FFA program. Some of his high-school FFA accomplishments include 6th Place Novice Showmanship, and 1st Place Market Broilers Weight Class 2 back in 2022, and this July he won First Place Intermediate Showmanship and 1st Place Market Broilers Weight Class 6 at the Stanislaus County Fair. His FFA journey didn't just include raising and showing animals. Austin attended multi-tudes of high-level leadership FFA

events including GLC (Greenhand Leadership Conference), ALA/MFE (Advanced Leadership Academy/Made For Excellence), Stanislaus-Tuolumne Section FFA Officer Election, and the California State FFA Convention in both 2022 and 2024.


However, FFA wasn't even the beginning of his agricultural career. Austin comes from a long line of family ranchers and because of that, he was raised with the love of agriculture and its proceedings. Austin has achieved everything to be accomplished in FFA as a student. He obtained his Greenhand Degree in 2020, his Chapter in 2021, and his State degree in 2023. He obtained all FFA degrees during high school, such as the Greenhand and chapter degree. He also achieved the goal of earning his Golden

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California state FFA degree in 2023. Austin is also planning on going to the 98th National Convention again in 2025 to get the highest degree obtainable in the FFA, the American Degree, which is only awarded to less than 5% of all FFA members.

Scheduled for an important virtual interview on September 24th at 11 am, Austin is awaiting his virtual meeting with a panel of industry professionals and agriculture educators across the United States. This interview is the deciding factor as to whether he will be recognized as the 2024 National Agricultural Processing Proficiency Winner. Austin will be traveling to Indianapolis to attend the 97th National FFA Convention in October, where he will have the chance to connect with fellow finalists and

industry leaders while awaiting the announcement of the national winner. You can watch the live stream of the 97th National FFA convention on Thursday, October 24, 2024, to see if Austin Stephenson, Modesto-born and Grace Davis High School alumni, will be named the 2024 National Agricultural Proficiency winner.



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Prime Time Returns for California Almonds

The Almond Board of California (ABC) is bringing back its "Own Your Prime" campaign for a second season, once again teaming up with NFL legend and college football coach, Deion "Prime Time" Sanders. Following a highly successful first year, the campaign will continue to highlight the health benefits of almonds, backed by Sanders' dynamic personality and dedication to peak performance at any age.

Building on Success: Why Prime Time is Back

The initial run of the "Own Your Prime" campaign exceeded all expectations, drawing attention not only from almond industry insiders but also from the broader public. Deion Sanders, with his energetic and charismatic personality, was the perfect fit to lead a campaign centered around staying in top physical condition, no matter your age.



Laura Morin, ABC's director of global market development for North America and China, emphasized how thrilled they are to renew the partnership. "We're excited to have Coach Prime back for another year. His energy and genuine love for almonds were key reasons why last year's campaign was such a success. He brought professionalism and enthusiasm that truly elevated our message."

A Strategic Media Blitz

This year's campaign won't simply ride on last year's momentum—it's expanding its reach and impact. ABC has crafted a strategic media blitz designed to bring the message to a wider and more diverse audience. Alongside health-

conscious consumers, the campaign will also target sports enthusiasts.

Morin explained that the "Own Your Prime" message will appear in a variety of prominent media outlets, from Sports Illustrated and GQ to lifestyle publications like People Magazine. "We've already done one major media session with these publications. The coverage we expect will be phenomenal, helping us reach everyone from hardcore sports fans to individuals interested in health and wellness."

This strategic media presence aims to showcase almonds as more than just a nutritious snack—they're essential for anyone pursuing peak performance in life, whether that's on the field or in daily life. New Content, Same Prime Energy
One of the highlights of last year's success



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was the compelling content featuring Sanders, and this year will be no different. ABC has worked hard to ensure the new season of "Own Your Prime" keeps the energy high and the message fresh.

Morin shared that they dedicated an entire day to filming new digital and social media content, ensuring they have plenty of material to work with. "We filmed with Deion for a full eight hours, shooting everything from videos to still images. We thought we'd have to cut a lot, but Deion was such a pro that we finished ahead of schedule—he nailed every shot."

It's not just about Sanders' performance, though. His genuine enthusiasm for almonds is clear. "He truly believes in almonds," said Morin. "He actually eats them regularly, which makes the campaign feel so authentic. It's easy to see why this partnership works so well."

Reaching New Heights

With the campaign scheduled to air during the fall college football season, ABC has high hopes for its impact. Ads will be strategically placed to engage sports fans during prime viewing times. For California almond grow-

ers, this campaign goes beyond just increasing sales—it's about solidifying almonds' role in a healthy lifestyle.

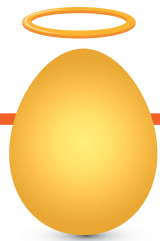
By associating almonds with someone like Sanders, who embodies peak performance and a winning mindset, ABC hopes to further elevate public perception. Almonds are already recognized as a versatile, healthy snack, but this campaign positions them as a key part of an active lifestyle aimed at achieving top results.

The Perfect Partnership

The partnership between ABC and Deion Sanders has proven to be a perfect match. Beyond the marketing success, the collaboration has been enjoyable for both parties. "Deion and his team were easy to work with—they

were true professionals," said Morin. "We knew we wanted to continue this partnership because it was such a positive experience."

With the campaign rolling out across various platforms, ABC is confident that the "Own Your Prime" message will resonate even more strongly in its second year. The goal is to reach new audiences and reinforce the idea that almonds are a prime choice for fueling an active lifestyle.



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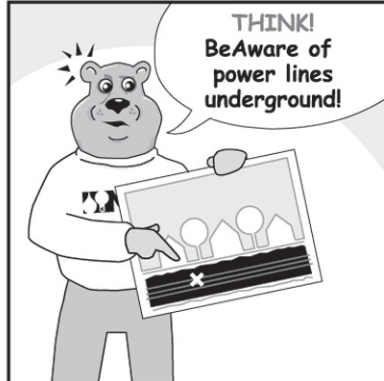
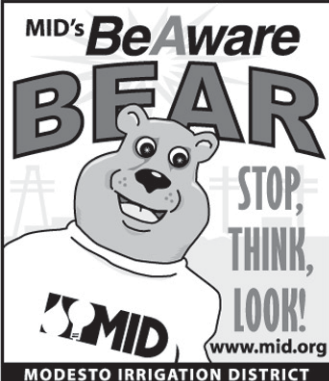
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\$1.9M in Grants for Innovation, Adoption of Sustainable Ag Pest Management in CA

Source: California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR)

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) announced that it is accepting grant applications for \$1.9 million in available funding for integrated pest management (IPM) projects that support a statewide transition to sustainable pest management. The funding is available through DPR's 2025 Research and Alliance Grants programs.

IPM is an approach to pest management that uses the least-toxic, most-effective method to solve pest problems. Sustainable pest management (SPM) builds on the existing practices of IPM to incorporate broadened considerations of human health and social equity, environmental protections, and economic viability in pest management decisions and practices through the state's urban, agricultural and wildland settings.

"Pest management is essential to protecting public health, supporting stable, healthy food production, and maintaining our infrastructure," DPR Director Julie Henderson said. "Our grants fund innovative research into a broad range of safe, sustainable pest management alternatives and the outreach,



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