



THE LOCAL VOICE FOR OUR FARMERS, RANCHERS AND DAIRY PRODUCERS SINCE 2013 VALLEYAGVOICE.COM VOLUME 13 • ISSUE 1 • JANUARY 2023

## Changing Focus

By Scott Hamilton,  
President, Hamilton Resources Economics

As 2023 sets in, farmers face ongoing questions regarding their water supplies.

Challenges to long-standing methods of allocating Kern River water continue.

The harsh realities of the implementation of the Groundwater Sustainability Act continue to be felt by many growers in the Valley as the ability to pump groundwater diminishes and significant new fees are being assessed to develop water projects to achieve groundwater sustainability. The Friant Water Authority continues its needed quest to restore capacity in the

Friant Kern Canal – a critical need for CVP contractors in Kern County.

Westlands Water District will see a new board with a new general manager. And the need for substantial improvements in water supply continues to gather attention.

The Family Farm Alliance, whose purpose is to ensure the availability of reliable, affordable irrigation water supplies to Western farmers and ranchers is gearing up for its annual conference in Reno, on February 23rd and 24th. The conference title is “A wake up call for America – why farms, water and food matter”.

Another group comprised primarily of water districts is calling for action. Solve the Water Crisis recognizes that California is in the midst of a water supply crisis that is already impacting the economy, every region across the state, jobs, critical industries, and all Californians. The organization wants California’s policy-

makers to understand and immediately address the harsh realities of today’s water supply crisis.

As mentioned in last month’s Valley Ag Voice, the California Farm Water Coalition continues to advocate for water for farms and to educate an increasingly urban population.

Quench California, an effort sponsored by the Association of California Water Agencies, is focused on improving water infrastructure. They say that California’s Sierra Nevada snowpack is predicted to decline by 25-40% by 2050, thereby significantly reducing what has historically been the state’s most reliable water source. They highlight the need for increased infrastructure to capture, move and store all the available water supplies.

And 2023 will be a critical year for the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley as they endeavor to

implement early phases of projects to improve water deliveries from the Delta to the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California.

The Association of California Water Agencies held its Fall Conference in Indian Wells at the end of November. One of the panels, focusing on California’s water supply strategy, was comprised of Nancy Vogel, Water Deputy for the California Natural Resources Agency, Joaquin Esquivel, Chair of the State Water Resources Control Board, and Ellen Hanak, Vice President of the Public Policy Institute of California. All speakers recognized the seriousness of the systemic nature of the current water supply situation – that it is not merely a consequence of the current drought. Vogel is a water leader within the state administration and a strong advocate for the governor’s water strategy. She is working closely with DWR to ensure available funds are

See **CHANGING FOCUS** on PAGE 3

## Lindcove Research and Extension Center Annual Fruit Display and Tasting



Just one of the lines of tables overflowing with citrus at the annual Fruit Display and Tasting at the Lindcove Research and Extension center. (Photo: Audrey Hill.)

By Audrey Hill, Feature Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

Each December, the Lindcove Research and Extension Center near Exeter, CA, hosts a two-day citrus display and tasting event. The event allows researchers to discuss their year’s work and encourages growers and the public to share the fruits of their labor – citrus. Lindcove is one of the nine UC Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Research and Extension Centers (REC) and facilitates research for the UC system, as well as for “local and regional partners that address critical needs in horticulture, pests, and diseases and breeding new

varieties.” (IREC.UCANR.edu). Most of the research at the 150-acre facility is dedicated to citrus, and at the 2022 citrus tasting event, 195 varieties and many new disease control opportunities were on display.

As visitors walked in, they could see the giant screen structure across the way that represents the new half-million-dollar research project to understand the difference in fruit when growing citrus under large screens. Don Cleek, Agriculture Supervisor for Lindcove, stated that there are already about 500 acres of fully screened citrus there because of the rampant disease among citrus in Florida. Lindcove hopes to find what differences in plant biology and production will exist inherently in the new screened disease-controlled system.

The seedless Daisy SL mandarin was the favorite of many, including Don Cleek, and the initial taster for ripeness. Other displays included the Tango mandarin, which was born at the Lindcove REC, New Zealand lemonade lemons, variegated lemons and limes, all types of oranges, lemons, grapefruits, pomelos, kumquats, exotics like finger limes, and many hybrids. All varieties on display were fruits from an individual tree at Lindcove and were processed in the Lindcove packing house. Each fruit box stated, “Citrus Clonal Protection Program” (CCPP) with a VI number. The director of the CCPP, Georgios Vidalakis, Ph.D., was there to explain to guests his program and stated that the number is

LINCOWE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER on 4

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## Almond Sector Assesses Toll After Its 'Toughest' Year

By Christine Souza, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

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With the ongoing multiyear drought, global logistical challenges and inflationary impacts affecting California’s \$5 billion almond crop, leaders in the almond sector say they are hopeful for a return to a more profitable outlook in 2023, with a more orderly supply chain and lower production costs.

Almond Board of California President and CEO Richard Waycott told several thousand attendees at the organization’s 50th annual conference, held Dec. 6-8 in Sacramento, that “the past year is probably the toughest we’ve had as an industry.”

As part of the state of the industry address, Waycott, joined by Almond Board Chair Alexi Rodriguez of Campos Brothers Farms in Fresno County, cited chal-



Fresno County farmer and processor Stuart Woolf says he expects to fallow almond acres due to water challenges during a discussion on water at the Almond Board conference. (Photo: Christina Souza)

lenges affecting the almond sector. These include limited water supply, logistical and supply-chain issues, rising interest rates, inflation, and the war in Ukraine.

“This combination has created this perfect storm that

See **ALMOND SECTOR ASSESSES TOLL** on PAGE 9





# FARM BUREAU NEWS

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



## President's Message

**Welcome to 2023! Hope that you and your families had a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.**

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

I was going to start by saying Happy New Year to 2023 but I believe that 2023 isn't going to be close to happy! I looked back at my January 2022 article to see if I came close to predicting how 2022 was going to be and YEP, I stated that 2022 was going to be a year where regulations, water, and pesticide issues were going to continue to become more difficult to work with. I wish that I could say that 2023 is going to be a better year for agriculture, but it's not April Fool's Day!

Immediately in 2023, agriculture employers need to be addressing AB 2183 – known as the “card check bill”. This is the legislation that Governor Newsom held closed-door meetings with the labor unions, United Farms Workers, and the California Labor Federation, to design the follow-up amending legislation that he seeks and at the time I am writing this, there seems to be no information on amending legislation. Thus, the chartered AB 2183 goes into effect on January 1, 2023, and my recommendation is to engage as soon as possible to stay in compliance because the unions will be looking for those employers. If you need any information on this legislation, please contact the Kern County Farm Bureau office.

I mentioned in my December article about climate change bills that appeared at the end of the legislative session that the Governor signed. I am concerned that these types of legislation would somehow lead to a mandatory process in some form or fashion on how agriculture farm. It appears that the County of San Luis Obispo wasted no time in adopting a planting ordinance for Paso Robles where it is now mandated carbon sequestration while farming. I believe that this is the nation's first regulation to mandate this, but I believe that the state will follow this instead of

allowing the agricultural industry to have a choice to sequester or not. Also, it requires farmers seeking to rotate crops to set aside a 50-foot buffer zone for riparian habitats as well as caps groundwater pumping to 25-acre-feet per year for the next 22 years. What is interesting about what the San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors adopted is that the Planning Commission submitted a letter to the SLO Board of Supervisors recommending that they not adopt the planting ordinance and to allow the Groundwater Sustainability Agencies and the Groundwater Sustainability Plans to oversee the process of SGMA and that the ordinance actually impedes that process. Hopefully, the actions by the SLO board of supervisors don't trigger other boards to consider “stepping” into SGMA prematurely as well as mandating carbon sequestration.

By the way, carbon sequestration and the concept of healthy soils seem to be the hot topic towards the end of 2022. My recommendation is to be cautious on these because it's unclear whether there is enough science that it will not impede agricultural practices in the future or if it could trigger subsidence in the future. These are areas where I am working to obtain the science and working with the oil industry as a partner to understand the science.

As I mentioned in several of my previous articles, climate change continues to be used by the Governor and legislators to move what I believe is their agenda of controlling what you buy, use, and do. The current move is to limit the purchase of fuel-engine vehicles in California, but that brings a whole new set of problems. For example, currently one can easily pull over and quickly re-fuel as needed. However, with going electric there will need to be fast-charging sites constructed. Placing those fast-charging sites will be difficult because there will need to be a way to get the electricity to the site and to have the capacity to deliver enough elec-

**See PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE on the NEXT PAGE**



*Presents*



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**Afternoon Presentations and  
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or call the **Kern County Farm Bureau** at **661.397.9635****

**You may also visit our webpage for more info: <https://kerncfb.com/spray-safe/>**

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## Young Farmers & Ranchers

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*Articles or commentaries are not direct opinions of  
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**By Timothy Collins  
Chair, Kern County  
Young Farmers  
& Ranchers**

The Young Farmers and Ranchers wrapped up 2022 with our elections meeting in November, followed by the YF&R

State Conference in December. We are excited to introduce our 2023 officer team. I was elected as Chair again for another year, Christine Johnson as Vice Chair, Katie Verhoef as Treasurer, Russell Todd as Secretary, Christine Etcheverry as Social Media Coordinator, Cory Camp as Clay Shoot Chair, and Katelyn Filkins as Farmers Market Chair. We are already planning another year of meetings, tours, events, and fundraisers. While most of our focus is on Kern County, we also hope to be more involved in YF&R events around the state in 2023.

Several of us from Kern attended the YF&R State Conference held in Monterey in December.

While the consensus is that agriculture in California has a challenging future, we think it is worth fighting for and is an industry that YF&R members from across



*As part of “Technology at Work in Salinas,” YF&R toured Stout Industrial Technology, where they were building smart cultivators that use cameras and AI technology to target weeds with mechanical blades. (Photo: Kern County Young Farmers & Ranchers)*

the state still want to be a part of. Building relationships with those members from across the state is always a highlight of the conference. In addition, they encourage those of us who are often pessimistic about the industry.

We had valuable speakers, interesting sessions, and networking opportunities at the conference over the weekend. However, the highlight for me was Sunday morning's “Technology at Work in Salinas” tour.

Salinas is a special place for me as it is where my great-grandpa eventually settled and worked on a farm after leaving Oklahoma following the Dust Bowl. Next, we toured Stout Industrial Technology where they were building smart cultivators that use cameras and AI technology to target weeds with mechanical blades, a job typically done by hand crews. We also stopped by PlantTape where they use automated transplanting equipment to increase efficiency and reduce larger labor crews. Our last stop was downtown Salina's Western Growers Center for Innovation & Technology. Here we learned about the continued tech advancements in ag and how Silicon Valley, just 60 miles to the North, can play a role.

My great-grandfather grew up with horses in Oklahoma and then drove tractors in Salinas in the 1940s and 50s. While he saw a major transformation with internal combustion engine workhorses taking over in his day, I am sure he would not have imagined the technology today, especially what is just around the corner. If there are opportunities in ag in California today, it is in more advanced technology. This technology can keep California the top ag producer in a climate where our ag industry is under attack.

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The  
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# OPINION: Misdiagnosis

By Austin Snedden  
Ranching Contributor,  
Valley Ag Voice

Misdiagnosis is something we generally think of when referring to the medical field, but just as misdiagnosis can happen in the medical field, it can happen elsewhere. It's the recognition of a problem, but a misunderstanding of the cause, resulting in a solution that won't fix it. Governments, large and small, are the primary culprits of misdiagnosis. Usually, it occurs with a complex problem that folks think needs an urgent fix—something that is so important that “something must be done,” even if we don't understand causation or how to fix it. Although complex issues logically spawn most misdiagnoses, don't underestimate the incompetency of bureaucracy and its ability to misdiagnose simple problems. We can debate the proper role of government and how much we should call on it to solve problems, but it is hard to argue with the fact that government is primarily ineffective at fixing issues.

I have hammered climate change in previous articles, so I will not dwell too long. The significant illness of the planet is climate change, and the cause of the illness is humanity. The cure for the illness is to eliminate modern efficiencies. The primary problem with this diagnosis is that when looking at the earth's long-term medical chart, there has never been a period where the climate wasn't changing. The secondary problem with this diagnosis is the causation. Many variables affect climate, none of which can be held constant; therefore, we can't properly employ the scientific method. The final and most dangerous problem with this diagnosis is that the supposed cure will result in food shortages, heating and cooling shortages, and ultimately, hardship and mortality for some of the poorest folks on the planet. This misdiagnosis, or at best a diagnosis that is no better than a guess, will ultimately result in a reduction in the use of fossil fuels that will make food less abundant and more expensive and energy for heating and cooling those in extreme climates less available. That is a certainty.

We are all too familiar with the deadly wildfires in California. They destroy lives, homes, property, and biodiversity. The scope of these wildfires is a clear illness that the layman can see. Wildfires always have and always will exist, but the destruction and ferociousness of the fires in recent years have been outliers. The government's diagnosis of causation is climate change. I guess “spontaneous combustion” sounded too outlandish, so they went with its close relative, man-made climate change. For the average thinking person, it sounds ignorant enough that a minuscule temperature change causes fires, but dig in, and it sounds even more ignorant. Climate change did not create a forest policy that reduced grazing. Climate change did create a government policy that decreased logging, but climate change did not create a government policy that increased roadless areas. Instead, the government teamed with environmental groups to create a policy that increased fuel loads and reduced fire breaks in our wild lands. A misdiagnosis of wildfire built on a misdiagnosis of man-made climate change has resulted in a deadly, costly illness in wildfire.

The examples abound, but one that hit closest to home is the prescription of SGMA to fix an overdraft of our water table. The “illness” was a declining water table. The prescription was SGMA, but what about the causation of these declining water tables? The State “diagnosed” that farmers and municipalities were pumping too much water. If the State wants to learn the causation of overdraft, they might need to look in a mirror. The State of California did not deliver the water that was paid for and promised through the State Water Project because of a little fish and other environmental reasons, resulting in freshwater flowing out into the ocean that was earmarked for humans. If you are a farmer that had permanent crops or even annual crops, and you know, had to make a living based on production (unlike the folks in Sacramento), what do you do? You turn on your well pumps. The state created an ailment where the cure hurts the victim. Society tends to grow government based on the idea that there are problems the government will fix. Based on history and current examples of the government being a “physician” for our problems, I am not sure we can handle too many more “cures.”



Aerial applicators need every opportunity to protect the food supply while working to bring everyone home safely. (Photo: Jon Slikker Jr.)

# Aerial Applicators—A Conscientious Pilot's Wish

Jon Slikker Jr., Aerial Applicator, Vince Dusters

When pulling up to a railroad crossing and patiently waiting for the train to pass, you give consideration to the large piece of iron chugging down the tracks. When a school crossing guard is parked on the side of the road at an intersection, the ultra-loud whistle blows, and traffic stops to give consideration to any children that may be crossing the road. When a siren is heard in the distance, we all look for a combination of flashing red and blue lights, anticipating the need to give room to any emergency services to rush and save a life. The biggest similarity between these examples is the public giving the right-of-way because the consequences could likely result in an accident or loss of life.

Aerial Applicators are not rushing around saving lives with lights and sirens. We are conscientious applicators that hold the highest regard for human life and safety. During an application, communication to the public is very limited. There are a few options we have in our tool chest that might help.

**Assume the pilot in an aircraft making an application does not see you right away.** Many times, a pilot is looking at five things at once. Pilots in the field are looking at wires, cell towers, buildings, instrument gauges, and for anyone else that might be at the application site. If you notice a pilot making an application, please give the

pilot a moment to recognize you're there and more than likely will pause the application for you to make your way past.

**Listen to the spotter or field man.** A spotter is another set of eyes for the pilot on the ground. We all have jobs to do and places to be. Pilots do not want to hold you up, and more than likely, we are in the field working for a relatively short amount of time. Mostly here in Kern County we employ a field spotter that has direct communication with the pilot. If you have a question, talk to the spotter away from the application site and we can work with you to make sure you're not in harm's way.

**Smokers.** Crop dusters usually have a device that creates a white puff of smoke. Smoke is a tool used to help applicators determine the direction and velocity of wind movement. We are trying diligently to eliminate offsite movement of any crop protection materials. Smoke is also a valuable tool to help us communicate to the public that we see them. We are not simply waving and saying hello; we are making sure we have your attention and warning you that you have entered into an application area, we need you to give us room to work. Your health and safety are our priority. Please wait at a minimum of 1/4 mile away.

When making aerial applications, we need every chance and opportunity to protect the world's food supply while working together to bring everyone home safely at the end of the day. The goal as a pilot is to make safe and effective applications while safely returning ourselves to our families and our aircraft safely back to the hangar.

# President's Message

*Continued from the PREVIOUS PAGE* tricity continuously. A study just released by National Grid advised that one of those fast-charging sites could require the same amount of electricity as a sports stadium or even a small town, and depending on the location, it could be as much power as needed by a large industrial plant. Where does the electricity come from, who pays for the electricity, and by the way, how does one dispose of their electric vehicle battery pack? All these items seem to not be addressed when the Governor and legislators talk about how moving to electric vehicles will reduce the carbon footprint and not mention

how agriculture will be able to comply as well. The new legislation does establish an “Expert Advisory Committee,” but the word agricultural was not included in the committee formation.

A quick note on water: the state issued the State Water Project allocation at 5%. And as I am writing this article, the state is experiencing rain and snow. Maybe, 2023's glory will be a wet water year!

As I have mentioned before, engagement is vital, meaning if you are not at the table then you are on the menu!

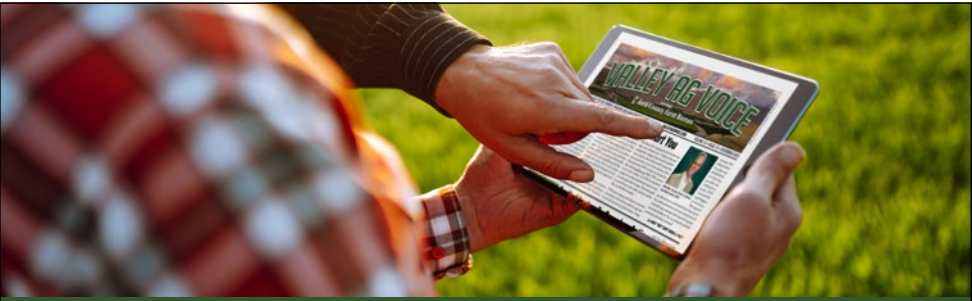
2023, here we go whether we like it or not! But remember the Kern County Farm Bureau is here to assist you and will continue to keep you informed.

# Changing Focus

*Continued from PAGE 1* distributed quickly to water projects in the State. The State Water Resources Control Board has invested heavily in meeting drinking water requirements for rural communities. Additionally, they are responsible for administering water rights and approving new applications. That responsibility has been challenging requiring them to allocate water to senior water rights holders to meet other essential needs. All speakers noted the problems with

funding and permit applications and processing and are seeking ways to improve the processes.

2022, with its surface and groundwater shortages, increasing regulations, and increasing production costs, is a year many farmers are glad to have behind them. Likely though, things will get worse before they get better. Many organizations, including local water districts, are seeking long-term improvements in the water supply. They are going to need the moral and financial support of the agricultural community to be successful.



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# VALLEY AG VOICE

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# Farmers Get Help Transitioning to Organic

By Ching Lee, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

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If it weren't for his "dumb mistake," Sonoma County winegrape grower Andrew Furlong's 20 acres of zinfandel would be certified organic by now.

But last year, he cleaned his drip line with a product that postponed certification on his vineyard. The acid cleaner he used was advertised as "all natural" and "organic." But because it wasn't certified organic, he said, it was considered a prohibited material. It set him back two years.

To be certified organic, producers must go through a three-year transition in which they stop using synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and other prohibited materials on their land while they implement other organic practices. Farmers say this transition period remains one of the biggest hurdles to becoming certified organic because they lose yields, yet their crops can't command the price premiums of organic products.

"Farming organically is more difficult," Furlong said. "The fertilizers aren't quite as effective. We have less tools to combat pests and disease. Then there's the certification process, the usual red tape."

Because of the product mishap, Furlong had to start over. His organic status remains "transitional." But under an agreement, the winery that buys his grapes pays him a higher price during the transition. That's one of the advantages farmers seek when they enroll in a certified transitional program, which has been described as "organics in training."

Santa Cruz-based California Certified Organic Farmers is one of several organic certifiers nationally that offers such a program. CEO Kelly Damewood said CCOF works with transitioning growers from the outset to make sure they're learning how to keep proper records, build soil health and not apply prohibited materials.

Farms enrolled in CCOF's program undergo annual inspections during the three years to verify they're complying with federal organic regulations. They also pay the same inspection fees as certified organic operations. CCOF requires one year of transition before



To be certified organic, producers must go through a three-year transition in which they stop using synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and other prohibited materials on their land while they implement other organic practices. (Photo: Ching Lee)

crops can be sold as certified transitional. Farms are recognized for efforts to farm organically during the transition, but they can't represent their crops as organic.

Damewood said the program's focus is not about having a "consumer-facing label" at the retail level so that farmers can fetch a higher price for their products. But she said some growers do use such a label in direct sales, such as at the farmers market. More often, the program is meant to help transitioning growers obtain a premium through a direct arrangement with a handler-processor-buyer, she said.

Though "certified transitional" labels have not taken off at the retail level, at least one company—the cereal maker Kashi—has been using and promoting it. The company sources wheat from transitional farms. By supporting certified transitional crops, the company said on its website, "we are helping to create a marketplace to drive more organic farmland."

As the organic market continues to grow, the push to increase the supply and availability of certified organic products has picked up momentum. Organic food sales rose 2% between 2020 and 2021, according to the Organic Trade Association, but less than 1% of U.S. farmland is organic. The number of farms actively transitioning to organic production dropped by nearly

71% since 2008, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

To help farmers through organic transition—and to encourage others to take the plunge to convert to organic—USDA in August said it would invest up to \$300 million in a new Organic Transition Initiative that's meant to help build markets and income streams for farmers.

As part of the initiative, groups such as CCOF are working to build programs to help transitioning farmers, facilitate farmer-to-farmer mentorship, create markets that can absorb transitional crops, and provide technical support and grant funding.

Though the initiative is not focused on creating a national "certified transitional" label, the Organic Trade Association continues to urge USDA to establish a program that would conform standards for transitional certification so that third-party-verified private labels could be developed.

In a letter to USDA last month, association CEO and Executive Director Tom Chapman said various organic certifiers already offer transitional certification programs, but they lack harmonization and consistent oversight.

USDA approved a national certified transitional program

in 2017 and began accepting applications from certifiers, but the department withdrew the program months later with no explanation.

OTA maintains that "creating a viable end market for transitional products is the soundest way to lower financial risk and increase business incentives to purchase transitional products," the association said in an email to Ag Alert®.

A University of California study found that because few consumers know what "certified transitional" means, some view products with the label as lower quality than products grown conventionally. As a result, some producers "may opt for other more established and well-known certifications," such as Non-GMO Project or Certified Pesticide Residue Free, "to market their products and obtain price premiums during the transition period," wrote Ashley Spalding, author of the study.

CCOF's Damewood said she thinks there's "a lot of value" in certified transitional programs to allow growers to earn a premium from processor-handlers, but trying to educate consumers at the retail level about what the term means would be a challenge. "I think there's valid concerns that it could lead to consumer confusion," she said.

She acknowledged the market implications and potential impact to the price of organic products as more transitional organic products compete with certified organic products. But she said CCOF's vision "is a world where organic is the norm."

Yolo County farmer Paul Muller said all farmers, whether they're organic or conventional, worry about overproduction and how it drives down prices. But as someone who's been farming organically for more than 40 years, he said he believes in the ecological benefits of organic farming. As such, he said he doesn't want to exclude other farmers from entering into organic production.

"I think it's really important that we keep growers producing and getting into the market, so the market continues to expand," Muller said.

At the same time, he said he wants the organic marketplace to maintain its high integrity and for transitional labeling to be clear, formalized and codified with proper oversight.

"What's really important is that there are trusted labels in the marketplace that consumers can look for," he said.



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## Lincove Research and Extension Center

*Continued from PAGE 1* like a social security number associated with an individual tree and ensures that the tree is grown free of disease. His program is the first of its kind in California. It is regarded by scientists as the best way to ensure that the trees you buy, whether grower or homeowner looking for a backyard tree, will be the highest quality available. The CCPP is also working on developing disease-resistant varieties from trees coming from Florida.

Other researchers at the event were sampling new varieties of mandarin and pomelo still under development, and visitors got to lend input on their favorites.



Lincove Research and Extension Center's new half a million dollar research project to study citrus growth in a disease controlled environment. (Photo: Audrey Hill)

Nearby, five boxes of the same clementine were sampled, although all were grown with different conventionally used rootstocks. The difference in flavor and color was very subtle. However, some were undoubtedly different in sugar and acid content. Some of the fruit also showed "granulation," or the effects of a freeze on citrus. The researcher operating the booth explained that these fruits specifically had not likely seen a freeze yet, meaning it could be an effect of the rootstock. Anyone willing to try all five clementines was given a notecard that listed sugar, acid, visual appeal, and taste as factors to be included in the project's report.

This event would not have been possible without the Director of Lindcove REC Ashraf El-Kereamy, Ph.D., or Agriculture Supervisor Don Cleek. Both worked extremely hard to make the event possible and to keep Lindcove running smoothly with a good scientific process year around. Dr. El-Kereamy also works at UC Riverside, facilitating research on plant molecular biology, and has published more than 40 peer-reviewed papers. Another group pertinent to the event's success was the volunteers, many of whom were Master Gardeners of Fresno, Tulare, and Kings County. The volunteers I met, as well as the researchers and directors, wore many hats, representing California agriculture in a wide range of plant and animal agriculture.



# Johansson Calls for Restoring Farm Bounty

**California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson on Monday urged lawmakers and society at large to adopt a new mindset in their approach to agriculture.**

*By Caleb Hampton, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert*

*Reprinted with Permission from California Farm Bureau Federation*

California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson on Monday urged lawmakers and society at large to adopt a new mindset in their approach to agriculture.

Addressing the 104th California Farm Bureau Annual Meeting in Monterey, Johansson took issue with any notion that farmers facing historic challenges of drought and water shortages should just accept a sustained new era of limitations.

He insisted California's agricultural producers can do more than just survive—if only state policymakers reject their prevailing mindset and embrace one that is geared toward abundance.

“The management of scarcity is failing,” he said. “It’s time now to reimplement the management of bounty.”

Over the past year, farmers faced water delivery curtailments, supply-chain disruptions, labor shortages and rising costs. It was “a year that went by quickly, but a year that had challenges like no other,” Johansson said, noting that none of those challenges have gone away.

This year, fallowed farmland increased by 750,000 acres compared to 2019, according to a recent study from

the University of California, Merced. The knock-on effects on food processing industries amounted to

losses of roughly \$845 million, up from \$590 million in 2021. All told, the consequences of diminished agricultural production totaled \$2 billion in value-added losses and a loss of nearly 20,000 jobs.

The problems are worsened and the consequences are aggravated, Johansson said, by policies that stem from a mindset of working within the limits of scarcity—of adapting to a changing environment by paring down California's agricultural potential.

“Change is inevitable,” Johansson said. “We understand change in agriculture. But what we struggle with is a state that doesn’t have a plan of how we make those changes based on principles.”

The Farm Bureau president said there is a clear way forward. “It doesn’t have to be this way,” he said. “There needs to be an urgency because there is a solution, and California Farm Bureau has it.”

When it comes to drought, instead of asking farmers to manage with increasingly less water, California can embrace solutions such as building water-storage infrastructure and supporting groundwater recharge to capture and store water in wet years and use it in drier ones. To curb rising energy costs, it can look to hydropower and nuclear power, he said.

The historic challenges have brought a historic opportunity, Johansson said. With rising food costs and inflation, urban neighbors and legislators are waking up to the need to support farmers, he said, declaring that the time is ripe to push for changes that recognize the importance of an abundant agricultural sector.

“We’re all concerned about what our farms are going to



*California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson gives his address during the organization's 104th Annual Meeting in Monterey. (Photo: Caleb Hampton)*

look like this year with the prices that we face in some of our commodities and the rising interest rates,” Johansson said. “What I haven’t seen before is the discussion we are having at our dinner table is pretty much the same as what they’re having in urban America right now.”

Johansson called on California farmers to take advantage of the political opportunities at hand, including the state Legislature’s election of Assemblyman Robert Rivas, D-Hollister, as the next speaker of the California Assembly.

“For the first time in many decades, in June, we’ll have a speaker in the Assembly who represents Monterey County, who actually comes from a rural area, raised in farmworker housing—someone who at least is answerable to rural California and also lives in rural California,” Johansson said. “There’s opportunity there.”

There are also broader political opportunities. With rising grocery bills, lawmakers in Washington, D.C., are paying attention to farming and food security. “As

we meet with urban legislators and congressional members, they ask, ‘What do you need as farmers?’” Johansson said. “Now they get the reality.”

When the country looks for answers in agriculture, he added, it looks to California farmers, who have demonstrated an ability to overcome challenges and feed the nation and beyond.

“We have a perfect opportunity to tell a very powerful

message that, based on principles, we can continue in agriculture to make a difference, feed the world and, more importantly, prosper our communities,” Johansson said.

He highlighted the role young agriculturalists can play in shaping the future of farming.

“Young farmers and ranchers are being increasingly focused on when it comes to the electorate,” Johansson said. “They will be the voice of this organization.”

He encouraged all farmers to raise their voices and assured them that Farm Bureau will continue working to empower them.

“It’s a hundred-year-old organization. It’s changed quite a bit, but we’ll hold onto the traditions, and we’ll focus on change that makes a difference for our members,” Johansson said. “Ultimately, our first obligation as California Farm Bureau is to maintain that grassroots organization and to grow this membership and to continue to be the voice for agriculture.

“Our biggest principle is to ensure the success of all farmers and ranchers,” he said.

## County Farm Bureaus Honored for Service to Members, Community

*Press Release Provided by California Farm Bureau Federation*

Excellence in leadership, member services, policy implementation, agricultural promotion and public relations earned honors for county Farm Bureaus during the 104th California Farm Bureau Annual Meeting in Monterey. The awards were presented during a recognition dinner.

For county Farm Bureaus with up to 499 agricultural members, the Solano County Farm Bureau earned the County of the Year Award. Solano County Farm Bureau is being recognized for its membership growth and member engagement. It was praised for increasing the visibility of the Farm Bureau, highlighting the benefits of membership and engaging with potential members. The Farm Bureau also revived its Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee after nearly a decade. This year, it started three community garden projects, and partnered with local nonprofits and community members to adopt garden boxes in low-income areas. The Solano County Farm Bureau has increased membership by 30%.

Celebrating 100 years in 2022, the San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau received the County of the Year Award for Farm Bureaus with 500 to 799 members. The Farm Bureau was featured at the California Mid-State Fair Junior Livestock Sale for the first time. The Farm Bureau made it a priority to engage with other agriculture organizations to share the contributions of the Farm Bureau. It also engaged with elected officials through in-person meetings and Zoom and YouTube sessions. The Farm Bureau also moderated a June panel discussion for a film, “Where There Once Was Water,” working with the filmmaker to ensure agricultural representation at the event.

Among county Farm Bureaus with 800 or more members, the Butte County Farm Bureau was named County of the Year among county Farm Bureaus with 800 or more members. Butte County Farm Bureau is being recognized for its member recruitment and community engagement efforts. That included a March Madness membership drive, in which new and renewing members were entered to win a gift of local goods valued at \$1,000. This program renewed upwards of 100 members. The Farm Bureau also created a new Junior Farm Bureau program for kids ages 7-15. New this year, the Farm Bureau started hosting monthly meetings with women in the rural community, which included lunch and a speaker to help participants be more educated on local advocacy issues and efforts.

The Modoc Farm Bureau received the Innovator Award, which recognizes the most creative, forward-thinking program undertaken by a county Farm Bureau.

In addition, Modoc County Farm Bureau was selected by the American Farm Bureau Federation among 143 entries from across the country for County Activities of Excellence. The Farm Bureau was recognized for its collaborative stewardship agreement with the U.S. Forest Service to address forest staff vacancies in the far-Northern California region. Under the agreement, the Farm Bureau is recruiting and hiring short-term employees that work in the forest to avoid project delays as the Forest Service brings in permanent employees.

The Modoc County Farm Bureau will participate in the 2023 AFBF Annual Convention next month in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

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The California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of nearly 29,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of 5.3 million Farm Bureau members.



# COMMENTARY: These Four Projects Can Solve Water Crisis, Protect Farms



**By Edward Ring,  
Senior Fellow,  
California Policy Center**

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from California Farm  
Bureau Federation*

Despite seasonal rainfall at normal levels so far this year, the California Department of Water Resources on Dec. 1 announced an initial State Water Project allocation of 5% of requested supplies for 2023. Unless heavy rains or new policies change this decision, it will mark the third consecutive year that the State Water Project delivered only 5% to its customers.

This is an avoidable problem. By the end of December 2021, for example, only three months into the water year, two massive storm systems had already dumped more than 104 million acre-feet onto California's watersheds. Almost none of it was captured by reservoirs or diverted into aquifers.

For nearly 40 years, the political consensus in California has been to cope with droughts by increasing conservation mandates. During that time, the state's population has increased from 24 million to nearly 40 million, and farm production has increased in virtually every category. But due to conservation, agricultural water use has been constant, averaging about 34 million acre-feet per year.

Several factors are breaking this model despite a 40-year history of alleged success. Replacing flood irrigation with drip irrigation was a short-term solution. Flood irrigation in the fields downstream from the Sierra

mimicked annual flooding prior to the construction of dams and levees—and replenished the aquifers.

Increased environmental requirements for less water diversion from rivers for agriculture have forced additional groundwater pumping at the same time as those aquifers were no longer being replenished by flood irrigation. As depleted aquifers collapse and percolation is no longer possible, the soil dies.

California policymakers have decided to prioritize river flow to protect salmon and other native fish, even though invasive striped bass have now been identified as a major cause of salmon losses. Those flow policies, combined with destruction of aquifers thanks to drip irrigation and a failure to construct any new facilities to capture more storm runoff have left Californians unable to cope with droughts.

Until a new consensus is reached on water policy, draconian rationing is the only option. Expect millions of acres of fallowed or ruined farmland and cities devoid of outdoor landscaping.

There is an alternative. Here are some water projects that ought to be moving forward in California:

**Build desalination at scale:** Desalination has the unique virtue of being an inexhaustible supply of fresh water. But so far, there is only one major desalination plant in California, located just north of San Diego. The \$1 billion Carlsbad Desalination Plant went into operation in 2015 and desalinates 56,000 acre-feet of water per year, enough to serve 400,000 people.

**Build off-stream reservoirs:** The virtue of off-stream reservoirs is they are constructed in arid valleys and won't disrupt the flow of natural rivers with a high dam. Instead, flood runoff is pumped into them during storm



*The planned Sites Reservoir, destined for this Sacramento Valley location in Glenn and Colusa counties, could provide water supplies to irrigate more than 150,000 acres of farmland a year. (Photo: Edward Ring)*

events. The largest proposed project, the \$4 billion Sites Reservoir north of Sacramento, would store 1.5 million acre-feet. Its annual yield could irrigate more than 150,000 acres of farmland.

**Build wastewater recycling projects:** The proposed Carson plant in Los Angeles County is planned to recycle 168,000 acre-feet of wastewater per year at a projected construction cost of \$3.4 billion. This, however, is just a fraction of the total available wastewater stream in the Los Angeles Basin. If all urban wastewater in California were recycled, it would add an estimated 2.0 million acre-feet per year to the water supply, as well as improve the health of aquatic ecosystems.

**Support environmentally friendly Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta diversions to San Joaquin Valley aquifers:** The draft "Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley" proposes constructing channels inside delta islands where fresh water could be safely taken from perforated pipes beneath a gravel bed during periods of



*Unless heavy rains or new policies change this decision, it will mark the third consecutive year that the State Water Project delivered only 5% of requested supplies to its customers. (Photo: Edward Ring)*

excess storm runoff, while at the same time continuing to provide fresh water in the Delta necessary for farming.

The Blueprint also proposes a new \$500 million central canal in the San Joaquin Valley to transport water from the pipes in the delta to underground storage. Aquifer storage capacity in the San Joaquin Valley is conservatively estimated at 50 million acre-feet. Groundwater supplies could be greatly enhanced from this canal, which would include connections to Friant-Kern and Delta-Mendota canals and the California Aqueduct, as well as facilities to recharge and recover water from the aquifers.

These four project categories have the potential to eliminate water scarcity in California forever. If Californians are destined to endure decade-long droughts with minimal snow and only a few big storms each year, these projects will ensure that sufficient water is harvested and stored to keep cities and farmland healthy and green.

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# Agriculture in the Classroom Program Honors 'Outstanding Educator'



Carrie Lawson Robertson hiking in Utah. (Photo: Robertson Family)

Press Release Provided by California Farm Bureau Federation

A middle school teacher in Los Angeles who introduces urban students to farming and ranching experiences has been honored with the "Outstanding Educator Award" presented by the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom.

Carrie Lawson Robertson received the award at the 104th California Farm Bureau Annual Meeting in Monterey.

Robertson teaches students about agriculture at a 2-acre farm at Paul Revere Charter Middle School. On the property that backs up to the Santa Monica Mountains and Los Angeles' bustling Sunset Boulevard, she directs a "land lab" that includes a traditional classroom along with a vineyard, orchard, raised farm beds, native gardens, and a hiking trail.

The students produce grapes, stone fruit, alfalfa, pumpkins, kales, tomatoes, artichokes, and herbs. They also look after a pot belly pig named Daisy as well as several goats, chickens, guinea pigs, rabbits, and chinchil-

las. The immersive agricultural experience allows

kids from the city to connect with the food they eat and learn about farming and the natural environment.

"Carrie is a true advocate for agricultural education," said Judy Culbertson, executive director of the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom. "Her dedication and creativity in her classroom on Sunset Boulevard have made a positive, lifelong impact on her students, and the enthusiasm she has for incorporating agriculture into the classroom is undeniable. Carrie understands the critical importance of agriculture and she works to instill this appreciation in her students."

Robertson's father and grandfather were cattle ranchers on the outskirts of Los Angeles. She said her experiences in straddling two worlds—agriculture and urban life—inspired her teaching philosophy of helping students find a personal connection to food, land, and agriculture. She also helps them understand production agriculture and the high-tech world of modern farming.

"Agriculture is life," Robertson said. "All human beings are dependent on agriculture for food, clothing, and shelter, but also for employment, innovation, communities and to solve issues around climate change. The outdoor, experiential nature of agricultural education provides so many positive benefits to students, including social skills, sensory input, and stress relief. I find that my students have a deep loyalty to our program, our farm animals, and the special places at our farm like the hiking trail and vineyard."

The California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of nearly 29,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of 5.3 million Farm Bureau members.

## New Online Pesticide-use Course Aims to Protect Water Quality



**By Cheryl Reynolds,  
Interactive Learning  
Developer, UC  
Agriculture and  
Natural Resources**

*Reprinted with Permission from UC  
Agriculture and Natural Resources*

Did you know that some pesticides used around homes and other structures are toxic to small aquatic organisms living in nearby streams, creeks, rivers, and oceans?

The UC Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program has launched a new online course on runoff and surface water protection in California. This free course is designed for pest management professionals working primarily in structural pest control or landscape maintenance, but residents and property managers may also find the presented information useful.

Developed by pest management experts from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) and University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources, this course presents information on the Surface Water Protection Regulations that are found in Title 3 of the California Code of Regulations. These regulations were put into place to prevent pesticide runoff into California waterways and to reduce surface-water contamination from pyrethroid insecticide use.

In this course, participants will learn about the types of

pesticide applications that are allowed under the regulations, as well as application types that are prohibited and the ones that are exempt.

The course takes a close look at pyrethroids, particularly bifenthrin, because of its high use in urban areas, high risk of runoff reaching surface waters, and high toxicity to aquatic organisms. Fipronil, another commonly used ingredient in structural and landscape products, also is addressed in the course as well because it causes water-quality concerns similar to those of as pyrethroids. Bifenthrin is used for managing pests such as ants, crickets, and lawn grubs. Fipronil is used for ants, roaches, and termites.

The Urban Pyrethroid and Fipronil Use: Runoff and Surface Water Protection course has been approved by DPR for a total of 1.5 continuing education units, including 0.5 hour of Pesticide Laws and Regulations and 1.0 hour of Other and by the Structural Pest Control Board for 1.5 hours of Rules and Regulations.

The course takes about 90 minutes to complete. It is divided into seven sections so a person can stop and resume where they left off. To take the course, people need to set up an account at [Campus.Extension.org/](https://Campus.Extension.org/) then they can enroll. The direct link to the course is [Campus.Extension.org/Course/View.php?ID=2221](https://Campus.Extension.org/Course/View.php?ID=2221).

UC IPM currently offers 22 online courses with continuing education units from DPR. Many of these courses are also approved for continuing education units by

See **NEW ONLINE PESTICIDE-USE COURSE** on PAGE 9

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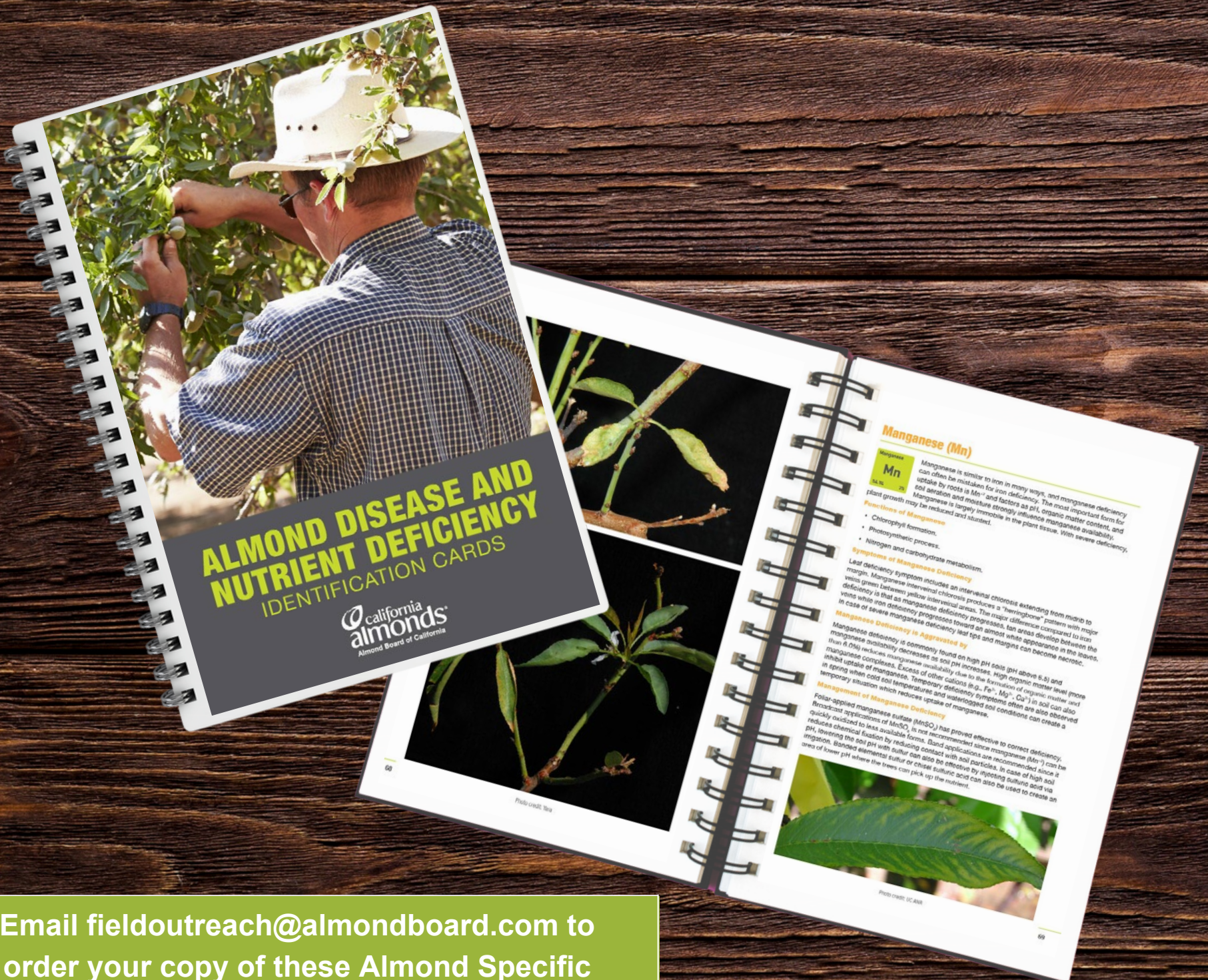
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## Almond Sector Assesses Toll



Almond Board of California Chair Alexi Rodriguez and President Richard Waycott review a challenging year for the almond sector. (Photo: Christina Souza)

**Continued from PAGE 1** has had a profound impact on our industry,” Rodriguez said. “This industry has been through challenging times before, and with great challenges come great opportunities for growth and innovation.”

She added, “We are a resilient industry, and together we’re going to get through it.”

In presenting the economic outlook for California almonds, David Magaña, a Rabobank vice president and senior analyst based in Fresno, said the state’s almond acreage decreased this year for the first time in more than 25 years. The decrease was first reported in a Land IQ report commissioned by the Almond Board.

Total standing acreage as of Aug. 31 was estimated at 1.64 million, compared to 1.66 million acres at the same time in 2021, the report stated. Bearing acres—orchards producing almonds and planted in 2019 or earlier—increased slightly to 1.34 million from 1.31 million last year. Nonbearing acres—new plantings going back to 2020 but not yet bearing almonds—dropped to 294,000 acres from 353,000 acres in 2021.

“On the supply side, we expect to continue to see large volumes of almonds—depending on the weather and depending on water—in the next few years,” Magaña said. “The most optimistic view I have is the global middle class will continue to demand food that we grow here in California, including almonds.”

California growers this year are expected to produce 2.6 billion pounds of almonds. This is less than the amount shipped in each of the past two years, which were the two largest production and shipment years since record keeping began. Waycott said, “Hopefully we can see things come into a better equilibrium.”

Looking ahead, Waycott told attendees that the Almond Board plans to drive global demand through marketing programs and new product development, such as consumption of almonds to promote skin health and use of almond hulls as a food ingredient.

In addition, Waycott said, the Almond Board is half-way to achieving its 2025 almond orchard goals to achieve zero waste, increase environmentally friendly pest management, reduce dust, and increase water efficiency.

In a panel session on managing less water, farmers and water leaders discussed approaches such as use of more groundwater recharge and development of regional strategies.

“It’s a little difficult to talk about groundwater recharge in a drought year,” said Daniel Mountjoy, director of resource stewardship at Sustainable Conservation. He said the state, growers and water districts must be prepared to apply water to the land when it does arrive.

“The most economical way to store water in the state right now is putting water back on the ground and into the aquifer,” Mountjoy said.

Groundwater sustainability agencies are exploring incentives to encourage farmers to recharge in optimal locations, he said.

Fresno County farmer Stuart Woolf of Woolf Farming, which is an irrigator in the Westlands Water District, discussed his response to water shortages.

“Years ago, we started running all of our budgets based the return per acre-foot of water, and that really drove a lot of our plantings,” Woolf said. “I never contemplated that I would ever consider taking out almonds so I could grow more row crops, but fortunately, we’re in a position to do that.”

Woolf said he expects to fallow 1,100 acres of almonds and plant 1,500 acres of row crops.

“We’re losing money,” Woolf said. “They (almonds) use over 4 acre-feet, and I can turn around and grow row crops and actually make a lot more money. I would encourage everybody in the room to be looking at these numbers and looking at your alternatives.”

Searching for solutions, Woolf said, he farms ground in other counties and is looking into growing drought-tolerant crops, including agave for tequila.

“We’re going to give it a try. I have a test plot with about 4,000 plants, so we’re trying to think about these things creatively,” Woolf said.

During a panel discussion on almond pollination, Elina Niño, an entomologist who specializes in honeybees at the University of California, Davis, discussed research related to self-pollinating almond varieties.

Niño said UC research shows yields are higher when honeybee colonies are used for pollinating these varieties. In response to a question about the number of hives needed per acre to pollinate almonds—usually two hives per acre—Niño said, “That is still the question that remains to be answered. This is something that is going to have to be an individual decision for growers.”

The Almond Board conference began 50 years ago as a half-day meeting to share research findings with growers.

Since then, said Stanislaus County almond grower and processor Jim Jasper of Stewart & Jasper, the annual event has become “the Super Bowl of the industry.”

## New Online Pesticide-Use Course

**Continued from PAGE 7** the California Structural Pest Control Board, Certified Crop Adviser, the Western Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture, and the Arizona Department of Agriculture.

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# DWR Launches Public Comment Period for LandFlex Program to Protect Drinking Water Supplies

Press Release by the California Department of Water Resources



From left, homeowners Leonicio Ramirez and his daughter Tania Ramirez are the first residents to receive water through a water distribution system in East Porterville, California on August 19, 2016. (Photo: DWR)

In drought-stricken communities, drinking water wells are going dry because groundwater is being pumped faster than it can be replenished. To further protect clean drinking water, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) in coordination with the Department of Food and Agriculture has developed the LandFlex Program to support groundwater sustainability agencies and local growers to limit unsustainable groundwater pumping affecting drinking water wells.

The program aims to free up water in the event of a fourth consecutive dry year, accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), and prevent drinking water supply problems in 2023. Enacted by the state in 2014, SGMA addresses the issues of over-pumping and provides a framework for local agencies to better manage and protect groundwater supplies for long-term sustainability.

The \$25 million grant program would award funds to local groundwater sustainability agencies to pay growers to immediately idle land as a one-year drought-relief measure. The proposed program would target operators of small- and medium-size farms in areas where agricultural pumping reductions would help keep

household and small community water system wells from going dry.

As of November 2022, 1,394 dry wells have been reported statewide, a nearly 40% increase over the same period last year. For comparison, fewer than 100 dry wells were reported annually in 2018, 2019, and 2020.

In order to reach vulnerable communities in need and provide small or disadvantaged farmers access to the program, DWR is working directly with partners in non-governmental organizations and the agriculture industry to spread the word about this program. Partners include the Community Alliance with Family Farmers, Self-Help Enterprises, Western United Dairies Foundation, and the Almond Alliance.

Before LandFlex is officially launched, a public comment period on the draft guidelines will begin on Friday, December 9 and close on Thursday, December 29. Public comments may be submitted via email: [SGWP@Water.CA.gov](mailto:SGWP@Water.CA.gov).

For those interested in applying for a LandFlex grant, DWR will host an Applicant Workshop on Thursday, January 19, 2023. To register for the workshop and learn more about the LandFlex program and how to apply, please visit [Water.CA.gov/LandFlex](http://Water.CA.gov/LandFlex).

## DPR Mill Fee Design Concepts Released for Feedback

Press Release by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation

On December 2nd, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) released a Mill Alterna-

tives Concept Paper outlining initial options for the redesign of its primary funding source, the mill assessment. DPR's mill assessment, which is a fee paid by pesticide dealers, brokers, and registrants when a pesticide is first sold into the marketplace in California, provides

approximately 80 percent of the department's annual funding and was last adjusted in 2004.

For the last eight years, DPR has been operating with a structural funding imbalance impacting its ability to advance its mission to protect human health and the environment and support the state's transition to safer, more sustainable pest management. In 2021, the legislature allocated funds to conduct a mill assessment study to identify ways to give the department more sustainable, long-term funding and support and incentivize safer, sustainable pest management.

The Mill Alternatives Concept Paper is part of an independent study to identify options for the structure, sources and levels of funding necessary for the department to continue to fulfill its mission of protecting human health and the environment long-term.

The concept paper, informed by a broad range of stakeholder interviews and feedback, outlines considerations for the department's funding structure. This includes the structure of the department's mill assessment and different funding models, the use of mill funding across department programs and implementation considerations. DPR's consultant, Crowe LLP, is requesting

stakeholder feedback on the concept paper to inform its final recommendations for DPR's funding design, expected in Spring 2023.

"A new funding design is vital to continuing our long-term, critical work to protect human health and the environment. It also is essential to our ability to support the transition to safer, more sustainable pest management across California," said DPR director, Julie Henderson.

DPR's consultant led a webinar on December 6, 2022, to discuss the concept paper and their approach to identifying potential mill assessment alternatives. Registration was not required. Attendees joined the Mill Study Webinar live on Zoom.

Feedback on the concept paper must be sent via email at [ProjectMillStudy@CDPR.CA.gov](mailto:ProjectMillStudy@CDPR.CA.gov) by January 13, 2023. Comments received on the concept paper will inform the development of the Mill Assessment Study Draft Recommendations to be released in Spring 2023.

More information on the mill assessment study and the current mill assessment are available on DPR's website.

### Farm, Ranch and Transitional Use Properties



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#### WALNUTS

**\$29,500±/AC**

149.33± acres, Lindmore ID and Wells, Productive Soils, Lindsay, CA.

**ALMONDS PRICED REDUCED \$31,997±/AC**

155.73± acres, Wasco Area, 2 SOURCES OF SEMI-TROPIC WSD CONTRACT WATER, 1 Well, Solar, Class 1 soils, Almonds in full production.

**FARMLAND PRICED REDUCED \$12,000±/AC**

156.96± acres, Wasco Area, Semi-Tropic WSD non-contract water, 1 well, Productive soils, and Perfect for permanent crops

**DRY LAND PRICE REDUCED \$2,250±/AC**

160 acres, mostly grade 1 soils, Near Valley Acres

#### WINE GRAPES

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#### ALMONDS

**\$25,310±/AC**

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**PRICED REDUCED \$18,457±/AC**

394.47± acres, Wasco Area, Semi Tropic non-contract water, 3 wells, 863.4±KW Solar System, Productive Soils, Almonds in full production.

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## CDFA Announces Vacancies on Shell Egg Advisory Board

Press Release by the California Department of Food and Agriculture

The California Department of Food and Agriculture, Meat, Poultry and Egg Safety Branch (MPES) is announcing two vacancies on the Egg Safety and Quality Management (ESQM) program's Shell Egg Advisory Committee Board (SEAC).

The ESQM program monitors egg quality at production, wholesale, and retail levels. The goal is to provide California consumers with eggs that are wholesome, properly labeled, refrigerated, and of established quality, while maintaining fair and equitable marketing standards in the California egg industry.

These vacancies for two industry members are being created because of upcoming term expirations. The membership terms for these vacancies will be for 36 months. Applicants from the industry must be registered egg handlers or representatives of registered egg

handlers in the state of California.

Board members receive no compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for transportation to and from meetings and for per diem expenses for lodging, meals, and incidental expenses.

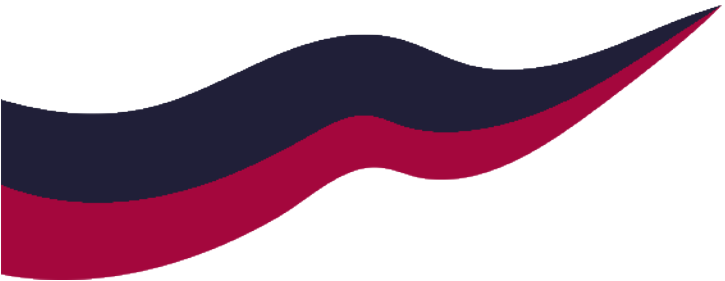
Applicants interested in being considered for these two SEAC appointments, should submit resumes by February 1, 2023, to:

**Mrs. Penny Arana**  
**Meat, Poultry and Egg Safety Branch**  
1220 N Street  
Sacramento, California 95814  
[Penny.Arana@CDFA.CA.gov](mailto:Penny.Arana@CDFA.CA.gov)

Additional information is available on the Egg Safety and Quality Management program's web page at [CDFA.CA.gov/AHFSS/MPES/ESQM.html](http://CDFA.CA.gov/AHFSS/MPES/ESQM.html). You may also contact Michael E. Abbott, Egg Quality Manager at (916) 900-5062.



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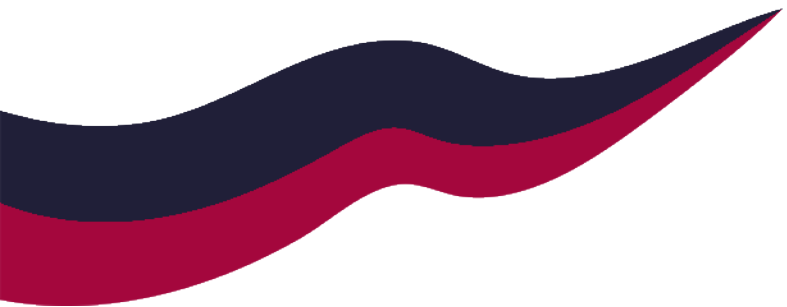
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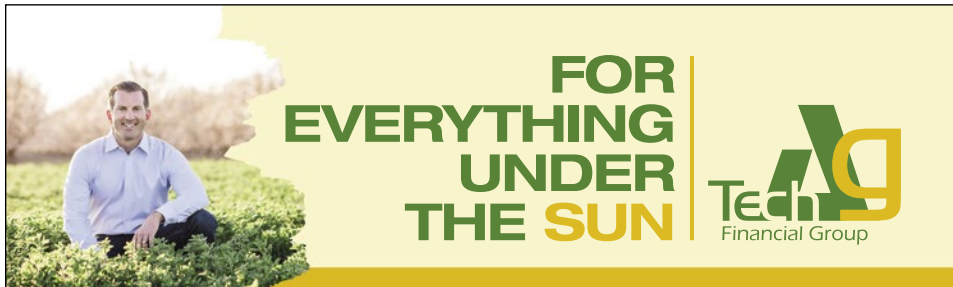
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California's almond acreage decreased for the first time in more than 25 years, according to a new report from Land IQ. (Photo: ABC)

## California Almond Acreage Drops in 2022 – First Time in Decades

Press Release Provided by Almond Board of California

California's almond acreage decreased for the first time in more than 25 years, according to a new report from Land IQ to the Almond Board of California (ABC).

Total standing acreage as of Aug. 31 was estimated at 1.64 million acres, compared with 1.66 million acres at the same time in 2021. Bearing acres – orchards producing almonds and planted in 2019 or earlier – increased slightly to 1.34 million from 1.31 million last year. But non-bearing acres – new plantings going back to 2020 but not yet bearing almonds – dropped to 294,000 acres from 353,000 acres in 2021.

In addition, the Land IQ 2022 Standing Acreage and Removal Final Estimate said approximately 30,000 acres are either classified as stressed or abandoned. They were included in the standing acreage total because the orchards “may have the ability to recover,” Land IQ said.

Removed orchards contributed to the drop in total acreage and continued a trend from 2021. Total orchard acreage removed was about 60,400 acres as of Aug. 31 this year compared with 56,900 removed acres in 2021.

“Land IQ's report may indicate a possible trend towards lower California almond acreage in the year ahead,” said Richard Waycott, ABC president and CEO. “This acreage estimate was based on data collected through Aug. 31, so it does not reflect any additional removals that may have occurred as the harvest and post-harvest seasons progressed this fall. Those data will be incorporated in the next acreage estimate to be published in April 2023.”

The estimate comes from multiple lines of evidence, including extensive examinations on the ground and advanced remote sensing analytics. Land IQ said the 2022 standing acreage estimate is 98.8 percent accurate.

Land IQ's Final Acreage Estimate in November, along with USDA-NASS's April Acreage Report, May's Subjective Estimate and the Objective Report in July are all commissioned by ABC to provide statistical transparency and a robust picture of California almonds to industry stakeholders around the world.

In 2018, ABC first commissioned Land IQ, a Sacramento-based agricultural and environmental scientific research and consulting firm, to develop a comprehensive, living map of California almonds. The map is the result of more than a decade of research.

## Almond Board of California Search Committee Preparing for 2023 CEO Transition

Press Release by Almond Board of California



Richard Waycott, ABC president & CEO.

Almond Board of California President and CEO Richard Waycott has informed the board of directors that after 21 years he plans to step away from his Almond Board responsibilities at the end of 2023 to pursue other interests.

A search committee for the Almond Board of California (ABC) has begun the process to ensure a smooth transition. The committee is being led by ABC Board of Directors Chair Alexi Rodriguez and will be conducting a nationwide search to find a CEO successor.

“On behalf of the board of directors, we are thankful for Richard and his many years of service to the industry. He has been part of a period of tremendous growth,” Rodriguez said. “Richard set the end of 2023 as the right time to step away from ABC and we believe this timeline will allow for a seamless transition.

“He will be available as appropriate during the search

and transition process, and I'm confident that with the knowledge and support of our board of directors and search committee members, we will find the right candidate for the organization,” Rodriguez said.

Waycott joined ABC as president and CEO in 2002, bringing strategic leadership experience to the global development of the California almond industry.

“I'm honored and humbled to have served our hard-working, forward-thinking, down-to-earth almond industry for two decades,” Waycott said. “This will be an outstanding opportunity and a privilege for the next president and CEO, and I look forward to supporting our board, growers and ABC work family in the next year and throughout this transition.”

During Waycott's tenure heading up ABC, the almond industry has grown from 545,000 acres and production of 1.09 billion pounds to 1.62 million acres with production topping 3 billion pounds. The farmgate value of the crop grew from \$1.2 billion in 2002 to more than \$5 billion in 2021, the last year fully measured.

Before coming to ABC, Waycott worked more than 20 years in the food manufacturing and agribusiness industries, mostly in Latin America, with extensive experience in consumer products and business-to-business grains and oilseeds markets.



# The Wonderful Company Announces More than \$1 Million in Community Grants to Central Valley Nonprofits and Schools

## Thirty-One Grantees Chosen for Their Critical Work in California's Central Valley, Building on the Wonderful Company's Longstanding Commitment to the Region

Press Release by Provided by The Wonderful Company

The Wonderful Company, one of the largest and most philanthropic privately held companies in the United States, today announced its latest Wonderful Community Grants recipients—31 nonprofit organizations in California's Central Valley that will receive in total nearly \$1.1 million in grants to help further their missions and programs. Since the program's inception, The Wonderful Company—whose iconic brands include FIJI Water, POM Wonderful, Wonderful Pistachios, Wonderful Halos, Wonderful Seedless Lemons, Teleflora, JUSTIN, JNSQ, and Landmark wines—has awarded over \$5 million in community grants to over 200 organizations and schools in the Central Valley.

Every year, The Wonderful Company and its co-owners, Lynda and Stewart Resnick, invest more than \$30 million in community development, education, and health and wellness initiatives across the Central Valley and beyond. The Community Grants program is at the heart of the company's ongoing commitment to be Wonderful Neighbors in the Central Valley communities where the majority of their employees reside, and it intends to help inspire increased engagement with local and regional organizations.

"We believe in the importance of investing in our own local neighborhoods - supporting community organizations in the places where we operate and where our colleagues live and work," said Andy Anzaldo, chief operating officer, corporate social responsibility at The Wonderful Company. "Through Wonderful Community Grants, we are supporting organizations and schools across the Central Valley that, we believe, will help build and maintain vibrant, healthy communities now and for future generations."

The Wonderful Community Grants directly support game-changing programs emphasizing health and wellness, recreation, community beautification, art, and social services. This year, the program expanded its geographic reach to support programs in Lost Hills and eight other communities, including Avenal, Wasco, Shafter, Delano, and more. Nonprofit organizations and schools with a history of producing tangible results demonstrating a clear community need were eligible to apply for funding.

"The Central California Food Bank is so grateful to be a recipient of Wonderful Community Grants that will support a school pantry program in Firebaugh and three-monthly fresh produce markets in Avenal," said Alicia Linares, director of programs & partnerships at Central California Food Bank. "We are committed to sustaining programs that promote equitable food access in our region, and these grants will provide enhanced food support in underserved communities where it is needed most."

"The Marjaree Mason Center is grateful for this significant donation from The Wonderful Company, which will allow us to enhance outreach and prevention efforts, as well as direct services in the communities of Del Rey, Sanger, Mendota, and Firebaugh," said Nicole Linder, executive director at the Marjaree Mason Center. "This additional funding will allow us to serve Fresno County better and ensure that all residents have access to heal-

ing-centered domestic violence services."

Some of the 2022 grant recipients include:

### Avenal

- **Central California Food Bank:** Provide monthly fresh produce and essential provisions distributions at three partner sites in Avenal.
- **Kings Community Action Organization:** Provide financial assistance to families whose water has been shut off or is about to be shut off due to overdue water bills.

### Delano

- **Community Action Partnership of Kern:** Provide 3,900 fresh produce boxes that feed a family of five in Delano.
- **3E Empower Equip Embark Inc.:** Provide unemployed women living near the poverty level with workforce programming and job placement through an intensive three-week program.

### Del Rey

- **Marjaree Mason Center:** Provide domestic violence intervention and support services to approximately 550 adults and their children.
- **Central Valley Scholars:** Offer college-prep workshops to provide students with access to the necessary information, tools, and resources to submit successful college applications.

### Firebaugh

- **Boys & Girls Club of Fresno County:** Deliver after-school programming for kids, ages 6-18, and paid apprenticeships for teens.
- **Junior Achievement of Northern California:** Offer economics and personal finance courses to improve the literacy of middle and high school students.

### Lost Hills

- **Together We Rise:** Provide duffle bags for foster children with comfort and essential items.
- **American Red Cross:** Provide free smoke alarm installations in households across Lost Hills and Delano.

### Mendota

- **Fresno Council on Child Abuse Prevention:** Educate over 7,283 individuals in a child maltreatment prevention program to reduce ACEs.

### Sanger

- **Teens That Care:** Train students and their parents in grades 1-6 on general safety practices for bike and scooter riding in Mendota and provide a helmet for each participant.

### Shafter

- **Shafter Library and Learning Center:** Purchase and install a new modern wood pergola to shade part of the plaza to make it more conducive for children's programming and enjoyment.
- **Bakersfield Symphony Orchestra:** Cover ticket, transportation, and dinner costs for Shafter and Delano students to attend in-person symphony concerts through the BSO Next Generation and Young People's Concert Outreach Programs during the Spring season.

### Wasco

- **Wasco Recreation and Park District:** Provide hands-on experience in water safety, nutrition, arts, and overall wellness to youth.
- **Kern County Library:** Provide books, resources, and literacy programs to 96,245 community members in Wasco, Delano, and Lost Hills, as well as a sprinter van that will be converted into a library on wheels for outreach events.

For more information, please visit [WonderfulCommunityGrants.com](http://WonderfulCommunityGrants.com).



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Grimmway Farms President and CEO Jeff Huckaby received the Grower of the Year Award at the Organic Grower Summit. (Photo: Grimmway Farms)

## Jeff Huckaby Named Grower of the Year at Organic Grower Summit

*Press Release Provided by Grimmway Farms*

On December 1st, Grimmway Farms President and CEO Jeff Huckaby received the Grower of the Year Award at the Organic Grower Summit (OGS) in Monterey, presented by the Organic Grower Network. OGS is an annual event, aimed at providing vital information around the opportunities and challenges in the production of organic fruit and vegetables. Huckaby is the fifth recipient of this prestigious award.

"We are honored to present the annual Grower of the Year

award to Jeff. His decades-long work exemplifies what hardworking, passionate organic farming is all about. Over the past three decades, Jeff has worked tirelessly to encourage water conservation, natural methods for pest control, and always found ways to share information about those practices with other organic growers," shared Matt Seeley, co-founder, and CEO of Organic Produce Network, when announcing the honor last month. "His dedication to the environment and community is what makes the organic sector special and makes him so deserving of the title of Grower of the Year."

Jeff Huckaby is a fourth-generation farmer with over 30 years of farming management experience, joining Grim-

mway in 1998. Under his leadership, Grimmway has grown their organic farming division from several hundred acres to over 50,000 acres of certified organic land. Prior to serving as President and CEO, he served as Executive Vice President where he oversaw sales, production, engineering, and farming for all Grimmway Farms products. "I am honored and humbled to receive this award, and it's with great pride that I share this recognition with our incredibly hard-working family of employees at Grimmway Farms, who work tirelessly to ensure that the highest quality organic produce reaches the consumer. I am excited as we look toward the future and continue to elevate the work and importance of organic farming," said Jeff Huckaby.

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# The Pendulum of Intellectualism

By Joshua Stevens  
Faith Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

“How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?” **Proverbs 1:22**<sup>1</sup>

The American church has been stuck in a war within itself for some time now. It is a war being fought on both sides by well-meaning believers striving to live a life according to the gospel as they understand it.

On one side we have lazy Christians, those who give their life to the Lord on Sunday for two hours and live for the devil the rest of the week. They stare aghast in the face of a discussion on whether salvation precedes faith—not because of the depth it requires to be able to fully understand and partake in such a topic but

because the idea that we should have to think so much about the gospel is antithetical to a lifestyle surrounding me, myself, and I. “I didn’t go to religion to make me happy. I always knew a bottle of port would do that. If you want a religion to make you feel really comfortable, I certainly don’t recommend Christianity.”<sup>2</sup>

On the other side, we have Christians who are so caught up in the iotas of detail that they forget the purpose of the details altogether. Even worse, they may be caught up in a sin of their own, allowing the intellectual opportunities of theology to be so compartmentalized that it does not change the very fabric of your being. Then by doing so, they fall into the same trap as above. It is dangerous to fall into either extreme and so alienate ourselves, not just from our congregations and our community but to our God. “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living

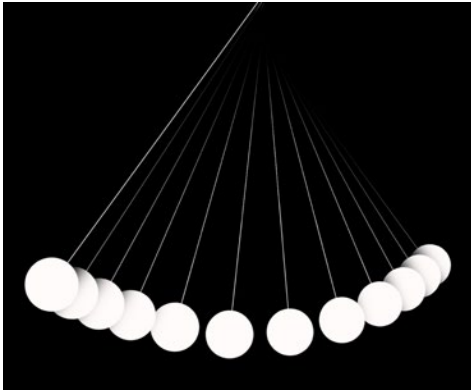
sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” **Romans 12:1-2**<sup>1</sup>

It is then our duty to resist the danger of the pendulum of intellectualism and not let it sway too far to one side or another. We should endeavor to moderate our congregations so we can achieve the peace between these two sides.

At this point, some may say the other side of the pendulum is not laziness or selfishness but faith. I hardly find this, to be a compelling case. Great thinkers such as Augustine viewed faith and reason working together not in opposition to one another.<sup>3</sup> At most we could argue if faith brings about clearer understanding of reason or if reason brings a clearer understanding of faith, but in both cases, we see that the two work together hand in hand.

So then, what should we endeavor to do? Where in this pendulum swinging should we plant our heels in the ground and stop the momentum? The answer is both profoundly simple to understand and exhaustibly difficult to do. We should aspire daily to find the wonder of God and share it with any who will listen. Or perhaps it was said better by another, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” **Romans 12:3-4**

Lord, thank you for the opportunity each of us had to celebrate this season. Thank you for your continual



It our duty to resist the danger of the pendulum of intellectualism and not let it sway too far to one side or another. We should endeavor to moderate our congregations so we can achieve the peace between these two sides. (Photo: Aldrick Stock Photography / Shutterstock.com)

mercy, love, and guidance. May each of us stand strong against the temptation to allow the pendulum to continue swinging and pass us by. Give us the strength to do what is right and the wisdom to ask, ‘thy will be done’. As we enter into this new year, guide us to your glory daily and provide us with the courage and boldness to proclaim it to all. In Jesus’ name, I pray,

Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Crossway Bibles. (2001). *The Holy Bible English Standard Version*. Wheaton: Good News Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis, C. (n.d.). *God in the Dock*.

<sup>3</sup> Ligonier. (2012, March 14). *Augustine on Faith and Reason Part 2*. Retrieved from Ligonier: [Ligonier.org/Learn/Devotionals/Augustine-on-Faith-and-Reason-Part-II](http://Ligonier.org/Learn/Devotionals/Augustine-on-Faith-and-Reason-Part-II)

# Minnesota Court Folds Large Retailers into Packer Antitrust Suit

Press Release Provided by R-CALF USA

Several large retailers and wholesalers (including Sysco, US Foods, Kroger, Hy-Vee, Albertson, Associated Grocers, Subway, SuperValu, and Cheney Brothers) recently filed claims similar to those brought originally in April 2019 by R-CALF USA and National Farmers Union (NFU) against the Big 4 packers. Those claims are that the packers’ efforts to jointly manage their slaughter volume and their cattle purchasing practices caused beef prices to rise while also pushing cattle prices lower. In response, the U.S. District Court held a hearing and decided to coordinate these new claims with R-CALF USA and NFU’s suit ahead of trial. This does not substantially affect the current case. While the Court may amend the existing schedule to

fold these new claims in, fact discovery is already expected to continue across 2023 given that the parties have only just begun document production.

As a continuing update on the consolidated case, the next major event is plaintiffs’ motion for class certification, presently due in August 2023. In that motion, R-CALF USA, NFU, and the other named cattle feeder plaintiffs will ask the Court to certify that their claims should proceed on behalf of feeders who sold fat cattle to Tyson, National Beef, Cargill, or JBS from January 1, 2015, to the present (other than on a cost-plus basis), and everyone who traded live cattle futures or options during that period. The Court appointed Scott+Scott Attorneys at Law LLP and Cafferty Clobes Meriwether & Sprengel LLP to act

as co-lead counsel, and Robins Kaplan LLP as liaison counsel, on behalf of the proposed class. If the Court grants that motion everyone who did sell fat cattle to one of the Big 4, or traded live cattle, would be included in Plaintiffs’ proposed class, without the need to file separate suits or engage separate legal counsel.

“For years we’ve talked about how the packers have been squeezing ranchers and consumers,” said NFU President Rob Larew. “This addition of some of the largest retailers in the nation shows just how widespread the impacts of this rampant consolidation have been on the American economy.”

According to R-CALF USA CEO Bill Bullard, “while our original case was filed in early 2019 to address suppressed fed cattle prices, we soon saw consumer beef prices skyrocket to new historical highs in early 2020. That has obviously caused additional focus throughout the entire supply chain.”

NFU and R-CALF USA look forward to litigating the case on behalf of all cattle feeders and working to correct years of unfair and suppressed fat cattle prices.



United States District Court for the District of Minnesota. (Photo: United States District Court for the District of Minnesota)

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