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THE LOCAL VOICE FOR OUR FARMERS, RANCHERS AND DAIRY PRODUCERS SINCE 2013 VALLEYAGVOICE.COM VOLUME 12 • ISSUE 7 • JULY 2022

The Vision of the Water Blueprint—Growing the Valley's Water Future

By Scott Hamilton
President, Hamilton Resource Economics

Fights over water have played an important part in the history of California. And today it continues with many groups fighting over a resource that at times is very scarce. It is therefore unusual when entities, who are accustomed to fighting with one another, decide they might be able to achieve more by working together. Such was the motivation for the formation of the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley a few years ago. Many believe the Water Blueprint is the last best hope to develop and implement major water supply improvements in the San Joaquin Valley to address critical water shortages resulting from drought, government regulations, climate change, and subsidence. This year, the Water Blueprint has seen significant reorganization and a renewed focus.

To begin, the organization has evolved by transitioning from an executive committee, to a larger and more representative board comprising a cross section of Valley Water Interests. Members of the board, led by President Ian Lemay of the California Fresh Fruit Association, Vice President Eddie Ocampo from Self-Help Enterprises, and Executive Director Austin Ewell, including other industry representatives, water district leaders, local, county government, and white area representatives (lands not in a water districts). The remainder of the board consists of Casey Creamer, CA Citrus Mutual; Geoff Vanden Heuvel, Dairy Industry; Scott Petersen, San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority; Jason Phillips, Friant Water Authority; Kassy Chauhan, Fresno Irrigation District; Steve Chedester, San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority; Johnny Gailey, Delta View Water Association; Jack Rice, Western Resource Strategies; Deanna Jackson, Tri-County Water Authority; Augustine Ramirez, Fresno County; Stephanie Anagnoson, Madera County; Paul Boyer, Farmersville; Sarah Woolf, Water Wise; Austin Ewell, Ewell Group; Christina Beckstead, Madera County Farm Bureau; Vince Lucchesi, Patterson Irrigation District; Scott Hamilton, South Valley Water Resources Authority, and Chairman of the Technical Committee; and Mike Wade, California Farm Water Coalition, and Chairman of the Communications Committee. South Valley Water Resources Authority is a coalition of 12, predominantly Kern Co, water districts.

With the new board, it was necessary to ensure everyone was on the same page and that there was agreement on direction of the organization. Out of that process came a revised mission statement: "Unifying the San Joaquin Valley's voice to advance an accessible, reliable solution for a balanced water future for all" and a new vision statement: "The Water Blueprint serves as the united voice to champion water resource policies and projects to maximize accessible, affordable, and reliable supplies for sustainable and productive farms and ranches, healthy communities, and thriving ecosystems in the San Joaquin Valley."

The valuable part of that process was the discussions that led to the statements—he debate, back and forwards, of what was important. Out of that fermentation, several important concepts arose: the Water Blueprint should be a forum to resolve differences, and that forum might enable the Valley to speak with a unified voice on water issues; the water battle should be for more water, not a fight over remaining scraps; and that the scope of the Blueprint's

*See **VISION OF THE WATER BLUEPRINT** on PAGE 5*

'From the Field' Video Series Discusses Many Challenges Growers Are Faced With This Season


Matt Efird (left) talks with Brian Maxted (right). (Photo: The Holloway Group)

Holloway-produced Web Series Talks to Industry Experts About Overcoming Water Issues, Soaring Input Costs and Market-related Hurdles

By Brian Milne, Vice President, Director of Marketing & Communications, The Holloway Group

As part of its 90th anniversary campaign, Holloway has released a free "From the Field" video series hosted by CEO Brian Maxted, who catches up with experts from around the agriculture, logistics and related sectors to discuss current trends, best practices and sustainable solutions to help the industry grow.

In the first episode, Maxted meets with agronomist Steve Lenander in a Wasco almond orchard for a mid-season update and to discuss how the cooler temperatures this spring have affected nut production in the Valley, and what it might mean for the second half of the season.

"If you look at the end of the year, we usually end up with the same amount of heat units every year," Lenander said. "With these cool springs, I usually say we're going to pay for that with some big-time heat in July and August probably."

In the second episode, Maxted continues his discussion with Lenander, discussing how growers are combating soaring fertilizer costs with soil amendments. The two also discuss solving ponding issues and unlocking nutrients in the face of soaring input costs this summer.

"When you have ponding, you're not going to have any oxygen available to the tree," Lenander said. "That's really going to shut down all growth aspects, nutrition's not going to be available. Additionally, you're setting yourself up for a host of disease problems when you have severe ponding like that."

Maxted added those irrigation and water penetration issues are only going to worsen in the summer heat.

"You always want to prepare, especially in a drought year and what could be an unusually hot summer, when solving that ponding issue is even more important," Maxted added. "When the grower irrigates, they want to make sure that water is in soil, on those roots, supplying the nutrients that plant needs, and not sitting there on top of the ground."

*See **'FROM THE FIELD' VIDEO SERIES** on PAGE 6*

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The 52nd Anniversary of Mule Days

By Audrey Hill, Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

Mule Days is truly a one-of-a-kind event. Every Memorial Day weekend since 1970, the small town of Bishop welcomes packers, mule riders, and upwards of 30,000 visitors to their Tri-County Fairgrounds for the world-renowned Mule Days celebration. Visitors and competitors watch and compete with some of the most capable mules on the planet. At a glance, Mule Days looks like any other equestrian event, but with a closer look, the variety of events and shows is matched by none. From a 2-mule chariot barrel race to an 20-mule team pulling giant wagons circa the 1800s, anything a mule can do is showcased at Mule Days. As I was told, *and shown*, at this year's 52nd annual Mule Days, "Anything a

*See **52ND ANNIVERSARY OF MULE DAYS** on PAGE 5*


*Some of the Cal Poly packers wait for the individual hitch tying to start at the 2022 Mule Days. **Pictured Left–Right:** Hunter Walden, Lily Bennet, Sedar Cane, Julia Deming, Madison Martinich, Claire Saydah, Lou Moore-Jacobsen, Mary Cizin, and Audrey Hill. (Photo: Chris Martinich)*

FARM BUREAU NEWS

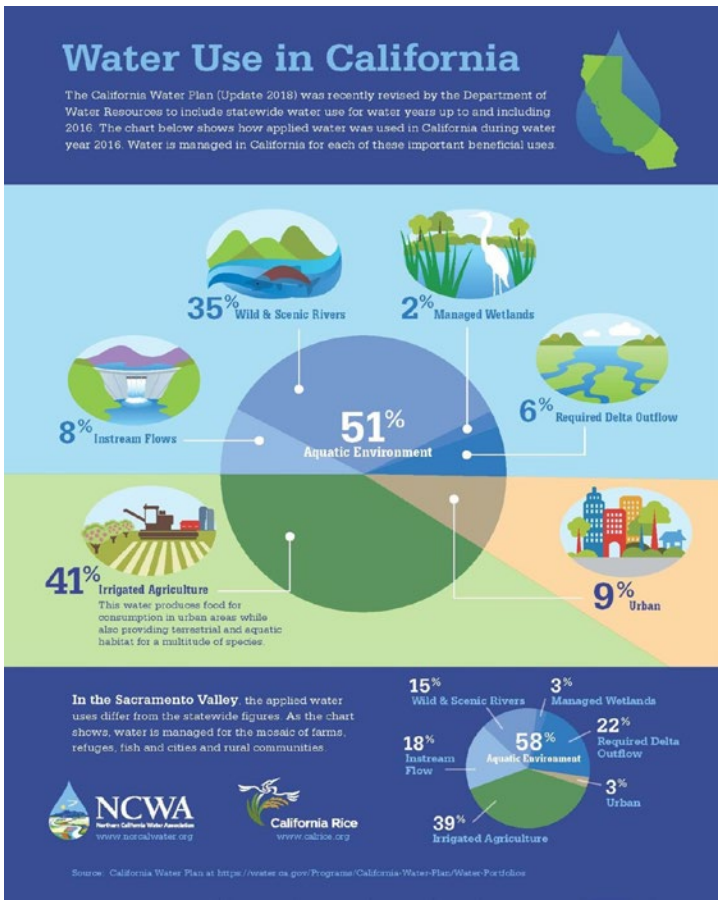
The United Voice of Kern County's Farming Community

President's Message

By Patty Poire
President, Kern County Farm Bureau

As the United States of America is nearing its 250 years in existence (a few more years to go but close), we seem to be more confused as a country on its direction and the needs of its citizens.

The headlines are reading like this is a new country with no "true" values when, in fact, the "true" values are what have sustained us all these years. The agricultural industry has been around for most of those years and exists to accomplish one thing: to provide the food for the people. Unlike the energy situation where our country relies heavily on other countries now, we have historically grown and supplied not only our own food but also food for the world. But if the drought continues (which I do not see changing anytime soon), water policy in California remains the same and SGMA moves forward (which I don't see changing anytime soon either), having our food production remaining within our boundaries may soon be just a memory. Do we want to be reliant on other countries for our food supply?



The chart above shows how applied water was used in CA during the water year 2016. (Graphic: NCWA)

Now the headlines are reading that food scarcity is on the rise along with the inflation component that comes with that. At a time when the CA aqueduct construction was completed and water flowed, agriculture's water reliability was around 98% until around the year 2000 when water reliability went to 58%, and now within the last 5 years, water reliability is sitting around 42%. How does the agriculture industry continue to feed the country when using water for growing food is no longer a priority? To understand how the change has gradually occurred, see below about water use in California. Urban is a small component of water use however when asked to curtail water use, urban went the opposite direction by increasing their water use. Do they not know or understand the need to use water for their everyday need of fruits and vegetables? Is urban so removed from how their food is grown that they do not understand the relationship between food and water and agriculture? Or even worse, do legislators understand?

I used the chart below to bring to your attention what is happening in the Sacramento Valley which is where legislators exist. At this time about 300,000 acres of rice production is not going to be planted due to curtailments of water.

This is not just happening in the Sacramento Valley but throughout the State of California, especially within the San Joaquin Valley which has been known as the "breadbasket" for the nation. And one then asks after reading the headlines, why does food scarcity exist? Why are food prices going up? They say it is because of inflation, but it is partly because of bad water policy decisions and the move away from producing our own food to importing and becoming reliant on other countries for the most vital component of our own existence, the ability to feed our people.

Happy 4th of July!

Executive Director's Report

By Romeo Agbalog,
Executive Director, Kern County Farm Bureau

The Fourth of July, also known as Independence Day or July 4th, has been recognized as a federal holiday in the United States since 1941, though the traditions of Fourth of July celebrations date back to the 18th century and the American Revolution. The Continental Congress voted in favor of independence from Great Britain on July 2nd, 1776, and then two days later on the 4th adopted the Declaration of Independence. So, from 1776 to the present, we celebrate July 4th as the birth of American Independence and commemorate this day with festivities including fireworks, barbecues, parades, and the like.

As we celebrate our nation's independence again this year with food, fireworks, and fun, it's important to take a moment and reflect where the food that will be served on tables across the country comes from. Likely from California, and remember "The 100 Mile Circle" referenced by Harrison Co. in a research report that they published last year? This 100-mile radius centered in Fresno and spans to Modesto in the North, Salinas to the West, and stretches to Bakersfield in the South accounts for approximately 60% of the nation's fruits and nuts, and 30% of the country's vegetables though represents only 1% of the total landmass of the United States. This statistic shows just how important a role our region plays in feeding the country, yet agriculture continues to be threatened by burdensome laws and regulations that increase costs, threaten water supplies, restrict land use and more. I suspect this is not the type of independence or government behavior that our nation's founding fathers envisioned.

Your Farm Bureau however remains steadfast in its efforts to safeguard local area agriculture's ability to continue to feed the country by taking action recently to oppose AB 2550 (Arambula D-Fresno) and provide comment to both the Kern County Board of Supervisors and San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Board on the AB 617 Arvin/Lamont Community Emissions Reduction Program. So in a similar way and spirit of the delegates from the 13 colonies back in 1776, we honor our nation's independence but fight for a different kind of independence for farmers and ranchers from a government that's lost sight of the spirit of 1776.

Young Farmers & Ranchers

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By Timothy Collins
Chair, Kern County Young Farmers & Ranchers

The Kern County Young Farmers and Ranchers have enjoyed several ag tours for our meetings this year. We wanted to continue that trend, but also add a bit more of a social element to this meeting as the summer begins. Temblor Brewing Company in Bakersfield proved to be a good fit. As the Kern County YF&R, we like to support businesses local to Kern County and Temblor is one of several local craft breweries that have become popular in Bakersfield over the past 20 years.

While there, Don Bynum, the main owner of Temblor, gave us a very in-depth tour of the brewing process. He also talked about how he started the brewery and what it takes to keep the business running. We all learned a great deal and got to see just how much it takes to make craft beer. On the ag side of things, we learned that the grain comes from either Canada or the northern states and the spent grain after brewing is used as cattle feed locally. To top it off, Temblor sells a wagyu burger which is made from the cattle that are fed their spent grain. All that talk made us hungry and thirsty. After the tour, we had dinner there and many of us tried out some of their specialty beers. We definitely recommend Temblor!

In July, we are taking a break from our tours and focusing on our 7th Annual Charity Farmers Market to be held on Saturday, July 16th at Norris Middle School. One of our main events of the year, the farmers market is made possible by donated local produce and the money received is then used to build or add on to a local school or nonprofit garden. Last year, we supported Norris Middle School who is generous enough to let us use their parking lot for this year's market after Covid restrictions did not allow us to last year. This year we are supporting the Edible School Kern County located on Buena Vista Road. Last fall we held a cook-a-long meeting at the schoolyard and are excited to be working with them again. We are still looking for more produce donations for the farmers market. If your farm, company, or anyone you know of is willing to donate produce, please reach out to us! We can also use your support as a customer, so be sure to stop by Saturday morning on the 16th!

Email: KernYFR@KernCFB.com
Instagram: @Kern_YFR
Facebook: KernYoungFarmersAndRanchers

As the Kern County YF&R, we like to support businesses local to Kern County and Temblor is one of several local craft breweries that have become popular in Bakersfield over the past 20 years. (Photos: Kern County Young Farmers & Ranchers)

2022 Miss Rodeo Glennville Pageant

Back Row (L-R): *Sutton Baker, Bela Navarro, 2021 Miss Rodeo Glennville Jr. Queen Marcia Gomez, 2021 Miss Rodeo Glennville Taylor Brown, Ashlin Torbet, Ashlyn White, and Audrey Stone.* ***Front Row (L-R):*** *2021 Miss Rodeo Glennville Princess Presley Watt, Quincey Carver, Julissa Martinez, Paisley Carver, Donna Gonzales, and Katie Donnelly.* *(Photo: Abby Chanley)*

By Elizabeth Vaughn, Copy Editor, Valley Ag Voice

If you've ever been a part of a rodeo, you know the abundant amount of work and effort that goes into the days leading up to the competition. At this year's Glennville Rodeo on June 12th, the event was kicked off by announcing the winners of the Greenhorn Mountain Veteran's Association Rodeo Royalty. This year, the young ladies competed for the titles of Queen, Jr. Queen, Princess, and Tiny Princess, based on age range, and along with their titles they received a custom sterling silver crown and belt buckle.

They are tested on horsemanship, speech and modeling, personal interviews, and they take a written test to demonstrate their rodeo and equine knowledge. The girls also work to raise funds that go towards running the Greenhorn Mountain Veteran's Association and are given the opportunity to increase their skills through the process. Besides the royalty titles, awards are given for Miss Congeniality, High Money Winner, Most Photogenic, and the Mary Stone Scholarship Award. Plus, the winner of Miss Rodeo Glennville was also awarded with a sponsored horse trailer.

From Wednesday to Sunday, the contestants all participated in events that ultimately would determine the winners to be announced the day of the rodeo. Wednesday was their introduction on what to expect through the orientation and Meet & Greet dinner. The next day, the girls had their written test and personal interviews in the morning and then speech and modeling section in the evening. Friday consisted of demonstrating proper horsemanship and later a rodeo knowledge interview, and that evening they attended the Lauren Small Benefit Dinner. Saturday was much easier going with a lunch at the 155 Market with a Glennville historian. Through the activities, the girls demonstrated their knowledge and love of equitation.

Lead organizer for the competition, Abbey Chanley, spoke with pride on how well this year's group represented the community: "We put this pageant on to find representatives for the sport of rodeo, but also to give young girls [an opportunity] to grow and improve in areas like interview and public speaking skills as well as horsemanship. Each of them did an amazing job competing, as well as raising money to fund our rodeo and community events and outreach for this next year. I told the girls on Sunday, I didn't think I would be emotional as we reached their coronation, but I am so proud of the way they competed, the way they interacted with each other and our community, and the countless ways each of them broke out of their comfort zones and worked towards a goal they set for themselves. Each of them is beautiful, talented and so deserving of these crowns. We are very excited for the next year with our newly crowned royalty and so blessed to have had such a fantastic group of girls compete this year!"

Donna Gonzales (7), the first runner-up for the Tiny Princess division and named Miss Congeniality, was proud to ride in the parade and gallop out in the arena with her horse Montana. She especially enjoyed waving to the crowd and spending the days with her friends. "One of the best things about the event is that even though the girls in the same categories are competing against each other, they all became like best friends and hung out together around each other's trailers outside the events," said Donna's mom, Alex Gonzales.

2022 Awards

Miss Congeniality in the Princess & Tiny Princess Division
Donna Gonzales

Miss Congeniality in the Queen & Jr. Queen Division
Ashlin Torbet

Mary Stone Community Service Achievement Award
Katie Donnelly

Most Photogenic
Audrey Stone

Tiny Princess
Quency Carver

Princess
Paisley Carver

Jr. Queen
Julissa Martinez

Queen
Katie Donnelly

Through the work of the Greenhorn Mountain Veterans Association, a 501c3 Non-Profit Veterans Organization, they have a purpose to "promote social activities, community welfare and a love for America."

If you would like to donate to the organization, visit them at GlennvilleRodeo.org/Donate,
Or mail checks to: GMVA, P.O. Box 305, Glennville, CA 93226.

Miss Donna awaits the moment she and her fellow contestants get to ride out in the arena. *(Photo: Elizabeth Vaughn)*

All the pageant contestants eagerly listened to the announcer as the results were revealed. *(Photo: Elizabeth Vaughn)*

The Cattleman's Corner

Extremely Different but Exactly the Same

By Austin Snedden Ranching Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

I have had the privilege of being able to travel around much of the country shopping for herd bulls and learning about cattle. I have always felt that the best way to learn about a herd was to learn a breeder's philosophy and try to see things through their eyes. The bovine is an amazing creature: It can survive and thrive in arid country that has no other ag value, and it can also thrive on the most valuable farm ground in the world. Variations in environmental factors across the nation make the methods of production quite different from region to region. The genetics that work well in one area may not work well in another, the tools of the trade and the uniform may vary from region to region, but the goals are the same.

A cattleman in Minnesota may not know how to saddle a horse but can diagnose and repair a broke down tractor in the field with minimum tools. A western cattleman may be able to pasture rope a yearling effortlessly on his/her own but may not know how to turn on a pivot. You have folks that refer to their stocking rate in cows per acre, and folks that operate in country that takes 100 acres per cow. Even the variation within a state can be shocking. One operator may be maintaining 10 miles of one-inch water line to deliver drinking water to arid country, while another is operating an eighteen-inch irrigation well to flood irrigate a pasture. A western rancher may be able to give you the thorough epidemiology of Foothill Abortion but may have never heard of fescue toxicity. Northern tier ranchers spend a substantial chunk of their growing season putting up feed for the harsh winters, while ranchers in the southwest work to carry cows through the dry feed of summer and early fall just to get to a winter green up.

All these differences are highlighted by different apparel, tools, equipment, and maybe even different conversations, but the bovine at the center of attention is what brings all these folks together. The goal is the same, protecting the health of the cow, while converting natural resources into fantastic protein. Though the methods are quite different these folks have more in common than they do things that separate them. They all work very unconventional schedules usually dictated by biology, daylight, and weather. All of them are trying to time the productions of their operations to match the biological production of their environments. All of them are comfortable with a certain level of inherent risk. All of them are trying to mesh environmental forces with market forces in order sell their cattle in a market they have little control over and that has weak indicators and forecasts. Throughout my travels, I have learned a lot about different methods, while also learning how little I knew about different forms of production. The cow being at the center of life is what ties the rancher, tightening a cinch on a horse to the cattleman fueling up the harvester. There are market and regulatory issues that our industry needs to confront and I hope we can draw from our common goals to speak with a louder voice collectively.

Cattle Ranchers, Land Trust Unite to Save Rangelands

By Edgar Sanchez, Reporter for Ag Alert

Reprinted with Permission from California Farm Bureau Federation

Carefully steering an all-terrain vehicle, Scott Stone recently drove across his Yolo Land & Cattle Co. ranch—until he stopped to savor the view.

"It's very peaceful here. It's invigorating for the soul," the 65-year-old cattle rancher said, admiring the panoramic vista—a pastoral, lush, undulating terrain leading to pine-dotted 2,200-foot twin peaks in the distance.

This landscape in Yolo County, where Stone and his family drive cattle for grazing, once could have become a golf course or other development. But Stone said, "Here, there are no power lines, no condos, no gas stations, no mini-marts."

That's because nearly 94% of this 7,445-acre ranch 20 miles west of Woodland has a conservation easement ensuring that most of it will remain development-free forever.

The perpetual protection was achieved in partnership with the California Rangeland Trust, a nonprofit dedicated to safeguarding the vanishing open spaces of working ranches across the state.

Since its creation in 1998, the group has worked with cattle ranchers throughout California to protect agricultural lands as open space. Legal agreements that keep properties from being developed also protect them for livestock grazing.

Privately owned ranchland accounts for 62% of California's undeveloped land in the great outdoors—but it is fast disappearing. Since 2001, about 280,000 acres of these working landscapes have been lost to new shopping centers, housing subdivisions and the like.

To date, the Rangeland Trust has reached agreements to permanently protect more than 365,000 acres of rangeland to provide clean air and water, carbon sequestration, habitat for wildlife and healthy foods for Californians.

Under the program, some ranchers donate part or all of their land to keep it intact for future generations. In other cases, the Rangeland Trust purchases development rights for the portions to be conserved, using a combination of its own funds, private donations and government grants.

Once an agreement is signed, ranchers retain all ownership rights, including the right to continue running cattle.

In all, about 80 ranches have conservation easements, ranging from 32 acres to 80,000 acres, said Michael Delbar, California Rangeland Trust's CEO.

Besides Yolo Land & Cattle, some of the notable properties in the program include the Running Deer Ranch in Napa County, the Marshall Ranch in Humboldt County, the Bear Valley Ranch in Colusa County and the Sweet Ranch in Alameda County.

Ranchers entering into contracts for their properties want to work with organizations that understand the cattle sector, said Delbar, who touts the ranching credentials of the Rangeland Trust.

"What makes us so successful is that our board members are all ranchers or landowners or involved in the ranching business," Delbar said. "That creates a trust factor with the ranching community. It also positions us uniquely with the environmental community, in that we are able to work with the ranchers to protect wonderful lands not only for agricultural purposes, but also for the immense environmental benefits."

The overall value of those benefits was quantified in 2021 by researchers from the University of California, Berkeley. They found that the ecosystems on 306,000 acres of California Rangeland Trust properties provide about $1.44 billion in annual environmental benefits,

Cattle are moved at the Yolo Land & Cattle Co. ranch. The ranch near Woodland signed a conservation agreement to protect the property from development and preserve rights for cattle grazing. (Photo: California Rangeland Trust)

including healthy plant and animal habitats, watersheds and climate-change regulation.

In addition, cattle grazing on the properties annually removes some 12 billion pounds of dry biomass—which can burn in wildfires—making it "the biggest fuel treatment we have in California," said Lynn Huntsinger, a UC Berkeley professor of rangeland ecology and management, who led the two-year study.

"I definitely was surprised by how much" California benefits from the easements, Huntsinger said. "Every dollar invested brings back more than $100 in benefits."

The Yolo Land & Cattle Co. ranch is part of the Blue Ridge-Berryessa Natural Area. The ranch was acquired in 1976 by the late Yolo County cattle rancher Henry H. Stone, who remained active in its day-to-day management until the early 2000s. Then his sons, Scott and Casey Stone, assumed greater roles as equal partners.

In 2003, about the time that Scott Stone became a Ranchland Trust board member, the family was approached by a developer.

"He wanted to build a destination golf resort on our ranch," Stone said. "He toured the property, and I had several meetings with him."

The Stones discussed the proposal before quietly rejecting it.

"We decided as a family that, that was not the path we wanted to go down," Stone said. "That was not the legacy we wanted to leave for our family."

Instead, the Stones reached out to the Rangeland Trust about creating an easement on the ranch. The family then submitted a formal project application.

After assessing the property's value, the Stones and the conservation group designated 6,945 acres as an easement in 2005. Nearly 500 acres were not affected by the arrangement. To this day, they comprise the family's active cattle ranch, home to 400 cattle, 10 quarter horses and other animals, as well as native wildlife, flora and fauna that extend into the easement area.

"We used half of the proceeds (from the Rangeland Trust agreement) to retire debt that we had on the cattle and farming operation," Scott Stone said. "We used the other half to invest in income-producing property, off the ranch. We invested in real estate to help offset the high and low cycles in the cattle industry, part of the economics of being in agriculture in California."

Stone served on the Rangeland Trust board for more than 15 years, at one point as its chairman.

His family is "happy we did the easement," Stone said. It has given him a special vision for the how the ranch may look 100 years from now.

"I'd like to see it pretty much as it is today, maybe a little more biologically diverse," Stone said. "It's a pretty magical piece of property."

52nd Anniversary of Mule Days

Continued from PAGE 1 good horse can do, a good mule can do better."

According to the event's website, Mule Days got its start when "the outfitters and packers of the region wanted an event to start off the packing season and the businessmen wanted to draw vacationers to the Owens Valley. What began as an informal gathering and a test of skills, has grown into a fun filled, world-class event." Today, riders of all experience levels, ages, and sports show off their mule's skills in English, Western, gymkhana, cattle work, team roping, coon jumping, chariot racing and more. Even water balloon fights and RC car spooking matches are not out of the ordinary. Although almost every equestrian event under the sun has become a part of Mule Days, including a fully non-motorized parade and a costume contest for the intercollegiate competitors, the main events are surely to be the *packing* events.

Packing is loading mules with saddles that can hold boxes and other goods, then tying specific hitches that ensure the load won't fall off. Competitive packing at Mule Days comes in a few forms. There are individual hitch-tying events for time, load-based competitions that test quick thinking and hitch-tying speed, and pack scrambles where packers let their animals go, starting a stampede of mules and horses around the Mike Boothe arena. When the timer goes off for the professional pack scrambles, packers must find and catch their animals, saddle them, string them together, and ride around the arena to the finish line. It is an incredible sight to see as dust flies up from the ground while over 50 mules and horses run circles around the arena, stepping over saddles and getting in the way of the packers as they frantically race to catch and load their stock. This type of event seems to only happen in one place on the planet, and that is right here on the eastern side of the Sierras at Mule Days.

Lou Moore-Jacobsen is a long-time friend of Mule Days. She has been training mules since the 1970s and is the matriarch of the Cal Poly SLO equestrian classes and Performance Horse Sale. Moore-Jacobsen also teaches the Packing class where students learn the ropes and train for the competitions at Mule Days. Moore-Jacobsen first came to Mule Days in 1979, only 9 years after its start. Later in 1984, she would come back to compete with her clients' race mules in the riding classes. Then she started competing in the packing competitions with her husband Rick Jacobsen. The couple met at Mule Days and continue to come back each year to compete, support the Cal Poly teams, and help set up the event. "Most of the people that come have formed long-term friendships with people from all over the country," said Moore-Jacobsen. "Mules are very humbling animals and mule people share that knowledge that even horse owners may not understand, so coming back to Mule Days every year gives us a chance to see our friends that we share so much in common with."

There is certainly a competitive atmosphere during the events, but the competitiveness never overshadowed everyone's generosity and genuine kindness. Competing teams share bonfires late into the night and share feeding shifts early in the morning. Announcers speak and laugh with their old friends near them, even apologizing to the crowd for their casualness and putting smiles on everyone's faces. Those who continue this tradition do so to keep their connections to the land and American's history alive while highlighting the capabilities of the sweet-hearted mule.

Thank you, Lou, for giving students this opportunity and for sharing your experience. Thank you, Rock Creek Pack Station, for letting the college teams use your stock and equipment and thank you to all of those that make this event happen every year.

Friant-Kern Canal. (Photo: Dennis Silvas / Shutterstock.com)

Vision of the Water Blueprint

Continued from PAGE 1 efforts needs to be diverse—to consider the people and communities in the Valley, and its legacy—a future for generations yet to come.

Given the emerging consensus, the board turned its attention to near-term goals and objectives, which fell into several categories. The water supply goal encompasses working with others to develop and implement a plan to maximize water supplies for the Valley. The Board recognized that SGMA was intended as a locally driven and controlled effort, but the Blueprint had a critical role to play in working to develop interregional projects to enhance water supplies and enable local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies to achieve their goals.

Regarding advocacy and communication, the board recognized the need for a common message to make unified, prioritized requests to legislators and policy makers and the need to develop and execute a targeted outreach program and build the coalition.

Ensuring safe, reliable, and affordable supplies for rural communities is a basic tenant of the Blueprint. The State Water Resources Control Board and Regional Water Quality Control Boards have numerous programs and funding to assist communities with inadequate or vulnerable systems. The role of the Blueprint is to identify unmet needs and engage with community leaders to resolve issues.

SGMA will inevitably bring some land use changes because there is simply not enough water to go around. The goal of the Water Blueprint is to work with others to ensure land use changes are strategic, such as preventing subsidence or working towards a larger environmental vision for the Valley. Retirement of agricultural land also needs to be voluntary and streamlined—land purchases only from willing sellers with minimal delay and red tape.

These goals were still a work in progress at the time of writing. More information can be obtained from the Water Blueprint website: WaterBlueprintCA.com.

Conservation Goals Leave Many Farmlands Out

By Kevin Hecteman
Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

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Michael Machado's farmland is in no danger of sprouting houses or strip malls anytime soon.

The third-generation farmer and former legislator has easements on his property meant to ensure the century-old family farm in Linden remains as such in perpetuity. In addition to the estate-planning benefits, there's a natural component.

"If you maintain the land in agriculture, there's going to be natural habitat that comes about just because of it, whether it be orchard or row crop or pasture," Machado said. "If you're dealing with pastures that may have farm ponds on them, farm ponds can become a focal point for certain species."

The problem, according to farmland-conservation advocates, is that the state's ambitious conservation-based climate plan, "Pathways to 30x30," largely excludes farmers and ranchers—and the lands they steward—from being counted.

The report stems from an executive order Gov. Gavin Newsom signed in October 2020 in which he set a goal of conserving 30% of the state's land and coastal waters by 2030—a goal called 30x30 for short. The order directed the California Natural Resources Agency to lead the effort.

The plan lists "working landscapes under conservation easements" as part of the 30x30 goal, giving as examples "sustainably managed private grazing lands, ranches, and working forests with formal durable protections for biodiversity such as conservation or mitigation easements."

Agricultural easements and Williamson Act contracts are only considered "complementary conservation measures" because, the report states, "protection is temporary, management does not protect natural conditions as a primary goal, or they are too small to be mapped." Despite calling for avoiding pesticide use on lands under conservation easements, the report names "organic farms" alongside Williamson Act lands and community gardens among spaces ineligible for 30x30 consideration.

Machado said he is puzzled why the state wouldn't include the farmland in the plan "but at the same time they're providing funding to purchase easements, which basically keeps the land in a permanent use, which you would think would meet the definition of the type of conservation they're trying to do." He added, "That raises a lot of questions."

Charlotte Mitchell, executive director of the California Farmland Trust, said it was obvious early on that most working lands would be excluded. "In speaking with some of the agency folks," Mitchell said, "it's really about the durably managed lands," which are lands are defined by the state as lands owned by the state or under easements for the purpose of protecting species and habitat.

Mitchell added, "We can't be durably managed to meet objectives that are not going to be good for the operation. They're not going to be good for the land, the crop, etc. There's too many variables."

Charlotte Mitchell, executive director at California Farmland Trust, said the state is missing an opportunity omitting many working lands from its "30x30" conservation goals. (Photo: Steve German)

The extent to which working lands can help might be based on the farmer's practices, said Taylor Roschen, a California Farm Bureau policy advocate.

"You might be able to say that prescribed grazing practices on rangeland are going to help boost native plant species or forage for pollinator species," she said. "You could talk about some of the healthy soil management practices that are taking place on real crop operations, and how that is providing better species biodiversity, species richness and soil health."

Many of these practices are not based on long-range timelines, she added. "That's the challenge that we have to articulate, is there's immediate biodiversity benefits that can be offered on working lands by making these investments while we also make long-term investments through conservation easements," Roschen said.

Mitchell said the farm's very existence is a boon to the environment.

"Just with the planting of the trees and vines that help with carbon sequestration, I think it's a major component," Mitchell said. "The habitat that we provide in these working landscapes is paramount. You can go to any orchard, row crop (farm), vineyard, and you're going to see a very lively, integrated biodiversity on those lands with different wildlife that is utilizing the crops for food, for cover."

Machado, who grows almonds, walnuts, cherries and olives, said, "We use cover crops on just about everything." These serve two purposes, he noted: to attract pollinators, and to "increase the tilth and hopefully developing enough biomass to help improve the soil."

Machado has participated in the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Healthy Soils program. "We saw benefits from water use, water savings, and then just building up the mass," he said, adding he wants to keep doing this.

Mitchell pointed to the success of CDFA programs such as Healthy Soils and the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program.

"I just think it's a really shameful miss on the agency's part to not recognize the working landscapes, and really the advancements we have made over the last decade," Mitchell said. "We're right in the midst of seeing a lot of change happening in farmland and understanding the science and understanding our climate changes, and how we can best suit solutions for that."

Roschen said there may be budgetary support. The governor's May revision to his budget proposal allocates $768 million over two years for "nature-based solutions" and the 30x30 plan, while a proposal from Democratic state senators suggests $500 million for 30x30.

The Machado farming family put property into an easement to continue a legacy.

"The family's been here since 1906, and it's been in farmland," said Machado, whose grandparents immigrated from the Azores and ultimately put down roots in Linden. "Upon the transitioning from one generation to another, the farmland usually ends up being sold or developed. Our interest was to try to maintain the legacy of the family and to keep it in farmland."

An easement also serves as "a barrier to urban growth," Machado said, noting that development in rural areas can suddenly limit how and when a farmer can carry out regular activities. "Urban growth, or pockets of urban growth in rural areas, can be very detrimental to the practice of agriculture," Machado said.

Mitchell said the 30x30 exclusion will not slow her down. "We have a long list of landowners who wish to take the voluntary step to see their farms protected for the next generation of farmers," she said.

Mitchell said more needs to be considered beyond climate resilience.

"To be able to protect this most valuable land in California should be everybody's priority, just from a food-production, food-security standpoint to climate resiliency and those climate benefits that these lands are also providing," she said.

Machado put it bluntly: "Without food, you can't eat. Without agriculture, you don't have food."

'From the Field' Video Series

Continued from PAGE 1 In the upcoming third episode, Maxted catches up with fifth-generation farmer Matthew Efird, President of Efird Ag Enterprises and Vice President of Double E Farms since 1999. Efird is also the District 8 Board Director for Blue Diamond, and discusses the many challenges facing Central Valley growers this season.

Double E Farms has been growing almonds and other permanent crops south of Fresno since the early 1980s, so Efird said this isn't the first time the operations have been faced with water scarcity issues, rising labor and input costs. But, as the two discussed, deteriorating market conditions due to the pandemic, trade issues and ongoing shipping and storage challenges, haven't made things any easier on the state's almond growers.

Despite those challenges, Efird said there's no other place he'd rather be, than farming in the Central Valley.

"All of these headwinds that come along definitely add more difficulty to the equation," Efird said.

"It's about stewardship of the land. While I have it, it's my responsibility – until I pass it on to the next generation – and part of that responsibility is to deal with the hits that seem to keep on coming. How can we make cuts here? How do we make cuts there, and be more efficient to be profitable and pass it forward? That's our commitment to the food system. Every farmer realizes that."

In July, the series will return to the field and visit an orchard removal and recycling project in Firebaugh, discussing the process of orchard removal, grinding and reincorporation of tree waste, and the Whole Orchard Recycling grants available as part of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's "Alternatives to Ag Open Burning Incentive Program."

To watch the "From the Field" series for free, visit HollowayAg.com/FromTheField.

Planning Is Critical As Farms Transfer to New Generations

Alison Main and her siblings sought help in farm transition planning as they looked to take over her parents' vegetable, fruit and flower farm in the Capay Valley near Sacramento. (Photo: Good Humus Produce)

By Lisa McEwen, Reporter, Ag Alert

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At Good Humus Produce, a small organic farm in the Capay Valley northwest of Sacramento, members of the Main family built a local agricultural tradition with seasonal harvests of more than 200 varieties of flowers, vegetables and fruit.

The farm was started by Jeff and Annie Main in 1976. It became a staple in Yolo County, serving as a cornerstone for the Davis Farmers Market and providing produce boxes that feed hundreds of area customers monthly through community-supported agriculture.

Nearly 46 years later, the Main family children—Zachary, Alison and Claire—are poised to take over the reins of the farm. They are finding that planning for its future is just as important as raising and harvesting its crops.

Transitioning farms from one generation to the next is a crucial task for California agricultural producers and is an often-overlooked part of operations. More than 40% of California farmers are 65 or older, and the average age nationally is 57.5, according to the U.S. Census of Agriculture.

The stability of California agriculture is largely dependent on a successful change of hands, and the Main children realized that the process isn't easy.

"We have 30 acres, and we hire two or three people to help us. Our family is the labor force," Alison Main said. "We realized quickly we had no time to deal with any of it. There was a lot of stuff that needed to be hashed out that we really didn't even know how to do or where to start."

Across California, a variety of nonprofit partnerships are providing resources to new generations taking over family farms and ranches. They're offering guidance and training to ease transition planning—or succession planning—so family agriculture traditions can continue.

Recently, the Mains joined a cohort of other farm families that enrolled in a 12-month course on transitioning agricultural properties to new generations. The program—called "The Regenerator: A Year of Farm Succession Planning"—is organized by California FarmLink.

Its course covers aspects of farm transition, including tax and estate planning, business structure and valuation, as well as financing strategies.

Planning for the future of California farms is critical for many reasons, said Liya Schwartzman, a senior program manager for FarmLink. Rising costs for the retiring generation, the high price of land for new generations, and less equity in the land and farming business are all factors affecting transitions, she said.

"It is increasingly challenging to pass the farm to the next generation," Schwartzman said. "Our local communities, economies and food systems are built on the strength and stability of small and medium-sized local farms. It is essential that farmers start early and do the planning needed to transfer management and ownership so that farms can sustain our local economies and communities."

Curt Covington, senior director of institutional credit at AgAmerica lending, said agricultural lenders want to see a proper estate plan in place for farm transitions. Not having one is a lending risk.

"This is an issue from the perspective of a lender," he said. "Farmers think they are invincible, but it is a growing problem."

In a lecture at the World Ag Expo in Tulare in February titled "Who's In and Who's Out: Elements of a Successful Succession Plan," Covington outlined three types of plans that farmers should have:

- **Continuity planning,** as in who to trust to run the farm, sign checks and keep the doors open in the instance of sudden death or incapacitation.
- **Estate planning,** a legal and tax accounting step to preserve wealth.
- **Succession planning,** which addresses anticipated timing of handing over the farming business to a successor.

"It's easy to say, 'I want my kids to be in farming,'" Covington said. "But, in reality, the steep cost of entry will keep them out. It will be difficult without the support of their parents."

A common error in succession planning is not realizing that retirement is closing in quickly. Many can also wrongly assume that a will is all that is needed, or that all assets should be distributed evenly among heirs, or that the entire process can be done by the farmer, Covington said.

Not seeking professional assistance is a huge mistake, he said. Farm families may need a financial or estate planner, a moderator to help with family discussions, a banker to assist with financial resources, an accountant with income records and business projections, and a tax attorney.

"Succession planning is not once-and-done," Covington said. "Start early and keep it regularly planned."

The lengthy process of planning for the future can be overwhelming amid daily tasks of farming. Alison Main said getting advice through the FarmLink farm succession program helped ease the anxiety.

"We were asked to outline our roles, and we couldn't even do it. We just didn't have the time," she said. "With this format, we meet once a month for eight hours, no distractions. We had to sit there and start dealing with it. It's a struggle to do in the midst of everything else, but we do feel like we're moving, we're doing. As hard as it is, it will pay off and save us a huge amount of trouble later."

Annie and Jeff Main started the process several years ago by placing the Good Humus farm in an agricultural easement as development crept in. At the time, they did not know if their children were interested in farming. But the easement made owning the farm a financial possibility for the next generation.

As their children decided to return to the farm, it became apparent that they had different visions for its future. A facilitator helped guide family members through neces-

*See **PLANNING IS CRITICAL** on the NEXT PAGE*

Okihi Preserve's vision is to build a sustainable community around the magic of the Kern River, to be sustainable we must be mindful and that is why mindfulness will be the heart beat of Okihi Preserve, and by rehabilitating the land, rebuilding the infrastructure and supporting native species, we can create a river front oasis for generations to come. (Photo: Okihi Preserve)

Okihi Preserve Awarded $27,000 Revitalization Grant From USDA-NRCS

By Melissa A. Nagel, Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

The local White Wolf Wellness Foundation (WWWF) received a $27,000 grant from the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) in June to use towards revitalizing the Okihi Preserve located along the Kern River. Once known as Camp Ohiki, the Okihi Preserve spans 13.7 acres along the Kern River in the County Park located off Round Mountain Road.

The preserve has multiple conservation concerns due to being in the riparian (riverbank) zone that is mostly owned by residential citizens, which has reduced the amount of preserved land and wildlife in the area. The grant funds received will be used to help restore some of the native plants and animal species that have become sparse in the area in recent years. There will also be a large focus on rebuilding the infrastructure at Okihi to provide a safe outdoor space for the community to connect with nature and enjoy for generations to come.

Change begins within. Those are the first words you'll see when visiting the White Wolf Wellness Foundations website. Words that help encompass the mission statement of the foundation and the Okihi Preserve, which is "To inspire and enrich the community with biologically diverse green spaces and mindful outdoor recreation that will directly serve to end many of the health disparities in Bakersfield."

This nonprofit organization was established in 2018 by founders Katherine and Stephen Winters with the goal of establishing a healthier and happier community. By offering services such as meditation and donation-based yoga, the foundation can reach people both in-person and online, allowing the foundation to impact a larger group of individuals.

There have also been several local music shows at Okihi this year hosted by local musician Crimson Skye. The shows have featured a variety of local musicians and have included food, drinks, and the option to camp overnight by the river. These unique opportunities have helped bring awareness to the foundation and the preserve and show the community first-hand the value of rehabilitating this 13-mile stretch of land along the Kern River.

The foundation also offers a unique "sound bath" experience via a repurposed ambulance donated by the Virginia and Alfred Harrell foundation. The OMbulance has been converted into a mobile sound stage that can travel anywhere, bringing a medley of intentional sound waves to complement any yoga, meditation, or other mindfulness-based function you may have in mind.

The rehabilitation of the Okihi Preserve is highly dependent upon donations, as there is extensive work to be done to bring the area back to life. Donations can be made on the foundation's website in monetary form. Gift cards to local nurseries and home improvement stores such as Home Depot and Lowes are also accepted and highly appreciated. For information on upcoming events, yoga and meditation classes, donating, and more, please visit the foundations website at WhiteWolfWellness.org.

Planning is Critical

Continued from the PREVIOUS PAGE sary, sometimes difficult conversations.

California FarmLink is partnering with the California Agricultural Mediation Program, which provides free mediation and facilitation services for farm families such as the Mains.

Annie Main, who feared potential tensions among her children, said the process has been "a game changer."

"As parents, we are the glue, and once we remove ourselves, my desire is that my three children will be able to communicate and work together and not go separate ways," she said. "It would not only be the end of the farm but also a distancing of the relationship. That was a surprise to me, but it's very clear how important it is and continues to be."

Attorney Mary Campbell, a CALAMP mediator, said farming is not just a business; it is a family conversation.

"These are tough talks to have, but they are necessary," she said. "Every family has a challenge. That is the nature of families. Mediation is the coolest thing that nobody knows about. We are there to support everyone's voice and can help you have the family conversations needed."

CALAMP also assists with agricultural debt issues, leases or other financial challenges that can feed into concern around succession planning, Campbell said.

At Good Humus, as they produce spring crops such as strawberries, apricots, beets and leeks, members of the Main family continue efforts to plan for the future.

"Everyone in our community will benefit from a smoother transition," Alison Main said, "and they won't have to wait five years for me to figure out how to turn the tractor on."

Water Shortage Limits More Cotton Acres as Price Surges

By Ching Lee, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

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Record-high cotton prices inspired California farmers to plant 10% to 25% more acreage than last year, according to early estimates. (Photo: Vladimir Tretyakov / Shutterstock.com)

Considering the red-hot price of cotton these days, California farmers say they would love to plant more of the field crop—if only they have the water.

State cotton growers have increased plantings by a modest 10% more than last year, according to preliminary estimates by the California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association. In its March prospective plantings report, the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimated state cotton acreage at 142,000 this year, up more than 24%.

"We should see wall-to-wall cotton out there, and it's not," said Roger Isom, association president and CEO.

The price of pima cotton, a higher-end type of cotton that dominates state production, has reached record levels at around $3.40 a pound compared $1.20 to $1.50 during the past two years, he noted. Upland cotton prices also remain at historic highs—rising to more than $1.20 a pound from the more-typical 75 to 85 cents in recent years.

Given current prices, Isom said increased state acreage comes as no surprise. But he lamented another year of drought has limited the amount that got planted.

Such was the case with Kern County farmer Matthew Cauzza, who for the past three years has had to leave one field unplanted due to lack of water. Because his family has been growing cotton since the 1930s, they're set up to grow and harvest cotton, which he described as "a safer bet" because of its "consistent outcome" compared to other crops he's grown.

He pointed to cotton's versatility, which allows him to rotate it in between vegetable crops such as tomatoes, onion and garlic. There's also "nostalgia" about cotton, he said, recalling growing up in a region where "every field was just cotton."

"We want to hold on to that a little bit, as long as we can do it," Cauzza said. "Water is the only thing that's keeping us from growing more cotton."

California cotton acreage peaked at 1.4 million to 1.6 million during the late 1970s and early 1980s, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Today, with drought limiting water supplies to farms and more land transitioning to permanent crops such as tree nuts, cotton acreage has declined to about 10% of what it used to be.

Because so few acres are being grown, Isom said there's concern that low cotton volumes won't be able to support the state's remaining commercial cotton gins, which have dropped to about a handful. Also, growers who got out of growing cotton have sold their cotton-picking equipment, he noted.

"If those go away, how do you pick your cotton and get it to the gin?" Isom said. "We're definitely seeing that and are very concerned on the infrastructure side of it."

Besides water shortages, depressed cotton prices in recent years eroded grower interest in planting the crop. Demand for cotton plunged during the height of the pandemic, when textile mills shuttered and people were buying less apparel. The market roared back last year, as shoppers returned to stores and mills ramped up production, devouring cotton stocks.

With a new crop on the horizon, Isom characterized the economic outlook for cotton as "cautiously optimistic." If demand stays up and supplies remain short, he said, prices will hold strong. But he warned cotton prices are now at a point where merchants and mills are buying less and turning to synthetic fibers. The good news, he said, is the soaring oil market has increased the cost of petroleum-based fibers such as polyester and rayon.

For pima cotton at least, Isom said he thinks higher prices could hold through next season, though it will be "pretty tough" to sustain current prices. California still grows the majority of the world's pima, and the slight bump in acreage this year won't "make a big dent" in supply, he added. Other producers of extra-long staple cotton to watch include China, India and Pakistan as to how their crops turn out.

With upland cotton, focus will be on Texas, the nation's top cotton producer, which has also faced a punishing drought. If the Lone Star State gets rain and produces a "decent-size crop of decent quality," Isom said, then prices might soften.

Though "the main attraction" for growing cotton this year is the price, Merced County farmer Bill Crivelli said another big driver is it uses less water than corn and processing tomatoes, two competing crops that have also seen prices move up.

"The tomato price is probably the highest it's ever been too, but tomatoes are kind of risky," he said, noting diseases such as tomato spotted wilt and curly top virus that could wreck fields. Tomatoes and corn also require more fertilizer to make a good crop compared to cotton, he pointed out.

In addition, having his own cotton picker makes cotton an easier choice over corn, Crivelli said, because "hardly any growers have corn harvesters," so they would have to pay for custom harvest.

Because cotton is one of the last crops planted, Fresno County grower Mark McKean said it is often the one that gets cut out of the planting schedule when water is limited. He noted his cropping plan was already in place last October, when he also considered growing canning tomatoes and garlic or onions, all of which are contract crops he's committed to grow. To make it work, he reduced his typical cotton acreage by 15% to 20%, but he will need to use surface water and groundwater to grow it.

"I would have more acres if I had more water available," he said.

Kings County farmer Charles Meyer had planned to grow 300 acres of cotton this year, but after his well went down, he was able to get only 30 acres planted. He's grown up to 2,000 acres in the past, but now most of that ground is planted to almonds, pistachios and alfalfa. He didn't plant any cotton last year due to lack of water.

Besides the higher price, Meyer said, another incentive for growing cotton is he's part of a cooperative that markets the commodity. He said he plans to use different agronomic approaches and new practices on the cotton he managed to plant.

"You might say these 30 acres is an experimental crop, because we're going to try to handle it a little bit different because of the lack of water," Meyer said. "We're always trying to learn new ways to improve and make it more efficient."

$193 Million in Grant Funding Now Available for Water Infrastructure and Resilience Projects

Press Release Provided by California Department of Water Resources

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) has released the Grant Program Guidelines and Proposal Solicitation Package for approximately $193 million in grant funding to help local agencies advance water infrastructure and resilience projects. This critical statewide funding will support projects such as water desalination, wastewater treatment, water conservation, and groundwater recharge as California plans for a fourth year of drought.

Financed by voter-approved Proposition 1, $167.5 million is available through the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program to implement projects that respond to local challenges by improving water supply reliability, reducing fire risk, increasing water storage, and improving water quality—including treating drinking water—while adapting for future challenges caused by climate change and drought. The remaining $25.5 million is reserved to fund projects that will benefit disadvantaged communities.

"As a state we must prepare now for continued impacts to our water supply from a changing climate. We must invest in water infrastructure and work towards a droughtproof and sustainable water supply that supports our communities and the environment into the future," said DWR Director Karla Nemeth. "This funding will help regions and local agencies increase self-reliance and implement projects that best suit the needs of their area."

DWR will deliver the funding through two phases and will require applications for the first phase to be submitted by August 19 of this year. Applications for the second phase of funding must be submitted by February 1, 2023. Applicants must coordinate through their respective established IRWM Regional Water Management Group and can submit grant applications using DWR's online submittal tool, GRanTS. DWR expects to announce the first phase of awards later this fall and the second phase in spring 2023.

This solicitation will award all remaining funding in

*See **WATER INFRASTRUCTURE AND...** on PAGE 11*

Lack of Water Means Smaller Tomato Crop

By Kevin Hecteman
Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

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David Richter has a good tomato crop going so far—but like many other farmers, not as much as in preceding years.

Richter, who farms near Knights Landing in Sutter County, cut his tomato acreage by 75 acres, mainly because his water allocation from the Sacramento River is 18%. Trying to make the allocation and other challenges work for this year's crop is "like putting a puzzle together," he said.

"I've done 42 of these now since I've been out of college, and we always say, well, this is different than what we've had," Richter said. "I don't know what to expect."

Tomato processors have, or soon will have, contracts for 11.7 million tons of tomatoes, grown on 234,000 acres, according to the latest estimate from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That's down from the January forecast of 12.2 million tons. That would represent an increase from the nearly 10.8 million tons grown in 2021, if it comes to fruition—a dubious proposition in some quarters.

"I just don't think we're going to get there," said Mitchell Yerxa, who farms tomatoes in Colusa County. "I think everyone hopes that they'll have enough water to get them all the way through," but "if that groundwater, that river gets low, it's going to be tough."

Mike Montna, president and chief executive of the California Tomato Growers Association, said the California tomato crop has averaged about 6.9% below the USDA estimate for the past three years. That "doesn't mean we can't hit that number, but recent history says you're going to be something less than that," he added.

While acreage in the USDA report is up—USDA estimates 5,000 more acres than the final total for 2021—Montna said that does not reflect more water supplies; it reflects hard decisions on the part of the farmer. Tomato acreage on a given farm that rivals the 2021 crop "almost all the time will mean that he fallowed some ground on some other commodities that he planted last year and focused his water on tomatoes," he said.

Farmer David Richter looks over developing tomato plants at his farm outside Knights Landing. Richter lowered his tomato acreage slightly this year because of a smaller water allocation brought on by the drought. The shortage of water is expected to hammer already-tight tomato supplies. (Photo: Christine Souza)

The biggest obstacle between the fields and the canneries, by far, is water—or lack thereof.

"Up and down the state, people are challenged with their water supply," said Bruce Rominger, who grows tomatoes near Winters and is chairman of the CTGA board. "Even wells that we thought pumped a certain amount of water are now pumping less. People are struggling to get enough water." His local irrigation district received a 0% allocation this year, which means Rominger is relying entirely on groundwater.

"What worries me the most is having a well fail, or some sort of water-supply issue," Rominger said. "We're walking a tightrope right now trying to irrigate what we have planted."

Richter, who finished planting Memorial Day weekend, said weather extremes have also affected the young crop.

"We had to stop planting back in April because of the heat," he said. "We stopped for three, four days. And a week later, we had frost damage out in the fields."

Tomatoes are seeded in greenhouses the first week of January, Yerxa said; he normally starts planting the first week of March.

The danger zone for young tomato plants is 92 degrees and up, Richter said.

"You get a lot of burning," Richter said. "You get soil temperatures in the 120s, and it'll burn the plants." To deal with that, he added, growers can pre-irrigate the field and plant at night.

"If you can get them in 7 to 8 hours before it gets in that 92-plus range, then they have a much better chance of survival," he said.

Many growers also plant their tomatoes deep, Yerxa said. There are a couple of reasons for this: "No. 1, to keep them out of the wind, but also just in case there is a freeze, there's plenty of plant matter below the soil that can then keep growing even if the freeze takes a little bit off the tops of the plants," he said.

Yerxa said water issues were the main reason processors and growers agreed early on to a price of $105 per ton for this season, a boost from $84.50 last year. Since then, however, a litany of other price increases has hammered farmers' bank accounts.

"We knew that there'd be a real short year on water, and that guys would have to be spending some money on expensive water," Yerxa said. "We had no idea that the price of UN32—the normal fertilizer used in tomatoes—we had no idea that price would double. That hurt a lot." It's also in short supply, he added, and "there's a lot of talk about being a problem moving forward as well."

Richter said he recently paid $5 per gallon for "red dye" diesel—fuel intended for off-road use and therefore exempt from road taxes—to power his tractors.

"I'm not farming as much, but I expect my diesel bill to be about the same as it was last year," he said.

Labor is getting more expensive as well, he added: "We got the double whammy—wages are going up, and also the overtime clicked in on the same year," he said, noting the minimum wage for larger employers going to $15 per hour and the overtime threshold dropping to eight hours in a day or 40 in a workweek.

All of this is likely to leave processors scrambling for all the tomatoes they can find.

"We're going to start the year with tighter inventories than we had last year, and they were already tight to begin with," Montna said. "We've had three years in a row of crops that were just shorter, along with an increased demand through the COVID surge."

From 2016 to 2018, processors had 6 million to 7 million tons of inventory on hand, Montna said; the number now is in the range of 2.5 million tons. The shortage is not limited to the U.S., he noted.

"All the other countries have been trying to overproduce or produce the amount that they wanted, and globally, we've been coming up short," Montna said. "I think the soundbite for this year is, really, global consumption of processed-tomato products will be whatever we can produce this year."

Even as the 2022 crop grows in the fields, tomato farmers are already thinking about 2023.

"Next year, everybody's very nervous," Rominger said. "We're going to have less water next year unless we have above-average rainfall. What are our costs going to do? Nobody has any idea. Are we going to add $2 more to the price of gasoline? Is it going to go back down? We just have no idea what next year will bring."

That means tomato farmers and their customers are going to have to wait until they can know the challenges ahead.

"There's a lot of question marks still out there with our supply," Richter said, "so it's going to be a roller-coaster ride, I'm afraid."

Insurance Services Names Ed McClements Senior Vice President of Large Group Sales

Press Release Provided by Western Growers

Western Growers Insurance Services (WGIS) is pleased to announce Ed McClements as the new Senior Vice President of Large Group Sales.

McClements has over 45 years of employee benefits experience and 32 years working in the agricultural marketplace. McClements has been immersed in large group sales throughout his career and has a notable history of experience in the design and ongoing operation of customized employee benefit programs for employers with large workforces.

In response to the ever-changing marketplace and the needs of our members, Western Growers Assurance Trust (WGAT) has created a large group strategy and added expertise to the WGIS team to provide value and predictability in employer health benefit costs. In partnership with WGAT, McClements leads new efforts for WGIS by providing analytics and guidance through the employer's decision-making process when selecting health benefits. This gives our members unprecedented insight into the underlying factors influencing health benefit costs, allows for control of costs and risk mitigation.

This initiative is led by a team of experts, from across the Western Growers Family of Companies, singularly focused to assist and provide insight for our members to make better decisions for their business and their most important asset, their employees, and their families.

About Western Growers

Founded in 1926, Western Growers represents local and regional family farmers growing fresh produce in California, Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico. Western Growers' members and their workers provide over half the nation's fresh fruits, vegetables and tree nuts, including half of America's fresh organic produce. Connect and learn more about Western Growers on Twitter and Facebook.

Farm Groups 'Troubled' by Court's Bumblebee Ruling

By Ching Lee, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

Reprinted with Permission from California Farm Bureau Federation

Saying that bumblebees may be classified as fish, a state appeals court has ruled that the pollinator insect may therefore be eligible for protection as an endangered or threatened species under state law.

The ruling, issued last week, reverses a 2020 Sacramento County Superior Court decision blocking the state from listing the bumblebee under the state Endangered Species Act and granting the insect protection as fish.

Unlike federal law, the state ESA does not include insects as eligible for listing. Specifically, state law extends protections only to birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, reptiles and plants.

Nevertheless, the California Fish and Game Commission voted in 2019 to designate the Crotch bumblebee, Franklin's bumblebee, Suckley cuckoo bumblebee and western bumblebee as candidates for ESA listing. The move triggered full protection for the bumblebees under state law, which prohibits actions that would kill, or "take," candidate species without a permit or other authorization.

The state based its listing decision on a provision of the Fish and Game code, which defines fish to include invertebrates. Because bumblebees and other insects are invertebrates, the commission argued, then they may be listed under the state ESA.

Farm groups, including the California Farm Bureau, sued, saying that bumblebees are not fish and that the commission abused its authority by adding the species as candidates for state ESA protection. They also contend that protections for the bumblebees could affect farming activities in the state, including grazing and growing crops, herbicide and pesticide applications, and use of commercial honeybees to pollinate crops.

The trial court sided with farmers. It rejected the state's argument, saying that the Fish and Game Code's definition of "fish" applies only to marine invertebrates, not to terrestrial insects such as bumblebees. Subsequently, the state and three environmental groups appealed.

In last week's ruling, the appellate court said it took a more "liberal interpretation" of the law, which it said was intended to be read more broadly to cover all imperiled invertebrate species, including bees.

"Although the term 'fish' is colloquially and commonly understood to refer to aquatic species," the court said, "the term of art employed by the Legislature in the definition of fish … is not so limited."

The court agreed that the law "is ambiguous as to whether the Legislature intended for the definition of fish to apply to purely aquatic species." But it concluded that legislative history supports its liberal interpretation: The commission had previously listed a terrestrial mollusk and invertebrate—the Trinity bristle snail—and two crustaceans as endangered or threatened.

California Farm Bureau Senior Counsel Kari Fisher said the organization is "troubled" by the appeal court's decision and is "evaluating potential next steps."

Farm groups said the court disregarded prior positions of the Office of Administrative Law, the Office of the Attorney General, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, all of which concluded that insects cannot be protected under the state ESA.

The state Legislature in 1984 considered a bill that would have added insects and plants to the categories of protected species, farm groups pointed out, and it expressly decided to add plants but not insects. Reports of the committees that produced the legislation also plainly stated that insects cannot be listed, the groups said.

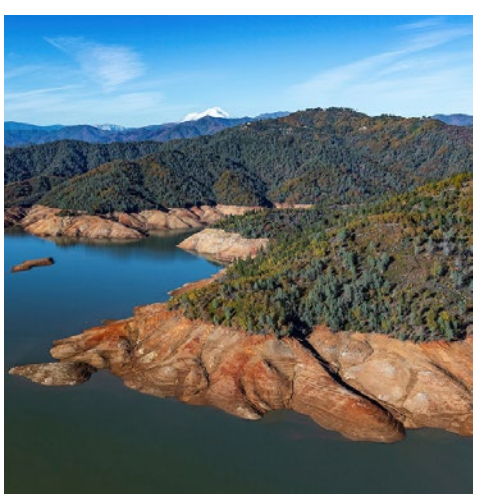
The ruling could complicate existing efforts to manage farmland to protect wildlife, they added. What's more, the case could set a precedent and inspire additional petitions to list other insects such as the monarch butterfly under the state ESA, they said.

In addition to the Farm Bureau, other farm groups party to the case are the Almond Alliance of California, California Association of Pest Control Advisers, California Citrus Mutual, California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association, Western Agricultural Processors Association, Western Growers Association and The Wonderful Company.

Water Infrastructure and Resilience Projects

Continued from PAGE 9 the Proposition 1 IRWM Program. In 2020, DWR awarded $211 million to 42 IRWM regions for implementation projects including approximately $25 million for projects benefiting disadvantaged communities.

The guidelines and proposal solicitation package, as well as detailed information on the solicitation requirements, procedures, and process can be accessed at the Implementation Grant Program webpage.



Aerial view of Lake Shasta on Oct. 28, 2021. (Photo: DWR)

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the IRWM Program, which was established by AB 1672, the IRWM Planning Act. The Act called for collaborative regional partnerships and development of IRWM Plans to identify local water challenges and projects to provide multi-benefit solutions.

While California continues to make investments in water infrastructure to plan for more frequent, intense droughts, it is also critically important that all Californians do their part to conserve water. Governor Newsom has called for a voluntary 15 percent cut in water usage and urged local water agencies to enact stricter mandatory restrictions where necessary. In response to the Governor's March Executive Order, the State Water Resources Control Board adopted emergency water conservation regulations last month to ban watering of non-functional turf in the commercial, industrial, and institutional sectors, and require local agencies to prepare for the possibility that water supplies may be up to 20% lower due to extreme weather.

Super-Powered Partnership: Almond Board of California and Marvel Studios

SEE HOW CALIFORNIA ALMONDS ARE FUELING THE NEW MOVIE, THOR: LOVE AND THUNDER

Brace yourself for a partnership of epic proportions. The Almond Board of California is teaming up with the biggest movie franchise in the world, Marvel Studios, in the upcoming movie Thor: Love and Thunder, releasing globally in theaters on July 8th!

This super-powered partnership will be taking place in the U.S., India, Italy, the United Kingdom and Mexico. Each country has developed a unique campaign, showing how Thor's wellness journey connects to their local campaign. The promotion will be live in all 5 markets from May 31 – July 31, 2022.

Scan the QR Code or search the link below to learn more about this heroic partnership and to see all the ads.

https://www.almonds.com/thorloveandthunder

Kern County farmer Travis Fugitt plans to grow 600 acres of hemp this year, all for CBD extraction. (Photo: Anton Watman / Shutterstock.com)

After Crash, Hemp Farmers Look to Fiber, Other Uses

By Ching Lee, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

Reprinted with Permission from California Farm Bureau Federation

The buzz about industrial hemp becoming the next big cash crop didn't last.

Soured by the heavily regulated nature of the crop and market instability, farmers who dabbled in growing hemp say they're bowing out this season, choosing to go back to farming more traditional crops.

This comes four years after the 2018 Farm Bill legalized production of industrial hemp. Since then, the crop has experienced some growing pains.

Much of the hemp that's been grown in the state and across the nation has been focused on the production of cannabidiol, or CBD, which is marketed as a health and wellness product and as a potential treatment for a range of conditions.

With hopes of cashing in on a newly legal crop and demand for CBD, farmers rushed to plant hemp. Now they face an oversaturated market and lower prices. Some are plowing under their crop or storing it until they can find a buyer.

California farmers planted 2,650 acres of hemp last year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Nationwide, acreage totaled 54,200.

Some farmers are trying to move beyond CBD, eager to return to hemp's roots and a broad array of products.

"The market can only bear so much CBD. That's why it's busted," said Sutter County farmer and hemp grower Justin Eve, who serves on the state Industrial Hemp Advisory Board. "But the market can bear livestock feed, textiles, clothing, oil and paper products."

Kings County farmer Tom Pires, who also manages a cotton gin in Riverdale, has been working with a hemp supplier in experiments growing hemp for fiber. A converted cotton gin is processing the hemp, keeping employees working as state cotton acreage plummets from historical levels, Pires said.

His goal, Pires said, is to grow hemp for seed to get the best varieties and cultivars for the San Joaquin Valley, then get farmers to grow hemp for fiber.

Shay Martinez, a hay broker in Kings County who's working with Pires to develop hemp fiber markets, said she worries about declining hay acreage and its impact on her business. As farmers grow less of it, she is exploring "where hemp can lead."

Pires said he's already selling hemp products from his experimental plantings, and Martinez is marketing some of the fibers as animal bedding. But to get farmers interested in growing hemp fiber, Pires said he's looking for contracts and buyers who are willing to pay some costs up front.

After "an incredibly poor experience," including not getting paid for some of his work, Kern County farmer Greg Tesch said he will consider growing hemp again only on contract. Until then, he's focused on peaches, cherries and other crops.

"We are farmers; we like to gamble, but there's no more gambling in the hemp thing," he said.

Regulations for growing hemp are challenging, farmers say, and can discourage them from growing it while stifling growth of hemp markets. Besides various rules for planting, growing and moving crops that California farmers already follow, hemp growers are subject to hemp-specific requirements in state and federal law.

Under federal law, industrial hemp cannot contain more than 0.3% THC, the cannabis compound that gets a person high. Crops that test higher must be destroyed. Counties are responsible for testing the crop for THC prior to harvest.

"It makes it really difficult for the grower," said Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner Lisa Herbert. "They have their CDFA program that they're responsible for; that's all the laws and regs. But then the county can put additional restrictions or fees on them."

Sutter County has its own hemp ordinance and fees because its contract with the state recovers only $12,000 annually, though the program costs $100,000 to run, Herbert said. The county ordinance allows her to charge growers a license fee on top of the $900 state registration fee.

With "all the testing, all the rigamarole" and having to go through a background check, Plumas County farmer and rancher Dave Roberti said hemp regulations seem set up "to find you in criminal contempt."

"It makes you feel like they think you're a drug dealer of some kind," Roberti said. "It's just frustrating to have a deemed agricultural crop be treated so different than anything else."

While jumping through state and federal regulatory hoops is difficult, Roberti said he is also discouraged by the lack of markets for hemp, which makes it "not worth the risk of going through all the hassles." He said he won't be growing any hemp this year, though he said he would reconsider if the market turns around.

A key reason for the current glut on the market, said

*See **HEMP FARMERS LOOK TO FIBER** on PAGE 15*

USDA Food Plan Is Pledging a 'Better Deal' for Farmers

By Christine Souza, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

Reprinted with Permission from California Farm Bureau Federation

U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has unveiled a framework to address "a litany of challenges" in order to transform the U.S. food system to become more resilient and help farmers, producers and consumers.

"We live in a great time of disruption," Vilsack said last week during a live-stream appearance, in which he announced the release of the USDA Food System Transformation Framework. "A transformed food system is part of how we as a country become more resilient and competitive in the face of these big and future challenges and threats."

Referencing challenges of the pandemic, changing climate, supply-chain disruptions, inflation and more, Vilsack said it is important to strengthen the country's food system across all aspects of the supply chain.

He also called for building on lessons learned during the COVID-19 crisis and resulting supply-chain disruptions. Transforming the nation's food system, Vilsack said, must be comprehensive and touch on four elements: production, processing, food distribution and aggregation, and market development.

Vilsack noted that the program and policies announced are at different stages, with some deployed now and others happening in the next few months, with resources obligated by the end of the year.

"A transformed food system will deliver a better deal for farmers, ranchers and growers and consumers through more new and better markets while also stimulating our rural economy," Vilsack said.

Republican leaders criticized the framework, noting that much of the funding draws from the American Rescue Plan Act and other pandemic-era relief already allotted to USDA.

"Our global food-supply system faces severe challenges that require serious responses," said U.S. Sen. John Boozman, R-Ark., ranking member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. In a statement, he said the proposal "misses the mark and fails to meet the moment."

Ranking member U.S. Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson, R-Pa., said in a statement that the framework "blatantly ignores the skyrocketing inflation rates and input costs that are crushing America's producers, compounded by the administration's burdensome regulatory overreach."

In answering a question posed by the USA Rice Federation about what USDA is doing to secure and protect U.S. agricultural production and processing to maintain food security domestically and overseas, Vilsack said, "Part of it is trying to address the congestion problems; part of it is trying to make sure that we have relationships with other countries so that markets remain open.

"There's a series of steps that we're taking in effort to try to continue to expand export opportunities," Vilsack said, adding that USDA is working with ocean carriers and ports to solve congestion.

The framework includes investments in programs to boost local food production and help small, midsize and beginning farmers with up to $300 million in a new initiative to support farmers transitioning to organic production and up to $75 million to support urban agriculture, including outreach and training.

*See **USDA FOOD PLAN A 'BETTER DEAL'** on NEXT PAGE*

CDFA Accepting Applications for the Beginning Farmer and Farmworker Training and Workforce Development Grant Program

Press Release Provided by CDFA

The Beginning Farmer and Farmworker Training and Workforce Development Program (BFFTP) is a new grant program, funded through the 2021 California general fund budget. This program will provide support to organizations to enhance or expand beginning farmer and farmworker training/apprenticeship programs. The overall goal of the program is to ensure that resources are dedicated to strengthening support for socially disadvantaged and/or beginning farmers and ranchers in the first ten years of business, and farmworkers who need job skills training to provide job sustainability. A secondary goal of the program is to build and grow regional networks to ensure organizations can provide adequate support and training opportunities for those most underserved in the agriculture industry.

Applicants may apply for two types of awards in this program: program planning and curriculum development grants of up to $100,000; or program implementation grants up to $1,000,000 for beginning farmer training and farmworker training and workforce development programs.

Applications will be accepted through August 1, 2022, at 5pm PST.

Grant Application Opens	June 1, 2022
Grant Application Closes	Aug 1, 2022 at 5pm PST
Review Process	Aug/Sept 2022
Award Announcement	Sept 2022
Grant Term Begins	Nov 1, 2022
Grant Term Ends	1-yr Projects: Oct 30, 2023 2-yr Projects: Oct 30, 2024

The following entities are eligible to apply for this program: Non-profit organizations, Tribal governments, and community colleges. Community colleges are eligible as co-applicants with local partner organizations. Entities applying must have demonstrated expertise in assisting socially disadvantaged, small-scale farmers, farmworkers and in workforce development programs.

The 2022 BFFTP request for applications (RFA) can be found on the program website CDFA.CA.gov/BFFTP.

The grant application can be found here: GoToMyGrants.com/Public/Opportunities/Details/9fc11c0a-a679-43c2-a283-d8f90a60bd3d.

Applications will be accepted via Amplifund. All applicants will need to register for an Amplifund account. To register, please follow the Amplifund prompt for new users in the 2022 BFFTP Grant Program Application link above. Additional training videos and materials can be found on the BFFTP website: CDFA.CA.gov/BFFTP/PDF/AmpliFundApplicantPortalResources.pdf.

Amplifund will host an Applicant Portal Training session via Zoom on how to register for an account and answer questions on the platform. Please follow the link below to attend this session. This session will be recorded and uploaded to the BFFTP Program website.

Amplifund Applicant Training Session 1: Monday, June 13th, 1:00pm–2:30pm.

CDFA's Farm Equity Office will hold two informational sessions on the grant program during the application period. These sessions will be offered via Zoom. CDFA staff will review the components of the application and answer questions about the application or the process during this time. Sessions will be recorded and available on the BFFTP website after the session.

Session 1: Wednesday, June 15th, 1:00pm–2:30pm.

Session 2: Wednesday, June 29th, 1:00pm–2:30pm. To register for this session, click here: US06Web.Zoom.US/Meeting/Register/tZMtdOyurD8vHdy9nlt53O2QXowCg-sqLGSG.

CDFA will be seeking external reviewers for the 2022 BFFTP Grant Program Technical Review Committee. Information on the guidelines and how to apply to the 2022 BFFTP reviewing committee will be made public via the BFFTP program website and a press release on June 15th, 2022.

USDA Food Plan a 'Better Deal'

Continued from PREVIOUS PAGE Monterey County organic farmer Javier Zamora of Watsonville, owner of JSM Organics, spoke of the framework's investment in organic farmers to help those transitioning to organic production.

"Now that I feel a little comfortable that my business is moving forward, I can share with others what the resources are and where to go and get (them)," Zamora said. "How can you make something happen if you don't have the tools?"

Zamora also said, "A part of this program will help us connect with end consumers who are sometimes not educated on who is producing the food and where it's coming from."

To build resiliency in the food supply chain, Vilsack announced framework programs that encourage investments in independently owned food processing, distribution and aggregation infrastructure.

Investments include: up to $375 million in support for independent meat and poultry processors; up to $100 million to support development of trained processing workers; $200 million to help specialty crops with food safety program expenses, and up to $600 million in financial assistance for food supply-chain infrastructure such as cold storage.

To increase infrastructure to help gather, move and hold food, Vilsack announced $400 million to create regional food business centers that will provide coordination, technical assistance and capacity building support to small and midsize food and farm businesses. He also announced $60 million for farm-to-school programs and up to $90 million to prevent and reduce food loss and waste.

The framework dedicates millions of dollars in nutrition programs for underserved families, as well as other programs that are aimed at addressing food insecurity.

USDA also intends to improve access to markets for consumers by investing $155 million in grants and loans to those offering healthy food in underserved communities.

To learn more about the Food System Transformation Framework, visit USDA.gov.

Hemp Farmers Look to Fiber

Continued from PAGE 13 Imperial County grower Chris Boucher, is "we built the car, and the engine really isn't ready yet"—with the engine being infrastructure, processing facilities and investments. "On top of that (is) the regulatory nightmare that's being imposed on farmers," he said. "Nothing is straightforward."

Boucher is known as a pioneering figure in the hemp movement. He first grew hemp legally in 1994 at the USDA Research Station, only to see enforcement agents tear it down. He went on to help craft and promote legislation for legal cultivation.

These days, he grows hemp in the Imperial Valley and sells hemp seeds and juice powder as a superfood ingredient. He calls hemp "the greatest crop that's happened" and said regulators should be "rolling the red carpet out and helping farmers" rather than "treating (hemp) like it's radioactive and dangerous."

For Derek Azevedo, executive vice president of Bowles Farming Co. in Merced County, times are different now compared to when Congress legalized hemp in 2018. He noted how farmers struggled with low commodity prices from 2017 to 2019, with many of them "eager to find something that they could grow profitably."

"A lot of folks would be less likely to take a flyer on hemp today," he said, because crop pricing is higher and input costs are far more expensive. "You're risking more chips on the table today."

Bowles Farming planted an experimental crop in 2019 to explore whether hemp would be a good fit for the operation. Azevedo said he learned the industry was too undeveloped and markets for the crop too undefined. The risk was too big, he said, so the farm never went further.

Others, such as Kern County farmer Travis Fugitt, have found a place for hemp. Fugitt, who also farms other field crops such as cotton, corn silage, alfalfa and wheat, will be planting 600 acres this year, all for CBD oil extraction.

With this being his fourth year growing hemp, he has refined the process through mechanization with an automated transplanting system that he said will reduce labor costs. Even so, he said the business is "down to nickels and dimes on the profit margins," with "not a lot of room for error." What's made it work for him, he said, is his crop has been "planned, marketed and sold before it's planted, so we're not hoping that someone buys our stuff."

"I don't see that I have a lot of competition," Fugitt said. "Everybody that was attempting it already is out of the game. I feel bad for everybody that got caught sideways, because there was a lot of hopes and dreams."

With less hemp grown last year and even fewer acres expected this year, Roberti in Plumas County said inventory is beginning to dry up.

He and Fugitt have already fielded calls from buyers looking for hemp biomass for CBD extraction. Roberti said, "That market's starting to come back a little bit."

California Dairy Families Partner With Feeding America and the California Association of Food Banks to Shred Hunger With Pilot Project Delivering More Than 190,000 Pounds of Cheese to Feeding Programs Throughout CA

Dairy cows. (Photo: Serhiy Horobets / Shutterstock.com)

Press Release Provided by California Milk Advisory Board

With one in five Californians currently struggling with food insecurity, partnerships between farmers and food banks are an essential tool in fighting hunger. In commemoration of World Milk Day and June Dairy Month, the California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB) announced a partnership with Feeding American and the California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) to provide access to nutritious dairy foods at sites serving families in need throughout the state.

A pilot program announced during a June 1 donation event at Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services in Sacramento, will provide five truckloads of cheese shreds in one-pound packages for distribution at 11 Feeding America and California Association of Food Bank sites. That's more than 3 million servings or 3.6 million grams of protein to nourish families. Part of the CMAB's #CADAIRY4GOOD, the pilot is phase one of an ongoing partnership with Feeding America that will deliver over $1 million in resources to food banks and feeding programs to source California dairy foods including cheese and fluid milk, one of the most requested and least donated items at food banks.

California Agriculture Secretary, Karen Ross, was onsite to help make the announcement, stating: "California dairy farmers have a long history of supporting the communities where they live and work. I'm pleased to join Real California Milk, Feeding America, and the California Association of Food Banks during dairy month to launch this partnership that provides products like cheese, a rich source of protein and other essential nutrients, to programs that serve families throughout the state."

"Farmers feed people, it's core to their personal values," said John Talbot, CEO of the CMAB. "California dairy farmers are passionate about nourishing communities everywhere with the wholesome goodness of milk. We're grateful to Feeding America for support to expand the reach of these essential resources."

The California cheese donation will be distributed to 11 food banks – Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services, Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, Feeding San Diego, Orange County Food Bank, Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank, Second Harvest Santa Cruz County, SLO Food Bank, Food Share of Ventura County, Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano, Central California Food Bank and Second Harvest of the Greater Valley. These food banks have 3,095 community partner distribution organizations, including soup kitchens and pantries, and collectively distributed nearly 360 million meals in 2021 alone.

"Many of our neighbors are forced to make difficult decisions between paying for food or other essentials including housing. Low-income households spend one-third of their budget on food which means rising food costs can have a dramatic effect on food security," said Sam Schwoeppe, Senior Account Manager, Agri Sourcing Partnerships for Feeding America. "Public-private partnerships like this are an essential way to support the vulnerable members of our community and allow us to stretch resources to increase access for all members of the community."

"Our food banks continue to serve more than 1.5x pre-pandemic demand and we don't anticipate that stopping any time soon," said Maria Houlne, Director of Farm to Family for the California Association of Food Banks. "Food donations and grants from farmers and organizations like CMAB, coupled with public initiatives like the state's CalFood program that allows food banks to purchase California-grown foods, are essential for food banks to meet that demand. Access to food is a basic human right."

The #CADAIRY4GOOD platform focuses on increasing access to nourishing dairy foods for families throughout California. In 2020 the CMAB provided more than 1 million servings of milk through grants to food banks in the state and in 2021 delivered 14 refrigeration units to school milk pantries in the Central Valley. Phase two of the 2022 program will focus on fluid milk with community milk drives and grants for food banks during September Hunger Action Month.

California is the number one dairy state. Its 1,100 family dairy farms are focused on delivering the wholesome goodness of California milk while creating a greener, more sustainable future for dairy in the state.

What Would Your Letter Say?

By Joshua Stevens
Faith Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

Much of the New Testament is written in letters to churches in cities such as Rome (Romans), Corinth (Corinthians), Ephesus (Ephesians) on and on the list goes. Have we ever taken a moment to wonder if Paul were alive today what would they say to your church? What would your letter be? What would you need to work on, what have you done well, and what are you unaware of?

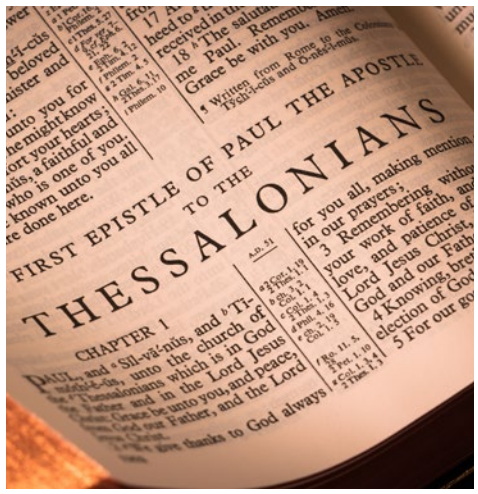
What may begin as an interesting thought process would surely end in much time spent introspectively examining not only our own lives, but the culture of our churches, and how they interact with the world. The first question we should answer may be the most important one—where do we begin?

These letters always start with an introduction—as all letters do and after a short intro Paul usually gives some reason for being thankful for the church he is writing to (*1 Corinthians 4, Romans 1:8, Ephesians 1:16*) after this brief section he will dive straight into the biggest issues the church is facing.

In Romans we see Paul immediately set into discussions of God's justice, particularly in light of our own sin and unrighteousness, how faith effects our righteousness and an example from history of such a thing. For our own churches, how might that look? I've talked to many students who have grown up in the church for nearly two decades and when asked what makes them a Christian I hear tired answers of "because I go to church" or "because I pray and ask God for help" or "because my parents are Christians". These students who have spent years sitting through Sunday schools and Sunday sermons have no greater ability to express the gospel message than a child who had never been to church. Would Paul condemn your teaching of the gospel? Would he implore you to return to the foundation set by the apostles and preach the truth or would he thank you for "[…] yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another." *Romans 15:14*

In First Corinthians we see a book nearly entirely dedicated to the unity of the body of Christ. With the first half of the book calling out instances that have driven believers apart and the second half finding ways to unite them again. We should ask ourselves if we have driven a brother or sister in Christ away from the church or the gospel. Have we put our political preferences above our eternal mission? Have we allowed non salvific issues to drive a wedge between a holy community? When Paul writes to you is he admonishing your church for the silly issues you have chosen to split over or is he giving thanks that you have unified "[…] my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." *1 Corinthians 15:58*

We see in First Timothy that Paul is writing explicitly in response to heresy; he gives guidance on how to choose leaders and warns of people leaving the faith. When Paul writes to your church does he need to remind you of these warnings? Does he need to reprimand the elders for not being diligent in what is being taught at the pulpit? Or have your elders "[…] pursue[d] righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness"? *1 Timothy 6:11*



First Thessalonians. (Photo: Josh Imer Bin / Shutterstock.com)

As you can see Paul ends these letters in hopeful summaries, encouraging the churches to walk in righteousness, be unified, and preach the gospel. How would Paul end his letter to your church, what would be the major take aways from it? It is my greatest hope and intention that this exercise will bring about a thoughtful response from church goers, one that brings them closer together to each other and Christ. It is my hope that this can be a tool for love, growth, and done in the benefit of the wonderful God we serve. My prayers will be with those who endeavor to answer these questions; may it be as fruitful for you as it was for me.

Crossway Bibles. (2001). *The Holy Bible English Standard Version.* Wheaton : Good News Publishers.

California Strawberries Celebrates the "Million Ways to Love Strawberries" with an 'Apotheberry' Experience Featuring California Strawberry Farmers, Christina Milian and Other LA Influencers

Christina Milian attends California Strawberries' "Million Ways to Love Strawberries." (Photo: Eugene Powers / Shutterstock.com)

Press Release Provided by California Strawberry Commission

On June 9th the California Strawberry Commission hosted an exclusive "Million Ways to Love Strawberries" event at the Santa Monica Proper Hotel to celebrate peak strawberry season, the unique versatility and love consumers have for the vibrant, healthy berry, and the extraordinary people who grow them.

California strawberry farmers Neil Nagata and Mayra Paniagua represented the hundreds of strawberry farmers who grow nearly 90 percent of the nation's strawberries on less than 1 percent of the Golden State's farmland. Many are second-and third-generation farmers with a long history of demonstrating love and care for the land and the people who grow and harvest the fruit, and for the communities where they live. Without farmers and farm workers, it would be impossible to get strawberries to grocery stores across the world.

Celebrity actress, singer, entrepreneur and mom of three, Christina Milian was there to celebrate all things strawberries and share a special strawberry version of her beignets from Beignet Box. Other notable food and nutrition influencers were there to serve guests their fabulous strawberry creations, including:

- **Arnold Myint,** Celebrity Chef from "Top Chef" and Food Network Star Season 11 prepared two savory strawberry dishes - Thai Son-in-Law Eggs with Strawberry Tamarind Sauce and Strawberry Scallop Ceviche.
- **Matthew Biancaniello,** author of *Eat Your Drink*, prepared three unique strawberry cocktails in celebration of strawberries, including The Last Tango in Modena, Strawberry Bubbly Mary, and Strawberry Infused Tequila with Surinam Cherries and Shiso.
- **Dani Flowers,** creator of the first Cake Bar in the world, and social media influencer, shared and demonstrated her mini Strawberry Lunchbox Cakes filled with strawberries.
- **Cecilia Cid,** 12 year-old tamale chef and her Abuela, prepared their family strawberry tamale recipe.
- **Mascha Davis,** registered dietitian and influencer, shared her strawberry, beetroot, and turmeric wellness elixir while highlighting the health benefits of strawberries.
- **Donna Colucci,** licensed aesthetician and founder of Bella Donna Skin Studio in LA showcased the benefits of strawberries in beauty products through strawberry-infused facial concoctions.
- **Aspacia Kusulas,** graphic designer, calligraphy and letterpress printer created love letters for event guests with a special strawberry ink.

"We are excited to host this event and shine a spotlight on the love that consumers have for strawberries," said Chris Christian, Senior Vice President, California Strawberry Commission. "Having our growers here to share their family farming stories and their passion for growing this healthy, sweet and versatile berry makes it extra special."