

The Stanislaus Farm News

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture

STANISLAUS COUNTY



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CULTIVATING RESILIENCE

**Official Publication of Stanislaus
County Farm Bureau
Vol.75 No.14 August 30, 2024**

2023 Crop Report: Annually each county in California prepares a report detailing the gross value and production of agricultural commodities grown within their county as required by the California Food and Agricultural Code. These reports provide a statistical description of the county's agricultural production and highlight some of the important issues the agricultural industry is facing. Values in the reports are gross values of commodities and do not reflect production costs or profits. The Stanislaus County Agricultural Commissioner's office appreciates the agricultural producers, industry representatives and public agencies that provide data annually for these reports.

See more on page 3.

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STANISLAUS COUNTY

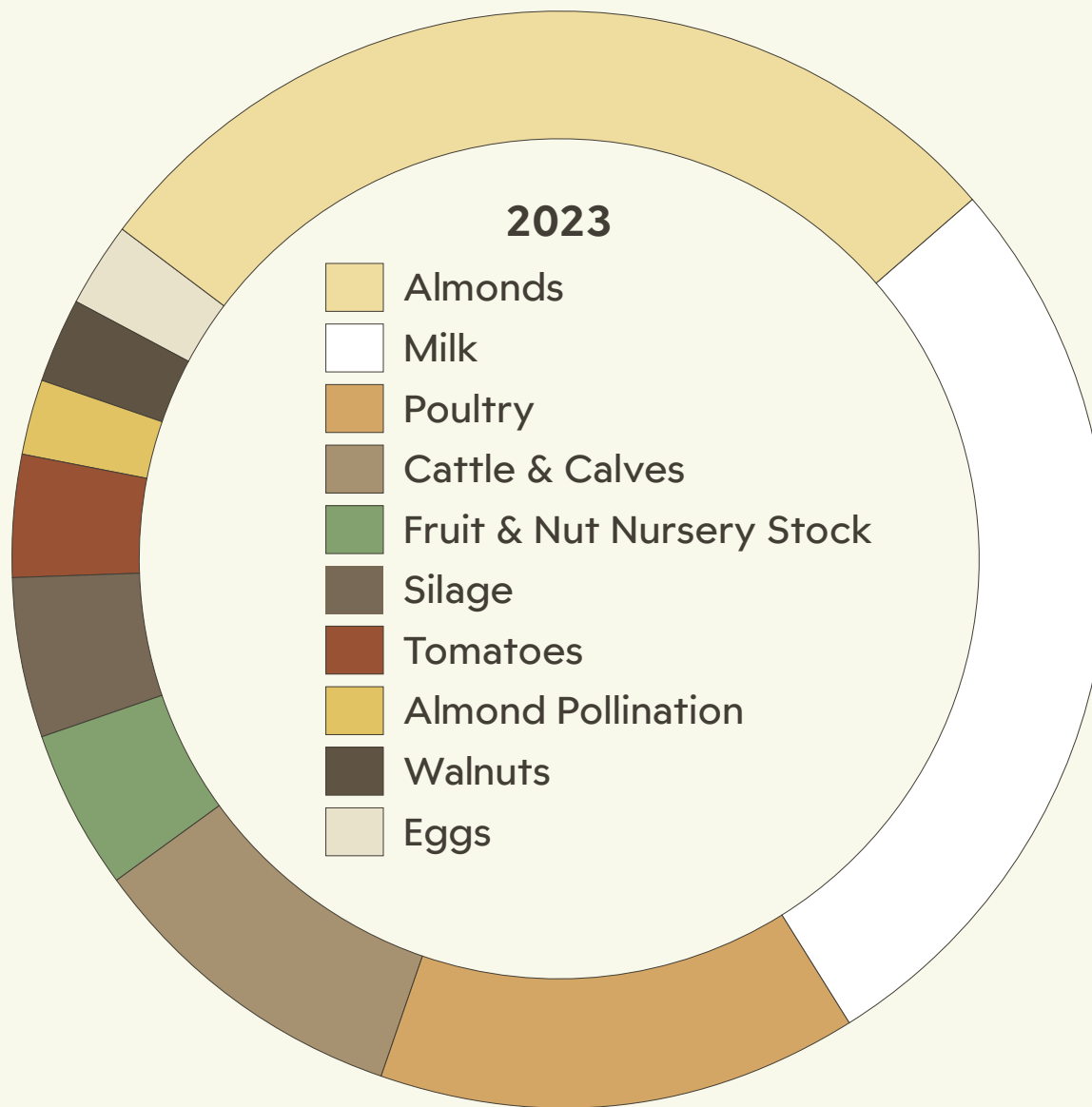


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SCFB MISSION STATEMENT

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.

TOP TEN COMMODITIES



CATEGORY	% of 2023 VALUE	2023 VALUE	2022 VALUE
ALMONDS, ALL	24%	\$813,444,000	\$752,971,000
MILK, ALL	23%	\$761,529,000	\$1,130,572,000
POULTRY, ALL	12%	\$399,855,000	\$383,168,000
CATTLE & CALVES, ALL	6%	\$208,749,000	\$192,802,000
FRUIT & NUT NURSERY STOCK	4%	\$146,328,000	\$175,035,000
SILAGE, ALL	4%	\$121,373,000	\$173,025,000
TOMATOES, ALL	3%	\$107,111,000	\$53,478,000
POLLINATION, ALMOND	2%	\$83,636,000	\$87,401,000
WALNUTS	2%	\$55,509,000	\$42,729,000
EGGS, ALL	2%	\$54,335,000	\$84,198,000
TOTAL TOP TEN	82%	\$2,751,869,000	\$3,075,379,000
ALL OTHER COMMODITIES	18%	\$614,213,000	\$651,103,000

2023 STANISLAUS COUNTY AGRICULTURAL REPORT

California fig sector hopes to raise profile of the fruit

Figs are in peak season, and California growers say they have a quality crop this year that more retailers should promote for fresh eating, even if most of their production still ends up going to make dried fruit. They have been trying to change that for years by promoting fresh figs while they're in season and educating consumers, who may know the fruit only as a filling for a certain cookie. "We're really trying to liberate the fig from the Newton," said Karla Stockli, CEO of the California Fresh Fig Growers Association and the California Fig Advisory Board.

Imperial Valley farmers reduce forage crop production to save water

Irrigators cut off water to a huge portion of the Imperial Valley's half-million acres of farmland earlier this month after the federal government approved a long-awaited program designed to bolster water levels on the Colorado River. The conservation agreement, authorized Aug. 12 by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the Imperial Irrigation District, pays farmers to stop irrigating forage crops such as alfalfa for a period during the summer. Farmers participating in the "deficit irrigation" program will be compensated to sacrifice one or two hay cuttings.

Water-right hearing could advance long-planned Sites Reservoir

The plan to build California's first new major reservoir in decades is advancing as the state considers whether to issue a water-right permit for the proposed Sites Reservoir, an off-stream water storage project that could store up to 1.5 million acre-feet of annually. The California State Water Resources Control Board last week began a public hearing process on the project's water-right permit application. Representatives of agriculture, water districts and government agencies are urging the state water board to approve the water-right permit to advance the project.

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UC Davis, other institutions to study seaweed as 'sustainable' specialty crop

A multi-state grant has been awarded to help develop Pacific dulse seaweed as “a sustainable, nutritious specialty crop,” the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced last week. The project is being undertaken by University of California, Davis, Oregon State University, University of Alaska Fairbanks and Kelp Line LLC. The effort is one of 65 projects to share in \$82.3 million in funding from the USDA’s Specialty Crop Multi-State Grant Program. More than \$23.3 million in funding was awarded for specialty crop programs in California.

Climate concerns are inspiring innovation in California wine regions

Winegrape growers are embracing innovations to monitor vineyard conditions amid California’s hotter, drier climate. In Napa Valley, growers are testing sensor technology designed by Agrology, a company that promotes regenerative farming and data tools to help farmers reduce their carbon footprint. Growers are also partnering with researchers working on developing new rootstocks and scions for warmer conditions. And the Sonoma County Winegrowers group is deploying a greenhouse emissions and carbon-sequestration accounting system.

Farmers evaluate demands, benefits of organic certification

With assumptions about high fees and onerous paperwork and inspections, some farmers have eschewed becoming certified organic even though they may already be farming organically or want to transition to earn higher prices. But those who have gone through the process suggest such perceptions may be overblown, with some saying the benefits of certification are worth the extra cost and work. Vasken Hauri of Country Nerd Farm in Mariposa County, said being able to label his specialty mushrooms with the certified organic logo is “a huge trust builder.”

Rare tomato disease detected in Sacramento Valley fields

Spurred by moisture and warm soil tem-

peratures, the fungal disease southern blight is typically a perennial problem of processing tomatoes in the southern San Joaquin Valley. But for the past two years, growers and pest control advisors have seen it in scattered Sacramento Valley fields where it’s been rare historically. Kurt Richter, who grows processing tomatoes, rice and other row crops in Colusa County, is among those who found southern blight in tomato fields for the first time this season. “It’s been tough this year,” he said.

Research on wild carrots seeks to improve stress tolerance in commercial varieties

Researchers at University of California, Davis, have received \$1 million in funding to study the genetic diversity of wild carrots in hopes of breeding resistance in commercial carrots to a fungal disease, *Alternaria*, and enhance farmers’ ability to grow carrots in water-deficient conditions. The Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research awarded a \$500,000 grant for the research, and the FFAR’s Crops of the Future Collaborative partners, Bayer, Bejo Zaden, Enza Zaden, Rijk Zwaan, Takii Seed, and Vilmorin Mikado, are providing \$500,000 in matching funds.

Walnut sector faces slow recovery, as growers pull less-productive trees

With more California walnut orchards being removed, the outlook for the industry is expected to improve as growers try to balance supply and demand. But such efforts alone will not be enough to put them on a fast track to market recovery and profitability. A report by RaboResearch Food and Agribusiness says walnut production may not decline as fast as acreage because growers are taking out older, less-productive trees and “heritage” varieties that are also lower yielding. Growers are also removing orchards with poor water availability or soil quality.

State pesticide regulators get funding infusion from new mill tax

Guided by a plan that prioritizes new pest management approaches and a goal to eliminate high-risk pesticides by 2050, state Department of Pesticide Regulation Direc-

tor Julie Henderson outlined priorities now being supported by a \$34 million revenue boost from raising the mill assessment on pesticide sales. Annual increases in the mill assessment—a fee that farmers pay when they purchase pesticides—went into effect in July. Henderson said the mill assessment increase will support Sustainable Pest Management initiatives and add 117 new positions.

Farm leaders sound alarm over increasing economic pressures

With some of the state’s major agricultural commodities struggling and farmers and ranchers facing increasing economic and regulatory pressures, California farm leaders say the industry will continue to lose farms as more are squeezed out and few people enter the business. In a meeting last week of the California State Board of Food and Agriculture, farmers and farm advocates representing specialty crops, winegrapes, cattle and dairy voiced their concerns about problems vexing the industry. Agricultural leaders warned of more consolidation and fewer farms.

Red leaf blotch disease found in California almond orchards

University of California plant pathologists have confirmed red leaf blotch disease in almonds for the first time in the state. The disease surfaced in May when a UC orchard crops advisor found unusual leaf symptoms in an almond orchard straddling the Merced-Madera county line. Infected leaves on the nonpareil, Monterey and Fritz varieties had yellow spots with orange to dark red-brown centers. The disease has been found to date in Madera, Merced, San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties. Officials say it likely entered the state on imported plant material.

STANISLAUS COUNTY



FREE ADS FOR FARM BUREAU MEMBERS

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

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this is the one thing the two of them would agree on—that we shouldn't be feeding people lab-grown meat," he said. "So, this truly is a bipartisan issue. It tends to get the attention of both Republicans and Democrats, especially people from agriculture states."

He said full bans are not the only option, but precise labeling is important. "The lab-grown industry wants it to be labeled as cultivated, which pulls better with consumers, and I think is inherently confusing. Whereas we and other groups believe that lab-grown meat is the real literal definition that ought to be on packages," Hubbard said. "So, there's a fight going on in many state houses about what you call this stuff and how you label it. And frankly, the language we use and adopt around this new novel sector will probably dictate its success, or lack thereof, with consumers."

Ag leaders and various advocacy groups around the nation continue to take on the topic of lab-grown meat. Speaking at the Nebraska Governor's Ag and Economic Summit, executive director of the Center for the Environment and Welfare, Jack Hubbard, pointed out the bipartisanship of the issue.

"Different states have taken different approaches, so Florida and Alabama have outright banned it. And you know, I think it's of note that after Governor DeSantis banned lab-grown meat in the state, Senator Federman, who really doesn't align politically at all with Ron DeSantis, came out and applauded him and said that



Labeling Lab-Grown Meat

Source: Sabrina Halvorson
National Correspondent / AgNet Media, Inc.

know, I think it's of note that after Governor DeSantis banned lab-grown meat in the state, Senator Federman, who really doesn't align politically at all with Ron DeSantis, came out and applauded him and said that

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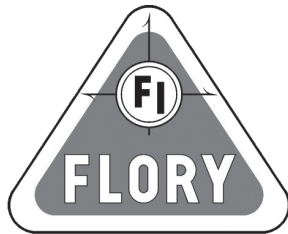
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2024 Turlock FFA Fair Results

Thurman Award Recipient - The Thurman award is presented to the 4-H Club and FFA Chapter representing the most diversity of projects within their program. The five components include: Chapter Group, Showmanship, Clean Barn, Still Exhibits and Outstanding Exhibitor.

Poultry Exhibition Show

* Kathryn Gutierrez - 1st Advance Showmanship, 1st Small Animal Master Show-

manship

* Jasmin Sanchez - 2nd Intermediate Showmanship

* Juan Fregoso - 1st Novice Showmanship

Poultry Meat Bird Show

* Novice Showmanship: 4th Christina Da Silva, 5th Anea Peralta, 8th Denton Walters

* Diego Peguero - 2nd Advance Showmanship

* 2nd Place Chapter Group

* Poultry Clean Barn

Group

Swine

* 5th Place Chapter Group

* Sydney Max - Reserve Champion AOB

* Logan Homen - 6th place Intermediate Showmanship

* Regan Homen - 6th place Advanced Showmanship

Rabbits

* Aurora Nix - 8th Advanced Showmanship

* Peyton Bruce - Outstanding Rabbit Exhibitor

* Rabbit Clean Barn

Sheep

* 4th Chapter Group

* Brylin Haley - Supreme Champion Market Lamb, 4th Advanced Showmanship

* Paige Schmidt - Supreme Champion Ewe, 4th place advanced breeding showmanship

Turkey Meat Bird Show

* Jaden Loflin - 5th Novice showmanship out of 86 exhibitors

* Brylinn Haley - 6th Intermediate Showmanship

* 3rd Place Chapter



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Meat Goats

- * Meat Goat Clean Barn
- * 3rd Place Chapter Group
- * Daniel Sanchez - Reserve Champion Market Meat Goat

Beef

- * 1st Place Chapter Group
- * Yesenia Mora - 7th place True Novice Showmanship
- * Jaden Loflin - 9th place True Novice Showmanship
- * Olivia Barletta - 3rd Place Intermediate Showmanship
- * Landen Cripe - 3rd Place Advance Show-

manship, 3rd overall haired steer, 1st class heifer calf, 3rd overall registered female, Champion pair of females, Grand Champion bred and owned, Outstanding Beef Exhibitor

Dairy

- * Betsy Theis - Reserve Champion FFA Milk Cow, 1st place showmanship
- * Mayci Lozano - Supreme Champion Milk Cow, 4th place registered showmanship, 5th place grade showmanship
- * George Gioletti - 4th place showmanship, Reserve Champion Grade Heifer
- * Chloe Chapman - 3rd Showmanship,

Grand and Reserve Grand Champion Registered Heifer, Reserve Supreme Champion Heifer, Outstanding Dairy Exhibitor, Outstanding Holstein Exhibitor

- * Jon Chapman - 2nd Showmanship
- * Jace Estacio - Reserve Grand Registered Bull

- * 2nd Registered Chapter Group
- * 1st Grade Chapter Group
- * Dairy Clean Barn

Horse

- * Betsy Theis - 4th showmanship, Outstanding Horse Exhibitor
- * Talia Stagi - 2nd showmanship
- * Vivis Romo - 7th showmanship
- * Avery Bettencourt - English Division All Around 1st in every class

Agriculture Mechanic Projects

- * Caleb Wilson - Outstanding Refurbished Project, Outstanding Ag Mechanics Exhibitor
- * Hans Tyson - Outstanding Ag Mechanics Unique Design/Safety Device
- * Tyler Gonzalez - Outstanding Ag Mechanics Most Interesting Contrivance
- * Owen Miller - Ag Mechanics Proficiency in Welding

Horticulture

- * 1st Place Landscape - "Dude Ranch"
- * Liliana Cabrales - Outstanding Ag Horticulture Exhibitor
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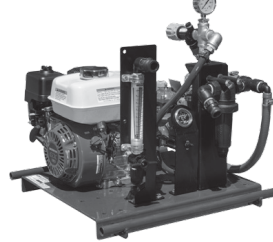
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Agricultural Education: In the Classroom, At Home and On the Farm

By: Zippy Duvall, AFBF President

As a father and now a grandfather, one of the most bittersweet moments is watching your kids and grandkids climb onto the bus for the first day of school each year. While it's easy to feel a bit sad that time is moving too fast, there is a swell of excitement for all they'll embark on in the new school year.

The start of a new school year is also a prime opportunity to sow the seed of agricultural education for the coming school year. These seeds will help our students grow a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the role agriculture plays in our lives. As generations become further removed from the farm, the gap between agriculture and consumers widens. That's why agricultural education is so critical – it bridges that gap and shows our next generation everything agriculture has to offer.

At Farm Bureau, we're already working to fill this gap head-on through the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture. Our Foundation is continually working to raise awareness and understanding of agriculture by providing resources for educators, tools for parents to use at home and opportunities for Farm Bureau members to volunteer in their local schools.

For educators and volunteers, the Foundation offers a wide array of resources designed to bring agriculture into the classroom in meaningful and engaging ways. On the Foundation's website, you'll find lesson plans, games, activities and videos, all crafted to be accessible and applicable for a variety of grades and class sizes. Each resource is thoroughly researched, written by education specialists and reviewed by subject matter experts, so teachers can feel confident in their accuracy. There are also scholarships and training programs such as On the Farm STEM training to help educators feel more equipped in their mission of agricultural education.

See "Classroom" on page 12



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Agenda includes: Pesticide continuing education, marketing, Cal OSHA insights, networking, human resources and more. Farm Bureau will be featured in the Resources Center. Learn more at <https://cvbexpo.com/>

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From "Classroom" on page 10

For parents, the Foundation provides numerous resources to help teach kids more about agriculture at home. A great way for parents and kids to learn together is with ag-accurate children's books, published through the Foundation's Feeding Minds Press. These books help share the world of farming in fun and unique ways, so whether you're reading about Chuck and his ice cream wish or learning about The Soil in Jackie's Garden, you can help your kids develop a stronger love for reading and a deeper understanding of agriculture. Also, September 6, is National Read a Book Day, which is the perfect time to explore

what Feeding Minds Press has available. Maybe your family will even end up starting a new tradition around it.

For Farm Bureau members who are looking for a way to give back, there are numerous opportunities to promote agri-



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Scan the QR code to learn more about how ABC drives demand for California almonds:



cultural education in your community. A great way to start is by reaching out to your county or state Farm Bureau to see what opportunities may already be available. And if there aren't any, I encourage you to start something new. Consider volunteering to do an accurate ag book reading at your local elementary school or library, organizing a farm tour or even setting up a booth at the county fair or another community event to talk about agriculture. Another simple way to start is by donating books and resources to support local teachers or sending a message to your local library requesting Feeding Mind Press books.

The Foundation relies on generous supporters like you. And if you are looking for another meaningful way to contribute, then I also invite you to consider making a donation to continue our excellent ag literacy work.

Whatever way you choose to volunteer or donate know that your efforts are truly making a difference to our young folks. On behalf of the Foundation Board and staff, I want to say thank you to the thousands of volunteers and donors across the country working with us to advance agricultural education!

As we enter this new school year, let's remember that the future of agriculture depends on today's students. Farm Bureau and our Foundation are committed to this mission, but it takes a collective effort to ensure that agricultural education remains a priority in our school and community. Whether you're an educator, a parent or a Farm Bureau member looking to give back, there's a role for you to play. Let's take this "back to school" season as an opportunity to inspire young minds and work towards ensuring the legacy of agriculture is instilled in our next generation.



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But the fourth and fifth generations of the Sciabica family have approached small-scale beer making with the same passion they've had for growing olives and making the best possible olive oils for the past 88 years.

"We want to be known on the olive oil side of things and beer as well — if we can create the foothold for it — for quality," said Craig Hilliker, Sciabica lead olive oil sensory analyst and more recently a certified beer quality and flavor analyst. "Currently, we're the oldest olive oil producer in the U.S. and the most awarded in the U.S."

about possibly brewing beer. Both Andrew and Hilliker were home brewers and figured John, a craft beer fan himself, would go for their idea.

"My uncle's been a craft beer early adopter since Sierra Nevada Pale Ale was one of the first craft beers," Andrew said.

He and Hilliker proposed canning their craft beer and selling it in the company gift shop, which John approved. They would market it under the Track 424 Brewery label, paying homage to the railroad spur that runs on the north side of their property on Yosemite Boulevard.

But when they priced out the cost of setting up a commercial brewery, Hilliker said their plans "got totally denatured, no pun intended." Instead, they turned to a small-scale home brewing set-up with tanks about the size of a commercial coffee urn.

Not being professional breweries, neither knew some of the finer points, like

The family's journey into craft brewing began in 2016, when Andrew Sciabica and Hilliker approached Jonathan Sciabica, CEO of Sciabica Family California Olive Oil and Gourmet Foods and Andrew's uncle,

Craft beer and extra-virgin olive oil

By Vicky Boyd

Craft beer and extra-virgin olive oil may seem alike an odd pairing at first glance.

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For customers who want to try several beers at one sitting, Track 424 offers flights of four.

how water sources may bring different chemistries to the beer. They also had problems with consistency from one batch to another, which made replicating a recipe difficult.

'Bob the Brewer' elevates offerings

Enter Bob Proffitt, a professional brewer who earned a bachelor's degree in fermentation science with a brewing focus from Oregon State University. He had spent the past 10 years as a brewer with Dogfish Head Brewing, Sam Adams Brewery and

Southern Pacific Brewery.

Proffitt moved to Modesto more than two years ago when his wife took a job with a local winery. He had been commuting to a Bay Area brewery when his wife, who had met Hilliker during an olive oil sensory class, introduced the two.

"We met Bob and knew we would have the ability to scale up faster and do research and development faster with him," Hilliker said. Proffitt started as brewmaster in July 2022.

"Bob really took us to that next level," Andrews added.

They then purchased a 3.5-barrel nano-brewery system, an already-plumbed all-inclusive set of small stainless steel tanks built on a pallet-like frame.

Birth of a taproom

With Proffitt at the helm, the brewery

See "BREWER" on page 18



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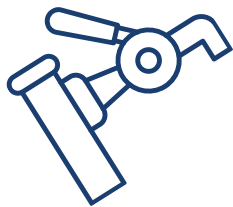
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From "BREWER" on page 15

celebrated its first birthday in August 2023. Then talk turned to opening a taproom, where Track 424 could introduce local craft beer drinkers to their offerings. It

also would be a casual place where people could stop in after work for a beer or meet for social activities like board games or watching football on the big-screen TVs.

They converted what had been a classroom used for meetings and olive oil sensory classes adjacent to the Sciabica gift shop into the taproom. A large sliding door separates the two and can be shut when the taproom is closed or when classes are in session. The taproom can still host olive oil tastings and classes.

The conversion was

put to its first test in September 2023 when Track 424 hosted a ticketed four-course beer-pairing dinner catered by Chef Tye Bauer of Bauer's and Bauhaus.

The taproom soon opened to the public with three beers pouring year-round: On the Bright Track Hazy IPA, Chug Along Crispy Pilsner and Hopomotive Double IPA. A few more seasonal brews are in rotation, including the upcoming Märzen, a full-bodied, less hoppy lager associated with German Oktoberfest.

Proffitt also is involved in occasional collaborations like Lil Mo' Love Session Hazy IPA, which Track 424 recently brewed along with Persuasion Brewing of Modesto.

In addition, they may have a limited pilot beer on tap that allows Proffitt to experi-



Brewmaster Bob Proffitt (standing) talks to a table of customers who came in to taste flights of beers.

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ment. For non-beer drinkers, Track 424 offers craft brew cocktails like Lavender Haze, a blend of lavender, mint, lime juice and pilsner.

Since they opened the taproom, Hilliker said they've had food trucks come on Fridays and Saturdays. But many are not reliable and don't show up when they said they would. To provide patrons with food they can count on, he said they have an on-site kitchen in the works.

This spring, the Sciabicas planted six rows of hops — three of the Cascade variety and three of Cashmere — at the family's farm along Dry Creek about a mile from the brewery. This is the same ranch that company founder Nicola "Nick" Sciabica purchased in 1925 and where he planted his first olive trees.

The hop vines will produce a limited number of cones this year and won't be in full production for another two years. Nevertheless, Proffitt already has plans to use them in upcoming beers. One is an all-West-Coast beer that includes water from the family farm's well and California-grown malted barley from Admiral Maltings in Alameda.

Complementary pairings

Track 424 already is gaining recognition in competitions for its quality, but the craft brewery has a long way to go to garner the myriad awards bestowed upon the family's extra-virgin olive oils.

This year, Chug Along Crispy Pilsner took third in the kellerbier or zwickelbier category in the California State Fair Commercial Craft Brew Competition. The family's

olive oils, on the other hand, this year took best of class in the flavored co-milled garlic category in the state fair's extra-virgin olive oil competition. Sciabica also earned four golds, three silvers and a bronze.

"Everything we sent was awarded," Hilliker said of their olive oils.

Adding craft beer and the taproom also is paying dividends to the family's core extra-virgin olive oil business.

"We had a huge challenge with the olive oil business connecting with anyone under 45 years old," Hilliker said, adding craft beer lovers tend to be on the younger side. "Craft beer attracts them and gets them interested in olive oil. The gift shop has seen 60% year-over-year sales increases. We're seeing unbelievable growth because we have so many new people coming here for the first time."



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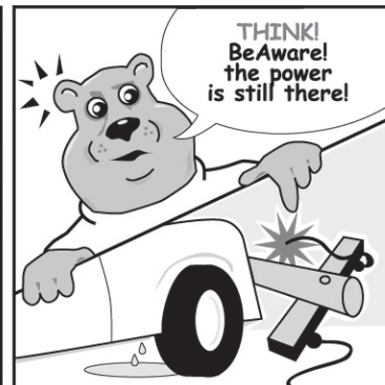
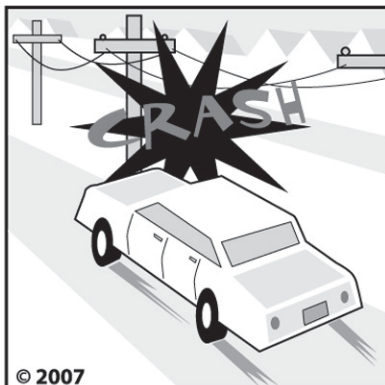
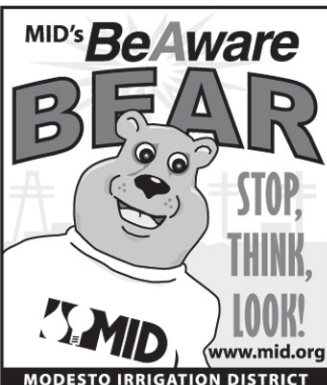
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The Track 424 Brewery and Taproom is open 4-8 p.m., Thursday; and noon-8 p.m., Friday and Saturday. It is located at 2150 Yosemite Blvd., Modesto. Their year-round beers are also available at a handful of Stanislaus County retailers and restaurants.

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WELCOME

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Operations for Campos Brothers Farms. Her leadership has driven strategic growth, operational efficiency, and innovation across the industry. Beyond her operational roles, Rodriguez has strongly advocated for the almond industry on regulatory and compliance matters.

“I’m excited and honored to be selected to lead the Almond Alliance,” said Alexi Rodriguez. “I’m looking forward to utilizing my knowledge and experience to advocate for this great industry and connect with industry members as we navigate the challenges ahead.”

Rodriguez’s appointment follows an extensive

search process, underscoring the Almond Alliance’s commitment to finding a leader who embodies the organization’s vision and values. Her leadership is expected to bring fresh perspectives and strategies to strengthen the Alliance’s role as the voice of American almonds. Rodriguez is uniquely positioned to lead the Almond Alliance as it continues to promote the interests of its members and drive the industry toward a

sustainable and prosperous future.

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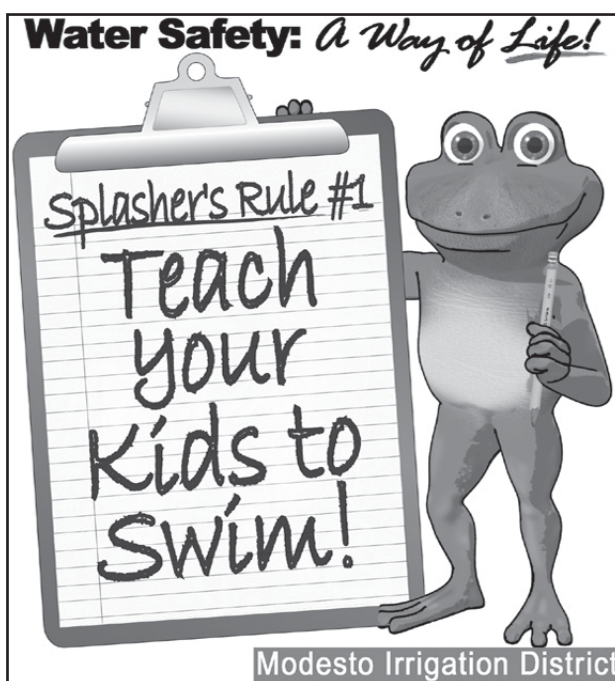
About the Almond Alliance
Almond Alliance is the leading authority in state and national policy, championing American almond farmers, industry, and community for the continued global growth, innovation, and success of American almonds and agriculture. Established in 1980, the Almond Alliance is a non-profit trade association with a local and international network of almond processors, hullers/shellers, growers, and allied businesses. The Alliance is dedicated to providing resources and solutions for our members, ensuring industry success and growth opportunities. Learn more at almondalliance.org.

Almond Alliance Announces Alexi Rodriguez as New CEO

TURLOCK, CA—The Almond Alliance is proud to announce the appointment of Alexi Rodriguez as its new Chief Executive Officer, effective January 2025. With a distinguished career in the almond industry and a deep commitment to agricultural advocacy, Rodriguez will lead the Alliance into its next chapter of growth.

“We are thrilled to welcome Alexi Rodriguez as the next CEO of the Almond Alliance,” said Blake Vann, Chair of the Almond Alliance. “Her proven leadership and deep understanding of the almond industry make her the ideal choice to guide our organization into the future. Alexi has been a steadfast advocate for the industry, and we are confident that under her leadership, the Almond Alliance will continue to thrive and champion the interests of our members.”

Rodriguez brings over 15 years of experience in the industry, having served in various high-impact positions, including Chair for the Almond Board of California (ABC) and Director of



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U.S. dairy farmers are well-acquainted with challenges, from market volatility to industry consolidation and shifting consumer preferences. Now, a new hurdle has emerged that could transform herd management practices: H5N1 bird flu on dairy farms.

zoonotic transmission of the virus from birds to dairy cattle and later, farm workers. The virus normally infects domestic and wild bird species. It's "highly contagious" and often fatal for birds. It's rarely fatal for cattle and humans and often limited to flu-like symptoms, but other animals — namely hogs — may be more susceptible to severe, potentially mortal symptoms. That's got a lot of attention on how dairy farmers respond to the bird flu threat.

While the virus is lethal to poultry, it poses a significant financial threat to dairy farmers. Bird flu in dairy cattle could necessitate operational changes

How does bird flu affect dairy farms? For dairy farmers, the bird flu can cause financial losses from:

- Decreased milk production and the inability to meet contracted milk deliveries
- Higher production costs
- Costs to add biosecurity measures to a farm
- Replacing cows lost or that see sharp declines in milk output

to prevent or minimize the impact of these disruptions to production. What is the bird flu?

Federal testing confirmed H5N1 in dairy cows — Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 — in March 2024. The discovery marked a first, the

"While dairy cows that have been infected with H5N1 generally recover well, it does dramatically limit milk production, causing financial losses for producers with affected premises," according to a USDA report. How to protect dairy cows from H5N1

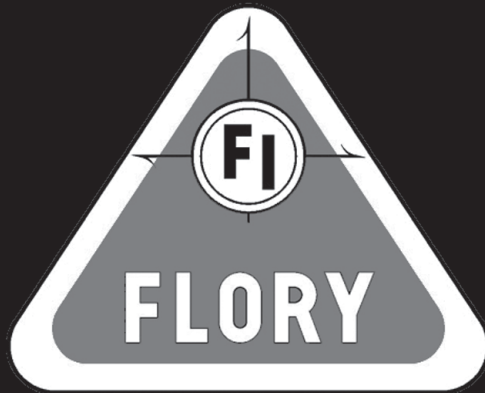
Those losses — and the costs dairy farmers may incur to test for and slow or stop the spread of H5N1 — were the motivation behind USDA expanding dairy farmer support in the wake of the virus. Historically, dairy farms don't have the biosecurity measures in place that are more common on poultry and hog farms.

"This is a real wake-up call that we have to be more diligent with

See "Dairy" on page 23

'A real wake-up call': H5N1 bird flu the latest challenge facing U.S. dairy farmers

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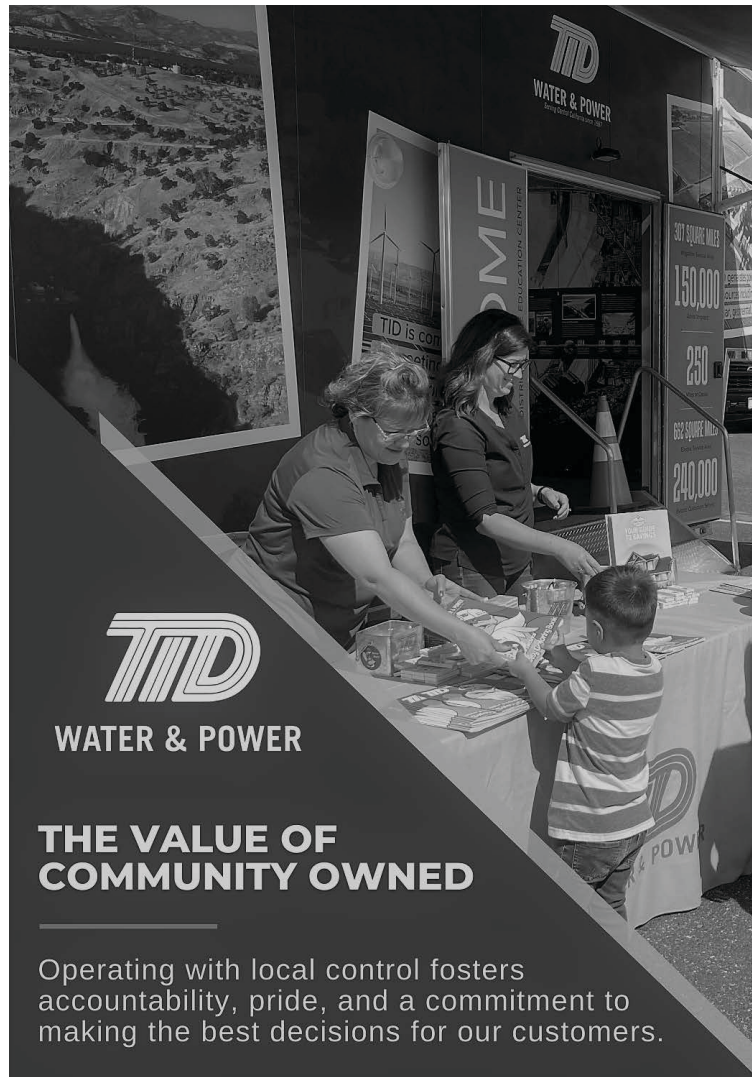
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Voracious Grasshoppers Threaten Western Rangeland and Crops

Source: American Farm Bureau

When learning U.S. history, narratives of vast swarms of locusts ravaging millions of acres of farmland are often recounted. Not all grasshoppers are locusts, and the swarms aren't quite as big as they were in the 1800s, but grasshoppers and Mormon crickets remain a persistent risk to agriculture in the West, inflicting significant damage to rangeland used for grazing and crops.

Almost 400 native species of grasshoppers inhabit the Western United States, though only a small fraction (about 12 species) are considered pests. Grasshoppers compete with cattle and other herbivores (including wildlife like deer and elk) for forage and are more likely to become a threat in areas with less than 30 inches of rainfall annually. They can consume up to 50% of their body weight each day in forage (while cattle consume 1.5-2.5% of their body weight). Put differently, just 30 pounds of grasshoppers will eat as much as a 600-pound steer raised for beef in a day. Grasshoppers are an even bigger menace to crop farmers and ranchers on public and private lands when drought conditions are added to the mix.

Grasshopper and cricket outbreaks not only result in the physical destruction of forage and crops but also contribute to soil erosion and degradation, disrupt rangeland nutrient cycles and impede rangeland water

filtration, which can have lasting impacts on rangeland ecosystems. Western landowners face heightened risks from grasshoppers due to the substantial amount of federally owned land in the region. Pest infestations on federal lands reduce the quantity and quality of forage available for those with public lands grazing leases. In the absence of grasshopper and cricket management on federal lands, insects can migrate onto private lands, undermining the effectiveness of common private pest management efforts. This movement from public to private lands complicates the control of these pests.


Literature on current economic impacts of grasshoppers on agriculture is limited. Generally, monetary losses either fall under the value of crops or rangeland consumed by insects that could no longer be sold on the market or consumed by livestock to produce meat or wool and the cost to

treat populations that have reached pest-concern levels. Some of the best available data comes from county agricultural commissioner disaster reports in California that indicate more than \$52 million in losses in a single county in one year.

A recent Market Intel analysis only scratches the surface in terms of describing these economic damages due to the limited data available and isolated surveying. Efforts to manage and mitigate grasshopper populations, led by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service through the Rangeland Grasshopper and Mormon Cricket Suppression Program, involve sophisticated monitoring and targeted treatments. Continued coordination and efforts among the federal government, states and private landowners is essential to safeguarding the livelihoods of farmers and ranchers against these small but hungry pests.


Daniel Munch is an economist at the American Farm Bureau Federation.

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From "Dairy" on page 21

biosecurity. You can't even go into a hog farm today without showering in first," said Nationwide Senior Dairy Consultant Dan Rice. "On most dairy farms, you don't even have to sanitize your boots. We need to be more mindful of biosecurity by adding things like this to our farms."

Minimizing farm entry points and limiting access to only workers, veterinarians and other essential people can help keep the virus away from a dairy farm.

"Hauling cattle from multiple farms to a sale barn, for example, is one way to spread the virus easily. You can help prevent this risk by locating a loading area where you can move cattle so a truck isn't driving onto your main farm," Rice said. "I have seen dairy farms with five entry points. That

makes it extremely difficult to control access. Though it's not always easy, one entry point is ideal."

Create a 'culture of safety' for bird flu
These steps — on top of regular herd health monitoring, securing feed from reliable suppliers and creating a plan for if the bird flu does show up on your farm — can help farmers be ready. That readiness will go a long way to keeping the virus away from not just dairy cows but other livestock like hogs that may be more endangered by the bird flu.

"Create a culture of safety to keep your farm safe for your families and workers," Rice said. "In the case of H5N1, that culture needs to be about safety and biosecurity to prevent the disease from spreading."

Rice recommends making sure you're in regular contact with your veterinarian in case testing becomes necessary. It's also a good idea to stay in touch with your risk management partner. Talk to your Nationwide Farm Certified agent to see what you can do to build a culture of safety on your dairy farm.

Visit AgInsightCenter.com for more resources and expert tips to help you run a successful business and maintain the safety of your operation.

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The Renaissance of Wine and Brew in California's Central Valley and how Digital Marketing Takes Center Stage

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

California's Central Valley, a region renowned for its agricultural bounty, is experiencing a vibrant renaissance in its wine and brewing industries. In recent years, local entrepreneurs and traditional farmers have begun to rediscover the art of hop growing and craft brewing, complementing the well-established vineyards that have long produced some of the state's most celebrated wines. The resurgence of these industries has been significantly bolstered by strategic digital marketing and the effective use of optimized websites.

Revival of Hop Growing and Craft Brewing
The Central Valley's resurgence in hop growing marks a return to its agricultural roots, with local farmers and new entrants embracing the crop due to its profitability and the booming demand for craft beer. This trend is supported by a growing number of small breweries popping up throughout the region, from Modesto to Fresno. These breweries often emphasize local ingredients, including freshly grown hops, which appeal to consumers interested in sustainable and locally sourced products.

Similarly, the wine industry continues to thrive, driven by the Valley's ideal climatic conditions for vineyards. The wines produced here, known for their robust flavors and high quality, compete on both national and international stages. This resurgence in both sectors is not only enhancing the local economy but also in-

creasing tourism, with more visitors drawn to the area for tastings and tours.

The Role of Digital Marketing

Digital marketing has been a game changer for the wine and brewing industries in the Central Valley. In an era where online presence is crucial, having a well-optimized website can make a significant difference in how a brewery or winery is perceived and how well it can attract and retain customers. An optimized website serves multiple functions: it enhances visibility in search engine results, provides essential information about the products and experiences offered, and acts as a platform for e-commerce.

Breweries and wineries use their websites to tell their story, highlight the uniqueness of their products, and showcase the authenticity of their production processes. Through engaging content such as blog posts, behind-the-scenes videos, and virtual

tours, these businesses can connect with their audience on a deeper level, building brand loyalty and encouraging repeat visits.

Social Media and Online Strategies

Further amplifying their online presence, many businesses in the industry leverage social media platforms to engage directly with their customers. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter allow for the sharing of daily activities, harvest updates, and special events, creating a community around the brand. Social media also provides a way for businesses to receive immediate feedback and interact with customers in real-time, which can be invaluable for building customer relationships and adjusting business strategies based on consumer preferences.

Additionally, digital advertising and email

See "Marketing" on page 26



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From "Marketing" on page 24

marketing campaigns are effectively used to promote new releases, special promotions, and events. These tools enable businesses to reach targeted audiences, enhance their market reach, and increase direct sales.

The revival of hop cultivation and the sustained success of the wine industry in California's Central Valley are shining examples of how traditional industries can thrive in the modern age. Supported by strategic digital marketing efforts, local breweries and wineries are not only surviving but thriving. They are reaching wider audiences, enhancing customer engagement, and ultimately contributing to the

region's reputation as a premier destination for wine and craft beer enthusiasts. As these industries continue to evolve, their digital strategies will play an even more critical role in their growth and success, underscoring the power of technology in transforming traditional businesses.

To enhance your company's online presence, whether it's creating a new website, updating an existing one, needing assistance with Online Reputation Management or seeking a virtual assistant

for social media posting or phone support, visit www.sisbroinnovation.com. You can also contact Sisbro Innovation directly at (800) 291-9102 for further assistance or call Kathryn Ramos directly to schedule a FREE consultation at (719) 237-9155.



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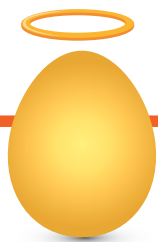
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California Officials Enforcing EPA Order Banning Dacthal

Source: Brian German, Ag News Director / AgNet West

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has banned the herbicide Dacthal, commonly known as DCPA. It is the first time in 40 years that EPA has issued an emergency ban, citing serious health risks associated with the material. The ban, effective immediately, is being enforced by the California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association (CACASA), who have quickly informed local farmers of the prohibition of the use of DCPA.

CACASA had already been preparing farmers for this possibility, so the transition should go smoother. Dacthal is registered to control weeds in both agricultural and non-agricultural settings and is typically used on crops such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, and onions. EPA views the material's potential harm to fetal thyroid development as being too significant to ignore, which has led to the emergency action. California officials are now conducting inspections to ensure compliance with the ban.

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