PPIC Present Their Perspective on the Future of the Valley to State Legislators

By Scott Hamilton
President, Hamilton Resource Economics

The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) is a nonpartisan group that provides independent, objective analysis and perspectives on some of California’s toughest issues. In recent years, much of their water focus has been on the San Joaquin Valley. On February 15th of this year, two of their senior representatives testified before the California State Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife and Local Government committees regarding the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and its implications for the Valley.

Their presentation was a summary of several earlier reports on the San Joaquin Valley. Their estimate of the historic (1988-2017) water shortage in the Valley was two million acre-feet. They indicated that the continuing overdraft has led wells to go dry, lands to subside thereby damaging infrastructure, and poses risks to water quality and ecosystems. Two million acre-feet is a very large number. The State Water Project, with its several major reservoirs and customers with deep pockets, only delivers slightly more than that, on average, each year. And as bad as that number sounds, it is too low for several reasons. Because it is based on historical conditions, it does not consider the need to meet new environmental demands such as flows for the San Joaquin River Restoration Program or in-stream flows to meet State Water Resource Control Board requirements. It does not consider the impacts of climate change on delta exports, estimated to be 350,000 acre-feet per year. And it does not include the increase in orchard acreage that the Valley has experienced in recent years. Adding those other considerations moves the shortage closer to three million acre-feet.

PPIC felt that about a quarter of the delta’s (500,000 acre-feet) could be met by expanding groundwater recharge programs. That number is considered high by many water managers in the Valley. For Kern County, it is misleading, but not intentionally so. In 2012, one of the wettest years on the Kern River, no Kern River water left the county. Rather, it was all diverted to groundwater recharge or surface uses, and the three water districts along Poo Creek, Casello, North Kern and Semitropic, have invested significant resources in expanding recharge facilities to capture its high flows. There is essentially no uncaptured local water in Kern County. The major area for capturing high flow water in the Valley is north of the Chowchilla River where uncaptured water is more abundant and recharge facilities are less developed.

While the Groundwater Sustainability Agencies located in the Valley have plans to address the shortages, DWR has found that nearly all of those plans were “incomplete.” PPIC suggested recurring and troubling themes in the plans: a tendency to underestimate historical overdraft while overestimating the availability of new supplies, and a reluctance to take ag land out of production. PPIC projected that 500,000 acres of farmland would come out of production by 2040. That was half the number that Dr. David Sunding, a professor at UC Berkeley, had estimated. Sunding had also estimated the annual impact to the Valley was a loss of $7 billion and 65,000 jobs. PPIC’s estimate was less than half of that, primarily because their acreage retirement estimate was half that of Sunding’s, and PPIC’s estimated impacts were

See PPIC PRESENT PERSPECTIVE on PAGE 7

Precipitation Prediction with Miles Muzio

By Melissa A. Nagel, Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

On February 23, 2022, the Water Association of Kern County (WAKC) hosted a lunch with KBATV’s Chief Meteorologist Miles Muzio at the Bakersfield Museum of Art. Many WAKC members were in attendance, along with some local Kern County farmers and other Kern County weather-wise. Some hot topics were discussed during the meeting such as current drought conditions, expected rainfall, and snowpack runoff predictions for the year. And although we’re still going to be in a considerable drought for the duration of the year, Miles said we can expect some decent rainfall up into April, which is music to some local farmers’ ears.

As mentioned, Miles Muzio is the Chief Meteorologist for local news station KBK in Bakersfield. He has been in the weather business for the past 50 years in various capacities. From serving as meteorologist in the United States Air Force, Command 3-star General, to briefing weather for an Alaskan Air Force, and now working as a meteorologist serving our community.

Miles gave a lot of great information and insight into Kern’s weather forecast for the rest of the year in his presentation. He began by explaining how he looks at the sea’s surface temperature when developing an extended forecast. Miles stated that his main reason for this is, “Because 70 percent of the earth’s surface is ocean and so that will have a palpable impact upon the other 30 percent of the world which is land.” Monitoring these moisture conditions in the ocean is what helps predict weather anomalies such as La Nina. Miles also used these methods to develop his own way of predicting El Niño-like conditions, which he calls “La Mancha.” He used that system to predict that Kern County would have a very wet December 2021, something other forecasters in California disagreed with. Nonetheless, we had a very precipitous December which has led to us having a decent “rain season” this year and is predicted to continue on throughout April.

Most of California was downgraded from the Extreme Drought category to the Severe Drought category in 2021, which is expected to be maintained throughout 2022. Although this is not great news for Kern County, it does offer some hope of a slightly less severe summer season. During the luncheon, Miles gave an updated rainfall outlook for the duration of Bakersfield’s rainy season. The numbers should look close to this: 1.12 inches of rain in March, 1.05 inches in April, .10 inches in May.

See PRECIPITATION PREDICTION on PAGE 7

EHV-1 Outbreak in Southern California

By Audrey Hill, Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

An outbreak of Equine Herpesvirus (EHV-1), a highly contagious respiratory disease in horses, is sweeping the southern part of California. What is known about the virus, where has it been found, and how is it avoided?

What is EHV-1?

EHV-1 is a virus that lives in the environment and is primarily transmitted via the respiratory tract. According to the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP), “Almost all horses have been infected with the viruses and have most of the times no serious side effects.” Equine Herpesvirus, AAEP, Most horses will be infected at a young age and will recover easily. However,

See EHV-1 OUTBREAK IN SoCal on PAGE 4
President’s Message

By Patty Paire
President, Kern County Farm Bureau

It’s only been 30 days since I last wrote an article, but it appears that life has changed overnight due to the devastation occurring in Ukraine. Russia’s aggression on Ukraine came swiftly within a matter of hours. The impact of this is affecting many people around the world—producing more with less! The reason for this inability to do what they do better than any producer in the world was stuck at home. A few short months later, the COVID pandemic stepped up and made sure that the price of fuel needed to run equipment. Farmers during the last year have had a team shooting at each of the 80 teams.

As we say, “history has a way of repeating itself,” thus being prepared and don’t forget! But let’s not kid ourselves, Ukraine crisis just stepped up this situation, the policies of the current leadership were already leaning us down this path. At this time, the focus for the agricultural industry is not only on water, which is becoming more and more scarce (mother nature has changed her path again) but on how to obtain vital materials like fertilizer and their associated costs. And let’s not forget how to pay for the skyrocketing price of fuel needed to run equipment. Farmers during the COVID pandemic stepped up and made sure that the country (and all those people therein) still had access to vegetables, fruits, nuts, meats, poultry, and fiber while the country was stuck at home. A few short months later, farmers and ranchers are faced with the prospect of the farmers of old, turn back the clock on some of the reasons for this unfortunate reality is due to high costs slowly chipping away at affordability for years. However, the aggression on Ukraine has, or maybe is, the tipping point.

Where do we go from here? Do we continue to just “deal” with it and hope for the best? I don’t know that answer but doing nothing is unacceptable in the eyes of the Kern County Farm Bureau. Nearly two dozen Republican and Democratic state lawmakers in California recently sent a letter to Governor Newsom. In that letter, the elected officials urged Governor Newsom to consider what California has to offer the country and the state in terms of energy, which would assist the agricultural industry. The letter also urged the Governor to consider the people of the state, also known as their suffering constituents. I would hope that this governor and the president would not seek to become reliant on energy needs from countries like Iran, Venezuela, or Ecuador but instead look within at the highly productive resource economies developed over the last century. Like with food production, our leadership class must realize the importance of supporting those farmers and energy providers who have proven to be there when needed, especially during the COVID pandemic.

As noted earlier, Mother Nature has changed her path again, causing an increase in water scarcity. That increase has caused the Federal Project to announce a 0% to 15% allocation, depending on the contract with the project. The Friant Water Authority came out immediately and stated, “they believe there is ample justification for an allocation higher than 15%.” As we continue into the dryer months of the year, this will lead to water costs increasing and the need to utilize groundwater. These factors may compounding in complying with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, which is a reminder that Kern County sub-basin has 180 days to work through the concerns of the Department of Water Resources. With 30 of those days already gone, we are in the middle of working through these concerns, and again, your engagement is encouraged.

It would appear that the seemingly daily increase of water costs, fertilizer costs, labor costs, and regulatory costs would serve as a tipping point. Only time will tell, and it is times like these that show the toughness and resolve of the American farmer, and at the Kern County Farm Bureau, we will continue to fight for you in these times of unease.

Executive Director’s Report

By Romeo Agbalog, Executive Director, Kern County Farm Bureau

Just a couple of weeks ago we set our clocks an hour ahead in observance of Daylight-Saving Time (DST). “Spring forward” and “Fall Back” have been part of the lexicon helping people keep time in order since the enactment of DST in the early 1900s. Did you know that agriculturalists were one of the first groups to lobby in opposition DST? More on that later.

Moving along with the time, your local Farm Bureau is springing forward into action with a series of activities in furtherance of advocacy, education, and promotion of local area agriculture. At the end of March representatives of the Kern County Farm Bureau traveled to the state capital in Sacramento to participate in California Farm Bureau’s Annual Ag Leadership Conference and Issue Advisory Committee (IAC) meetings. At the conference, participants met with legislators and other public officials to educate decision-makers on issues of concern and importance to the agriculture industry. Members of IAC took a deep dive into policy discussions on subjects like, air quality, labor, land use, trade, and more.

After a pandemic induced hiatus, Kern County Farm Bureau brought back Farm Day in the City held at the Kern County Fairgrounds to provide local area students with an opportunity to experience agriculture in an up-close and hands-on environment. Students from across Kern County ranging from second thru fourth grade visited exhibits and heard presentations regarding animals and livestock, locally grown crops, farm equipment, and saw demonstrations from local ag organizations and volunteers showcasing the benefits of agriculture. Early education on the value and importance of agriculture is vital to our industry and I am thankful to the educators who avoided themselves and their students by participating in Farm Day in the City again this year.

Young Farmers & Ranchers

By Timothy Collins
Chair, Kern County Young Farmers & Ranchers

Last spring, the Young Farmers and Ranchers held a clay shoot fundraiser. 5 Dogs Range in hopes that we could launch a successful new annual fundraiser for the group. After a year of Covid shutdowns, we hoped it would be a way to bounce back. This year on March 5th, we held a very successful second annual clay shoot fundraiser and we are thankful and excited that this has already become our main fundraiser for the year. We are now planning and looking forward to the 2023 annual clay shoot next year.

The day started off with donuts and coffee on what proved to be a chilly morning after a rainy Friday. For once, we prayed that it wouldn’t rain. Cold weather notwithstanding, we had a team shooting at each of the twenty stations. Two stations in, I realized I had only hit one out of the first ten—only to be reassured by everyone who supported us by sponsoring or getting a team together, or both. We could not hold the event every year or even keep our Y&R club in action without you! This year we are looking forward to giving out more money than ever before through our Ag Grants to local 4H and FFA members. Be on the lookout for information regarding Ag Grant applications soon.

See YOUNG FARMERS & RANCHERS on the NEXT PAGE
The Bakersfield Sound:
The Music That Put Kern on the Map

By Mike McCoy
Executive Director,
Kern County Museum

More than a million Americans were forced to move off small family farms in the American Southeast in the 1930s because of prolonged drought and bad farming practices, better known as the Dust Bowl. Mostly from Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas, these agricultural migrants came to the West Coast seeking seasonal farm labor and relief from the loss of their livelihoods. Many passed through Kern County and many of these migrants made Central California their new home. And they brought their music with them.

One staple in the farm labor camps and rough dance halls that sprung up in the Central Valley was the country music of Oklahoma and Texas. Small combos toured the valley towns bringing some light and levity to otherwise tough living conditions. As the “Okies” settled in for more permanent work on Kern County’s farms and in the oil fields, the music moved into better dance halls and small honky-tonk taverns.

Soon, places like The Lucky Spot, The Beardsley Ball Room, The Pumpkin Center Barn, Tex’s Barrel House, and the famous Blackboard, were jumping on Friday and Saturday night with new hard driving country music that was original and different from the commercial sound being produced in Nashville and Los Angeles. Coming in from the farms, ranches, and the Westside oil patch, the hard-working men and women liked their music loud, their beer cold, and settled any trouble right on the spot.

The Kern County Museum is opening a special permanent exhibit that celebrates the era of the 1950s and 60s when the Bakersfield Sound was in its heyday. Names like Merle Haggard, Buck Owens, Cousin Herb Henson, Red Simpson, and Bill Woods are remembered with their musical instruments, sequined costumes, record albums, and short biographies. Funded with a grant from the State of California’s Museum Fund and several local donors, the new exhibit welcomes visitors from around the world who are die-hard fans of country music or soon-to-be new fans. The museum already welcomes more than 80,000 visitors a year, and the new exhibit promises to be a hit. Come see and learn about the story of hard-working people who knew how to take out a little time to play.

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Ukraine Invasion Blurs Outlook for Sunflower Seeds

By Ching Lee, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

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As California farmers prepare to plant this year’s sunflower crop, the Russia-Ukraine crisis clouds long-term prospects for their biggest market—and for production of the oilseed.

Almost all sunflowers grown in the Golden State are harvested as planting seed used by other farmers who grow sunflowers. Most sunflowers are grown for their seeds, which are crushed to make cooking oil. Russia and Ukraine are top producers, with 50% of the world’s sunflower acreage, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has affected seed companies’ ability to get seed to those markets, said Garrett Driver, North America supply chain manager for Nuseed, a global seed company that sells sunflower seeds worldwide.

“They certainly were anticipating the arrival of that seed,” he said. “Then Putin invaded Ukraine.”

Some early shipments arrived undisturbed. But Driver said some were in transit as the invasion unfolded, and now many seed companies are trying to assess what the total impact to their business will be.

Because there’s no way to move product from ports or warehouses to farmers in Ukraine, he said seed companies expect “a pretty significant reduction in planted acres this year.” Sanctions against Russia also will prevent seeds from being delivered to Russian farmers for planting.

“We are in the 10th week of COVID and all the other supply chain and logistics challenges,” Driver said. “This is just another problem to put in the bucket.”

The sunflower market has been “red hot since the Russian invasion of Ukraine,” according to the National Sunflower Association. Traders, the group said, are worried about the conflict affecting crop movement and trigger “a mass scramble by importers to seek alternative shipments.”

Market disruptions from the Russia-Ukraine war have added uncertainty for California sunflower growers and seed producers. (Photo: Putnaknick / Shutterstock.com)

“The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has affected seed companies’ ability to get seed to those markets,” Garrett Driver, North America supply chain manager for Nuseed, said. “They certainly were anticipating the arrival of that seed.”

In the end, the war could drive a high volatility in seed supply, but the impact will likely be felt in the 2022 crop, Driver said. “The 2023 crop—Howe said some of those seeds may end up sitting in a warehouse if the Russia-Ukraine war continues.”

EHV-1 outbreak in SoCal

Continued from PAGE 1

reactivation of the infection, often from high stress situations like traveling or from second exposure, can cause a horse to shed the virus, meaning they become contagious.

As stated by Dr. Craig Barnett, DVM, Senior Equine Technical Services at Internet/Scherer-Flax Animal Health, EHV-1 will reproduce on the back of the throat (through virus shedding), blood vessels are the first to be affected, and the National Hunter Derby in February, experienced this first-hand.

“Our barn went to DIHP for week 4 of the Desert Circuit. We found out about the virus a couple days before we were scheduled to head home to Arizona. She comments that, "DIHP disease communication center's Disease Alerts page.

Equine events, specifically English hunter and jumper events seem to be the most affected. One equine center, the Desert International Horse Park in Thermal, CA, has been under quarantine since the virus was first identified in March. As of March 10th, Orange County had 41 cases, Riverside had 34 cases, San Diego had 38 cases of EHV-1, San Mateo had 41 cases of EHV-1, and LA County had 1 EHM case.

For frequent updates on EHV and other diseases affecting horses, visit the Equine Disease Communication Center’s Disease Alerts page. Equine events, specifically English hunter and jumper events seem to be the most affected. One equine center, the Desert International Horse Park in Thermal, CA, has been under quarantine since the virus was first identified in March. As of March 10th, Orange County had 41 cases, Riverside had 34 cases, San Diego had 38 cases of EHV-1, San Mateo had 41 cases of EHV-1, and LA County had 1 EHM case.

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After two dry months, the next few weeks will be crunch time for California ranchers, as many look to the skies for forage growth.

Plentiful rainfall late last year has kept pastures green at Grizzly Island in Solano County. But dry weather during the past two months has stopped grasses from growing for grazing livestock.

Ranchers say precipitation in the next few weeks will be critical for forage growth. (Photo: Ching Lee)

By Ching Lee, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

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After two dry months, the next few weeks will be crunch time for California ranchers, as many look to the skies for rain to get pastures growing and keep their livestock fed

Generous storms late last year got range conditions off to “a fantastic start,” said Solano County rancher Jeff Dittmer. There’s been enough feed on the ground that his cattle are still in “pretty decent shape,” he said. Even now, pastures remain green, but the lack of rain has stopped grasses from growing, so he has started to feed some hay.

This time of year, the grass should be growing much faster than the growing, so he has started to feed some hay. This time of year, the grass should be growing much faster than the growing, so he has started to feed some hay.

“Half inch of rain here and there makes all the difference in the world once you’re into the springtime,” he said.

After western Glenn County received 12 inches of rain during what he described as a “miracle fall,” Mike Landini, who runs a grass-fed cow-calf operation in Elk Creek, said “tough decisions got set aside and we were able to pretty much keep the cows, even think about building back up a little bit after two years of drought.”

But the dry weather since then has depleted his grasses, to the point that he will need to feed hay to get through April or May, when he can start shipping his cattle to summer pastures in Oregon.

“If we don’t get any rain here in Glenn County, we’ll be back to the same scenario we’ve been for the last two falls: We won’t have feed this next October, November, December to come home to,” Landini said.

He noted that grasses on shallower soils have already turned brown because there hasn’t been enough moisture. If it doesn’t rain for three more weeks, he said, another 30% of the grass will be lost, “and there’s no recovery after that.”

With some substantial precipitation, rangelands can still see more forage growth for the year, said Theresa Becchetti, advisor for Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties.

“If we get more than trace amounts of rain in the next week or so, it is very possible to end the season looking close to normal, or even above normal,” she said. “If we don’t, it will be ugly.”

She noted that ranchers she’s talked to are “holding out hope for a ‘Miracle March’” and don’t want to think about tough decisions they may be forced to make, including feeding hay, weaning calves early or both. Weaning early can be a financial hit or miss, she noted, depending on market prices when they sell their calves, as the calves will be lighter weight. But if the price is high enough to compensate, ranchers can still come out ahead.

Mark Lacey, who operates in Inyo and Mono counties, and whose father also manages cattle in Kern, Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties, said they plan to wean early if they don’t see any rain by the middle of this month.

“Everybody’s biting their nails, hoping for rain in the next couple weeks, not wanting to have to make the same decisions they made last year,” he said.

He noted many ranchers already reduced their cattle numbers last year due to drought. Operations with summer grazing ground may need to consider moving their cattle early. Those without will need to wean calves early and decide how aggressively to cull their herds, he added.

The cattle market is better than last year, but Lacey noted prices are at least a dollar per pound lower than during the state’s last drought, from 2012 to 2016, when many ranchers were forced to liquidate herds. Prices then were high enough to justify costs of moving cattle out of state. Now flight costs are soaring, there’s a scarcity of feed and surging pasture and hay costs.

Despite an inch and a half of rain last week, San Diego County rancher Glenn Drown said he decided to ship 25% of his replacement heifers to the saleyard, figuring “we’d waited long enough.”

He noted his region was fortunate last year to have gotten some late rains that helped make good grass, so he hasn’t had to reduce much of his herd during the past two years, though his numbers have been down for about six years.

If conditions don’t improve this year, he said he will need to “call a little deeper with the older cows.”

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“I think we still have to wait and see what March and April bring,” Drown said.

With hay prices at $300-plus per ton, Andy Domenigoni, who runs cattle in Tulare and Riverside counties, said “it’s a real easy decision this year” to sell cattle. He’s getting ready to ship some in about a week because feed is already short. Without some April showers, he said, he’ll definitely need to sell calves early “while the market is good.”

“You can’t feed your way out of it with the price of hay this year,” he said.

If there’s a “Miracle March,” Domenigoni said, “it could really change things around” and perhaps change his mind about how aggressively he may need to reduce his numbers. But with the higher cattle market, he said he will probably still cull some older cows.

Though Tulare County rancher Sam Travioli has heard other ranchers talk about shipping cattle early, he said he thinks it’s a little early for that, as the rainy season is not over. He acknowledged that ranchers may not be expanding herds anytime soon, but he said he also doesn’t think too many will be heavily downsizing either.

“We don’t know what’s going to happen. It might rain 10 inches three weeks from now,” Travioli said. “We’re survivors. We’ll make it somehow, some way.”
Farmers Key to Renewable Energy Future

By Christine Souza, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

Reprinted with Permission from California Farm Bureau Federation

California is progressing toward its goal of achieving 100% renewable and carbon-neutral electricity by 2045, and agriculture may be an integral part of the solution. Farmers statewide have invested in renewable-energy technologies near vineyards, row-crop farms and atop walnut driers. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 9% of California farms have an on-site renewable-energy system.

“Aaron Barcellos, who farms row crops and trees in Merced and Fresno counties, took advantage of federal tax incentives and invested in constructing two solar systems that total 1.4 megawatts to offset the farm’s energy usage. “Most farmers, if they’ve got a drip system with an electric pump on it, are probably spending between $80 and $120 an acre per year at least on just their energy costs, depending on the crop and how much water they’re delivering,” Barcellos said. “On-farm energy use is definitely a big deal. It’s one of those line items in the budget that we always check on.”

With the ongoing drought and a regulation that requires local agencies to balance groundwater supplies under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, or SGMA, more farmers see renewable energy as a source of income, especially with farmland expected to go out of production.

“Right now, agriculture has a huge role to play, especially with SGMA,” Barcellos said. “We know we’re going to be retiring lands that don’t have enough water, and there’s lots of interest in solar for those.”

Solar arrays dominate the on-farm growth of energy systems due in part to incentives provided by a federal tax credit. And, under California power-generation policies, solar customers who produce their own energy can receive financial credits for unused power their systems provide to the electrical grid.

“Agriculture and land use is the only sector of the economy that can transition from becoming a major source of carbon emissions to becoming a major carbon sink” in reducing emissions, Aghajanzadeh said. “No other sector can achieve this.”

The state’s electricity mix is already more than 60% carbon free. About 36% of that comes from renewable sources, predominantly solar and wind.

Arian Aghajanzadeh, an agriculture technology expert who founded Klimate Consulting in San Francisco, said farmers have a unique role to play in California’s energy future.

“With the creation of Net Energy Metering Aggregation, where customers can accumulate multiple accounts and offset them against a single renewable generating facility, farmers and ranchers have been able to create sustainable operations and choose optimum locations for the facility that doesn’t impair their productive acres,” said Kevin Norene Mills, California Farm Bureau director of legal services.

The California Public Utilities Commission has been considering rolling back long-term financial benefits that purchasers of solar power have counted on under the net-metering program.

An issue in PUC proceedings is whether the program will retain, cut back or kill a benefit to solar power customers that allows them to sell unused power to utilities for 20 years. Mills said the California Farm Bureau is fully engaged in the matter and is arguing for the current policies to remain intact.

Barcellos said he is worried that “the return on investment window is getting tighter and tighter.”

Specific to water, Aghajanzadeh said irrigation remains very energy intensive for farmers, and the transition from flood to more pressurized irrigation has increased power demands—especially for those who rely more on groundwater due to cuts in surface-water supplies.

But new energy solutions are in the works. One effort, called “Project Nexus,” involves placing solar panels over San Joaquin Valley canals to produce renewable energy, conserve farmland and reduce water evaporation.

The project is a partnership among Turlock Irrigation District; University of California, Merced; and others.

“Project Nexus, with 5 megawatts of solar power, will help TID move closer to meeting clean energy goals and allow the district to study the scalability of the project across our 250 miles of canals, which could remove the need for expensive land purchases for large-scale solar projects,” said TID External Affairs Manager Josh Weimer. “As we’re in the midst of a third consecutive dry year, any and all water savings are beneficial to TID and the state.”

See RENEWABLE ENERGY FUTURE on PAGE 17
Regenerative Farming Brings Animals Into Orchards

By Lisa McEwen, Reporter

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Benina Montes returned to the family farming operation after graduating from college, and she joined family members in slowly changing the way it was run. The conventionally farmed almond ranch in Merced County transitioned to a diversified, organic farm using regenerative farming practices.

“This is farming for the future,” she said. Montes co-owns Burroughs Family Orchards in Ballico with her parents, Ward and Rose Burroughs. They grow organic almonds, walnuts and olives. Additionally, she and her husband Herberto operate Burroughs Family Farms, producing organic pastured eggs. Completing the arc is Full Circle Dairy, an organic, grass-based dairy of 500 Jersey and Jersey-cross cows that is co-managed by sister Christina Bylsma and her husband Brian.

The family operations now span 1,200 acres, while using cover crops, no tillage, cattle and sheep grazing, diversified crops and hedgerows. Burroughs Family Orchards is part of a research project led by the Ecylus Foundation called the 1,000 Farm Initiative. Created by former U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist Jonathan Lundgren, the foundation will complete research by 2023 that aims to quantify regenerative agriculture’s potential impacts, with a goal of inspiring its methods nationally.

The principles of regenerative agriculture are similar to conservation agriculture: minimal soil disturbance, eliminating or reducing chemical use, avoiding bare soil by using cover crops that enhance plant diversity, and integration of livestock into the cropping operation. That integration was highlighted on Feb. 17 as Burroughs Family Orchards hosted a field day to share insights on how farms and communities are impacted when these methods are used together or “stacked.” Montes said the turnout of 260 people underscored a strong interest in regenerative farming.

Lundgren of Ecylus urged attendees to consider regenerative management practices on their own almond farms in the face of changing climate, loss of top soil, increased production costs and declining water availability.

“All of these problems we are facing are more personal than ever before,” he said. “We all need to be more than what we can be if we’re going to get out of this mess.”

Lundgren is research co-author of “Defining and validating regenerative farm systems using a composite of ranked agricultural practices”—work published last year on the open research platform F1000Research. The project brought together scientists from California State University, East Bay; University of Minnesota; Purdue University; University of Nebraska; and South Dakota State University.

Lundgren said the research revealed healthier soil, higher plant and insect biodiversity and faster water infiltration rates in almond orchards employing regenerative practices. Crop yields and profits were similar to conventional practices, but with fewer inputs needed thanks to livestock that graze the cover crops.

“Most conventional farms abandon these inputs out of necessity,” Lundgren said. “I encourage you to understand the ecology of your farm.”

Montes said she began farming almonds conventionally with her father after graduating from California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo, in 2001. By 2006, they transitioned to organic almond production and diversified into organic olive production in 2010, employing crop variety that is a hallmark of regenerative agriculture.

“I always knew I wanted to take over the farming, and I knew we needed to diversify because we were vulnerable otherwise,” she said.

Montes’ children, nieces and nephews represent the fifth generation of the family in California farming more than 100 years. She said, “It has been exciting to see the changes on our farm, and I’m excited about what we can do with this kind of farming.”

Cindy Daley of Chico State’s Center for Regenerative Agriculture has been working with the Burroughs family since 2006, while incorporating climate-smart agricultural practices in the college’s curriculum.

“It is the farmers leading this effort,” she told guests at the field day. “It does take a psychological shift in your farming to embrace these practices. But that’s why you are here today, to kick the tires and see what others are doing.”

Farmers, educators, policymakers, salesmen, nut processors, funders and activists came together at the event to learn about regenerative practices. Research on soil tests, biodiversity and ecosystem resiliency was presented by experts from Chico State, University of California, Davis, and UC Cooperative Extension. Scientists from the Ecylus Foundation also led a variety of in-the-field seminars that resulted in attendees tromping through cover crops in search of insects.

Four generations of the Jantz family convened at the event, with 3-year-old Levi sweeping for bugs in the cover crop. Levi’s dad, Rylan Jantz, drove three hours from Colusa County with his father, Linwood, to delve deeper into regenerative practices, which he is using on his Chandler walnut farm. They met up with local farmers—great-grandparents Cleo and Twila Jantz.

“I came today because I want to learn more about how to integrate animals in the orchard,” Rylan Jantz said. He added he was looking to network and find a lead in acquiring Katahdin sheep, which do not need shearing, for grazing in his orchard. Livestock are removed from regenerative orchards 90 days before harvest to address food-safety concerns.

Joe Gardner, national sales and marketing manager at Treehouse Almonds, a Tulare County nut processor, also attended the field day to glean more information for himself and his growers.

He said he has some concerns about using livestock as part of the cycle and noted that a lush cover crop such as the one at Burroughs Family Orchards is likely not possible in Kern County, where he farms, due to different microclimates. Still, he said he was curious if he could benefit from regenerative practices.

“We have some of the best ground in the world, but we do need to rebuild our soil health,” he said. “I’m here to see how these practices work and if we can adopt some of them. We are trying to do some of the little things that will help our operations.”

PPIC Present Perspective

Continued from PAGE 1

mitigated by water marketing to reallocate water to minimize adverse economic impacts. Within a water district, water markets may mitigate some of the water shortage impacts, but for the most part SGMA has shut down water markets. Water districts are reluctant to transfer water outside of their districts until they know they have a surplus, and with climate change, that determination involves much uncertainty.

The PPIC report was an honest representation but requires some context. And whether they are correct, or whether the future might be worse than their projections, a future for the Valley where the only strategies are to increase recharging of local water and to take ag land out of production is an extremely bleak one. PPIC is in the process of updating an earlier study that showed that, on average, 10 million acre-feet of surplus water flows out of the Delta to the Pacific Ocean. By State Water Resource Control Board regulation, only 35% of that may be exported—meaning that outflow must still exceed 6.5 million acre-feet even if Delta export opportunities were to increase. The Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley continues to advance the concept of Fish Friendly Diversions—a method for capturing a portion of the available 3.5 million acre-feet while not harming endangered fish, mud snails and other aquatic life. That integration was highlighted on Feb. 17 as Burroughs Family Orchards hosted a field day to share insights on how farms and communities are impacted when these methods are used together or “stacked.” Montes said the turnout of 260 people underscored a strong interest in regenerative farming.

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**Hard Freeze Devastates Valley Tree Crops**

*By Kevin Hecteman, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert*

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Tim Taylor walked one of his almond orchards in Sutter County last week, collecting blossoms off the trees for samples. A cold spell at the end of February had plunged much of the Sacramento Valley into record-low territory, and Taylor was out to assess the damage.

“Every flower can produce an almond,” Taylor said. “When that freeze hits and these are developing, when they’re younger — when they’re brand new — you can get a little colder on them. But once they start to develop like this — he sliced into a blossom to check the developing nut — see that black inside? That means it’s frozen. It froze, and it’s dead.”

The toll only added up. Taylor estimates that 60% of his orchard was damaged by the freeze, potentially decimating his yield. It was disquieting news after expectations for a bountiful year.

“We had a wonderful February,” Taylor said. “We had lots of warm days this year, the bees were working hard, and we thought we’re going to have a bumper crop this year. It was looking pretty darn good until all of a sudden it decided to freeze for four days.”

Similar scenes are playing out up and down the Central Valley, where temperatures reached the low to mid-20s most of Presidents Day week.

“With each passing day, or with each passing week, you lose frost tolerance,” said Mel Machado, director of member relations at Blue Diamond Growers. “At full bloom, I figure 26's the magic number; anything 28 (degrees) or below at full bloom, I’m going to start to see some damage.”

Machado said it was light to nonexistent this time. For that to work, there has to be an inversion layer; Machado said it was light to nonexistent this time.

“Sounded like a military zone out there with all the helicopters flying, trying to push down the warmer air from above into the orchards,” Verseschagin said. For that to work, there has to be an inversion layer; Machado said it was light to nonexistent this time.

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“One guy told me he had a helicopter at 200 feet before it found anything warm,” Machado said. “That’s useless. You need to have air 30, 40 feet off the canopies to make that work.”

When a freeze is in the forecast, farmers can use water to fight off damage — up to a point.

“If I know it’s getting cold, I’ll come out here at 10:30 at night, or midnight, or 2 a.m., and we start irrigating,” Taylor said. Water coming out of the ground is 50 to 52 degrees, he added, and can raise the temperature in the orchard a degree or two in much the same way hot shower water warms up a bathroom.

“If it’s only 30 degrees, you can do pretty well,” Taylor said. “But like last week, we got 25, 26 degrees out here. You can only raise it a couple of degrees. You’re at 20 degrees, and it just starts taking its toll.”

Agricultural commissioners have been collecting data to support a potential disaster declaration. Growers in counties that are declared disaster areas have access to relief programs through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency.

Lisa Herbert, Sutter County’s agricultural commissioner, said the disaster threshold is 30% damage across the entire county, and this one may span as many as five counties.

“We know for certain the almonds have issues, but there are preliminary reports that we may be seeing some damage in prunes as well,” Herbert said. “It’s pretty early to tell, but those are the things that we will be looking at moving forward.”

Colusa County Agricultural Commissioner Anastacia Allen said the first step is documenting everything. She and Herbert encouraged farmers with damage reports to contact the office or visit their websites.

As the season progresses, we’ll work along with University of California Cooperative Extension and other experts in the field to confirm that, yeah, this is going to be a loss, that they are completely lost at this point,” Allen said. “It’s very early, but yes, it looks like the losses are going to be pretty severe.”
The Perfect Cow is Somewhere in the Middle

By Austin Snedden
Ranching Contributor,
Valley Ag Voice

The types of cattlemen fall somewhere along a bell curve; the vast majority are on one side or the other of the median but close to it. The folks on the extremes are often the loudest voices coaching the folks in the middle about their cattle selection criteria. On one side you have folks purely influenced by stock shows, where visual appraisal is almost everything, maternal ability, performance measurements, and carcass merit have very little influence on these folks selection criteria. On the other side you have folks that are heavily into EPDs (expected progeny differences) and Genomics, these folks are greatly influenced by universities and breed association criteria. The EPD enthusiast makes their selection criteria based on data, real data measurements, but especially derived data based on correlations and algorithms, with no interest in visual appraisal.

To make it simple, I am going to call the one extreme the “Show Jock” and the other extreme the “EPD Doc.” Both extremes have added things to the industry and both extremes have led the industry off course. The Show Jock has led the industry into belt buckle height cattle in the 1950s and 1960s, where bellies nearly drug on the ground. As well, the Show Jock lead us into the frame race of the 1980s and 1990s where cattle were judged on maximum height and ground clearance. Neither of these variations were practical to the cowman in the middle seeking cattle that could turn a profit and survive in the real world. The EPD doc arrived later to the scene, this enthusiast was spawned out of a need to measure performance to make cattle more profitable, but the true EPD doc blew right past weights and measures and found a passion for correlations and algorithms. Solely looking at trait associations with the goal of maximizing data on paper, the EPD doc took the industry down a road of bad feet, bad udders, poor joint angles, and lack of mothering ability.

I have seen a show judge pick an 1,800-pound bred heifer to win a national show. I have also seen the EPD doc pick a cow-hocked bull out of a cow with a poor udder to go to stud for mass collection based on the genomic roulette wheel. Both of these creating trends is equally as damaging to the cowman in the middle trying to find seed stock whose offspring will pay the bills. The reason these folks on the extremes have such amplified influence is because breed associations like them both, as well as agriculture colleges and marketers. These folks that like both extremes are primarily responsible for the publications, research papers, and marketing that we all read, and therefore the influence is unduly amplified. Although there are a whole lot of us in the middle, the extremes are more appealing to feature because it gives the feeling of progress.

There are many cowmen and women that have multigenerational knowledge, not only the multi-generations of humans that have influenced them but also the multiple generations of cattle they have experienced. These folks can point out what a good cow or bull should look like. They may not be able to give “reasons” taught from a judging textbook, but the eyes know shapes, hair coats, symmetry, and function.

These folks may only look at three or four of the twenty plus EPD traits some breed associations have, but many of them have a more profitable cowherd than the guy that makes a spreadsheet. All that to say, I don’t think we should dismiss the show and the importance of visual appraisal, and we shouldn’t dismiss EPDs and the prospect that correlations could add to a producer’s profitability. But the cowman looking to make a payment needs genetics that will hit down the middle.

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But today's political landscape is very different than in the past, largely because Congress, the executive branch, and the public now realize that the self-interests of the largest beef packers has led to the exploitation of independent cattle producers on one side of the supply chain and consumers on the other. Beef shortages at the grocery store, super-inflated beef prices, and a cattle market irresponsible to historically favorable beef demand and beef exports reveal that exploitation.

And yet, the beef packers and their allies continue to advance the same tired arguments they used to bring the cattle and beef industries to the brink of disaster as they’re using now to keep it on its destructive course. The beef packers’ trade association argued to Congress that “free market supply and demand fundamentals are at work. Let them keep working.” It contends beef prices are high because of exceptional beef demand and cattle prices are low because there’s an oversupply of cattle—more cattle to be slaughtered than there is packing capacity to slaughter them.

In chorus, their allied industry pundits are grabbing the microphones. Land grant universities, long the beneficiaries of beef packer endowments, are generating new studies using old data showing the cattle market is functioning superbly under the law of supply and demand; and are urging Congress to do nothing or risk some nondescript unintended consequence. Texas A&M University recently submitted a collection of such biased studies to Congress.

And then there’s the ostensibly bone-wolf cheerleaders, like commentator Nevil Speer who unabashedly tells policy makers to “leave well enough alone.” Speer argues there is no confirmational data supporting legislation like the Grassley/Tester bill ($949) that requires packers to purchase at least 50% of their cattle in the negotiated cash market. Instead, Speer claims an inverse relationship between increased cash volume purchases and cattle prices.

Senate Bill 949 is the beef packers’ kryptonite. They fear it because it throws a barricade across the packers’ road to vertical integration—it impedes their goal of substituting competitive market forces with their own corporate control over the entire supply chain.

Let’s unpack the status-quo gang’s major arguments. If it’s true that despite strong beef demand and increasing exports, cattle prices have nevertheless remained depressed for the past seven years because of insufficient packing capacity, then whose fault is that? Who owns the shuttered plants and plants that haven’t been modernized? We allege in our class action antitrust lawsuit that the Big 4 packers conspired to depress cattle prices by agreeing to periodically reduce slaughter volumes to ensure the demand for cattle did not exceed the available supply.

And what of Speer’s claim of no confirmational data and an inverse relationship between cash purchase volumes and cattle prices? Well, findings in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s report, “Investigation of Beef Packers’ Use of Alternative Marketing Arrangements,” reveal that when the cash market volume was only about 40%, the packers’ use of alternative marketing arrangements already depressed fed cattle prices by as much as $33.28 per head.

If you’re a cattle producer or a beef eater, then Congress needs to hear from you that you want them to take decisive action to fix the broken cattle market. If you remain silent, the status-quo gang is certain to win again. Tell Congress to restore competitive market forces in the cattle supply chain, which it can do by enacting the force-the-packers-to-compete bill, S.949.

And then there’s the ostensibly lone wolf cheerleaders, like commentator Nevil Speer who unabashedly tells policy makers to “leave well enough alone.” Speer argues there is no confirmational data supporting legislation like the Grassley/Tester bill ($949) that requires packers to purchase at least 50% of their cattle in the negotiated cash market. Instead, Speer claims an inverse relationship between increased cash volume purchases and cattle prices.

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Bill Bullard is the CEO of R-CALF USA, the nation’s largest non-profit trade association exclusively representing the U.S. cattle industry.
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CDFA Accepting Grant Applications for Dairy Methane Reduction Programs

Press Release Provided by California Department of Agriculture

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is now accepting grant applications for the Alternative Manure Management Program (AMMP) and Dairy Digester Research and Development Program (DDRDP) administrated by its Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation (OEFI).

CDFA’s dairy methane reduction programs provide financial assistance for the installation of dairy digesters and implementation of non-digester-based manure management practices that result in long-term methane emissions reductions and maximize environmental co-benefits on commercial dairy and livestock operations in California. These programs are funded through a $32 million appropriation from the California State Budget, authorized by the Budget Act of 2021.

The following programs at CDFA are accepting grant applications:

- **Dairy Digester Research and Development Program (DDRDP) Applications** are due Monday, May 9, 2022 by 5:00 PM PT. Detailed information including application process and requirements, application assistance workshops conducted by CDEA, and community outreach resources is available at [CDEA.CA.gov/OEFI/DDRDP](http://CDEA.CA.gov/OEFI/DDRDP).

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CDFA’s dairy methane reduction programs provide financial assistance for the installation of dairy digesters and implementation of non-digester-based manure management practices that result in long-term methane emissions reductions and maximize environmental co-benefits on commercial dairy and livestock operations in California. These programs are funded through a $32 million appropriation from the California State Budget, authorized by the Budget Act of 2021.

The following programs at CDFA are accepting grant applications:

- **Dairy Digester Research and Development Program (DDRDP) Applications** are due Monday, May 9, 2022 by 5:00 PM PT. Detailed information including application process and requirements, application assistance workshops conducted by CDEA, and community outreach resources is available at [CDEA.CA.gov/OEFI/DDRDP](http://CDEA.CA.gov/OEFI/DDRDP).

- **Alternative Manure Management Program (AMMP) Applications** are due Monday, May 9, 2022 by 5:00 PM PT. Detailed information including application process and requirements, application assistance workshops conducted by CDEA, and community outreach resources is available at [CDEA.CA.gov/OEFI/AMMP](http://CDEA.CA.gov/OEFI/AMMP).
USDA Commits $215 Million to Enhance the American Food Supply Chain

Press Release Provided by the USDA

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that USDA is making available up to $215 million in grants and other support to expand meat and poultry processing options, strengthen the food supply chain, and create jobs and economic opportunities in rural areas. Today’s funding opportunity, announced on the one-year anniversary of President Biden’s Executive Order 14017 “America’s Supply Chains”, is one of many actions that USDA is taking to expand processing capacity and increase competition in meat and poultry processing to make agricultural markets more accessible, fair, competitive, and resilient for American farmers and ranchers.

“For too long, ranchers and processors have seen the value and the opportunities they work so hard to create move away from the rural communities where they live and operate,” Vilsack said. “Under the leadership of President Biden and Vice President Harris, USDA is committed to making investments to support economic systems where the wealth created in rural areas stays in rural areas. The funding we’re announcing today ultimately will help us give farmers and ranchers a fair shake and strengthen supply chains while developing options to deliver food produced closer to home for families.”

USDA Rural Development will make $150 million available in grants to fund startup and expansion activities in the meat and poultry processing sector. USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) will provide another $40 million for workforce development and training, and the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) will provide $25 million to offer technical assistance to grant applicants and others seeking resources related to meat and poultry processing. These new opportunities are part of the Biden-Harris Administration’s historic commitment to fight monopolization and promote competition across the economy. They are also aligned with USDA’s vision of a food system that supports health and ensures producers receive a fair share of the food dollar while advancing equity and combating the climate crisis.

Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program

USDA Rural Development is making $150 million of American Rescue Plan Act funding available through the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP). USDA is offering grants of up to $25 million each to expand processing capacity through a variety of activities, including but not limited to construction, expansion of existing facilities, and acquisition of equipment.

USDA encourages applications that benefit smaller farms and ranches, new and beginning farmers and ranchers, Tribes and tribal producers, socially disadvantaged producers, military veteran producers, and underserved communities.

For additional information, applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to visit the MPPEP website: RD.USDA.gov/MPPEP. Questions may be submitted through the website or sent to MPPEP@USDA.gov.

All application materials can be found at RD.USDA.gov/MPPEP or at Grants.gov. Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time on April 11, 2022, through Grants.gov.

Meat and Poultry Processing Workforce Development

USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) will invest an additional $40 million through existing workforce development programs to provide a pipeline of well-trained workers to meet the demand for both current processors and increased independent processing capacity. The primary investment will be through competitive grants to support workforce training at community, junior and technical colleges with programs specifically for meat and poultry processing. A Request for Applications will be published in April 2022. Additional investments will leverage existing regional USDA education and Extension networks and establish new, or supplement select existing, Centers of Excellence at Minority-serving Institutions focused on meat and poultry research, education and training.

Each of these investments is designed to deliver needed support more quickly. Additional investments, either through the same or new programs and partnerships, are expected later this year. To sign up for notifications of these and other NIFA funding opportunities, visit the NIFA website.

USDA expects to continue working with the Department of Labor to support and encourage the development of good jobs in the agricultural sector, including jobs in meat and poultry processing.

Meat and Poultry Processing Technical Assistance

USDA also is helping to ensure that entities proposing independent meat and poultry processing projects through the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP) have full service technical assistance support from application through post-award. USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) will provide approximately $25 million in American Rescue Plan funding to establish partnerships with organizations that will provide technical assistance to MPPEP applicants, recent recipients and future applicants of the Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant program, and to entities who require general guidance and resources on meat and poultry processing. Of the $25 million, AMS will utilize $10 million to implement the first phase of support by establishing an initial technical assistance network and lead coordinator. More information about the technical assistance is available at the Meat and Poultry Supply Chain website.

USDA’s one-year supply chain report, also published today, assesses the opportunities, including today’s significant investment in the meat and poultry sector, that USDA, other Federal agencies and Congress have made over the long-term to infuse stability, improve equity, diversify and expand infrastructure and markets, and transform the food system.

314.54 +/- Acres of Almonds & Open Farmland in Semitropic Water Storage District
Free Online Trainings for Almond Industry Professionals

The Almond Board of California (ABC) is providing an opportunity for growers, handlers, PCAs and CCAs to gain timely operational insights that support in-orchard practices and help them meet seasonal challenges head on, while understanding the complexity of global, technical and regulatory issues that impact the industry as a whole.

The trainings will be held on the first and third Tuesdays of every month and last between 60-90 minutes. Attendees will have an opportunity to ask the presenters questions specific to their operation.

APRIL
  5  3D Tree Monitoring
  19 NRCS Incentives

MAY
  3  Aflatoxins/PEC
  17 Managing Warehouse Pests

JUNE
  7  EU Update
  21 Cover Crops

JULY
  5  Nutrition Research
  12 Farm Bill
  19 Whole Orchard Recycling

AUGUST
  2  Almond University/Stockpile Management

To register for upcoming Training Tuesday webinars, scan the QR code.
NGFA and TFI Urge Biden Administration Work With Canada to Ease Supply Chain Strains

Press Release Provided by National Grain and Feed Association

In a March 7 letter to President Joe Biden, the National Grain and Feed Association, The Fertilizer Institute and 19 other members of the Agricultural Transportation Working Group requested the administration work with the Canadian government to avert a major railway labor strike and to rescind the cross-border vaccine mandate for workers moving essential commerce.

“If the U.S. and Canadian governments allow the following supply chain disruptions to persist into the spring fertilizer season, the impacts to our industry and North American farmers could be devastating,” the working group noted.

The letter references a potential upcoming labor disruption at Canadian Pacific (CP) Railway. The Teamsters Canada Rail Conference recently voted in favor of strike action, which could happen as early as March 16. The impact would be significant for grain movements on both sides of the border for livestock feeding and processing operations served by the CP. The strike also would halt the CP route that carries U.S. grain to the Pacific Northwest export market. Grain is CP’s largest line of business and approximately 10-15 percent of CP’s business is fertilizer, the working group noted.

“A CP railway strike would severely curtail fertilizer supply and shipments into the United States and would happen at the worst possible time as farmers are planting their 2022 crops,” the letter states. “Given the fragility of current supply chains, urgent attention and engagement with all parties is needed to avert a potential strike.”

The letter also urged the U.S. and Canadian governments to modify or rescind their mandates blocking unvaccinated foreign nationals, including truck drivers, from crossing the border. Canada’s vaccine mandate requires U.S. truckers to show proof of vaccination before entering the country and the U.S. mandate requires foreign cross-border truckers to be vaccinated. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has said its border policy will remain in effect through April 21.

“The border policy has raised prices because it has constrained trucking capacity and made truck movements more expensive and less timely,” the letter states. Over one million short tons of fertilizer cross the U.S.-Canada border by truck each year. March, April and May are peak months for fertilizer applications across the northern states.

“Given the urgency of several supply-chain challenges, we urge revision or rescission of the border policy prior to April 21,” the working group stated.

Brent Reed Joins Scythe & Spade As West Coast Regional Manager

Led by a Seasoned Veteran and 3rd-Generation Californian, Scythe & Spade expands their presence in the West

Brent Reed joins Scythe & Spade as West Coast Regional Manager

Press Release Provided by American Farm Bureau Federation

Scythe & Spade is excited to announce that Brent Reed has joined their team as West Coast Regional Manager. Reed brings 30 years of experience working in agricultural businesses. Reed holds a BS in Agricultural Business from California State University of Fresno and is a licensed California Real Estate salesperson (DRE#01751246) and holds an Accredited Agricultural Consultant designation from the ASFMRA.

Reed formerly managed acquisition activities in the West/Pacific Northwest for one of the country’s largest farmland investment firms. He acquired over 23,000 acres of tree nuts, wine grapes, citrus, and irrigated row crops worth ± $500 million dollars.

“Since 1998 we have targeted California but have never found the right partner until now. With Brent’s wealth of experience this is an enormous opportunity for our team and clients, as we add 9 million acres to our sandbox,” says the company’s founder.

“I’m excited to bring my experience to this elite team. The Scythe and Spade team are some of the most professional and dedicated people that I’ve worked with. Scythe and Spade’s FarmBase” is a great tool and nothing like I’ve seen in the industry. I’m looking forward to sharing my knowledge of this 9-million-acre sandbox which I call home,” adds Brent.

More information about Brent Reed is available on the company’s website: Ag-Management.com/Leadership

Scythe & Spade specializes in facilitating strategic investments in agribusiness real estate. Focused on simplifying complex agribusiness issues, the company pairs capital investors with agricultural operators to deliver both valuable equity capital to help operators grow their farming operations and steady apprecia
tion and income to investors. Headquartered in Boise, Idaho, Scythe & Spade uses a high-tech, high-touch, specialized network of expert consultants to analyze agriculture investment opportunities to perfectly match investors with agribusiness operators for successful strategy implementation and compelling returns.

Almond Board of California Announces 2022 Elections

Press Release Provided by Almond Board of California

Elections for the Almond Board of California (ABC) Board of Directors have kicked off for the 2022-2023 crop year with the call to all candidates to file their petitions or declarations of candidacy by April 1, 2022.

There are two independent grower positions and one independent handler position on the ABC Board of Directors to be decided in voting that starts April 21 and ends May 26. Alternate seats for those spots are also open.

To be considered for an independent grower or alternate seat, candidates must be a grower and must submit a petition signed by at least 15 independent almond growers (as verified by ABC). Independent handler and alternate candidates must declare their intention in writing to ABC.

All petitions and declarations must state the position for which the candidate is running and be filed by mail with ABC at 1150 9th St., Suite 1500, Modesto, CA 95354. The deadline for all filings is April 1. Potential candidates who’d like more information can contact Toni Arelildo at TArellano@AlmondBoard.com.

“The ABC Board of Directors is such an important and vital part of our industry. It guides the work of the Almond Board and is key to overseeing the welfare of the industry and of more than 7,600 growers and 100 handlers,” says Richard Waycott, ABC President and CEO.

The ABC board sets policy and recommends budgets in major areas, including marketing, production research, public relations and advertising, nutrition research, statistical reporting, quality control and food safety. Getting involved provides an opportunity to help shape the future of the almond industry and to help guide ABC in its mission to promote California almonds to domestic and international audiences through marketing efforts, funding and promoting studies about almonds’ health benefits, and ensuring best-of-class agricultural practices and food safety.

ABC encourages eligible women, minorities and people with disabilities to consider running for a position on the Board of Directors to reflect the diversity of the industry it serves.
The SWP Contractors are responsible for nearly all of the each was executed. Under the provisions of the contracts, terms that end between 2035 and 2042, depending on when integrity and financial management of the State Water has with 29 public water agencies (Contractors) and to extend the long-term water contracts DWR currently decision represents a significant milestone in the lengthy effort 00246183). This well-reasoned and strongly worded deci All Persons Interested in the Matter (Case No. 34-2018- plaintiffs in California Department of Water Resources Vs. of Water Resources (DWR) on every claim asserted by in which he ruled in favor of the California Department Press Release provided by State Water Contractors Project Contracts

On March 9, 2022, Sacramento Superior Court Judge Hon. Kevin R. Culhane handed down his final decision in which he ruled in favor of the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) on every claim asserted by plaintiffs in California Department of Water Resources Vs. All Persons Interested in the Matter (Case No. 34-2018-00246183). This well-reasoned and strongly worded decision represents a significant milestone in the lengthy effort to extend the long-term water contracts DWR currently has with 29 public water agencies (Contractors) and to implement other changes aimed at improving the fiscal integrity and financial management of the State Water Project (SWP) moving forward. First entered in the 1960s, these contracts have 75-year terms that end between 2035 and 2042, depending on when each was executed. Under the provisions of the contracts, the SWP Contractors are responsible for nearly all of the capital, operations and maintenance costs of SWP—the water infrastructure that two thirds of the State depend on to keep their taps flowing. To keep these costs manageable, capital expenditures typically are financed using 30-year bonds. However, in the absence of a contract extension, DWR has been limited to issuing bonds with maturity dates no later than 2035. Today, the longest financing period for bonds issued by DWR is just 13 years. This compressed repayment period has very real impacts on water rates for SWP customers throughout the State. Implementing these contract extensions will allow DWR to again sell bonds with 30-year terms or longer, commensurate with the economic life of the capital project or expenditure being financed, thus ensuring the debt service on these bonds remains affordable to SWP Contractors and their water customers.

“This is an obvious, simple administrative step that must be taken to ensure water affordability for Californians,” said Jennifer Pierre, General Manager of the State Water. “The reality is that California’s public water agencies will always need to pay for the operations and rehabilitation of the SWP, and it is always in the best financial interest of the ratepayers—everyday Californians like you and me—for the SWP to get the best possible terms and conditions on these bonds remains affordable to SWP Contractors.”
Statewide Snowpack Falls Well Below Average Following Consecutive Dry Months

Press Release Provided by California Department of Water Resources
On March 1st the Department of Water Resources (DWR) conducted the third snow survey of the season at Phillips Station. Following a January and February that will enter records as the driest documented in state history, the manual survey recorded 35 inches of snow depth and a snow water equivalent of 16 inches, which is 68 percent of average for this location for March. The snow water equivalent measures the amount of water contained in the snowpack and is a key component of DWR’s water supply forecast. Statewide, the snowpack is 63 percent of average for this date.

“With only one month left in California’s wet season and no major storms in the forecast, Californians should plan for a third year of drought conditions,” said DWR Director Karla Nemeth. “A significantly below-average snowpack combined with already low reservoir levels make it critical that all Californians step up and conserve water every day to help the state meet the challenges of severe drought.”

Although early season storms helped alleviate some drought impacts, a lack of storms in January and February heightens the need for conservation. The Governor has asked all Californians to cut back water use at least 15 percent compared to 2020 levels. Regionally, the Northern, Central, and Southern Sierra snowpacks are all standing just above 59 percent to 66 percent of average for this date, impacting watersheds across the state.

DWR has increased its efforts to improve climate and runoff forecasting by strengthening its collaborations with partner agencies investing in proven technologies to improve data collection and hydrologic modeling. This includes efforts at the Central Sierra Snow Lab where DWR and its partners regularly test new equipment and sensors to maximize performance when measuring the state’s snowpack. Forecast improvements and monitoring enhancements increase the reliability of data used to inform water managers about flood risks, allowing opportunities to create more storage in reservoirs ahead of big storms while also ensuring water supply reliability in periods of dry or drought conditions.

“As the world continues to warm, precipitation is pushing toward extremes. Even when we see large storms producing a lot of snow early in the season, all it takes is a few dry weeks to put us below average,” said Jeremy Hill, Manager of DWR’s Hydrology and Flood Operations Branch. “This new pattern challenges forecasting efforts that have relied on historical patterns, so DWR has led the charge to adopt new technologies and utilize the best available science to manage water in real time and use forecasts that give us time to make decisions to get the most benefits and minimize the hazards.”

Current water conditions are now available in real time at California Water Watch, a new website launched by DWR. This website will help Californians see their local hydrological conditions, forecasts, and water conditions down to their address or their local watershed. The site presents data from a variety of sources and allows the public to obtain a quick snapshot of local and statewide water conditions.

“With below average precipitation and snowpack up until this point, our latest statewide snowpack forecasts are only 66 percent of average,” said Sean de Guzman, Manager of DWR’s Snow Surveys and Water Supply Forecasting Unit. “That is not enough to fill up our reservoirs. Without any significant storms on the horizon, it’s safe to say we’ll end this year dry and extend this drought a third year.”
Entrepreneurs Wanted: Apply by April 29 for Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge

Press Release Provided by American Farm Bureau Federation

The American Farm Bureau Federation, in partnership with Farm Credit, is seeking entrepreneurs to apply online for the 2023 Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge. Now in its ninth year, this national business competition showcases U.S. startup companies developing innovative solutions to challenges faced by America’s farmers, ranchers and rural communities.

Farm Bureau is offering $165,000 in startup funds throughout the course of the competition, which will culminate in the top 10 semi-finalists competing in a live pitch competition in front of Farm Bureau members, investors and industry representatives at the AFBF Convention in January 2023 in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

“Innovation is at the heart of everything farmers and ranchers do,” said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. “The Ag Innovation Challenge is an outstanding avenue for identifying and supporting startup businesses striving to solve the problems facing rural America. I look forward to seeing the innovative, resourceful and creative solutions that Challenge applicants submit.”

Applications remain open through April 29, and the 10 semi-finalist teams will be announced Sept. 13. Each of the top 10 semi-finalists will be awarded $10,000 and a chance to compete to advance to the final round where four teams will receive an additional $5,000 each. The final four teams will compete to win:

• Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge Winner, for a total of $50,000
• Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge Runner-up, for a total of $20,000
• People’s Choice Team selected by public vote, for an additional $5,000 (all 10 semi-finalist teams compete for this honor)
• People’s Choice Team selected by public vote, for an additional $5,000 (all 10 semi-finalist teams compete for this honor)

Prior to the live pitch competition, the top 10 semi-finalist teams will participate in pitch training and mentorship from Cornell University’s SC Johnson College of Business faculty, and network with representatives from the Agriculture Department’s Rural Business Investment Companies.

Recent winners of the Ag Innovation Challenge include Grain Weevil Corporation, a grain bin safety and management robot that improves farmer well-being by controlling risks and costs (2022 Ag Innovation Challenge Winner) and Harvust, a software platform that helps farmers successfully hire, train and communicate with employees (2021 Ag Innovation Challenge Winner). Other examples of successful Ag Innovation Challenge participants, as well as detailed eligibility guidelines and the competition timeline can be found at FB.org/Challenge.

Entrepreneurs must be members of a county or parish Farm Bureau within their state of residence to qualify as top 10 semi-finalists. Applicants who are not Farm Bureau members can visit FB.org/About/Join to learn about becoming a member. Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on April 29, 2022.

Renewable Energy Future

Continued from PAGE 6

Another step, Aghajanzadeh said, is to incentivize farmers to shift irrigation loads from midday hours, when there is excess solar, and make it easier for the grid in the evening.

He said “flexible irrigation” would be more cost effective than storing electricity in batteries. Groundwater storage can also be another form of a battery when water is moved to bolster aquifers so less energy is required to pump it out of the ground, he said.

Barcellos said flexible irrigation and shifting loads is not yet practical for farmers. At times irrigation is running 24/7, and irrigation systems would have to be redesigned to make this approach more effective, he said.

Solar is another option. Farmers and food processors such as Mann Packing Co., a grower-packer-shipper in the Salinas Valley, are taking advantage of wind energy.

Steve Sherr of Foundation Windpower, which constructed a 1.79 megawatt wind turbine for Mann Packing in Gonzales, said, “Wind also happens to be a particularly valuable resource here in California, as it fills a need for energy generation during times of day when solar is no longer available,” adding that wind requires a limited amount of land.

Related to the state’s energy future, Barcellos said, “Agriculture has a role to play.” He said energy demands may lead to more specialized crops and cost-efficient water systems.

“California farming right now is changing so fast and right in front of our eyes,” he said. “I’m not sure what five years or 10 years from now will look like, but you have to be engaged in just about every space.”
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Visiting the Cross: Jesus’ Crucifixion

By Joshua Stevens
Faith Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

This month hocks of Christians will crowd together in churches around the world. From different denominations, cultures, and languages together we will sing out in praise, adoration, and thankfulness that Christ came to die for our sins and was bodily risen three days after his crucifixion. From an outside perspective, this would most assuredly seem absurd. You could imagine someone who has never heard of Christ or the Gospel wallowing into an Easter service and thinking—“Why are they so excited that this guy died?” Or maybe even, “Where’s his crucifixion. From an outside perspective, this would be a waste of time.”

Growing up in the church, we may sometimes become numb to the brutality of the cross and the miracle of the resurrection. For a moment, step into the shoes of someone who has never heard the story and experience the gospel message for the first time.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8 (ESV), “Now I would remind you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one unimpressed man, he appeared also to me.”

The book of Corinthians was written by the Apostle Paul (1 Cor 1:13) to the church of Corinth in modern-day Greece sometime between 53-54 C.E., a few years after his first missionary trip there. His letter to the Corinthians is a response to what he had heard was going on in the church and covers a variety of issues. (Patrz ello, n.d.)

He begins talking about the resurrection towards the end of the letter. This section starts by reminding those members what saved them. Since they lived in Corinth, these Christians knew what a crucifixion looked like, but for those of us removed from this culture, we may find it difficult to comprehend the significance of the crucifixion of Jesus and Jesus’ burial.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus was resurrected three days after the day of his burial. This took place on a Friday afternoon, Good Friday, after he was crucified by the Roman cavalry around 30 A.D. Mary Magdalene went to the tomb where Jesus was buried and saw that the stone had been removed from the grave. Jesus had fulfilled prophecy and had risen from the dead!

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” 1 Peter 1:3 ESV

The Easter holiday celebrated across the world for many years is considered the most important religious occasion among Christians. Easter Sunday is the Highest Holy Day in Christianity. It is also known as Resurrection Sunday. It marks the anniversary of Jesus’ resurrection and ascension to heaven, and it serves as confirmation of our faith. His resurrection means the eternal life that is granted to all who believe in him.

Followers of Christianity often celebrate with various traditions like church services, songs and hymns, lighting candles, and family gatherings. The Easter lily is another symbol of the season and is placed throughout churches. As mentioned in the Bible, the white lily symbolizes the purity of Christ, rebirth, new beginnings, and hope. While at Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus, during Easter it’s the celebration of His resurrection and how Christ died to save humankind from sin.

“My God of God help fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 15:13 ESV

The sacrifice of Jesus is a reminder of the selfless love and time for us to express our gratitude. This is a reminder of welcoming Jesus into our hearts. It’s also the best time for families to reflect on the beautiful message and faith we have in Christ. In the spirit of the Easter season, let us look to the rising sun to reflect on the sacrifices that we may have with the confidence of new beginnings. We must remember to be kind, understanding, and caring to one another.

As a result, the Easter holiday has developed a range of modern traditions. The decorated eggs have been a symbol of fertility. The Easter bunny tradition, however, came from the Germans much like Santa Claus, and baby bunnies and chicks are a symbol of new life. On Easter Sunday, the celebration of new life begins. Easter Sunday means spring is just around the corner, and the growing season is about to start. Springtime reminds us that after winter there will be leaves, buds, flowers, and new life.

We must thank our farmers and ranchers for the ham or lamb dinner, our egg farmers for the eggs we decorate, the farmers who grow the lilies. Easter time is a time to be thankful.

Happy Easter! He is Risen!”
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