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THE LOCAL VOICE FOR OUR FARMERS, RANCHERS AND DAIRY PRODUCERS SINCE 2013

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# 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 deficit (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 2017, 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 Poso Creek, Cawelo, 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 KBAK-TV'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

citizens wondering what the rest of 2022 has in store for 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.



**D2 - Severe Drought**

- Grazing land is inadequate
- Fire season is longer, with high burn intensity, dry fuels, and large fire spatial extent
- Trees are stressed; plants increase reproductive mechanisms; wildlife diseases increase

**89.31%**  
of Kern  
County  
(D2-D4)

Severe drought conditions affect 89.31% of Kern County. (Image: Drought.gov)

As mentioned, Miles Muzio is the Chief Meteorologist for local news station KBAK here 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,

to briefing weather for an Alaskan Air Command 3-star General, to bringing us the most up-to-date weather in Bakersfield for many years, and much more. Miles is both a Certified Broadcast Meteorologist and a station scientist. He also founded the Kern Chapter of the National Weather Association (NWA) in 2006. Kern County is lucky to have such a gifted and experienced 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 scientists 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 in 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**

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# 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**



Hannah Bolland and her horse Bambo V getting some practice in at a mock horse show in Paso Robles, CA. Sarah Pollock Sporthorses hosted this event in mid-March for its barn because of the many cancelled events in the area. (Photo: Tatum Malcolm)





# FARM BUREAU NEWS

*The United Voice of Kern County's Farming Community*



## President's Message

**By Patty Poire**  
**President, Kern**  
**County Farm Bureau**

*WOW!* 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 with impacts that are a stark reminder of times past, like when Iran decided to attack its neighbors, resulting in similar consequences—raised oil prices, food uncertainty, high production costs, inflation, and the list goes on. You would think that we would have learned that being self-reliant on the “necessities of life” like energy and food production would have had a lasting impact as a country, state, and county. Especially in our county where energy production is unmatched, and food production consistently ranks first or second in the nation. Undoubtedly, the current challenges we face with the price of fuel, food, goods, and everyday needs stem from what can be described as *forgetting* from a certain leadership class. Another, and probably more accurate word is *arrogance*. As we say, “history has a way of repeating itself,” thus be prepared and don't forget! But let's not kid ourselves, the Ukraine crisis just stepped up this situation, the policies of the certain leadership were already leading 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 inability to do what they do better than any producer in the world—producing more with less! The reason 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 compound the difficulties 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 those 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 Spring Forward—and Away We Go!

**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 capitol 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 availed themselves and their students by participating in Farm Day in the City again this year.

On April 25th, the Kern County Farm Bureau will be holding its 2022 Golf Classic golf tournament at Stockdale Country Club in Bakersfield. The tournament is an excellent networking event featuring promotional booths and participants from across the South San Joaquin Valley. If golfing appeals to your recreational or competitive nature, or if you just want to mingle with folks in the ag industry and ag supporters alike then the Golf Classic is the event for you. This event sells out fast, so if you're interested in sponsoring or securing a team, please call us at (661) 397-9635 or visit [KernCFB.com/Golf-Classic](http://KernCFB.com/Golf-Classic) for more information.

So, what about agriculturalists and DST again? Well first, on a personal note I have never been a fan of this government sanctioned theft of an hour of my sleep and, yes, I was one of a small number of stunned and embarrassed parishioners sitting in the parking lot at church having missed Sunday services on the Sunday after DST. But I digress, see the U. S. has ping-ponged on DST over time from implementation to repeal, back to implementation and most recently by act of Congress to repeal again. In 1919 the U. S. repealed DST due largely by a massive lobbying effort from farmers who argued in part that the sun, not the hands of a clock, dictated their schedules. “After all, dew doesn't evaporate at a specific time, cows typically aren't too keen on an earlier milking, workers worked less since they came and went according to the clock, and those darn roosters sure can't tell time.”

The point is this was a legislative victory for farmers. I mention this because it seems like we in agriculture haven't had very many victories in government lately. Whether water, regulations, or supply-chain we could use a win. Perhaps we can set our clocks, get on the same schedule, use timing to our advantage, and like the farmers of old, turn back the clock on some of these burdensome laws and regulations that crushing agriculture. This would be a very timely thing to do.

## Young Farmers & Ranchers

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*Articles or commentaries are not direct opinions of  
Kern County Farm Bureau*



**By Timothy Collins**  
**Chair, Kern County**  
**Young Farmers**  
**& Ranchers**

Last spring, the Young Farmers and Ranchers held a clay shoot fundraiser at 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 our 3rd 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



*Left–Right Zach Jones, Amy Mebane, Tim Collins, and Brad Western at the clay shoot fundraiser. (Photo: Kern County Farm Bureau)*

5 Dogs staff saying the course was in fact more difficult than last year. I was up for the challenge and improved throughout the rest of the course. After shooting, we enjoyed tacos for lunch and then selected the winning tickets for the gun raffle, and the numerous other raffle items that had been generously donated. We finished up by giving out prizes for top teams and top individuals.

All of us with YF&R would like to say thank you to

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 YF&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 Lucky Spot, a one-time honky-tonk at 2303 Edison Highway in Bakersfield. (Photo: Kern County Museum)

## 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.

## Young Farmers & Ranchers

*Continued from the PREVIOUS PAGE* YF&R was also happy to partner with the Farm Bureau to co-sponsor the CSUB Ag Night Basketball game on March 3rd. Ag Night is an annual event that seeks to promote agriculture in the community by inviting all local FFA students and their families to attend a game for free—made possible by the sponsors. It was a fun night rooting for the home team in a game that was neck and neck and kept us on the edge of our seats to the last few seconds.

We, as young farmers, are making it a greater part of

our mission as a club to reach out to and support the even younger future farmers. As a high school ag teacher myself, I think YF&R can be the next step for many graduating high school students interested in ag. The future is bright for youth in the Kern County agriculture industry and YF&R is here to make it possible.

Please reach out to us if you would like to join our email list to receive information about upcoming events. We are also active on both Facebook and Instagram.

**Email:** [KernYFR@KernCFB.com](mailto:KernYFR@KernCFB.com)

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**FARM BUREAU**

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### GOLF CLASSIC 2022

**Monday, April 25, 2022**

**8:00am Registration**

**9:00am Shotgun Start**

**Awards Announcements at close of Tournament**

**Stockdale Country Club**  
**7001 Stockdale Hwy**  
**Bakersfield, CA 93309**

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For further sponsorship details or tournament information contact us at [ragbalog@kerncfb.com](mailto:ragbalog@kerncfb.com) | 661-397-9635  
Tournament proceeds benefit promoting, protecting, and strengthening Kern County’s agricultural interests through the Farm Bureau.

#HEREWEGROW



# Ukraine Invasion Blurs Outlook for Sunflower Seeds

By Ching Lee, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

Reprinted with Permission from California Farm Bureau Federation

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.

Virtually 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 55% 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.

"Of course, this is coming on the heels of two years 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 the conflict will affect crop movement and trigger "a mass scramble by importers to seek alternative shipments." As



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

such, U.S. and Canadian growers "stand to gain from the Black Sea trade disruptions," the association said, adding it expects "plenty of volatility in the coming days."

With strong demand for sunflower oil even before Russia attacked Ukraine, Driver said he expects American farmers will pick up some of the slack by planting more sunflowers this year and potentially next year. But he said the increased acreage won't be substantial because of limited milling capacity in the U.S. for the oilseed.

"You're not going to see traditional corn growers stop growing corn and grow sunflowers instead," he said.

The Dakotas are the nation's leading producer of sunflowers, with 78% of U.S. acreage. Together, the two states planted a little more than 1 million acres last year. That's compared to 16.8 million acres in Ukraine and 15.4 million acres in Russia.

In California, farmers are on track to begin planting sunflowers next week. Acreage here reached 46,000 in 2021, up from 44,100 acres in 2020, according to USDA. But with the state's ongoing drought and curtailments on water for farming, people in the business say competition

for land and water to grow sunflowers and other annual crops remains fierce.

Sutter County farmer David Richter has been growing sunflowers for 18 years. He said his cropping plans remain "up in the air" because he doesn't know how much water he will get on his Sacramento River Settlement contract. But he said he's going to try to plant sunflowers because they use the least amount of water compared to other field crops he usually grows.

"I'm stretching a limited supply of water the best I can with crops that don't take a lot of water, such as sunflowers," he said.

Compared to corn, wheat or safflower, sunflowers historically have been a higher-value rotational crop for California farmers, said Dan Howe, location manager for Remington Seeds in Colusa County. The company works with farmers to produce seeds for seed companies, and in recent years, he said there has been an upward trend in the company's sunflower acreage in the state. But this year, land and water availability has reduced plantings.

D.J. Ehresman, a Remington agronomist and field representative, said the company is on the verge of finalizing contracts with growers, with about 90% of its acreage

"set in stone." Those contracted fields stretch from Chico to Stockton. Due to reduced surface-water allocations, he said growers with access to wells will "play a pretty big role" in producing sunflowers this year.

Howe said he is not aware of any seed companies making major cropping changes to the current growing season, as most of them are moving forward as though "we have a relatively normal sales season." However, he said he also thinks "a good chunk" of Russia and Ukraine's 2022 crop won't be planted and that seed companies are positioning themselves for that.

"You can't have a conflict between the two largest sunflower-growing countries in the world and there not being an impact," he said. "The question is how big and how long. That's the uncertainty of it all."

Even though there has been no impact so far to the crop California growers will be planting this year—the seeds of which will be sold to farmers worldwide to produce the 2023 crop—Howe said some of those seeds may end up sitting in a warehouse if the Russia-Ukraine war continues.

"This ripple effect—where does it go? How long does it last?" he asked.

Because most sunflower seeds are bred to be sown for a specific region, Howe said certified seed to be grown in Russia and Ukraine are not typically sold to other regions such as the United States. If they're stored properly, seeds that haven't been treated with fungicides or insecticides could be sold for two to three years. He estimates about 75% to 85% of the sunflower seeds produced in the state are exported, with the rest marketed to U.S. farmers.

Driver of Nuseed said he thinks sunflower seed production in California could rise as seed companies that had production in Ukraine and Russia now look for alternative locations.

"The demand that was forecasted prior to this invasion and conflict was pretty strong for sunflowers globally," he said. "We are seeing an uptick in overall acreage around the world. I think both of those are driving more production here in California."

## EHV-1 Outbreak In SoCal symptomatic and contagious days.

**Continued from PAGE 1** reactivation of the infection, often from high stress situations like traveling or from second exposure, can cause a horse to start shedding the virus, meaning they become contagious.

As stated by Dr. Craig Barnett, DVM, Senior Equine Technical Services at Intervet/Schering-Plough Animal Health, EHV-1 will reproduce on the back of the throat after entering a host horse via the nasal cavity, then travel into the lymph nodes, and eventually into the animals white blood cells (viremia). Because of this, the virus can hide from the animal's immune system for long periods of time and is why many infected horses do not show signs of disease. If the virus starts to reproduce (through virus shedding), blood vessels are the first to come in contact. Inflammation of the blood vessels, known as vasculitis, can further cause inflammation of the placenta and nervous tissue. Subsequently, signs of infection like abortion, neonatal death and Equine Herpes Myeloencephalopathy (EHM), the neurological form of the disease, can appear and can be fatal.

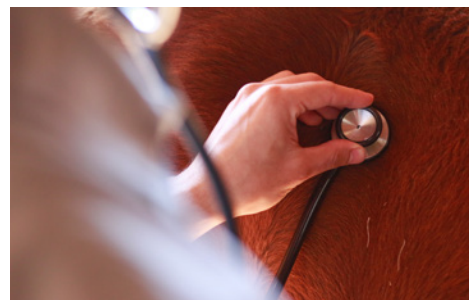
If any of these symptoms do develop, they generally begin to appear within 2-10 days and viral shedding can last roughly between 7-10 days, according to the CDFA (*Equine Herpes Virus, CDFA*). It is important to note that delayed viral shedding is not uncommon—as seen frequently in reports made by the Desert International Horse Park (DIHP), an equestrian center with high exposure to EHV-1. The unpredictability of the virus makes it necessary to prepare for a high variability of

### Where Is the Outbreak?

The first case reported by the Equine Disease Communication Center was a single horse confirmed to have EHM in Alameda County on January 21, 2022. The horse started showing clinical signs on the twelfth of January and was reported to have exposed 27 other horses. Soon after, horses in San Mateo County, Riverside, more in Alameda, Orange, and LA counties became diagnosed. As of March 10th, Orange County had 41 cases (5 EHM, 36 fever-only), San Mateo had 38 cases of EHV-1 (5 EHM, 33 fever only), Riverside had 34 cases (3 EHM, 31 fever-only), 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 because of the virus since February 11th (roughly a month), when the first three cases were confirmed. Since that date, the equine park has seen around 13 cases of EHV-1, one euthanasia from EHM, and many horses tested and quarantined. Hannah Bolland, a hunter, jumper, and equitation rider that came to DIHP to compete in the Young Hunters 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.



Veterinarian examining a horse. (Photo: Lgctr / Shutterstock.com)

They isolated and locked down the infected barn so that only specific staff could enter. No horses were allowed to leave that barn. In addition, barns that stayed longer could not leave the premises for the next couple of weeks and no new horses were allowed on the show grounds," she states. Thankfully, she and the rest of her barn did not come in contact with EHV-1, and their horses are safe at home in Arizona. She comments that, "DIHP has made a lot of improvements to the show grounds, which has attracted many participants from all over the states. It is such a shame that the outbreak occurred, and I give my condolences to the equestrians whose horses were affected or lost to the virus."

### How Can EHV-1 Be Avoided?

The AAEP suggest two primary methods of prevention: vaccination and biosecurity. EHV's primary transmission route is through horse-to-horse, horse-to-human-to-horse or indirectly through fomites, or disease carrying agents like buckets, people and other

tack. The virus can also live outside a host for up to a month depending on the environmental conditions, and it is recommended that any tack thought to have come in contact with the virus should be washed and disinfected during this time period.

Vaccination is another primary defense against the virus. Many vaccines for EHV-1 exist and although not a 100% guarantee against infection, will prepare a horse's immune system and increase resistance if they were to come in contact with the virus. Dr. Hector Gonzalez, DVM of Bakersfield Large Animal Hospital, Inc. pushes horse-owners to vaccinate and administer booster shots with urgency because of the Valley's proximity to the Southern California outbreak. He also mentions that Bakersfield Large Animal Hospital offers a core vaccine that includes vaccination for EHV-1 and EHV-4. Updates that Dr. Gonzalez, DVM receives from the state veterinarian regarding EHV-1 push for postponing or canceling events, especially hunter jumper events, to reduce the spread.

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# Ranchers Hope for a Wet ‘Miracle March’



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 cattle can eat it, he noted. “We’re starting to run out of time,” Dittmer said. “If we

don’t get some decent rain here in the next month or so, it’s going to look awful grim come this summer.” For pastures to make good feed, ranchers don’t necessarily need the downpour the state saw in December, he said. But timing is key. Smaller, more frequent showers are more helpful for growing grass than one big deluge, Dittmer added. “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 50% 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, a University of California livestock and natural resource 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 freight 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 “cull a little deeper with the older cows.” “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.”

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# Farmers Key to Renewable Energy Future

By Christine Souza, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

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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 dryers. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 8% 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 explained. "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."



Aaron Barcellos, who farms tree and row crops in Merced and Fresno counties, walks near a 1-megawatt fixed solar-array system that he had installed on the farm. It is one of two systems that together produce 1.4 megawatts of electricity and offset what is used on the farm. (Photo: Christine Souza)

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.

"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.

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.

"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

Karen 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



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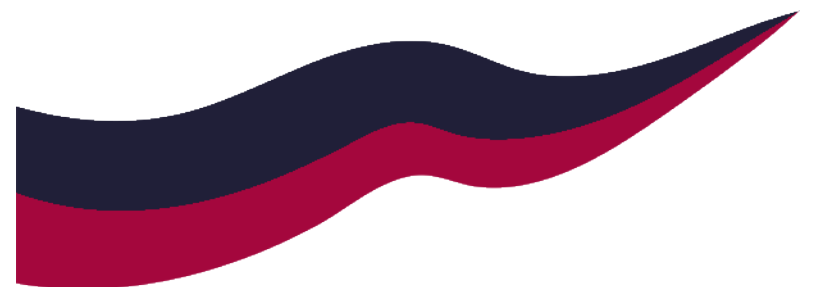
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# Regenerative Farming Brings Animals Into Orchards

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 Rosie Burroughs. They grow organic almonds, walnuts and olives. Additionally, she and husband Heriberto 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 tilling, cattle and sheep grazing, diversified crops and hedgerows.

Burroughs Family Orchards is part of a research project led by the Ecdysis 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 250 people underscored a strong interest in regenerative farming.

Lundgren of Ecdysis 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 Ecdysis Foundation also led a variety of in-the-field seminars that resulted in attendees tromping through cover crops in search of insects.

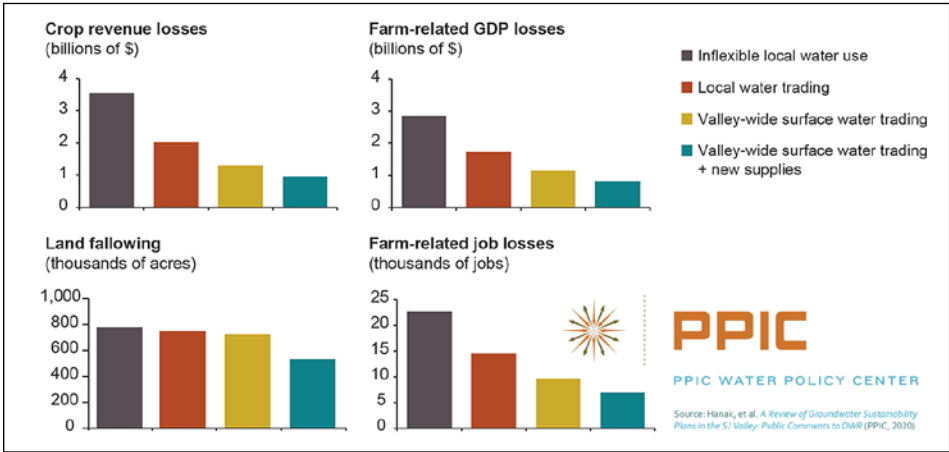
Four generations of the Jantz family convened at the event, with 5-year-old Levi sweeping for bugs in the cover crop. Levi’s dad, Rylan Jantz, drove three hours from Colusa County with his father, Linwood, to delve deeper into regenerative practices, which he is using on his Chandler walnut farm. They 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 120 days before harvest to address food-safety concerns.

Joe Gardiner, 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’s projections of economic impacts in the Valley with and without water trading, but questions surround the feasibility of water trading when SGMA forces water districts to keep supplies local. (Image: PPIC)

## 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, but, as any worthwhile endeavor, that solution is going to need significant financial and political support.

### PPIC Resources—available at: [PPIC.org/Water](https://ppic.org/water)

- “Priorities for California’s Water: Responding to the Changing Climate” (report, Nov 2021)
- “Improving California’s Water Market: How Water Trading & Banking Can Support Groundwater Management” (report, Sept 2021)
- “Groundwater and Urban Growth in the San Joaquin Valley” (report, Sept 2021)
- “A Review of Groundwater Sustainability Plans in the San Joaquin Valley” (public comments submitted to DWR, May 2020)
- “Water and the Future of the San Joaquin Valley” (report, Feb 2019)
- “Replenishing Groundwater in the San Joaquin Valley” (report, Apr 2018)
- “Water Stress and a Changing San Joaquin Valley” (report, Feb 2017)



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## Precipitation Prediction

**Continued from PAGE 1** and tapers to 0.00 in June as we get into the summer months. Our yearly precipitation total is expected to be around 5.99 percent, keeping us in the Moderate to Severe drought category.

To re-cap, we can expect more rain to carry us through April with small amounts of rain here and there in May. Unfortunately, our snowpack and reservoir levels

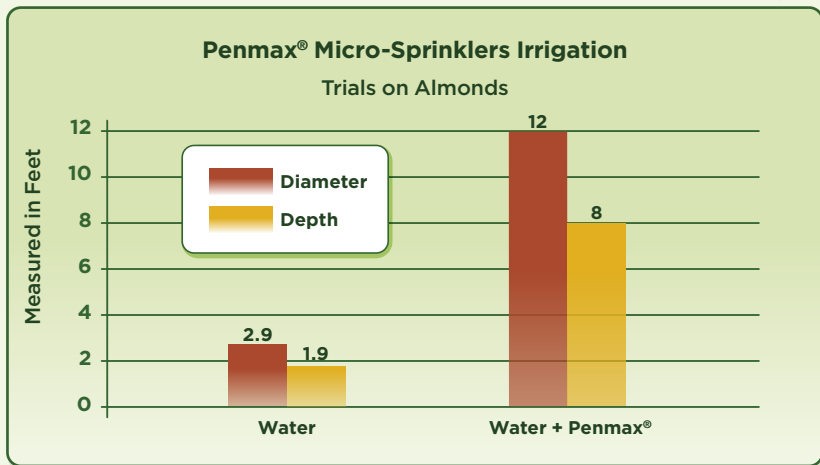
have been underwhelming and will remain that way unless we receive some last-minute storms significant enough to increase the snowpack. With spring right around the corner, the likelihood of another Winter storm seems dim. To keep up with the current weather, visit [BakersfieldNow.com/Weather](https://BakersfieldNow.com/Weather) or you can follow Miles Muzio on Facebook for his daily weather forecast. For updated drought information, you can visit [Drought.gov](https://Drought.gov).





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Fruit growers spray water over fruit trees in freezing conditions, to protect the fruit from ice damage (Photo: MountainPix / Shutterstock.com)

## 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 dispiriting 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 28’s the magic number; anything 28 (degrees) or below at full bloom, I’m going to start to see some damage.”

Machado said it’s too soon to know the total crop losses. “The first clue of what’s going to hang in the trees is normally about the end of March, and the first clue of what you might actually get to harvest is the end of April,” he said.

Kelly Evans, Taylor’s wife, said she needs to see what the trees will shed over the next month. Preliminary estimates are showing a wide range—from “fared out pretty well” to “a complete loss” in some orchards.

“Is the tree going to drop the stuff that was burnt, or is it going to drop some of the good nuts that are left? We don’t know yet,” Evans said. “We’re in a holding period for the next 30 days to figure out what will be left of the crops.”

Glenn County saw its share of damage as well. Mike Vereschagin, who grows almonds near Orland, said bloom came about 10 days earlier than last year.

“We had one of the best blooms we’ve had in a long time,” Vereschagin said. “The potential was for a huge crop this year, and the frost took all that away here.”

Many growers hired helicopters in a bid to warm up the trees, he added.

“Sounded like a military zone out there with all the helicopters flying, trying to push down the warmer air from above into the orchards,” Vereschagin said.

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

“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 28 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  
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# 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



(Photo: William Edge / Shutterstock.com)

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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# OPINION: Beef Packers and Allies Urge Congress to Do Nothing in Face of Broken Cattle Markets



**Op-ed By Bill Bullard,  
CEO, R-CALF USA**

*Press Release Provided by  
R-CALF USA*

Large beef packers and their allies are fighting to hold Congress at bay—to prevent any meaningful reforms to the broken cattle market. This isn't a new fight as they've successfully held Congress at bay for decades. Throughout the 2000s they blocked legislation to ban packer ownership of livestock, require minimum purchases in the negotiated cash market, ban unpriced contracts known as formula contracts or alternative marketing arrangements; and seven years ago, they spurred the repeal of mandatory country of origin labeling.

In the 2010s, they successfully blocked the finalization of rules to implement the Packers and Stockyards Act—the act passed in 1921 to protect independent livestock producers from unfair, deceptive, or unjustly discriminatory buying practices.

The large beef packers' political prowess is now legendary. They've ruled with iron fists over the cattle and beef industries for decades and ensured the legal and regulatory framework within which they operate continually furthers their self-interests.

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 unresponsive to historically favorable beef demand and beef exports reveal that exploitation. Where before evidence of market failure was regarded by some as equivocal, today the evidence is undoubtedly definitive.

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 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 (S.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 for years? 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



(Photo: Ana Maria Ciobanu / Shutterstock.com)

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 mandatory country of origin labeling bill, S.2716, and the force-the-packers-to-compete bill, S.949.

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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# FSIS Rescinds Mask Mandate for Processing Facilities

Press Release Provided by U.S. Cattlemen's Association

On March 1st, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA FSIS) issued Notice 09-22, which rescinds previous guidance requiring employees at federally inspected meat processing facilities to wear masks while working in the establishment.

In November, the United States Cattlemen's Association (USCA) sent a letter to FSIS requesting updated guidance from FSIS that allowed for COVID-19 cognizant rules while not impeding the day-to-day operations of our members' facilities. In the letter, USCA argued that mask mandates are untenable in processing facilities due to factors related to food and human safety, the design and layout of small and very small establishments, and the working conditions on the slaughter floor.

The letter was preceded by several meetings with FSIS leadership to further explain these barriers to the imple-

mentation of mask mandates in small and very small processing facilities.

USCA Independent Beef Processing Committee Chairman Patrick Robinette issued the following statement:

"We are pleased that FSIS is rescinding its mask mandate for federally-inspected processing facilities. There are alternatives to masks, which USCA outlined in its letter to FSIS leadership last year, that can help control the spread of COVID-19 while also contributing to a safe, comfortable work environment.

"Americans continue to seek out U.S. beef to feed their families, and USCA members are eager to meet that demand. Today's notice will put back into operation several regional processing facilities that were forced to go offline due to the previous guidance. USCA looks forward to continuing its dialogue with FSIS to implement policy that best supports independent producers and processors."

## 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) administered 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 CDFA, and community outreach resources is available at [CDFA.CA.gov/OEFI/DDRDP](https://CDFA.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 CDFA, and availability of no-cost technical assistance for prospective applicants provided by CDFA-funded Technical Assistance Providers and UC ANR Climate Smart Agriculture Community Education Specialists is available at [CDFA.CA.gov/OEFI/AMMP](https://CDFA.CA.gov/OEFI/AMMP).

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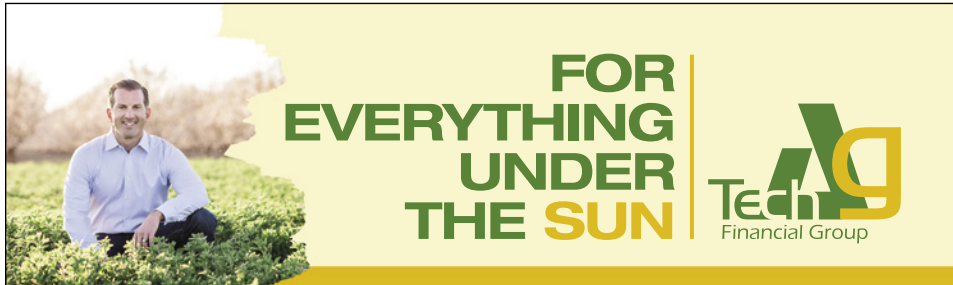


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# USDA Commits \$215 Million to Enhance the American Food Supply Chain

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](https://www.RD.USDA.gov/MPPEP). Questions may be submitted through the website or sent to [MPPEP@USDA.gov](mailto:MPPEP@USDA.gov).

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

### Meat and Poultry Processing Workforce Development

USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture



(Photo: Mark Agnor / Shutterstock.com)

(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.



## 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



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# 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 agribusiness capital markets. 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 25,000 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 work 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](https://www.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 appreciation 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



Fresh almonds (Photo: Leonori / Shutterstock.com)

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 Arellano at [TArellano@AlmondBoard.com](mailto: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.

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# California Walnut Board Marketing Order Update: Status & Next Steps

Press Release Provided by California Walnut Board

The California Walnut Board (CWB) has been actively working to update the Federal Marketing Order rules governing inspection. As part of the process, the USDA will hold a hearing on April 19 and 20, 2022 to discuss the recommended updates. Following the hearing, USDA will publish its Recommended Decision in the Federal Register for public review and comment and then schedule a referendum, which will give growers an opportunity to vote on the proposed amendments to the Marketing Order. The vote will be managed by USDA and is anticipated to be held in the later part of the year.

The CWB Grades & Standards Committee began working with USDA in 2020, looking into ways to update the outbound inspection process to remove redundancies and duplicative costs to bring more efficiency to the industry. As a result, the CWB voted to suspend enforcement of mandatory USDA outbound inspections of California walnuts. This action resulted in USDA issuing a preliminary six-month moratorium on the enforcement of the mandatory inspection requirement, effective September 1, 2021, which is expected

to be extended until Marketing Order amendments are finalized.

Since that time, the CWB's Marketing Order Revision Committee (MORC) has been meeting with staff on a regular basis to make decisions on how to evolve the Order to ensure the new version will benefit the industry in a much stronger way.

Jack Mariani, a California walnut grower and member of MORC stated, "the updates are long overdue and being made with committee input representing growers and handlers. I believe the updates will help the industry keep up with current market demands, save resources and increase efficiencies."

The Federal Marketing Order rules governing inspection, which date back to the Order's inception in 1948, are outdated as market and customer quality demands have since surpassed USDA grading standards.

The Marketing Order update is among many endeavors the California Walnut Board & Commission undertakes to provide greater benefit to growers and handlers. To learn more, visit [Walnuts.org/Walnuts-Industry](http://Walnuts.org/Walnuts-Industry).

# Judge Sides with DWR, Rejects Plaintiffs' Challenge to Extension of State Water Project Contracts

Press Release provided by State Water Contractors

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 Contractors. "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 they can in financing the bonds."

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117.82± acres, located in Kings County WD/1 Well grade 1 - Excellent Soils, Hanford

**TABLE GRAPES \$36,500±/AC**  
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**WALNUTS PRICED REDUCED \$29,500±/AC**  
149.33± acres, Lindmore ID and Wells, Productive Soils, Lindsay, CA.

**TABLE GRAPES \$35,000±/AC**  
154.36± & 406.65± acres, Southern San Joaquin Municipal Utility District, Quality Varieties, Excellent Soils.

**ALMONDS SALE PENDING**  
156.56± acres, 1 well, 3.5AF Semi-Tropic WSD contract water, Young producing orchard, Open ground for new planting

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**ALMONDS \$17,500±/AC**  
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**ALMONDS AND FARMLAND \$21,790±/AC**  
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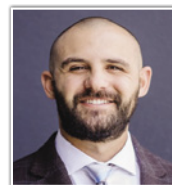
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# Statewide Snowpack Falls Well Below Average Following Consecutive Dry Months

*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



March 1, 2022 snow survey at Phillips Station (Photo: DWR)

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 snowmelt 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."



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# California Water Commission Increases Potential Funding for Seven Storage Projects

*Press Release Provided by Association of California Water Agencies*

The California Water Commission has increased the potential funding amounts for the seven projects in the Water Storage Investment Program (WSIP).

Proposition 1, approved by California voters in 2014, directed the Commission to create a competitive process for funding water storage projects based on their public benefits. The projects were evaluated and ranked on criteria established in the WSIP regulations.

In 2018 the California Water Commission approved Maximum Conditional Eligibility Determinations (MCEDs) for eight projects. Since that time, one project has withdrawn from the WSIP, and in 2021, the Commission voted to redirect a portion of that project's MCED amount to bring two projects up to their requested amount (due to a shortage of funds, three projects received MCEDs less than they were eligible for) and to adjust the MCEDs of all existing projects to account for inflation at approximately 2.5%.

This month, with approximately \$64 million in available funding remaining, the Commission voted to increase the potential funding amount for the Sites Project by \$25 million, correcting a shortage from 2018 due to limited funding. In addition to adjusting the Sites Project's MCED, the Commission also voted to adjust the MCEDs of all existing projects to account for inflation at approximately 1.5%.

"I am excited to watch the work of the applicants as they move these projects forward, and to see them all reach their final award hearings so we can help make these projects a reality," said Commission Vice-Chair Matthew Swanson.

Once an applicant obtains the necessary permits, final environmental documents, contracts for administration of public benefits, and contracts for 100% of the non-public benefit cost share, they can appear before the Commission for a final funding award.

Project	1.5% Inflation Adjustment	Resulting 2022 MCED
Chino Basin Conjunctive Use Program	\$3,192,905	\$215,265,405
Harvest Water Program	\$4,328,709	\$291,841,209
Kern Fan Groundwater Storage Project	\$1,321,915	\$89,123,415
Los Vaqueros Reservoir Expansion Project	\$7,083,343	\$477,558,343
Pacheco Reservoir Expansion Project	\$7,477,633	\$504,141,383
Sites Project	\$12,984,241	\$875,396,369
Willow Springs Water Bank and Conjunctive Use Project	\$1,902,626	\$128,274,876
Inflation Adjustment Total	\$38,291,372	\$2,581,601,000



# 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 semi-finalist teams 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,



(Photo: AFBF Photo, Philip Gerlach)

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)

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](https://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](https://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.

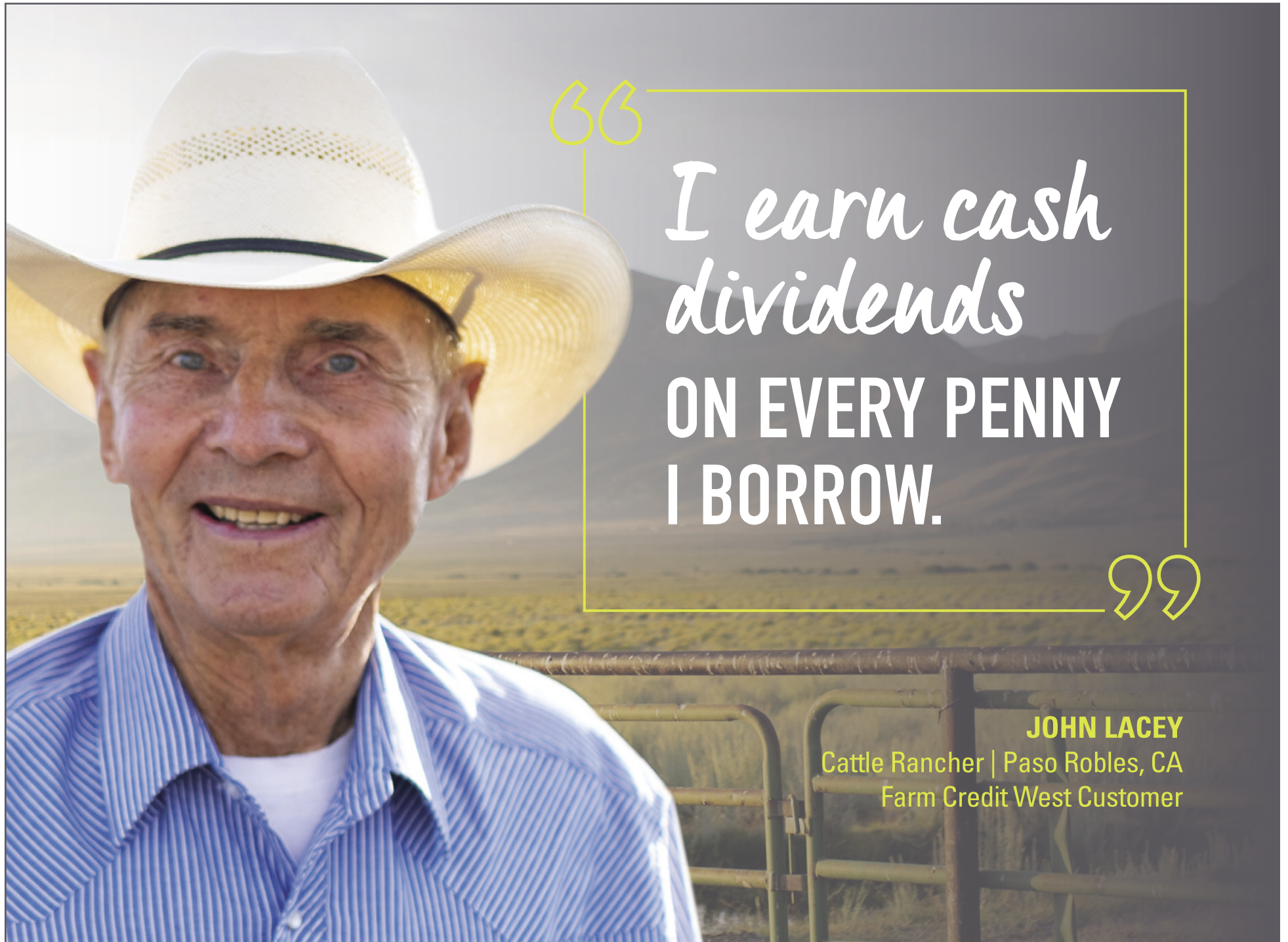
Related to the state's energy future, Barcellos said, "Agriculture has a role to play." He said energy demands may lead to more specialized crops and cost-efficient water systems.

"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 flocks 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 walking into an Easter service and thinking: “Why are they so excited that this guy died?” Or maybe even, “Where’s the nearest exit? Do they do these sacrifices often?” 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, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which

you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to 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 untimely born, he appeared also to me.”

The book of Corinthians was written by the Apostle Paul (1 Cor 1:1) 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. (Petruzello, 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

pain and torment which Christ endured.

Before we get to the crucifixion, we should look at the night before. Jesus took his disciples into a garden to pray (Matthew 26). During that time, it is noted that He was sweating drops of blood; this is a condition called hematohidrosis caused by great stress or anxiety. This resulted in Jesus’ skin becoming more tender (Shrier, 2002). From the garden, Jesus was taken by the Pharisees, walked two and a half miles, received no sleep, and was beaten and mocked (Luke 22:63-65).

“Pilate orders Jesus to be flogged as required by Roman law before crucifixion. Traditionally, the accused stood naked, and the flogging covered the area from the shoulders down to the upper legs. The whip consisted of several strips of leather. In the middle of the strips were metal balls that hit the skin, causing deep bruising. In addition, sheep bone was attached to the tips of each strip. When the bone makes contact with Jesus’ skin, it digs into His muscles, tearing out chunks of flesh and exposing the bone beneath. The flogging leaves the skin on Jesus’ back in long ribbons. By this point, He has lost a great volume of blood which causes His blood pressure to fall and puts Him into shock” (Shrier, 2002). After getting flogged, Jesus has a crown of thorns placed upon His head and was given a robe to wear (Matt 27:28-29). After all of this, Jesus is unable to carry His cross, and so a man comes to help carry it for Him (Matt 27:32). Jesus wouldn’t have been expected to carry both the vertical and horizontal pieces of the cross but just the horizontal piece, and once reaching the hill, He would have been thrown down to have nails 7 to 9 inches long driven into His wrists. Then His feet, too, were nailed to the cross, most likely one over the other before He was hoisted up on the cross. His shoulders and elbows would have been dislocated and He would slowly suffocate on the cross. (Shrier, 2002)

After Jesus’ death, a soldier came and pierced His side with a spear to make sure He had died (John 19:34). Christ was taken down off the cross and placed in a tomb; then His tomb was guarded by soldiers (Matt

27:57-66).

While this is happening, Peter lies about being a follower of Christ (John 18:15-25). And what of the other disciples? They were frightened and despairing. Certainly, this is understandable: the man who claimed to be ushering in a new and glorious age who healed the sick, cast out demons, performed miracles, and drew crowds to hear Him speak suddenly was taken off by the government and brutally murdered as a spectacle. I think many would be fearful to call themselves a follower of Christ at such a time. Thankfully, the story doesn’t end there! What happens after the empty tomb holds the reason why we celebrate.

Three days later, it was the women who discovered Jesus’ empty tomb. Jesus appeared before the disciples, before hundreds of others, and before Paul on the road to Damascus. This resurrection serves as proof that Jesus’ ministry was the will of God—for the dead cannot raise themselves. Jesus suffered this horrible death so that we may have the opportunity to accept Him as savior, the perfect propitiation for our sins.

“How deep the Father’s love for us  
How vast beyond all measure  
That He should give His only Son  
To make a wretch His treasure  
How great the pain of searing loss  
The Father turns His face away  
As wounds which mar the Chosen One  
Bring many sons to glory” (Townend, 1995)

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## Easter

By Andrea Wright  
Faith Contributor  
Valley Ag Voice

The naming of the celebration “Easter” goes back to the name of a pre-Christian goddess in England named Eostre, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring and fertility (Britannica). Springtime is life renewed. The plants and trees that have been dormant from winter come alive, and the birth of animals represent rebirth and promise. The Easter story tells of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

This extraordinary miracle has led to many important dates leading up to Easter Sunday. The Lenten season is the reconciliation with God. Easter arrives at the end of Holy Week and right after Good Friday. In preparation for Lent, Easter begins on Ash Wednesday and is observed for forty days. Many Christian traditions observe Lent through fasting. Palm Sunday is celebrated with processions where blessed palm leaves are handed out recalling the event of Jesus entering Jerusalem. The people greeted Jesus by waving palm branches shouting joyfully, “Hosanna, Hosanna in the Highest” (Matthew 21:9). Holy Thursday is the commemoration of the Last Supper with Jesus. It is the last meal that Jesus shared with his apostles before His crucifixion. The Last Supper provides the scriptural basis for the Eucharist, also known as “Holy Communion.” Good Friday is also a Christian holiday commemorating the

crucifixion of Jesus and Jesus’ burial.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus was resurrected three days after the date 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.

“May the God of hope 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 His selfless



Jesus Christ risen (Photo: Rachata Sinthopachakul / Shutterstock.com)

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. Eastertime 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. Eastertime is a time to be thankful.

*Happy Easter! He is Risen!*



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