

The Stanislaus Farm News

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture

STANISLAUS COUNTY



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

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County Farm Bureau
Vol.76 No.2 February 7, 2025

"It is only the farmer who faithfully plants seeds in the Spring, who reaps a harvest in the Autumn." - B. C. Forbes

Published Fridays by the
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WHEN & WHERE

Stanislaus County Farm
Bureau Boardroom,
1201 L Street, Modesto

English 7:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Spanish 12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

- March 25, 2025
- April 8, 2025
- April 22, 2025
- May 6, 2025
- May 20, 2025
- **Must attend all 5 sessions**



To Register:
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Call our office @
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Full Enrollment is required,
see below for details.



The Supervisory Development Academy is **FREE** this year because Stanislaus County Workforce Development (SCWD) secured grant funding.

The funding requires full enrollment, that requires the following:

1. Register in CalJobs
2. Watch Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Orientation Video on SCWD website
3. Review/complete the SCWD Eligibility Packet
4. Gather income verification and required data from last 6 months.

Questions?

Call Anna @ Farm Bureau - 209-522-7278

What Happens During a WIOA Eligibility Appointment?

1. Workforce Specialist and client meet in-person or by telephone.
2. Workforce Specialist completes the step-by-step WIOA Title I Application wizard with the client to establish Adult or Dislocated Worker eligibility.
3. Client signs Application and signs and completes forms included in the Eligibility Packet (if not done previously)

What Happens AFTER Eligibility has been completed?

1. Meet with a Career Services Specialist
2. Provide Identity & Employment Authorization
3. Verification, if you are a veteran
4. Selective Service Status (males ages 18 up to 26)
5. Family income for the last 6 months example: paycheck stubs

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.



STANISLAUS COUNTY FARM BUREAU
Eastside Regional Meeting
Thursday, March 6th
6:00 PM
Fruit Yard



STANISLAUS COUNTY FARM BUREAU
Westside Regional Meeting
Thursday, February 20th
6:00 PM
Almond Wood



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STANISLAUS COUNTY FARM BUREAU
Northeast Regional Meeting
Tuesday, February 25, 2025
6:00 PM
Dying Breed Brewing



STANISLAUS COUNTY FARM BUREAU
Southern Regional Meeting
Monday, February 24th
11:30 AM
Hilmar Cheese Co.



California Farm Bureau voices support for farmworkers, dispels rumors of widespread disruptions

California Farm Bureau published a press release Jan. 30 dispelling erroneous news reports and social media posts that claimed immigration enforcement raids had caused widespread labor shortages affecting citrus harvest in the Central Valley. A Border Patrol operation in Kern County disrupted work on some farms last month, but employees returned to work after a few days. "We recognize that some workers may feel uncertain right now," said Bryan Little, senior director of policy advocacy at the Farm Bureau. "We will do everything in our power to ensure that agriculture remains a

place where you are safe and supported."

California Young Farmers & Ranchers excel at national Farm Bureau convention

California Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers stood out in competitive events at the American Farm Bureau Federation annual convention, held Jan. 24-29 in San Antonio. Representing the Golden State in the YF&R Excellence in Agriculture Award, Jynel Gularte of Monterey County earned a fourth-place finish in the national competition. The award recognizes YF&Rs who do not derive most of their income from an agricultural operation but who contribute and grow through their involvement in agricul-

ture and leadership. Gularte, from Gonzales, is controller and compliance officer for her family's vegetable farm. She serves as chairwoman of the Central Coast YF&R.

Regulatory price tag mounts for lettuce growers

On the Voice of California Agriculture podcast, produced by California Farm Bureau, host Gary Sack discussed a recent study that found the cost to California lettuce growers of complying with the state's environmental, labor and food safety regulations has increased by a whopping 63.7% during the past seven years. As of last year, increased regulations brought the total cost



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of compliance for lettuce growers to \$1,600 per acre, the researchers found, accounting for more than 12% of total production costs, even as farmgate values for the crop remained nearly unchanged.

California Bountiful TV tours Orange County

In its latest episode, California Bountiful TV explores agricultural and culinary landmarks in Orange County. Host Aubrey Aquino visits an Anaheim food hall housed in an old citrus packinghouse, the agritourism destination Tanaka Farms in Irvine and a unique dining establishment that features fresh, local produce. The weekly show produced by the California Farm Bureau is up for three Taste Awards this year, with voting for the Viewers Choice category taking place through Feb. 7.

Dairies decry draft waste discharge rules

To reduce nitrates and ensure that people have access to safe drinking water, the state has proposed tighter water quality requirements for all California dairies that collect dairy waste and apply it to land. The draft order, if adopted as proposed, establishes new precedential groundwater quality

protection requirements that would apply to all California dairies that apply their dairy waste to land, said Kari Fisher, senior director and counsel of legal advocacy at the California Farm Bureau.

California drops 'Clean Fleets' rule phasing out diesel trucks

California has dropped its landmark rule that would have phased out nearly all diesel trucks in the coming years, the California Air Resources Board announced earlier this month. The "first-in-the-world" rule, called Advanced Clean Fleets, was adopted in 2023 and was set to phase out the sale of new medium- and heavy-duty diesel trucks, including the big rigs that transport many agricultural products. State officials said this month they will not pursue that rule or another clean trucking rule after the Biden administration's Environmental Protection Agency failed to approve waivers for them before President Donald Trump took office.

Gene editing behind two new self-pollinating Nonpareil almond varieties

Two California companies are in the final stretch of a multiyear marathon to bring

farmers the world's first Nonpareil almond variety that can pollinate itself—a development that could help growers reduce the need for bees, lower production costs and increase their bottom line. The companies, Ohalo Genetics and Burchell Nursery, are on a similar timeline: They plan to begin nursery trials this year and to have limited supplies by late 2026 to allow growers to plant them for testing on a first-come basis.

Both expect to begin commercial deliveries to growers in 2027.

Study finds skyrocketing cost of regulatory compliance for California lettuce growers. The cost to California's lettuce growers of complying with the state's environmental, labor and food safety regulations has surged 63.7% over the past seven years, reaching \$1,600 per acre and accounting for more than 12% of their production costs, according to a study commissioned by the Monterey County Farm Bureau and prepared by two Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, professors. Since 2006, compliance costs have risen by 1,366%. Despite this, lettuce growers saw just a 0.37% increase in market prices for their products from 2017 to 2024, highlighting the growing financial strain on the sector.



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FREE ADS FOR FARM BUREAU MEMBERS

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

Classified Ad's \$4.40 per run.

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RATES: Display rates on request. Terms are cash. Ads should be paid for at time of first insertion or immediately after receipt of bill if order is placed by telephone or mail.

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California DPR Launches New Spray-Days Online System

Source: Almond Board

This month, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) is introducing a new online system, SprayDays, sharing Notices of Intent (NOI) to use a restricted use pesticide with the public. While the system will not be available to the public until March, growers and pest control advisors (PCAs) are encouraged to prepare for this change now.

SprayDays – built to meet DPR’s promise to allow a prior notification to the public of some pesticide applications – is built onto the existing CalAgPermits online system. Growers and PCAs will be required to use electronic filing unless an exemption is granted by the county agricultural commissioner. “Growers and applicators must use the CalAgPermits system for NOI submis-

sions starting February 26, 2025. If electronic filing is not possible, they will need to obtain approval to submit a paper NOI from the County Ag Commissioner office,” explained Gabriele Ludwig, director of environmental policy at the Almond Board of California.

Transitioning to an Online System

As Ludwig explained, the new system builds on existing NOI processes, which already requires pesticide applicators to provide advance notice of restricted-use pesticide applications. SprayDays leverages the CalAgPermits program which is aimed at streamlining submissions and increasing public access to information, according to DPR.

NOIs must still be submitted at least 48 hours before a planned application. For fumigants, the advance notice deadline extends to 72 hours (Note: County Ag Commissioner offices may have their own, longer deadlines). In both cases, the process remains consistent

with current requirements, though the submission method now shifts to a digital platform.

According to Ludwig, “The practical process of filing an NOI hasn’t changed significantly, but growers need to familiarize themselves with the electronic system to ensure compliance.”

Features of SprayDays

Once the information is live to the public on March 26, 2025, the system offers two main tools for the public to obtain information about NOIs.

1. Notifications: Users can sign up to receive email or text alerts for planned pesticide applications near up to 10 addresses. Notifications will include the type of pesticide and the application window – which NOI windows are good for up to four days

See DPR on page 22

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Navigating California's New Indoor Heat Standards and Labor Challenges in 2025

By Anna Genasci, SCFB

As California agriculture steps into 2025, regulatory changes continue to shape the industry. In a recent Farm Bureau Friday podcast, I sat down with Bryan Little, Chief Operating Officer of Farm Employers Labor Service (FELS), to discuss the latest labor regulations affecting growers and farm employers. From newly implemented indoor heat standards to evolving workplace violence prevention rules and the push for autonomous tractors, California agriculture faces an increasingly complex regulatory landscape.

Understanding the Indoor Heat Regulation

One of the most discussed changes this year is California's new indoor heat illness prevention standard. Implemented last summer by Cal/OSHA, this regulation is designed to protect workers in environments where air conditioning is not feasible. Initially focused on warehouses, the standard also impacts agriculture, covering workspaces such as greenhouses, packing sheds, and even tractor cabs.

"California agriculture has long led the way in protecting outdoor workers from heat illness," Little explained. "But this new indoor regulation presents unique challenges, especially in environments where controlling temperature isn't practical."

For compliance, employers must implement engineering controls, such as air conditioning, to maintain indoor temperatures below 80 degrees. When that isn't possible, alternative measures include:

- Providing shaded or air-conditioned recovery areas.
- Ensuring access to water and encouraging frequent hydration.
- Allowing workers to rotate between cooler areas.
- Monitoring employees for heat stress

and providing training on prevention. Little acknowledged that enforcement will likely focus on warehouses initially, but agricultural employers should prepare now by documenting training, workplace modifications, and safety protocols.

Workplace Violence Prevention: A One-Size-Fits-All Challenge

Another regulatory hurdle is the recently enacted Workplace Violence Prevention standard. Originally designed for office settings, retail stores, and hospitals, this rule now applies to agriculture, requiring employers to assess risks and develop a written prevention plan.

While physical violence in agriculture is rare, workplace safety concerns still exist. "Domestic disputes can sometimes spill into the workplace," Little noted. "Ensuring controlled access to farm sites is an important step toward compliance."

Many in the industry find the regulation burdensome and disconnected from real agricultural risks. To ease compliance, FELS has developed a workplace violence prevention plan tailored for farm employers. Additionally, Farm Bureaus are hosting training sessions to help employers and supervisors understand the new requirements.

"The regulation feels like it

was written for convenience stores, not ag workplaces," I observed. Little agreed, emphasizing the need for greater collaboration between regulators and the industry.

The Push for Autonomous Tractors: Innovation vs. Regulation

Autonomous tractors promise to revolutionize California agriculture by improving efficiency, reducing labor needs, and enhancing worker safety. Machines like the Guss autonomous air blast sprayer are already demonstrating their potential in orchards and vineyards.

"Instead of a driver wearing a respirator and a 'moon suit' while towing an air blast sprayer, we now have the option to remove the operator entirely," Little explained. "This significantly improves safety."

Despite the benefits, outdated Cal/OSHA regulations from 1977 are slowing adoption. However, in November 2024, the Cali-



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California Farm Bureau successfully advocated for an advisory committee to update these rules.

"We finally have the opportunity to modernize the regulations and pave the way for wider adoption of autonomous equipment," Little said. Until then, growers seeking to use autonomous technology must navigate a cumbersome variance process.

Minimum Wage and Overtime: The Growing Cost of Business

As of January 1, 2025, all California agricultural employers must adhere to the same wage and overtime rules as other industries—an eight-hour workday, a forty-hour workweek, and time-and-a-half pay for overtime hours.

"One of the most common questions we get at FELS is how overtime is calculated," Little said. "Daily and weekly overtime are

calculated separately, and employers must pay based on the larger figure."

While many farm employers already pay above the minimum wage due to labor shortages, the increased costs add pressure to an already tight bottom line. Studies show that overtime laws, originally intended to help farmworkers earn more, have actually led to fewer hours and reduced overall income for many employees.

To offset rising labor costs, the Farm Bureau is advocating for a tax credit covering the additional cost of overtime beyond the base minimum wage.

"For rural communities, even a \$200-\$300 tax credit could make a meaningful difference," Little said.

The Bigger Picture: Consumer Awareness and Support for Local Agriculture

With California farm employers facing mounting regulatory and financial pressures, there is an opportunity to educate consumers on the true cost of locally grown food.

"California has some of the strictest labor laws in the world," I pointed out. "When consumers buy local, they support a system that ensures workers are treated fairly."

While regulatory challenges persist, organizations like Farm Bureau and FELS continue to provide vital resources, advocacy, and education to help farmers navigate these changes. With ongoing collaboration between policymakers and industry leaders, the future of California agriculture can remain both innovative and sustainable. For more information on labor compliance and farm employer resources, visit <https://www.fels.net/> or contact Stanislaus County Farm Bureau.



YF&R
Informational
Night

FEB 19, 2025
5:30PM

Stanislaus Farm Bureau Office
1201 L Street
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Join us as we hear from past YF&R members, the YF&R State Chair and the California Farm Bureau YF&R Director.



STANISLAUS COUNTY FARM BUREAU
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2025 TRAININGS



Register here:

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

February 25, 2025 Food Safety - FSMA

9:00-10:30am - Spanish
10:30-12:00pm - English

What is FSMA? Who does it apply to?
How do I comply? What should I expect during
an inspection?

Pricing: Member \$50/Nonmember \$60

June 5, 2025 CPR & First Aid

8:00-12:00pm - Spanish
1:00-5:00pm - English

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

Pricing: Member \$100/Nonmember \$125

March 6, 2025 Pesticide Handler & Fit Testing

9:00-12:00pm - Spanish
1:00-4:00pm - English

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

Pricing: Member \$60/Nonmember \$75

July 31, 2025 Tractor Safety

9:00-10:00am - Spanish
10:00-11:00am - English

CalOSHA requires that employees who
operate equipment be trained annually.

Pricing: Member \$40/Nonmember \$50

May 1, 2025 Indoor&Outdoor Heat Illness Prevention

9:00-10:00am - Spanish
10:00-11:00am - English

CalOSHA requires this training annually for
employees.

Pricing: Member \$40/Nonmember \$50

October 23, 2025 Hazardous Ag Materials (HAM)

9:00-10:30am - Spanish
10:30-12:00pm - English

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Understanding Pesticide Drift and its Implications

By Kristin Platts | Digital Content Writer, West Coast Nut

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As public awareness of pesticide applications grows, so do the complaints associated with odors from agricultural practices. A recent Spray Safe event in Modesto, Calif., hosted by the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau, highlighted the issue of pesticide drift and its implications for growers. Spray drift, as defined during the session, is the airborne movement of pesticides away from the intended target area during or shortly after application, excluding post-application movement from volatilization, evaporation or soil erosion.

When investigating drift complaints, inspectors focus on several key factors and closely examine weather conditions, including wind speed, direction, temperature and other environmental factors at the time of application. Residue evidence is another critical aspect, with inspectors collecting samples from surrounding areas, such as swabs from surfaces and foliage samples, to determine if pesticide drift occurred. They also assess applicator decisions to evaluate whether "due care" was exercised, a standard requiring reasonable precautions like those of a competent professional in the same field.

Stanislaus County Deputy Agricultural Commissioner Judith Arroyo, who oversees the Pesticide Use Enforcement program, emphasized the importance of accurate sampling to provide physical evidence of pesticide presence and assess the degree of exposure.

"Our goal is to prove or disprove violations and guide mitigation strategies," she said.

Arroyo explained sampling techniques can include surface swabs, residue collection and, in some cases, air and water samples, depending on the specific circumstances of the incident. When asked about the primary indicators investigated in a drift case, Arroyo said inspectors review weather reports, contact applicators about field conditions during the application and collect samples to assess whether drift occurred.

"It's about understanding all factors and gathering evidence," she said.

Odor Complaints and Drift Misunderstandings

An emerging issue discussed at the event was the classification of odor complaints as drift incidents involving products like Zeal MVP and Goal 2XL. Chris Simas, territory sales manager at Valent USA, explained how Zeal MVP has been an effective tool against pests like spider mites, but it emits a noticeable smell during or after application.

"The odor isn't pleasant, but it's due to solvents that make the product more effective," Simas said.

He encourages growers to communicate with neighbors before applying pesticides to reduce misunderstandings and foster better relationships.

See *SpraySafe* on page 17

California Farm Bureau stands with agricultural workers and farmers, calls for workforce stability amid reported concerns

Source: *Ca Farm Bureau*

Sacramento, CA – While there have been news reports of unease among some farm employees, the California Farm Bureau has been in contact with numerous farmers across the state and has not heard of any widespread workforce disruption.

Bryan Little, senior director of policy advocacy at the California Farm Bureau, which represents more than 26,000 farm and ranch families in the state, clarified that while concerns exist, farmers are continuing operations. While it's unclear if all farms are fully operational, Farm Bureau has not received reports indicating otherwise, and efforts are always underway to ensure workforce stability.

"We recognize that some workers may feel uncertain right now, and we want to be very clear: California agriculture depends on and values its workforce," Little said.

"Farm employees are not just workers — they are partners in this industry. They are people with families, dreams and an incredible work ethic that keeps food on tables across America. We understand the uncertainty some might feel right now, and we want to be absolutely clear: California's farmers stand with you. We respect you. We value you. And we will do everything in our power to ensure that agriculture remains a place where you are safe and supported."

With one-third of the nation's agricultural workforce located in California, farm employees play an indispensable role in food production. These skilled workers plant, cultivate and harvest the crops that make California the leading producer of fruits, vegetables and nuts in the United States.

"Without these employees, crops would go unharvested, rural businesses would suf-

fer and food prices could rise for families across the country," Little said. "This is not just a farm issue—it's a food security issue, an economic issue and a community issue."

The interdependence of agriculture and rural economies is without question, according to Little. Thousands of employees in ag-adjacent industries—including food processing, transportation and equipment suppliers—depend on the steady flow of agricultural work to sustain their livelihoods.

Little addressed the urgent need for immigration policy reform, noting that California's agricultural workforce challenges are not new.

"Farmers and ranchers have struggled with chronic labor shortages for years, and uncertainty surrounding immigration policy only exacerbates the problem," he said.

"California's farmers and ranchers are ready to work with the administration and Congress to advance real, bipartisan workforce reforms this year," Little said. "This isn't just about filling jobs—it's about ensuring security and stability for the agricultural workforce and the farmers who depend on them."

To provide a long-term solution, Little outlined three key priorities for workforce reform:

Modernizing the H-2A agricultural

visa program to make it more flexible and responsive to the labor needs of farmers and ranchers.

Providing earned legal status for current agricultural workers, recognizing their longstanding contributions to U.S. food production.

Crafting immigration policies that reflect the reality of agriculture in a diverse state like California, where workforce stability is essential to feeding the nation.

While supporting lawful immigration policies, the Farm Bureau cautioned against indiscriminate enforcement actions that do not account for workforce stability.

"We need policies that offer real solutions, rather than uncertainty," Little said. "It's like pulling the foundation out from under



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a house. If we want a strong agricultural economy and a secure food supply, we need solutions that reflect the reality of farming—not blanket enforcement measures that put the entire agricultural system at risk.”

Little said the California Farm Bureau remains in close contact with worker advocates, policymakers and agricultural leaders to monitor any reports of workforce disruption and to help ensure that California’s farms continue to function smoothly during all of California’s upcoming harvest periods.

“California Farm Bureau will continue to advocate for practical, compassionate solutions that protect our workforce, stabilize

our industry and secure America’s food supply,” Little said. “California agriculture is strong, and our message to farm employees is simple. You are essential. You are valued. And farmers will continue to stand with you. As harvest season approaches in key growing areas, we will do everything in our power to ensure a stable and secure workforce, a dependable food supply and a strong agricultural economy for the future.”

The California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of more than 26,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of 5.8 million Farm Bureau members.

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Nationwide News: Take advantage of life insurance tailored for farmers

By: Tim Kohl is Nationwide’s senior consultant of the Land As Your Legacy life insurance program for farmers and ranchers.

Shannon and Kelly Douglass own Douglass Ranch, which raises beef cattle, walnuts, sunflowers, pumpkins, corn and forage crops in Glenn County.

Several years ago, they began thinking about the need to protect their farm legacy and the financial well-being of each other and their son, Heath. So, they began shopping around for life insurance policies.

“Oftentimes, getting life insurance if you are a farmer can be a little time-consuming,” Shannon Douglass said. “And frankly, the older we get, the more difficult it is.”


But they took advantage of one of the perks of Farm Bureau membership and found an ideal plan at an affordable price through Farm Bureau’s partner insurance company Nationwide, which offers a variety of insurance options geared toward farmers and ranchers.

He’s since given up the habit, but when the Douglasses were applying, Kelly used smokeless tobacco, which can make life insurance expensive. The same is true for an applicant with a high body mass index.

Nationwide, however, offers more flexible guidelines for both of these risk factors through its Land As Your Legacy program for farmers and ranchers. When deciding on rates for someone who uses smokeless tobacco or has a high BMI, Nationwide also considers other lifestyle factors that may offset those risks.

For example, the company considers “the active lifestyle of farmers and ranchers” who have a high BMI, said Tim Kohl, Na-

See Nationwide on page 19






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Special Session Moves Funding for Los Angeles' Wildfire Impact

This week, the Assembly and Senate held Special Sessions to move quickly on budget-related legislation in support of communities devastated by the Palisades and Eaton fires in Los Angeles. The bills provide \$1 billion to augment state emergency response funding for emergency response, cleanup and recovery of areas affected by the fires, provide funding to the Division of the State Architect and other state agencies to expedite technical assistance to local educational agencies regarding efforts to rebuild and repair schools and accelerate access to \$1.5 billion in funding for greater preparedness against the growing threats of firestorms and windstorms and other natural disasters. Minority Leader Gallagher offered an amendment to increase the Governor's Proposed 2025 budget by \$1 billion, specifically for wildfire fuels mitigation statewide efforts which currently includes a \$200 million increase. The amendment was tabled, but the measures still passed from each chamber with bipartisan support. Staff Contact: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com

Cal Poly SLO Finds 64% Hike in Regulatory Costs for Lettuce Farmers

Costs of regulatory compliance for California ag producers continue to grow faster than their crops—or the prices they receive when they sell their crops. Lynn Hamilton, Ph.D., and Michael McCollough, Ph.D., of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo found in a study released on January 23 that producers' regulatory compliance costs have risen 63.7% since 2017 and a whopping 1,366% since 2006. While regulatory costs now constitute \$1,600 per acre or 12.6% of production costs for the Monterey County lettuce producer whose production costs the professors have been following for 20 years, farmgate value for their lettuce increased by a mere 0.37% from 2017 to 2024.

In Two Decades of Change: Evolving Costs of Regulatory Compliance in the Produce Industry, Hamilton and McCollough found increased compliance costs since 2017 from the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), the Irrigated Lands Program,

equipment emissions regulations, and minimum wage and other workplace mandates increasing employment costs. Costs related to regulatory compliance for food safety, inspection audits, air quality, crop protection reporting, and employee health, safety, and wages were included in the study. The leading drivers of these regulatory cost increases were rising employee health insurance premiums and stricter water quality compliance standards.

California agricultural producers are justifiably proud to grow a third of the nation's produce with the highest wages, labor standards, workplace safety and health, and environmental protections in the world. But increasing compliance costs continue to squeeze California producers, constraining their ability to compete with lower-cost producers around the world. Staff Contact: Bryan Little; blittle@cfbf.com

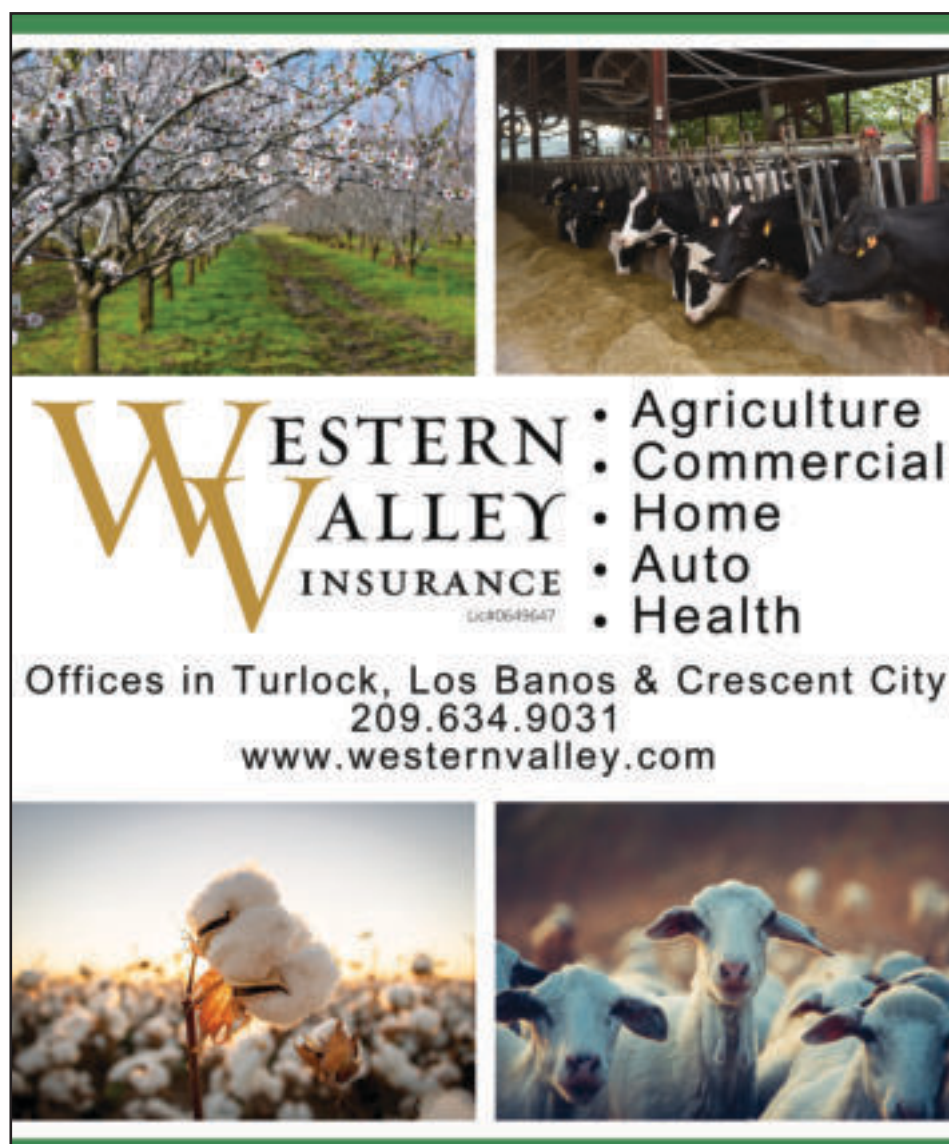
Cal/OSHA Initiates Regulatory Process on Workplace Violence

The California Legislature passed SB 553 The California Legislature passed SB 553 (Cortese) in 2023, mandating virtually all California employers to adopt complex and detailed plans for preventing workplace violence and protecting those in the workplace from violence and threats of violence. The Legislature also mandated that the state's workplace safety agency, Cal/OSHA, propose additional workplace violence prevention regulations by December 31, 2025.

The agency kicked off that regulatory effort with an online stakeholders meeting on January 24. The agency's initial draft imposes even broader mandates than SB 553, including a requirement that employers furnish post-event trauma counseling that arguably would be more effectively furnished as a compensation benefit for injured workers. This is important because, while workers' compensation is already a significant cost item for California employers, the workers' compensation system has the benefit of providing no-fault coverage for employees' treatment and lost wages. Staff Contact: Bryan Little; blittle@cfbf.com

California Dairy Quality Assurance Program December Newsletter

The December 2024 edition of our CDQAP newsletter is now available for your use and distribution. An online version of the issue is available for download. In this is-



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sue, find highlights of what the partnership accomplished in 2024. Staff Contact: Steven Fenaroli; sfenaroli@cbbf.com

CARB Withdraws EPA Waiver on Diesel Truck Ban, Train Rules

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) has withdrawn its two remaining waivers that were being considered by U.S. EPA, which would phase out diesel trucks and require cleaner locomotives. President Trump has threatened to revoke all zero-emission rules, including the previously approved EPA waiver for the phaseout of all gas-powered cars by 2035. Staff Contact: Steven Fenaroli; sfenaroli@cbbf.com

DPR Holds Hearings on 1,3-D Regulations

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) is currently developing new regulations and is partnered with the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, to potentially increase 1,3-D mitigation measures. Public hearings were held in Visalia, Salinas, and Chico. Farmworker

activists overtook the Salinas hearing when several protesters staged a mock “die-in,” lying their bodies on the ground near the podium. Farm Bureau gave public comment at the Chico hearing, which was not attended by activist groups. Formal comments will also be submitted this month and will highlight several elements of the proposed regulation that raise significant concerns including increased costs and operational complexities for growers. The proposed setback distances ranging from 100 to 500 feet, depending on numerous factors, reduce the amount of usable land and could negatively impact crop yields, particularly for smaller growers. Staff Contact: Isabella Quinonez; iquinonez@cbbf.com

Fix Our Forests Act Passes in the House

Last Thursday, the U.S. House passed the Fix Our Forests Act (H.R. 471), a bill that CAFB has supported. The legislation, which passed in a bipartisan 279–141 vote, would simplify and expedite the environmental review process for forest manage-

ment projects, promote better wildfire mitigation practices, limit the threats of frivolous lawsuits designed to delay such projects, and implement several other policies and programs aimed at supporting rural communities.

Rep. Jay Obernolte (CA-23) added the following commentary in a release by the Congressional Western Caucus: “By embracing modern technology such as real-time monitoring, AI-driven data analysis, and early warning systems, we can revolutionize how we detect and prevent wildfires. These tools, combined with streamlined processes... will allow us to act swiftly to reduce risks, protect homes, and ensure our forests thrive for generations to come.”

The bill now heads to the Senate for consideration. Staff Contact: Erin Huston; ehust-

See UPDATES on page 16



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From **UPDATES** on page 15

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Senate Ag Holds Brooke Rollins Confirmation Hearing

A confirmation hearing for Secretary of Agriculture nominee Brooke Rollins was held late last week, and while they have not voted at this time, she is largely expected to clear both the committee and floor votes. Rollins previously served in the first Trump administration as the director of the U.S. Domestic Policy Council and then as the president and CEO of the America First Policy Institute following the 2020 election. While most of her career has been in policy, she graduated from Texas A&M with a degree in agricultural development and grew up on a family ranch in Texas.

Several issues were brought up at the hearing, including trade, workforce, SNAP, nutrition, and wildfires. Sen. Adam Schiff (D-CA), our state's first senator to serve on the Senate Agriculture Committee since the 1980s, stressed the importance of addressing challenges related to wildfires, specialty crops, and ag labor. He also pressed the nominee to consider the potential for higher food costs and other issues should widespread deportations lead to workforce disruptions in the industry. Rollins committed to working with the Department of Labor on programs such as H-2A visa, ensuring the administration considers these issues moving forward. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl; mviohl@cbbf.com

Congress Passes Immigration Detention Bill

Congress moved swiftly last week to pass the final version of the Laken Riley Act (H.R. 29/S. 5) in a series of bipartisan votes in both chambers. The immigration bill gives the Department of Homeland Security broader discretion to detain undocumented immigrants suspected of certain criminal offenses such as theft and burglary. The bill originated last year following the widely reported death of Laken Riley, a 22-year-old nursing student who was murdered by an illegal immigrant who had previously been detained and released

by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

While not directly ag-related, the legislation represents a legislative victory for President Trump, who campaigned heavily on border security and immigration. He is expected to sign the bill into law this week. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl; mviohl@cbbf.com

New Administration Moves Quickly on Executive Orders

President Donald Trump wasted little time following his inauguration to move forward with a number of Executive Orders (EOs) aimed at several issues he campaigned on. This included everything from a federal employee hiring freeze and return-to-work requirements to declaring an emergency at the southern border. The latter of these has drawn significant attention, particularly as the Defense Department ordered 1,500 active-duty service members to the border for added security enforcement.

In addition, there have been several reports of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents conducting operations in major cities across the county. While there have been reports that such operations have led to reduced worker turnout on some farms and ranches, it remains to be seen what the impact might be for the agricultural industry in the short term. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl; mviohl@cbbf.com

Additional Confirmation Hearings Held
In addition to Brooke Rollins' confirmation hearing, several others relevant to our industry have either been scheduled or already completed. Former Rep. Lee Zeldin (NY), the current EPA Administrator nominee, passed in an 11-8 vote out of the Environment and Public Works Committee. Meanwhile, Interior Department nominee Doug Burgum (18-2) and Energy Department nominee Chris Wright (15-5) both passed out of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Republicans hold edge in the Senate with 53-47—and only need to confirm nominees with a simple majority vote—all three are expected to be confirmed. Of note, Sen. Ashley Moody (R-FL) has already been sworn in to replace Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl; mviohl@cbbf.com



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From SpraySafe on page 11

“We want to encourage better conversations with your rural neighbors,” Simas said.

“Tell them what’s going to happen so they can close their windows that night, and it’ll all be gone in a day or so.”

Stanislaus County Agricultural Commissioner Linda Pinfold addressed the growing challenge of odor-related complaints, which she said often stem not from the active ingredients but from their inactive ingredients.

“It has distillate that vaporizes, that’s creating the smell, and that’s what people smell,” she said.

While these smells are not indicative of an actual exposure or hazard, Pinfold said, they can still provoke strong reactions.

“People really react, and it’s the same kind of thing in many cases, like people feel ill just smelling people’s aftershave or perfume,” she said. “It can be something as simple as somebody smells it, and now they feel nauseous, and so now they’re complaining about it.”

Pinfold said while odor itself is not technically drift, ag commissioners are still required to investigate each complaint. That has kept her office busy in recent years, with the number of investigations and related complaints increasing between 2019 and 2023 by 122%.

Like Simas, Pinfold urges growers to consider their surroundings carefully, especially in areas with an agricultural-urban interface, and to communicate, particularly if they know they might have a difficult neighbor.

“If I was a grower and I know I have a challenging neighbor who may complain about this, I would probably give them a heads up, and I might even let my ag commissioner know if I think there’s a chance of hearing from them because of what I need to apply,” she said. “Open communication

and proactive mitigation can prevent problems before they arise.”

Providing context can also help ease concerns, she said.

“It truly is that ounce of prevention to say, ‘Hey, we’re going to be doing this. This is an herbicide. You are going to likely smell it, but just because you smell it doesn’t mean it’s a hazard to you. You’re not getting exposure,’” Pinfold said.

Practical Steps for Drift and Odor Mitigation

To mitigate the impacts of drift and odor, presenters at the Spray Safe event shared several practical steps, stressing the importance of timing pesticide applications during calm weather, early mornings or at night to minimize drift. Simas also noted there are some adjuvants that help with the odor and you should consult your PCA for those options.

He also reiterated the importance of maintaining open communication with neighbors about spraying schedules to alleviate concerns and help avoid complaints.

“Odor is not drift,” Simas said. “If odor was drift, every dairyman in the county would have problems. When you pump gasoline, you smell gasoline, but it’s not drift.”

Arroyo noted the role of sample collection in investigating drift claims, explaining the samples serve as critical evidence to determine the presence of pesticides, assess the extent of exposure and evaluate whether any violations occurred.

“We want to understand what happened and whether due care was exercised,” she said.

Arroyo referred residents seeking more information on pesticide-related complaints to California Department of Pesticide Regulation’s Community Guide to Recognizing and Reporting Pesticide Problems, which outlines the steps taken during investiga-

tions and provides clear guidance on how to address pesticide emergencies or concerns.

Keeping Growers Ahead of the Curve

Stanislaus County Farm Bureau’s Spray Safe event has been held annually for almost two decades. Anna Genasci, the organization’s communication and education director, currently runs the program, which she said has had to evolve over the years to adapt to the ever-changing landscape of California’s strict pesticide regulations. The event is a collaboration between a committee and local regulatory bodies, including the agricultural commissioner’s office, which helps ensure the program reflects current concerns and changes in local practices and regulations.

Genasci said one of the most significant frustrations she sees farmers face is the constant evolution of regulations.

“The heartache is the goalpost keeps moving,” she said. “We bring growers into Spray Safe annually, and it seems like every year there is a new regulation to discuss.”

While growers work hard to adhere to the changes, she said the rapid pace of regulatory adjustments can be overwhelming.

“They adhere to the regulations and make those changes to improve practices, and then we change it up,” she said. “It’s one more thing to comply with.”

Some regulatory changes, Genasci explained, seem to be driven more by public sentiment than by science, a shift that complicates growers’ ability to navigate compliance and trust in the system. Decisions about pesticide use should be based on science rather than emotional reactions, she said.

“It does feel like now there are [regulatory] changes happening because of public interest rather than scientific findings, and that’s a real concern,” she said.

Growing Your Farm's Reach ~ The Benefits of Blogging for Stanislaus County Agriculture

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

The Value of Blogging: Keeping Your Farm's Community Informed and Your Website Fresh

For farms in Modesto and throughout Stanislaus County, connecting with the local community is as vital as tending crops or caring for livestock. A well-maintained website is one of the best ways to keep neighbors, customers, and potential visitors informed about what's happening on the farm. Adding a blog to that website can help keep your local community informed, allowing you to provide timely updates, share engaging stories, and boost your on-line visibility while supporting your marketing efforts.

Keeping Readers Informed About Farm Happenings

A farm's blog is more than just another page on the website; it's a platform to tell your story. Regularly publishing posts can keep your local community updated with seasonal activities, new products, special events, and other news from Stanislaus Farms. Did you recently host a farm tour for local schools? Is there a new crop variety you're trying out this season? Are you launching a new CSA subscription box? A blog allows you to share all these details directly with your readers.

Beyond just providing information, blogs help humanize your farm. Readers can learn about your day-to-day operations, see behind-the-scenes glimpses of your work, and better understand the care and passion you put into your farm's products. When people feel connected to your story, they're more likely to support your business, whether that's by visiting a farmers' market stand in Modesto, buying your produce at local shops, or spreading the word to

friends and neighbors.

Showing Google That You're Active

Beyond keeping readers informed, a blog also sends important signals to search engines. One of the criteria Google uses to determine the relevance and authority of a website is how often it's updated. When you consistently publish new blog posts—ideally every month—you show Google that your site isn't stagnant. Instead, it's an active, current source of valuable information. This can improve your website's search engine ranking, making it more likely that people searching for "local farms in Stanislaus County" or "farm-fresh produce near Modesto" will find you.

Improved search rankings translate to more visibility, which in turn drives more traffic to your website. When people in your local community search for farm tours, pick-your-own events, or locally grown produce, a well-maintained blog can help ensure they discover your farm. This visibility strengthens your connection with your neighbors and opens the door to new customers who might not have found you otherwise.

The Benefits of Consistent Updates

In addition to engaging readers and improving SEO, regularly updated blog content shows your audience that you care about transparency and communication. Keeping the community informed builds trust and loyalty—two essential components of long-term success in the local agricultural market. A blog also allows you to highlight seasonal specialties, share tips for using your products, and even answer common customer questions. This can lead to stronger relationships and more word-of-mouth referrals within your community.

Adding a blog to your farm's website isn't just a nice-to-have feature; it's a valuable tool that benefits your audience and your business. For farms in Modesto, Stanislaus County, and beyond, blogging provides a direct line to readers, strengthens connections within the local community, and

helps improve your website's visibility on Google. By committing to a monthly update schedule, you can keep your customers informed, your search rankings high, and your farm's story alive.

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From Nationwide on page 13

tionwide's senior consultant of Land As Your Legacy.

"Nationwide has always had a special bond with American farmers and ranchers, beginning with our founding in 1926 by the Ohio Farm Bureau," Kohl said. "Because of our experience in this market, we lower some of the barriers to life insurance and support active family farm and ranch operators by offering more flexible guidelines."

"So, for us," Shannon Douglass said, "for my husband in particular, we found that Nationwide's life insurance was significantly less expensive than anything else we could find—we're talking less than a third of the lowest cost options we'd seen before that."

Now the president of the California Farm Bureau, Shannon Douglass advises members to not only buy life insurance but to buy it when they are young to lock in lower rates that can increase significantly the older an applicant gets.

"I encourage our members who have not gotten life insurance before because they felt like they were priced out of it to really take a look at the Nationwide life insurance options," Douglass said. "It certainly should let people sleep a little easier at night, knowing that their family's covered if something unfortunate should happen."

More details may be found at nationwide.com/business/agribusiness/farm-insurance/ag-financial/family-solutions.



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Stepping Up for Agriculture in 2025

By Zippy Duvall, AFBF President

Just a couple weeks ago at the American Farm Bureau Convention in San Antonio, I reminded Farm Bureau members that it's going to take all of us stepping up in 2025 to drive agriculture forward. After a record number of grassroots contacts last year—nearly fifty thousand texts, calls, emails and letters—I am confident that we are ready to work with leaders and lawmakers in 2025.

Already the past few weeks have been a whirlwind. When we heard talk of tariffs on our largest export markets, we launched into action by engaging with White House staff and reaching out to President Trump about the likely consequences of tariffs for farmers and ranchers, who always get caught in the crosshairs of tariff battles. We were also quick to express appreciation for the administration's negotiations with Mexico and Canada that led to the tariffs being put on hold for 30 days.

Of course, Farm Bureau supports the goals of security and ensuring fair trade, and we're hopeful President Trump can limit trade disruptions and open new markets for agriculture. We have seen very few new trade deals in the last decade, and U.S. agriculture is now seeing a trade deficit of \$32 billion. That's in stark contrast to our historical agricultural trade surplus, averaging \$12.5 billion over the past ten years. Boosting agricultural trade also has proven to be good for our overall economy. Historically, every \$1 of U.S. agricultural exports results in over \$2 in additional domestic economic activity.

The importance of trade is a point I'll make when I testify before the Senate Agriculture Committee this week as the whirlwind continues. I'll also shine a spotlight on the urgent need for action on a new, modernized farm bill. While the disaster assistance Congress approved at the end of 2024 is critical to farm and ranch families, we cannot afford to keep kicking the can down the

road with a long-outdated farm bill.

As farmers and ranchers know, the farm bill isn't the only pressing issue for agriculture right now. We—and many other small businesses—are anticipating what may be the largest tax increase in American history if Congress does not pass critical tax reform legislation this year. Lawmakers have promised to prioritize extending expiring tax provisions, and we will hold them to it. Congress must find a way to facilitate a stable business environment for America's farms and ranches to help us continue to provide the food, renewable fuel and fiber this country needs.

Farm Bureau is also urging Congress and the administration to work together to find solutions to one of agriculture's greatest challenges—labor. It's among the biggest limiting factors in American agriculture today and farmers are out of options.

Washington is also abuzz with nominations and confirmation. As critical cabinet and agency positions are filled, we will look forward to coming to the table to ensure your voices are heard in Washington. Just this week, we were pleased to see Brooke Rollins' nomination as Secretary of Agriculture advance. Farm Bureau has a long history of working with USDA, and we

are eager to work with Secretary-designate Rollins and her team in the days and weeks ahead.

Across Farm Bureau, we will continue to step up and engage on these issues and many others to ensure our voices are heard. I am amazed when I hear the changes our members have made at the local and state level, and when we come together at the national level, I know we can ensure a brighter future for agriculture.

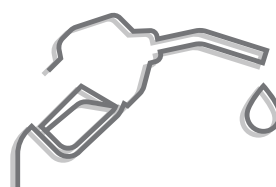


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From DPR on page 7

after the application – but will not provide a specific location, just that it’s within a mile of the address the user uses.

2. Searchable Map: The system features an online map that allows users to check areas for upcoming restricted-use pesticide applications.

Considerations for Growers
The introduction of SprayDays may come with some adjustments for growers. Public access to NOI data could lead to more inquiries or objections filed with county agricultural commissioners, potentially causing delays in planned applications.

“This system allows the public to file objections more easily, which could temporarily pause an application,” Ludwig said. “Growers should account for this possibility when planning their schedules, especially for time-sensitive applications like fumigants.”

Preparing for the Change
With the launch of Spray-Days, growers and applicators should:

- Review the system and understand its features by the end of March.
- Begin transitioning NOI submissions to the online platform, CalAgPermits.com, if not already using.
- Reach out to their county agricultural commissioner for guidance if electronic submissions are not feasible.

DPR has indicated that the system’s goal is to improve transparency to the public on pesticide use and maintain compliance with existing regulations.

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