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Kern's Groundwater Sustainability Plan Deemed Inadequate

By Scott Hamilton,
President, Hamilton Resource Economics

Trouble is brewing. Early in March, California's Department of Water Resources (DWR) released its decision on the adequacy of 12 subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) in the San Joaquin Valley. Six were adequate. Six, including Kern's, were deemed inadequate.

By way of background, in January of 2022, DWR, having reviewed the submitted GSPs, found most of them incomplete and advised groundwater managers of modifications needed to make them adequate. The agencies had 180 days to comply. That initiated a flurry of activity resulting in the submission of revised plans. DWR has now reviewed the revised plans, leading to their March findings. Subbasins plans could be inadequate because they

fail to address several issues adequately, such as subsidence, water quality impacts, justification for critical groundwater levels, impacts on drinking water, depletion of surface waters that are interconnected to groundwater, and lack of coordination or inconsistent data between GSPs in the same subbasin. In Kern's case, DWR highlighted three deficiencies that had been identified in the notice of incompleteness that, despite significant progress from the previous draft plan, still needed to be addressed to the satisfaction of the Department. DWR wanted 1) a better justifi-

cation of how undesirable results in the subbasin were established, 2) a better explanation of how the various minimum thresholds will collectively achieve the sustainability goals and avoid undesirable results for the subbasin, and 3) a better basin-wide approach to land subsidence, including management criteria and assessment of impacts to critical infrastructure from future subsidence.

With DWR's finding of inadequacy, "state intervention" was triggered, and jurisdiction now shifts from DWR to the State Water Resources Control Board (the Board). The Board has broad discretion under SGMA. They are required to make a determination regarding probation fol-

See **GROUNDWATER** on PAGE 4



Celebrating Cotton Candy Grapes

By Audrey Hill,
Feature Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

Congratulations to IFG, International Fruit Genetics LLC, for celebrating 20 years of the Cotton Candy™ grape! IFG is dedicated to breeding table grapes, sweet cherries, and raisin varieties that defy the odds of flavor. Still, none would have been possible

without the first highly flavored novelty grape: the infamous Cotton Candy™ grape.

Although the table grape is recognized worldwide today, it has humble beginnings. In 2001, Jack Pandol, The Stoller Family, and Dr. David Cain, the lead plant geneticist, started IFG. Later in 2003, they tasted something new while visiting the

See **COTTON CANDY** on PAGE 5

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Bipartisan "Farm Team" Listens

Caroline Webby, Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

The House Committee on Agriculture hosted the first official listening session Tuesday, February 14th, 2023, at the World Ag Expo to collect feedback on the 2018 Farm Bill and gather input from stakeholders on the developing 2023 Farm Bill. Chairman GT Thompson was joined by Speaker Kevin McCarthy (CA-20) and fellow congressmen Rep. David Valadao (CA-22), Rep. Jim Costa (CA-21), Rep. Doug LaMalfa (CA-24), Rep. David Rouzer (NC-07), Rep. Salud Carbajal (CA-24), Rep. Jimmy Panetta (CA-19), Rep. John Rose (TN-06), and Rep. John Duarte (CA-13) on the panel. Remarks were given by organization representatives and individuals from across the state and country, covering topics such as crop protection, innovation, conservation needs, nutrition programs, specialty crops, and more.

The Farm Bill is a piece of legislation first enacted in 1933 by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to alleviate difficulties facing the country as fallout from the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. Three main goals of the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, the first Farm Bill, were to support farmers while they navigate fluctuations in their business, feed the hungry, and protect the environment for future production. Most of the funds allocated to current farm bill programs go to feeding the hungry; the bill's Nutrition Title is projected to account for over 80% of the baseline cost in 2023. Due to issues still facing the country today, it is even more critical to improve upon the current framework of this bill.

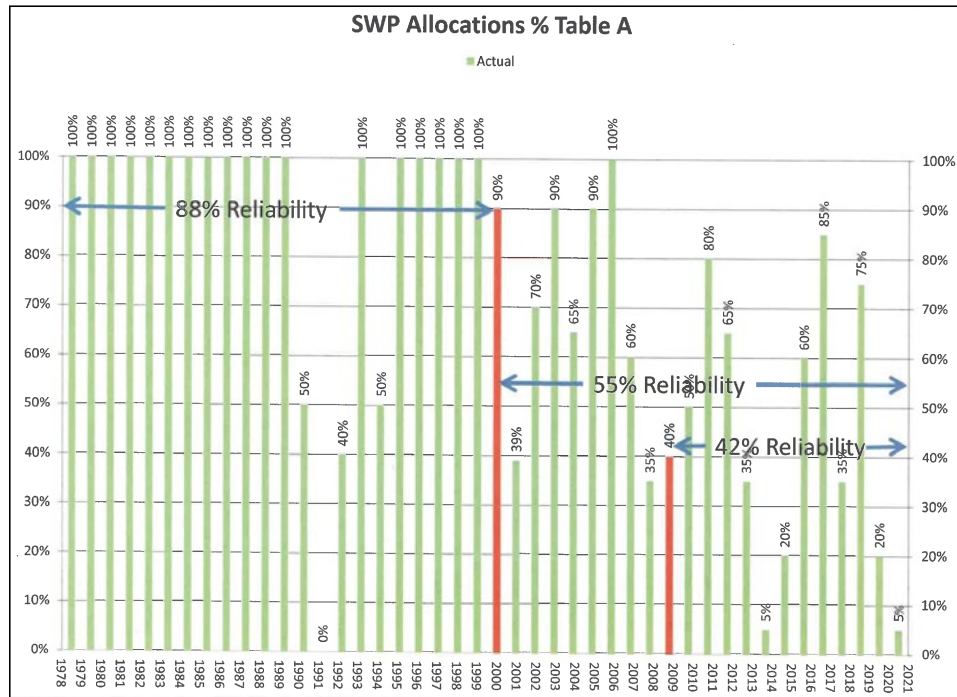
When the listening session opened for public comment, many praised the 2018 Farm Bill for its conservation programs that paid farmers to make

See **FARM TEAM LISTENS** on PG 13



FARM BUREAU NEWS

The United Voice of Kern County's Farming Community

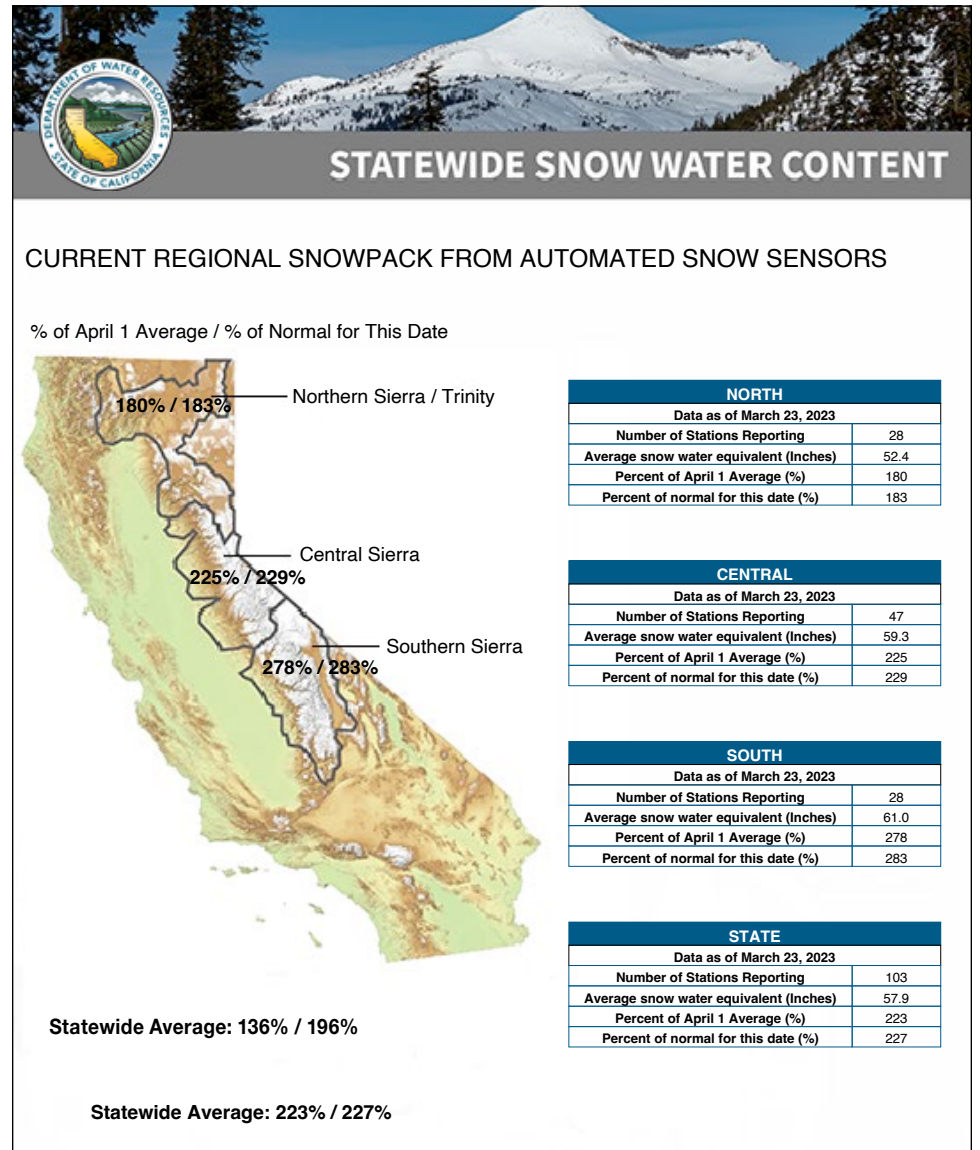


President's Message

WOW, here we are in April and just finished March, which had more atmospheric river events. I am writing this article on March 13, and the Kern Subbasin flooded over the weekend, as did most of northern California. The governor issued an executive order on Friday, March 10, in preparation for the atmospheric river events coming in the next two weeks; where he states that California is seeing extreme rain and snow, so the state is making it simple to redirect water to recharge groundwater basins. It has taken the governor and his administration to consider that this winter has been extreme regarding rain and snow until mid-March. Where would this state have been if the acknowledgment had come a month ago or, even better than that, in January? The idea that California wasn't in extremely wet conditions when the snow

survey on March 3 recorded 116.5 inches of snow depth and a snow water equivalent of 41.5 inches, which was 177 percent of average, is absurd. And today, the statewide snow water content reflects 217 percent of the average, with a snow water equivalent of 53.4 inches. Unfortunately, it has taken this long for the state to react, especially when the state touts how it can watch weather patterns. I can appreciate that there is a balancing act between

See **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE** on PAGE 4



Statewide Snow Water Content as of March 23, 2023 provided by the California Cooperative Snow Surveys. (Graphic: DWR)

Young Farmers & Ranchers



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

While the rain and snow continue to blanket Kern County, the Young Farmers & Ranchers caught a

break on March 11th for our third annual clay shoot fundraiser. With the clouds breaking up that morning and the warmer weather brought in by a storm the day before, it made for a beautiful day on the range. It takes a good team to make this kind of event happen; so, I would like to thank our YF&R executive team as well as the extra volunteers that helped the day of our shoot. We were able to get a great turnout despite the chance of rain as well as the current difficult environment in much of the ag industry. Congratulations to Matt Pandol Jr's team for taking first place!

We want to give a big thank you to everyone who came out and shot and to the individuals and companies who sponsored the event. You made this year another success for the club. We are now looking forward to being able to fund our Ag Grants and our new College Ag Scholarship as well as our meetings and other events throughout the year. If you missed it this year, we are already planning next year's shoot so be on the lookout to sign up early. We would also like to thank 5 Dogs for hosting us and running the shoot. I appreciated that they set up the course with easier clays to hit than last year, even if I still missed more than I would like to admit.

Back in late February before the clay shoot, we had our monthly meeting at the Tlo Wines tasting room in downtown Bakersfield. They hosted a special California ag trivia night for us and as groups, we answered questions ranging from what our state fabric is to what California's top ag commodity is. To the surprise of all but one member of my group (whom we should

have trusted), it was not almonds in the top spot but rather dairy products by a significant margin. Regardless of the trivia results, we all enjoyed the night and were able to build relationships with newer attendees.

I've written recently about how I love the community and people here in Bakersfield, but there is more to love than that. It has been one of those winters where when I look out the window and see the snow on the mountains around town and the green grass and wildflowers everywhere it makes me wonder why anyone would want to live anywhere else. Indeed, if someone from out of state came to town for an interview, it would be hard to say no to Bakersfield, there's even water in the river. We should be thankful for these times of beauty here that we have been given because they often do not last for long. Get outside, get involved, and enjoy Kern County!

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The Cattleman's Corner

OPINION:
Newsom and California Legislature: Dumb as a Post or Pro Vigilantism?



By Austin Snedden
Ranching Contributor,
Valley Ag Voice

There are certain things that have such a strong correlation to each other that you have to be ignorant to not see causation.

From not incarcerating criminals, releasing prisoners, not supporting law enforcement, and over-regulating good guys, Governor Newsom and the California Democrat super majority have created a situation where the productive public will either leave the state or protect themselves and their property through whatever means necessary. It is human nature, when you are attacked you either fight back or retreat. Historically, with logical competent governance, the law-abiding citizens were willing to stand aside and let the justice system handle the folks that chose to break the law. Unfortunately, for the majority of

uals, the Democrat majority voted down party lines against victims and against Senator Grove's bill.

The pro-crime policies of our majority liberal politicians, coupled with negative messaging towards law enforcement, have created a situation where criminals are emboldened, and law enforcement is hamstrung. In Kern County, we are blessed to have pro-justice law enforcement in District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer and Sheriff Donny Youngblood. Still, their goals of seeking justice are hampered by what State laws allow them to do in terms of penalizing criminals. In addition, the state putting more criminals on the street increases the workload of local law enforcement; couple that with tying their hands on prosecution, and you have a recipe for disaster.

Deciding to retreat from a place you have chosen is always hard regardless of the career or business, but it is often a non-starter for those of us in agriculture. Whether it is the literal deep roots of permanent crops, or the deep roots of many decades and many



Photo: Stepan / Adobe Stock

crimes, the justice system in California will leave the victim completely vulnerable. Do pro-crime politicians want the rest of us to pack up and leave, or stand up and fight? Those are the only choices.

AB 109, Proposition 47, and Proposition 57 have created a situation where the dregs of society who have victimized others are either not incarcerated or released early from prison to resume their victimization of productive citizens. There are fighters in our State Legislature that look to protect and defend us as law-abiding citizens. One of those fighters is State Senator Shannon Grove. Senator Grove proposed SB 1042, which would make the crime of human trafficking added to the list of serious and violent crimes, making this crime a strike on a criminal's track record. Kern County DA Cynthia Zimmer and many law enforcement officials and DAs scattered across the state supported Senator Grove's bill to protect the innocent and put away bad guys. But, to the bewilderment of sane individ-

generations invested in the land, bailing out because of bad governmental policy is something many of us aren't willing to do. Agriculture operations have been hit repeatedly with copper theft, equipment theft, vandalism, and many other things making production difficult and expensive. Liberal politicians condoning criminal activity has put us in a place where they have made themselves clear we are to either get out or defend our property. To be clear, if those of us productive citizens end up having to stand and fight a criminal element to protect our property and livelihood, it is not our choice. This has been imposed upon us by an incompetent or malevolent state government. I pray we can politically steer back toward sanity. Still, in the meantime, I pray those of us put in this situation by an incompetent government can make wise decisions when it comes to persevering and protecting what has been built and toiled for.

CDFA Releases Manure Recycling And Innovative Products Task Force Report

Press release provided by the California Department of Food and Agriculture

On March 10th, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has released the final report from the Manure Recycling and Innovative Products Task Force (MRIP).

CDFA convened the task force in late 2021 with the goal of developing recommendations on how to recapture and enhance the nutrient value of dairy manure while supporting healthy soils, protecting water quality, and reducing agriculture's carbon footprint in California.

The workgroup was comprised of dairy farmers and other members of the dairy industry, representatives of academia, state and federal government agencies, and non-governmental organizations with interests in sustainable farming, water quality protection, and environmental justice.

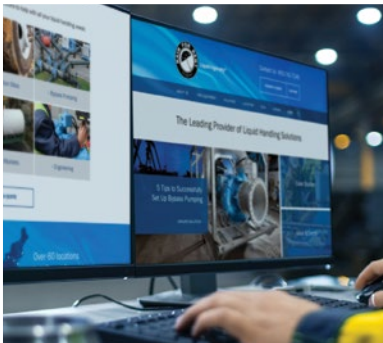
Recommendations for addressing nitrogen surplus are grouped into conventional strategies, compost strategies, denitrification and

treatment, and nitrogen capture.

In close alignment with this effort, CDFA funded research conducted by the California Biomass Collaborative (CBC) at the University of California, Davis. The findings provide an overview of the amount and location of surplus nutrients within California's dairy sector and evaluate selected manure treatment technologies capable of recovering manure nutrients in useful form or otherwise safely reducing surpluses.

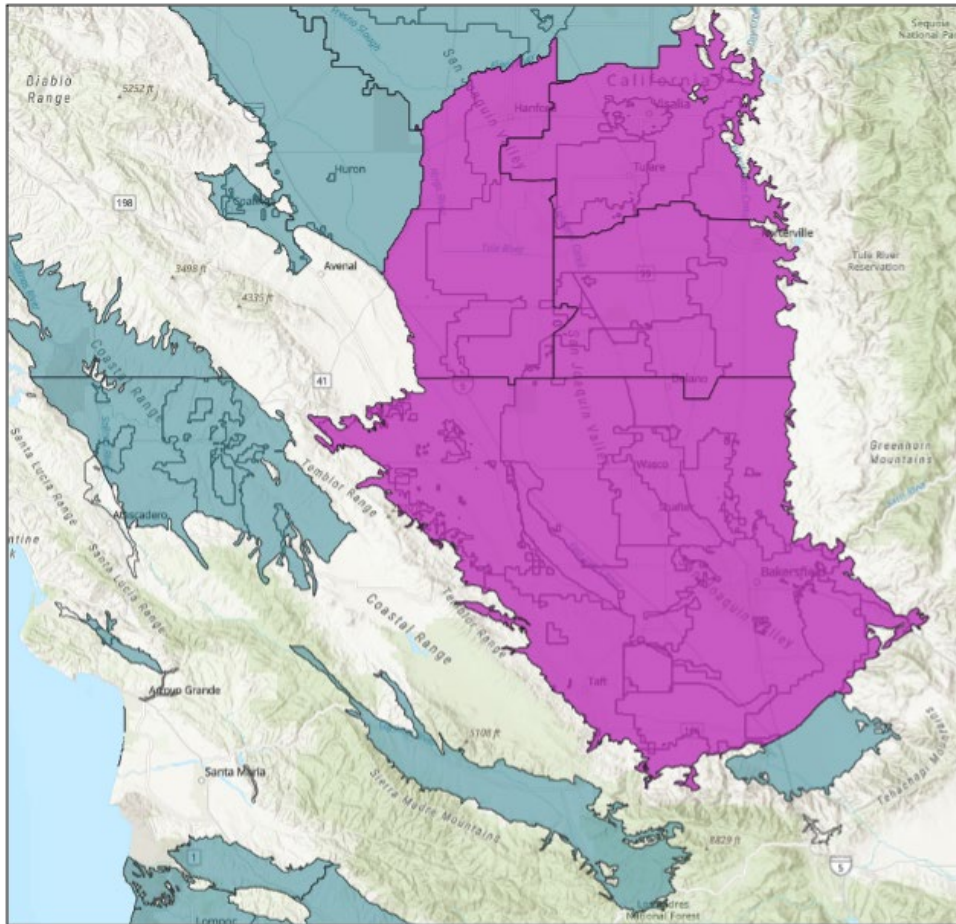
The CBC's completed report, Manure Nutrient Recovery, Removal, and Reuse on California Dairies includes topics for additional research and development needed and suggestions for quantitative assessment of technologies.

Looking ahead, the MRIP Task Force plans to continue its efforts in collaboration with CDFA to utilize its recommendations and monitor progress.



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Subbasins in the southern San Joaquin Valley deemed to have inadequate GSPs included the Kaweah, Tulare Lake, Tule, and Kern subbasins.

Groundwater

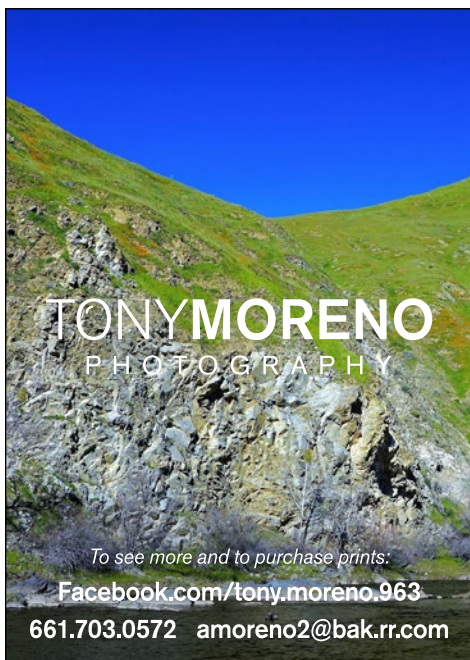
Continued from PAGE 1

lowing a public hearing. The Board can decide whether to put a subbasin on probation. If they do, the Board can impose fees on groundwater users, limit groundwater pumping, work with (i.e. regulate) pumpers directly without having to work through the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), and is required to collect a substantial amount of information on farmers’ groundwater use. There are many issues to unpack there. The biggest concern is that the Board essentially has only one tool to utilize to achieve sustainability – reduce groundwater pumping. Another concern is that it will not just be the GSAs appearing at the State Board hearing. Several environmental organizations have taken an interest in the SGMA

process and would like to see more done – with some, like Clean Water Action, even suggesting that the GSPs deemed “adequate” by DWR are deficient. Groundwater managers can expect conflict at the hearings.

Suppose the issues that caused the basin to be deemed probationary are not addressed during the probationary period. In that case, the State Water Board may begin another public process to determine whether or not to develop and implement an interim plan for the basin – that is, impose their own plan to achieve sustainability. If that sounds concerning, it should be.

With DWRs determination, the path to groundwater sustainability became much more uncertain. Kern County has some genuinely excellent water managers. Regardless of the Board’s decision, Kern’s water managers will continue to move forward with implementing their plans to achieve sustainability as prudently as possible. The deficiencies within Kern’s revised plan are easily fixable with cooperation between the GSAs. DWR had to review six GSPs for Kern County: the Kern Groundwater Authority, Kern River, Buena Vista, Olcese, Henry Miller, and South of Kern River. One scenario is that the revised plan will be redrafted and the deficiencies corrected. The Board will have much bigger problems to deal with than those in Kern and hopefully will defer a decision on probation subject to a review of the revised plans. Nevertheless, there is plenty of room for mischief, and that has water managers rightly concerned. While the formation of different GSAs intended to protect the interests of their respective water users, now is the time to put aside remaining differences and stay out of the way of the State Board.



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President’s Message

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all beneficial users (including communities and cities), the environment, and agriculture. Still, all of these need good stewardship of this vital resource. And it was and has been easier to manage water under a drought situation, but being able to pivot to the other extreme is crucial for the future.

To explore why the ability to pivot quickly in both directions, please see below the State Water Project (SWP) allocations history for the Kern Subbasin. It provides an account of how much of the contract of water that the SWP Kern County received. As you can see, since 2000, the Kern Subbasin experienced a drastic reduction of reliability – it went from an 88% reliability before 2000 to a 55% reliability. Within the last ten years, the Kern Subbasin is at 42% reliability. This brings me to the subject of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and the determination by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) on the Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP). DWR determined that the GSP was inadequate, and now comes the new process of working with the State Water

Board. I have learned from working on the GSP since 2016 that if the Kern Subbasin was still receiving 88% of its contracted water allocations, this basin would not be classified as critically overdrafted. In SGMA, that means a lot. I believe the Kern Subbasin received its contracted water, we would not be in its current position. So, how do we proceed? As I have always stated, if you are not at the table, you are on the menu! Your engagement as a landowner is vital and now more than ever. Go to your water district meetings and ask how they intend to move forward. Also, read the DWR determination letter to discuss the issues (if you need a copy, contact the Kern County Farm Bureau). One item to note on this process is that the state has the authority to require that you register your water wells at a current cost of \$300 per well and provide your extraction amounts, meaning they can demand that you put a meter on your well. They also have the authority to charge you an extraction fee of \$40 per acre-feet. And currently, no one in the Kern Subbasin is exempt from this process. Therefore, I recommend that you engage.

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COMMENTARY: Sustaining Food Production Is Key To Pesticide Policy



By Scott Dahlman
State Director of
Government Affairs for
Crop Life America

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from the California Farm
Bureau Federation*

On Jan. 26, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation released its “Sustainable Pest Management Roadmap.” This 97-page document is the culmination of a nearly two-year process in which DPR engaged a 33-member stakeholder committee to look at the future of pest management in California.

The concept of “sustainable pest management” grew out of a desire by California regulators to create a solution in search of a problem. California growers have embraced integrated pest management, or IPM, for decades, a proven approach to sustainably managing their farms and only using pesticides when and where necessary and in the smallest amounts possible. The new roadmap for sustainable pest management attempts to apply additional standards above and beyond existing IPM practices.

The roadmap outlines priorities that will likely result in sustainable pest management being adopted throughout California. It incorporates considerations of economic benefits, gives attention to community impacts and equity issues, water conservation, biodiversity, soil health and climate. Its “keystone actions” are made up of some items we agree with and others that concern us.

The pesticide industry agrees with proposals that would put more resources into preventing new invasive pests and eliminating current ones. This work could help reduce the pest pressures on California crops.

We support efforts to improve DPR’s registration process. For too long, California growers have had less access to pesticides than their counterparts across the country. Nearly every state relies on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency review of pesticides to make their registration decisions. The EPA reviews hundreds of studies for each pesticide, analyzing the data on impacts on unintended species, the environment and risks to human health.

Once the EPA determines a pesticide poses no unreasonable impacts or risks, the product is submitted to states for registration. Uniquely, in California, DPR requires submission of many of those same studies for state review. This can take three to six years or more, resulting in California pesticide users not having access to products neighboring states approved years earlier.

We won’t debate this additional review, but it is clear DPR’s process must be more efficient so that California growers have access to pesticides sooner. Steps such as moving to an electronic submis-



Damage from caterpillars. (Photo: Adobe Stock)

sion and tracking system would put DPR on par with EPA. Identifying bottlenecks and adjusting resources to improve efficiency also would help. We appreciate that California officials are engaged in creation of that system now. Bringing new, innovative and more targeted products to market should be seen as a boon to sustainable pest management, and everything that can be done to accelerate the process should be considered.

Our concerns focus on the roadmap’s goal to identify “priority pesticides” and eliminate their use by 2050. The industry is committed to innovation and is constantly working to bring new products to market. Innovations increase productivity, allow farmers to use fewer and more targeted pesticides, and reduce environmental impacts.

While we will continue to work to bring those new products forward, current pesticides are still important, as they provide pest control when circumstances dictate that they are the best option. The fear is that the rush to eliminate certain pesticides may leave some growers with no viable options to protect their crops.

We believe that growers are best equipped to determine which product works for their situation. They should have as many options in the toolbox as possible. We all saw how the cancellation of chlorpyrifos left some growers without any pesticide options for certain pest and crop combinations. It is important that these impacts are considered during the review process.

Another concern with the roadmap is how the “priority pesticide” list would be determined. The workgroup could not agree on a set of criterion. It will be left to DPR, with guidance from a newly created advisory body. We are hopeful that this advisory panel will include scientific expertise and members representing growers, registrants and pest control advisors who can provide perspectives on how and why certain pesticides are used.

As registrants, we know how important it is to work with our grower allies as we look towards the future of pesticide use in California. That is why we partnered with the California Farm Bureau and other grower groups to form the Californians for Safe Pesticide Policy coalition, or CSPP. Together, we have commissioned several economic studies that highlight the impact of some of the policies in the roadmap to bring real economic data to the conversation.

We look forward to continuing our work with the California Farm Bureau and the broader CSPP coalition to help ensure California farmers have access to pesticides they need to continue to grow a safe and sustainable food supply for consumers in California and around the world.

(Scott Dahlman is director of state government affairs for CropLife America and chair of Californians for Safe Pesticide Policy. He may be contacted at sdahlman@croplifeamerica.org.)

Cotton Candy

Continued from PAGE 1



University of Arkansas plant breeding researchers. Joining forces with John Clark, the University of Arkansas horticulture program director, Dr. Cain brought the new variety back to the Delano test fields. Soon after, the Cotton Candy™ grape was born. Initially, the plan was to name it the “toffee grape” for its toffee-like flavor until a visiting school came to taste the new variety, and one of the students decided that it tasted just like cotton candy. The new name, created by students, was perhaps the most influential and enticing new fruit name since.

Today the variety is celebrated as the first table grape traditionally bred for a highly specialized flavor profile and has blazed the trail for the rest. IFG has claimed patents for forty-eight table grapes, ten sweet cherries, and one raisin variety. These specialized grape varieties include Candy Hearts™, Candy Snaps™ (a strawberry-flavored grape), and the Julep™ grape (a spicy black grape that pairs well with cheese).

“One of the things we are most proud of is that it’s given new reasons for shoppers to get excited about fruit,” says Andy Higgins, CEO of IFG. It’s inspiring IFG every day to be a part of a healthy lifestyle by giving kids options that are “not just processed candies and snack bars.”

IFG is committed to having at least one variety available every day of the year and grows in 18 different countries, 13 of which produce the Cotton Candy™ grape. Upwards of 34,000 tons of Cotton Candy™ move throughout main markets yearly and are available at high-profile grocery stores such as Sprouts, Whole Foods, Costco, Albertsons, and Aldi.

“It’s not just a variety, it’s a phenomenon,” said James Cackett, Tesco, Technical Manager Produce - Citrus, Grape, Melon, Pineapple. “Cotton Candy™ grapes buck all the trends with their unique flavor that is enjoyed by all. It’s a variety of table grapes that the customers can never get enough of. I have seen the evolution of the variety turn global, and customer reaction to Cotton Candy™ grapes has been amazing, something that turned mainstream table grapes into a family favorite. There are not many varieties that resonate with Tesco customers, but Cotton Candy™ grapes are certainly one.”

As Dr. Cain has retired, the team is now led by Dr. Chris Owens, and they continue to push the boundaries of flavor in table grapes, raisins, and sweet cherries. IFG is very proud to be celebrating the success of the Cotton Candy™ grape this year. The grape is “a worldwide symbol of fruit innovation” and represents now 20 years of traditional non-GMO breeding for specialized tastes in table grapes.

Hot Mess Express is Theme of Latest High-Speed Rail Report

California Senate Republicans Double Down on Calls to End Failed Project amidst Price Increases, Building Delays, Broken Promises



Photo: State of California High-Speed Rail Authority

SACRAMENTO – Today, the California High-Speed Rail Authority provided a report with updated figures on the cost and progress of the construction of the High-Speed Rail project. To no surprise, the numbers continue to increase, the project continues to delay, and the promises continue to be broken. The failures are so bad that even liberal editorial boards at major newspapers have openly called for scrapping the project.

The latest estimate shows the High-Speed Rail Authority line from Merced-Bakersfield has now ballooned up to \$35.3 billion, up from \$22.5 billion in 2022. That's nearly a 57% increase in price in just one year!

"Recent estimates indicate the High-Speed Rail will cost \$206.4 million per mile. What is it, made out of gold? We already know that this entire project has been a complete failure since it was dreamed up more than 15 years ago," said Senate Minority Leader Brian W. Jones (R-San Diego). "California is looking at a budget deficit and we have much more pressing issues that demand our attention – like tackling crime, cutting costs, acting on homelessness, and investing in students.

"The broken promises on this project are breaking the bank for Californians. It's time to pump the brakes on the hot mess express and defund the High-Speed Rail," concluded Leader Jones.

In a recent editorial California should cut its losses on high-speed rail, the San Jose Mercury News Editorial Board agrees with Leader Jones and lays out an argument to pump the brakes on the project:

"With each passing year, the light at the end of the tunnel for California's high-speed rail project seems fainter...

The reality is that the project has never been realistic. Fifteen years after it was put before voters, there's still no path to completion. Costs keep rising, and now ridership projections for the system, if it ever opens, are declining sharply.

It's time for state and federal officials to cut their losses, to stop throwing money at a project that probably will never be finished..."

The Orange County Register Editorial Board also seems to agree in their column California's bullet train pipe dream must end:

"The ballot summary promised a 'bond issue of \$9.95 billion to establish high-speed train service linking' Northern and Southern California. Except for the possible completion of the Merced-to-Bakersfield project, none of that will happen.

The project originally was promised to cost \$33 billion. But the latest estimate from the High-Speed Rail Authority pegs it at \$113 billion...

...It doesn't take much reflection to conclude there are better uses of California's finite financial resources than a much-delayed, perpetually more expensive train project without much utility."

###

Senator Brian W. Jones represents California's 40th Senate District which includes the Cities of Escondido, Poway, San Marcos, Santee, San Diego City communities of Carmel Mountain Ranch, Mira Mesa, Rancho Bernardo, Rancho Peñasquitos, Scripps Ranch, Sorrento Valley, and University City, along with the San Diego County unincorporated communities of 4S Ranch, Alpine, Bonsall, Fallbrook, Lakeside, Pine Valley, Rainbow, Ramona, and Valley Center.

For press inquiries or questions, please contact Jacqui Nguyen, press secretary for the Senate Republican Caucus, at 858.999.7706.

USDA Answers USCA Petition; Proposes To Close "Product of The U.S.A." Loophole



Photo by Jenoch / Adobe Stock

Press release provided by the US Cattlemen's Association

On March 6th the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued a proposed rulemaking to close the "Product of the U.S.A." loophole that meatpackers use to purposefully mask the identity of their comingled beef products.

Under current regulations, imported beef product can be brought into the U.S., undergo a "significant transformation," – which can be as insignificant as trimming or rewrapping – and then claim the "Product of the U.S.A." label. This is a wholly unacceptable practice that intentionally misleads consumers.

The proposed rule announced today allows the voluntary "Product of USA" or "Made in the USA" label claim to be used on meat, poultry and egg products only when they are derived from animals born, raised, slaughtered and processed in the United States.

The proposed rule follows a request made by the U.S. Cattlemen's Association (USCA) in a petition for rulemaking submitted to USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service in 2019.

USCA President Justin Tupper issued the following statement:

"In our 2019 petition for rulemaking to FSIS, USCA called out the practice of applying 'Product of the USA' and 'Made in the USA' labeling claims on beef products that the food safety agency itself admitted could have come from other countries.

"USCA is pleased to see that the proposed rule finally closes this loophole by accurately defining what these voluntary origin claims mean, something we have been working to clarify since the repeal of mandatory country-of-origin labeling in 2015. If it says 'Made in the USA,' then it should be from cattle that have only known USA soil. Consumers have the right to

know where their food comes from, full stop.

"USCA would like to thank the Biden Administration for incorporating this goal in their Action Plan for a Fairer, More Competitive, and More Resilient Meat and Poultry Supply Chain issued in 2022. But, we also need to recognize the relentless work by our champions in Congress, including my home-state Senator Mike Rounds, who sponsored the U.S.A. Beef Act that would have prohibited beef from bearing the phrase "Product of U.S.A." unless it was exclusively derived from U.S. cattle. We could not have elevated this issue without the many voices speaking up in support of the change.

"USCA plans to submit comments supporting this proposed definition."

SO, WHAT EXACTLY DOES THIS ANNOUNCEMENT MEAN?

This is the first major progress since COOL was originally passed in the 2008 Farm Bill – and the first step towards truth in labeling since the program's repeal in 2015.

WHAT ABOUT MCOOL?

Mandatory COOL remains USCA's primary goal, and the wishes of the majority of the cattle producers and consumers. USCA members should continue to call and write their elected representatives and ask for their support of the American Beef Labeling Act. This bill reinstates mandatory country-of-origin labeling requirements for beef. Specifically, the bill requires the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) to develop a means of reinstating the requirements that complies with the rules of the World Trade Organization. The USTR and the Department of Agriculture must implement the means within one year.

The support of Congress will be a critical part of the pathway forward for COOL, and that will be accomplished through a grassroots push by cattle producers. USCA's request for a clear definition from the USDA FSIS is the first step to securing truthful and accurate labels.

AND WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

USDA will open a public comment period on this proposed rule. We must rally around definitions – the pathway towards country-of-origin labeling begins with closing the current loopholes. The approach suggested by USDA would get labeling right on beef. Now, we need to work to get it right on cattle. Join us in putting an immediate halt to fraudulent labeling by supporting this definition change.

Farm Bureau Joins Legal Efforts to Protect Key Firefighting Tool



Walbridge Fire behind one of many vineyards. Santa Rosa, California. (Photo by GibsonOutdoorPhoto / Adobe Stock)

Press Release provided by the California Farm Bureau Federation

On March 9th the California Farm Bureau joined various California counties and forestry and wood products organizations in filing a legal brief seeking to intervene in defense of the U.S. Forest Service’s use of a critical retardant used in wildfire suppression.

The Farm Bureau’s decision to intervene in the case is in response to litigation challenging the Forest Service’s aerial application of fire retardant as part of its firefighting strategy.

“Our farmers and ranchers face severe threats from wildfires that can occur in national forests and spread to agricultural lands,” said California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson. “Additionally, fires threaten the lives of livestock, disrupt grazing operations and put our rural agricultural commu-

nities in peril. We support the Forest Service’s continued use of this important firefighting tool.”

Besides Farm Bureau, the groups joining in the motion to intervene in defense of the Forest Service include: The Town of Paradise; Butte County; Plumas County; Rural County Representatives of California; American Forest Resource Council; National Alliance of Forest Owners; Federal Forest Resource Coalition; California Forestry Association; Montana Wood Products Association; Oregon Forest Industry Council; Washington Forest Protection Association; California Women for Agriculture; and National Wildfire Suppression Association.

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.



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In the Field:

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- ☐ Flush Irrigation Laterals & Hoses
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- ☐ Repair Leaking Riser Tee's
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State Declares Six Aquifer Plans As Out Of Compliance



Christine Souza Assistant Editor Ag Alert

Reprinted with permission from the California Farm Bureau Federation

California water officials delivered a mixed report card last week on local plans to curb overpumping of groundwater to protect the state's aquifers in critical overdraft.

The California Department of Water Resources recommended six San Joaquin Valley groundwater sustainability plans for approval but rejected six others as inadequate.

Under the 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, local agencies must implement groundwater plans that demonstrate how they intend to balance the state's challenged groundwater supplies within a 20-year timeframe.

DWR said six plans were missing information that the state needs to determine compliance. The department said plans must show a roadmap for how groundwater basins will achieve long-term sustainability by limiting overdraft, land subsidence and impacts to drinking water.

In its technical review, the agency found that sufficient action has not been taken to address one or more deficiencies in the following subbasins: Chowchilla subbasin, Delta-Mendota subbasin, Kaweah subbasin, Kern County subbasin, Tulare Lake subbasin and Tule subbasin.

The inadequate determination triggers the state intervention process, which authorizes the California State Water Resources Control Board to step in to manage the basin.

"All the basins that resubmitted did an extensive amount of work attempting to address the deficiencies," said Paul Gosselin, deputy direc-

tor of the DWR Sustainable Groundwater Management Office. "It is a complicated act to implement, but we did take an objective look at what they resubmitted."

"Whether plans are approved or inadequate and under state board intervention," he added, "we are looking to have the basins continue with implementation."

Calling passage of SGMA "a seismic shift in California water," California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson said, "It was never going to be easy to transition on a timeline of just 20 years to eliminate an estimated 2.5 million acre-feet of overdraft a year in our most impacted areas of the state."

"This action will trigger a process before the water board that will afford local agencies additional opportunities to address identified problems, regain control of their basins and, hopefully, avoid formal probationary status or the imposition of eventual state interim plans," Johansson said.

Local groundwater sustainability plans, or GSAs, must implement near-term actions, such as expanding monitoring programs, reporting annually on groundwater conditions, implementing aquifer recharge projects and designing allocation programs. Once plans are implemented locally, measures must continue even if basins are under state intervention.

Michael Hagman, executive director of the East Kaweah GSA, one of three GSAs in the Kaweah subbasin, said the local agency accepts the DWR's finding. "The department's decision makes sense, and we are already working on resolution," he said.

"While we fix these issues, we are trying to figure out how we move out of this condition and away from probation or failure (which could lead to a takeover of the GSA)," said Hagman, general manager of Lindmore Irrigation District, a federal water contractor

in the Friant Division.

If deficiencies are not remedied within a year, the board, after a subsequent notice and hearing, may develop and adopt an interim plan to manage the basin's groundwater use. An interim plan is a temporary measure to protect groundwater resources in the basin until GSAs are able to manage the basin sustainably.

"There are a number of board decisions that need to be made about how this process will move forward and when," said Natalie Stork, state water board supervising engineering geologist of the groundwater management program. "If the board puts the basin on probation, then it will focus on collecting the information it needs to develop and implement its own plan to manage the basin. During this time, the board will collect data and fees while local agencies work to fix their plans."

DWR recommended the following six basins for approval: Cuyama basin, Eastern San Joaquin subbasin, Kings subbasin, Merced subbasin, Paso Robles subbasin and the Westside subbasin in Fresno and Kings counties. These basins will work with DWR and report on progress in implementing plans and completing any corrective actions.

In response to DWR's recommendation of approval for the plan for the Westside subbasin, Jeff Fortune, president of the Westlands Water District board of directors, said, "This result reflects a great deal of time and dedication from Westlands' staff and board of directors who worked diligently and collaboratively with DWR to build a groundwater sustainability plan that will achieve the Westside Subbasin's sustainability goals."

DWR said the agencies whose plans were recommended for approval conducted crit-

ical analysis of groundwater levels, water quality and inter-connected surface waters to develop and refine sustainable groundwater management criteria.

Plans are to be updated over time as new data and information becomes available and as conditions change in groundwater basins. DWR will review annual reports from local agencies and assess plans every five years to determine whether they are on track to meet sustainability goals.

The California Farm Bureau, Johansson said, will work with state and local agencies, county Farm Bureaus and agricultural groundwater users "on workable solutions to sustain healthy aquifers."

"Our groundwater supplies are critical for California farmers, including vegetable, fruit, nut and dairy producers who account for much of America's food supply," Johansson said. "It is important that California carefully considers solutions that protect both our aquifers and our food production."

Of a total 94 groundwater basins required to submit plans under SGMA, state water officials provided determinations for 24 basins and is reviewing an additional 61 plans from 59 of California's high- and medium-priority basins submitted to DWR in January 2022. DWR said it anticipates issuing determinations for the remaining basins throughout 2023.

Critically overdrafted basins each received \$7.6 million in grant funding to aid in plan implementation. DWR's LandFlex program, state drought assistance programs and the California Department of Conservation's Multibenefit Land Repurposing program are trying to help critically overdrafted basins reduce their dependence on groundwater.

CDFA Awards \$12.25 Million For The Pollinator Habitat Program

Press Release provided by the California Department of Food and Agriculture

CDFA's Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation (OEFI) has selected 10 organizations to receive \$12.25 million in funding through a new competitive grant program, the Pollinator Habitat Program (PHP).

The PHP was established by the Budget Act of 2021 (Senate Bill 170, Skinner) in which CDFA was appropriated \$15 million to provide grant funding for the establishment of pollinator habitat on agricultural lands throughout California. CDFA was directed to administer the Pollinator Habitat Program and to prioritize the planning of native habitats for the benefit of native biodiversity and the use of locally appropriate native plant seed mixes when feasible.

"CDFA is pleased to make this investment in pollinator habitat on California farms and ranches. Pollinators are not only vital to our ecosystems, but

they are also essential to over a third of our crops, helping to produce a wide variety of California-grown fruits, nuts, and vegetables," said Secretary Karen Ross. "The Pollinator Habitat Program demonstrates how working lands can help safeguard California's diverse ecosystems."

CDFA accepted applications from September 2022 through November 23, 2022. Resource Conservation Districts, non-profit organizations, the University of California, California State Universities, California community colleges, and California and federally recognized Tribes were eligible to apply for up to \$2,000,000 in funding to work directly with farmers and ranchers to install habitat and implement management practices that support pollinators.

To find out more about PHP and to review a list of the awarded organizations please visit <https://www.cdca.gov/oefi/php/>.

State & Local Officials Highlight \$15 Million in Investments for Local Water Resilience Projects in the Central Valley



California Natural Resources Agency Secretary Wade Crowfoot, left, Steve Doe, Special Investigations Branch Manager, DWR, Mary Fast – Kings Water Authority Board Chair, and Alma Beltran, Mayor of Parlier, are seen at this event posing with this check presented to them by DWR in front of other local officials from across the Central Valley, in Parlier, at the Foothill Basin Project Site, some of which is seen behind the fence in the background, before \$15 million in financial assistance from DWR’s Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program was presented.

Press Release provided by the California Department of Water Resources

On February 24th, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) joined California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot and local officials from across the Central Valley to highlight the \$15 million in grant funding recently awarded to support local water projects. The funding was provided via DWR’s Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program, which is one component of the state’s emerging “Go Golden” initiative to invest funding towards projects designed to build California’s long-term water resilience.

“Today is all about local solutions,” said California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot. “We are celebrating a milestone – securing funding for projects that will provide benefits for decades to come. We know that if we’re going to continue to thrive and prosper in California, we have to strengthen our water infrastructure, and projects like these will do just that.”

The event was held at the Foothill Basin Groundwater Recharge Project site in the underserved community of Parlier, one of the eight local projects that will benefit from the funding. The grants, which will provide critical funding support to implement innovative, multi-benefit projects for climate and water supply resilience throughout the state, were awarded to Kings Basin Water Authority, the City of Bakersfield and Pixley Irrigation District. Working with local project sponsors, the three awardees will distribute funds to a pre-selected list of projects in their region. Benefits for funded projects include groundwater recharge, stormwater capture and water conservation.

“The Kings Basin Water Authority is thankful for the Department of Water Resources for awarding the region over \$6.2 million to support our key projects,” said Kings Basin Water Authority Board Chair Mary Fast. “The IRWM program provides a way for organizations and communities within the Kings subbasin to set aside our differences and work in collaboration to sustain and protect the region’s water sources.”

“The City of Parlier is a very disadvantaged community that has dealt with a lot of contaminated water issues,” said City of Parlier Mayor Amy Beltran. “It is very important for the city of Parlier to be able to work together and build relationships like these to help ensure that our kids and our communities have safe drinking water.”

“This funding is critical to allow the City of Bakersfield and its partners to continue implementing vital projects throughout the region,” said City of Bakersfield Assistant Water Resources Director Daniel Maldonado. “With the help of DWR and its IRWM program, the City of Bakersfield and its partner agencies are one step closer to achieving sustainability by becoming self-reliant and improving water supply reliability within the region.”

“The grants from DWR provide a much-needed solution for a critically over-drafted basin, and will help mitigate longstanding water supply issues within our district,” said Pixley Irrigation District Consulting Engineer Don Tucker.

Financed by voter-approved Proposition 1, the IRWM program has awarded more than \$1.7 billion throughout California, which has been matched by \$5.6 billion in local investments to help implement over 1,300 projects that foster climate resilience by mitigating drought impacts, improving water supply reliability, reducing flood and fire risk, increasing water storage and improving water quality.

The IRWM program is one component of DWR’s emerging “Go Golden” program, which strives to help large organizations and water agencies implement projects that address water infrastructure repairs, water conservation programs such as yard transformation, well rehabilitation, and fish and wildlife protection. Interested parties can stay up to date with the latest “Go Golden” announcements and news through DWR’s email subscription list.

A recording of the livestreamed event, along with B-roll photo and video footage, can be found at the links below. For more information about upcoming grant opportunities, visit DWR’s Grants and Loans webpage (<https://water.ca.gov/Work-With-Us/Grants-And-Loans>).

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TABLE GRAPES – \$27,500±/AC & \$28,500±/AC 119.92± & 150.27± acres Delano Earlimart Irrigation District, Lower Tule River Irrigation District, Quality Varieties, Productive Soils.	PISTACHIOS – \$51,898±/AC (NEW LISTING) 237.31± acres Wasco Area, Southern San Joaquin Municipal Utility District, Pistachios in full production, Productive Soils.
WALNUTS – \$22,099±/AC (PRICED REDUCED) 149.33± acres Lindsay Area, Lindmore ID, 3 Wells, and Productive Soils.	DRY LAND – \$2,105±/AC 290.41± acres Taft Area, Wheeler Ridge Maricopa WSD Non-Contract, West Kern WD Residential service, Recreational and Rural home site, Rental Income.
ALMONDS – \$31,997±/AC (PRICED REDUCED) 155.73± acres Wasco Area, 2 SOURCES OF SEMI-TROPIC WSD CONTRACT WATER, 1 Well, Solar, Class 1 Soils, Almonds in full production.	ALMONDS – \$23,516±/AC (PRICED REDUCED) 295.46± acres Arvin Area, Arvin Edison WSD Contract Water, 2 Wells, Excellent Soils, Almonds in Full Production.
FARMLAND – \$12,000±/AC (PRICED REDUCED) 156.96± acres Wasco Area, Semi-Tropic WSD non-contract water, 1 well, Productive Soils, and Perfect for permanent crops.	WALNUTS, TABLE GRAPES, PISTACHIOS – \$28,611±/AC (PRICED REDUCED) 345.95± acres Selma Area, North Fork GSA, Excellent Soils, Quality Well Water, Diversified Portfolio, Solar System.
DRY LAND – \$2,250±/AC (PRICED REDUCED) 160 acres Valley Acres, Recreation and Rural home site, Good Soils.	ALMONDS – \$18,457±/AC (PRICED REDUCED) 394.47± acres Wasco Area, Semi Tropic non-contract water, 3 wells, 863.4±KW Solar System, Productive Soils, Almonds in full production.
WINE GRAPES – \$18,378±/AC 161.06± acres Wasco Area, Semi-Tropic WSD non-contract water, 1 Well, High-Density planting.	ALMONDS AND FARMLAND – \$21,790±/AC 995.11± acres Wasco Area, Semi-Tropic WSD Contract and non-contract water, 5 wells, Productive Soils, and Almonds in full production.

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NLRB Ruling Holds Employer Liable for Direct and Foreseeable Harms



Teresa McQueen

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The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has once again expanded existing precedent. Clarifying its make-whole remedy, the NLRB finds that victims of labor law violations are to be compensated for all “direct or foreseeable pecuniary harm” suffered as a result of unfair labor practices. The Board’s latest decision in *Thryv, Inc.* follows an NLRB Notice and Invitation to File Briefs asking parties to weigh in on whether the Board should modify its make-whole remedy. The National Labor Relations Board is tasked with enforcing laws protecting union and non-union employees’ rights to engage in protected activity under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA).

In expanding its make-whole remedy, the Board found that in addition to the loss of earnings and benefits, victims of unfair labor practices may incur significant financial (e.g., out-of-pocket medical expenses, credit card debt) or other costs that are a direct or foreseeable result of the alleged unfair labor prac-

tices. Determining that compensation for such losses should be part of its make-whole remedy for labor law violations, the Board explained that the General Counsel will be required to present rebuttable evidence (in the compliance proceeding) proving the amount of direct or foreseeable financial harm, and that it was due to the unfair labor practice.

Going forward, the Board will apply this expanded standard in every case in which the Board’s recommended remedy would include make-whole relief for employees. This decision will be applied retroactively.

Section 7 of the NLRA prohibits an employer from engaging in activities that may “interfere with, restrain, or coerce employees” in the exercise of their Section 7 rights. Under Section 7, employees have the right to unionize, to join together to advance their interests as employees, and to refrain from such activity. Whether your workplace is unionized or non-unionized, keep these prohibitions in mind:

An employer may not:

- Promise employees benefits if they reject the union.
- Interview employees to prepare your defense



Photo: Adobe Stock

in an unfair labor practice case, unless you provide certain assurances:

- o Communicating to the employee the purpose of the questioning, assuring them against reprisals and obtaining voluntary participation.

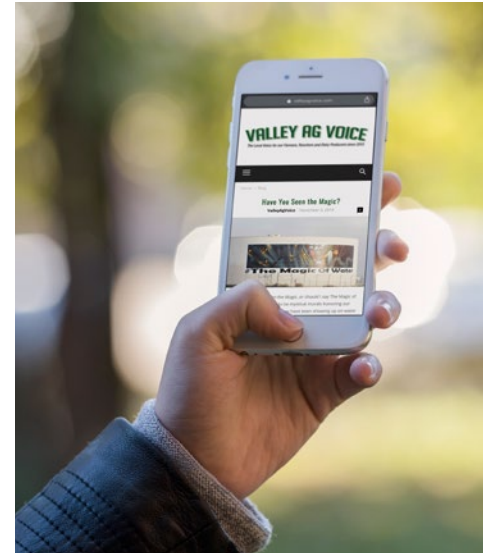
- o Questioning will be free from employer hostility to union organization and not itself be coercive.

- o Questioning will not go beyond what is needed to achieve its legitimate purpose.

- Distribute, maintain, or enforce work rules/policies that reasonably tend to inhibit employees from exercising their rights under the NLRA (e.g., prohibitions against employees voluntarily sharing or discussing wages).

- Create an impression in the workplace that you are spying on employees’ union activities.

- Photograph or videotape employees engaged in protected activities, including union activities.



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Despite Storms, Water Challenges Persist



Christine Souza Assistant Editor Ag Alert

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As still more storms dumped new snow onto California's burgeoning snowpack, water managers, farmers and environmentalists gathered in Sacramento last week to discuss long-term challenges to secure a more certain water future.

The fresh snowfall contrasted with challenging water realities discussed at the 61st California Irrigation Institute Annual Conference. With a theme of "One Water: Partnering for Solutions," the event focused on addressing impacts of climate change, including warming conditions and frequent droughts that severely diminish the snowpack and state water supplies.

The gathering emphasized solutions that some speakers said could be aided through partnerships among different water interests.

"We've certainly adopted a one water approach, and that really is breaking down the silos within our own utility and then taking that same approach as we think about building partnerships outside of the utility," said Paula Kehoe, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission director of water resources. "We recognize that there's definitely opportunities, but it takes a lot of hard work. There are many solutions to our challenges."

In describing the state's "hotter, drier new normal," Karla Nemeth, director of the California Department of Water Resources, which operates the State Water Project, said the state's water supply is much improved since last December.

Lake Shasta, California's largest reservoir, was framed by heaps of snow last week. Its water level as of Monday had risen to 83% of historical average. But Nemeth warned that the state's hydrology is variable, and snow levels in some regions are below average.

"The snowpack is much more intense in the central and southern Sierra, less so in the northern part of the country," Nemeth said. "In fact, we're a little bit below average. These storms may push us over that, which would be terrific, but what is important is the northern part of the state is where we have our biggest reservoirs that feed both the state and federal water projects, which is really a backbone of water management here in California."

Prior to the last few weeks of storms, she said, California had less than an inch of rain from late January to the first two weeks of February. "When it's not raining, it's actually getting drier, and that really represents a shift over our observed hydrology over the past hundred years."

Warmer temperatures, Nemeth said, have water managers looking at the amount of water lost

to evapotranspiration.

"We need to develop and appreciate the actual growing sliver of water that is either sinking into the soil or is evaporating given the role of temperature," she said.

DWR is also focusing on forecasting improvements and looking at soil moisture modeling to better understand how much water can be counted on from storms following dry conditions, Nemeth said.

As part of a panel discussion, Sacramento Valley farmer Fritz Durst discussed his approach to sustainable farming, including the use of no-till and other soil-health practices that retain water and improve yields.

Durst, who grows mainly dryland crops, said "the climate change we're seeing today has really added a substantial amount of risk" to farming.

"We're seeing much warmer temperatures in the summertime and colder temperatures in the winter," said Durst, who farms rice, alfalfa, sunflowers, tomatoes and cereal crops near Knights Landing and is a Sacramento River settlement contractor.

By farming sustainably, Durst said, he uses water to benefit wildlife and fish, and he is able to make a profit.

"We've been very proactive in the Sacramento Valley, especially in the rice realm, where besides providing food for human beings, we provide food for shorebirds and waterfowl," he said. "We provide food for fingerling salmon, and we have a plethora of different types of mammals and reptiles living around our fields. We're trying to help not just ourselves but the environment we live in."

Nemeth said water management must emphasize the "need to share the resource, so that we can continue to thrive both economically and environmentally." She said it is important for water managers to add flexibility to the water system.

To respond to changing conditions, she said, investments must be made in construction of aboveground and belowground water storage, desalinization and water recycling.

Local agencies are working on groundwater recharge and demand management to comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, a 2014 law that requires efforts to bring depleted groundwater basins into balance.

Jeevan Muhar, general manager of the Arvin-Edison Water Storage District, a federal Central Valley Project contractor based in Kern County, said it is important to invest in construction of new infrastructure and repairs of existing conveyance facilities.

Touting partnerships between agencies as a path to water-management solutions, Muhar described the cooperative relationship the water district enjoys with the large water provider in neighboring Los Angeles County.

"One of our largest partners is the Metropolitan Water District," he said. "We were one of the first ag-urban partnerships, and I'm proud to



New snow blankets the landscape of Shasta Lake, California's largest reservoir. Photo Courtesy of CFBF

say that we continue to have that partnership.

"Talk to your neighbors. Your neighbors might already have those facilities, and you should be able to capitalize on what folks are doing around you," Muhar added. "I definitely encourage you to think outside the silos and break those down. We have to."

Working collaboratively with various interests, he said, his district is trying to solve problems, noting that there are "some synergies in working with flood plains and recharge and solving water quality problems all at the same time, so that we can move forward and not continue to fight."

Robyn Grimm, climate resilient water systems

director for the Environmental Defense Fund, discussed work with local partners to develop tools, systems and approaches to manage water and land resources.

"Ultimately, all of us in the room here, we're trying to get to the same place where our water systems are in balance, and we're using our water supplies in a way that results in a sustainable and resilient California with ongoing agricultural production, beautiful places to recreate, a strong economy and a healthy environment," Grimm said. "It is a big lift to get there, and change is really hard, and the system is ever evolving and changing. We need to trust one another and work together."

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DWR Awards \$25 Million in LandFlex Grants to Protect Drinking Water Wells



Aaron Cuthbertson, engineering geologist with the California Department of Water Resources, measures groundwater levels at designated monitoring wells in Yolo County on March 10, 2020.

Press Release provided by the Department of Water Resources

The Department of Water Resources (DWR), in coordination with the California Department of Food and Agriculture, today awarded \$25 million in financial assistance to three groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) through the LandFlex Program. The funding will help preserve critical groundwater supplies in Central Valley communities.

LandFlex is a tool for GSAs to help provide immediate protection of drinking water wells in underrepresented

communities impacted by prolonged drought and over-pumping of groundwater supplies. The program also helps GSAs accelerate efforts to better manage and protect groundwater supplies for long-term sustainability as required by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) of 2014.

DWR has awarded grants to the following three GSAs:

- **Madera County Groundwater Sustainability Agency** - \$9.3 million
- **Greater Kaweah Groundwater**

Sustainability Agency - \$7.0 million

• **Eastern Tule Groundwater Sustainability Agency** - \$7.0 million

With these grant funds, GSAs will work directly with interested growers to temporarily idle agricultural lands to provide immediate benefits for vulnerable domestic wells. This one-year drought relief measure is expected to keep 1,500 to 5,000 acre-feet of groundwater in the ground to avoid impacts on vulnerable drinking water wells. The program will also help permanently eliminate the use of groundwater overdraft on each enrolled acre. This longer-term benefit of the LandFlex program is designed to prevent the extraction of an estimated 100,000 to 200,000 acre-feet of groundwater, accelerating each GSA's efforts towards sustainable groundwater management.

The program incentivizes participation by small- and medium-size farm operations where a reduction in agricultural pumping would help keep household and small community water system wells from going dry.

"LandFlex will help incentivize responsible groundwater and land use sustainability practices by encouraging growers to mitigate the impacts of groundwater overdraft in vulnerable areas. This program not only has the potential to be an effective tool for GSAs and their growers to push towards sustainability but to provide a much needed helping hand to our vulnerable communities in the San Joaquin Valley whose drinking water is being severely impacted by overdraft and the state's prolonged drought," said DWR partner Eddie Ocampo with Self-Help Enterprises.

Although a series of storms in January helped recover some reservoir levels, groundwater supplies are slower to

recover and drinking water wells throughout California are still at risk of going dry because groundwater is being pumped faster than it can be replenished.

"Many California communities, especially those located in the Central Valley, rely on groundwater and drinking water wells for their water supply needs, particularly during extreme drought. LandFlex is an example of the State taking proactive steps to protect drinking water supplies for California's most vulnerable communities," said DWR Director Karla Nemeth. "We are proud of the partnerships we've formed to make this program a reality."

In order to reach vulnerable communities in need and provide small or disadvantaged farmers access to the program, DWR is partnering with Community Alliance with Family Farmers, Self-Help Enterprises, Western United Dairies Foundation, and the Almond Alliance to assist GSAs with providing outreach and engagement to growers.

"This program demonstrates how collaboration and leadership are essential to meeting the challenges of climate change and bringing our aquifers into balance," said Karen Ross, Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture. "I am encouraged by the initial interest of farmers in this approach and appreciate the innovation and commitment they bring to healthy food production and the wellbeing of their communities every day."

More information about the LandFlex program (<https://water.ca.gov/landflex>). Learn more about SGMA (<https://water.ca.gov/sgma>), which addresses issues of over-pumping and provides a framework for local agencies to better manage and protect groundwater supplies for long-term sustainability.

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California Primed to Lose 30% of Its Food Safety Net

Food Banks Gear Up for Uptick in Demand

Press Release provided by California Association of Food Banks

Oakland, Calif., March 01, 2023 – Today, the California Association of Food Banks released data showing the impending 30% reduction in the meals provided by California’s food safety net, with the termination of two public programs that had started in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: CalFresh Emergency Allotments and Pandemic-EBT.

CalFresh, known as SNAP nationally, is the nation’s largest and most effective hunger relief program. Since March of 2020, CalFresh recipients have been receiving an extra benefit every month, called Emergency Allotments and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 ended these. CalFresh recipients will receive their last Emergency Allotment on March 26, 2023.

“The end of emergency allotments is going to be catastrophic for California’s food insecure community members. There’s no way that food banks alone can fill the gap that the end of Emergency Allotments is going to create. That, coupled with the end of Pandemic EBT, means that California is about to lose more than 30% of its food safety net,” said Stacia Hill Levenfeld, CEO of the California Association of Food Banks. “CalFresh and Pandemic-EBT dollars are spent at local markets helping to stimulate local economies. The ripple effect of this economic loss is going to be felt throughout our communities.”

The ending of Emergency Allotments will

Farm Team Listens

Continued from PAGE 1

land improvements, crop insurance programs, and the nutrition programs that sustained many families through the 2020 Covid-19 crisis. In addition, they commended the congress members for taking the time to listen to constituents, stakeholders, and industry innovators, as the feedback will be vital for improvement and progression.

Several of those who gave comments suggested expansions for the 2023 Bill, looking for farmers to be successful, protected, and to receive proper provisions for being providers to the nation. These expansions included increased research and mechanization, more robust nutrition programs, and protections for specialty crops such as grapes, pistachios, and almonds. Aubrey Bettencourt, President and CEO of the Almond Alliance of CA, said of adapting and developing with growing climate and conservation requirements, “the goal is to keep our farmers farming” with tools to be part of the solution to problems they are facing. Cassidie Bates, a representative from the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, mentioned strengthening nutrition programs as “food insecurity is again on the rise” on the sunset of Covid mitigation efforts. Other suggestions include promoting US

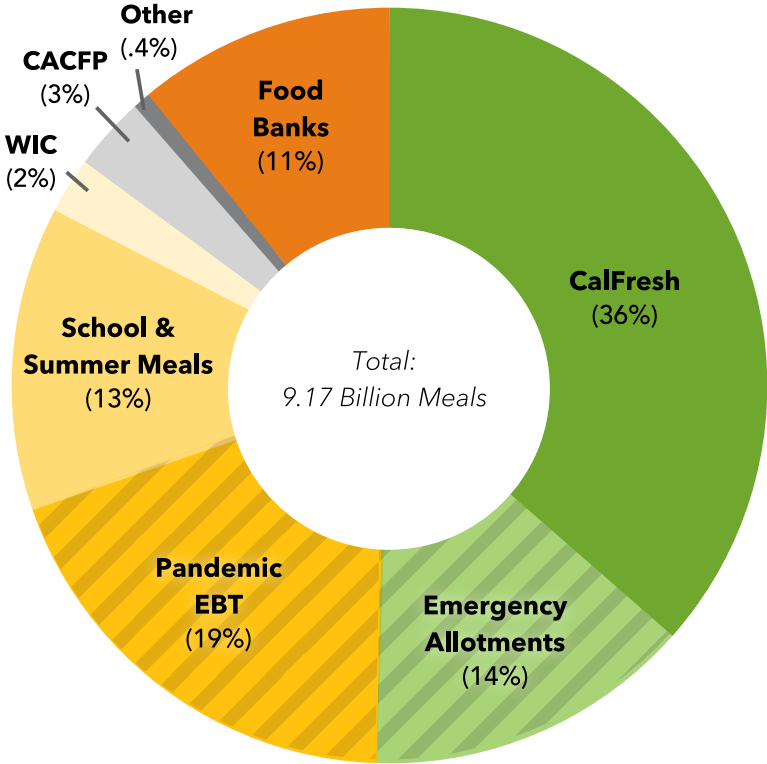
products and considering domestic producers when importing goods. Ian LeMay, president of the California Fresh Fruit Association, proposed that the USDA be given authority to promote US goods domestically. Each of the speakers represented the ag community well, seeking to bring success not only to California but to the whole country.

The Farm Bill will end in September, so the “Farm Team,” as Chairman Thompson calls the bipartisan committee, is motivated to present their new Farm Bill in the fall. Rep. Jim Costa stated, “The reauthorization of the Farm Bill is one of the most critical bipartisan pieces of legislation we will work on this year. It is imperative that the San Joaquin Valley and California farmers’ needs are heard and reflected in the final bill [. . .]. The information gathered will help us implement policies that address some of the Valley’s most pressing needs.”

Listening sessions will continue to occur across the country as the House prepares for the proposed fall presentation of the new Farm Bill. The second session was on March 15th in Waco, Texas. At this time, a third session has not been announced. Review the committee’s website, agriculture.house.gov, to follow this topic for updates and additional information.

impact all 5 million Californians currently on CalFresh – or about 3 million households. The average person is expected to lose about \$82 per month, the average household will

Food Assistance Sources for Californians¹



CalFresh

- CalFresh (3.33 Billion Meals)
- Emergency Allotments (1.32 Billion Meals)

Child Nutrition Programs

- Pandemic EBT (1.77 Billion Meals)
- School & Summer Meals (1.22 Billion Meals)
- WIC² (212 Million Meals)

Food Banks & Other Programs

- Food Banks³ (1.01 Billion Meals)
- CACFP⁴ (274 Million Meals)
- Other (33 Million Meals)

1. Data is from 2021, the most recent available data
2. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
3. Food banks, pantries, and other charitable food assistance programs
4. The Child and Adult Care Food Program

lose about \$200 per month. All tallied, this represents a loss of \$500 million in food benefits per month.

Soon after, at the close of the 2022-23 school year, Pandemic-EBT benefits will cease. Pandemic-EBT provides food benefits to school-age and young children who would have received free or reduced-price meals at school or daycare, but who lost access because of COVID-related school closures. This program was tethered to the federal Public Health Emergency status which is slated to end May 11, 2023. In the 2020-21 school year alone, Pandemic-EBT reached nearly 4.2 million children in California, providing more than \$6.1 billion in benefits.

While the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 authorized a national Summer-EBT program, it will only provide a small fraction of the benefits that Pandemic-EBT has offered.

Key Takeaways:

- Emergency Allotments which will disappear after March 26, 2023, have provided about 14% of the meals in California’s food safety net
- Pandemic EBT which will disappear after the 2022-23 school year, provided about 19% of the meals in California’s food safety net
- Food banks and other charitable food programs provide about 11% of the meals in California’s food safety net

In states that have already ended Emergency Allotments, data shows that 51% of CalFresh

/ SNAP recipients reported running low or being out of most things they needed, and either turned to friends, food banks, ate less or skipped meals altogether to fill the food gap.

At the same time California’s food banks are gearing up to support the millions impacted by this loss in benefits, they are suffering from a reduction in funding from both public and private sources.

“Food banks have been stretched thin since the onset of the pandemic distributing a billion pounds of food each year. And with this new crisis afoot we’re calling on the Governor to keep his commitment to fund the CalFood program, and to raise the ongoing funding for this program to \$60 million annually – providing critical funds for food banks to buy California produced food as California’s hunger crisis not just persists but worsens,” said Becky Silva, director of government relations.

We’re also asking the Legislature and Governor to pass legislation to strengthen the food safety net. SB 600 by Senator Menjivar will raise the minimum CalFresh benefit in California from \$23 to \$50 – you can barely buy a carton of milk, loaf of bread, and a dozen eggs with \$23 these days. And SB 348 by Senator Skinner would build on California’s groundbreaking School Meals for All by ensuring every student fully benefits from healthy school meals and by maximizing the newly authorized Summer-EBT program. Hunger is a policy choice and California needs to bring all available resources to bear.”

Pistachio Growers Hopeful About Potential Record Crop

By Ching Lee, Assistant Editor Ag Alert

Reprinted with permission from the California Farm Bureau Federation

Considering the waning profitability of almonds and walnuts, pistachio growers are upbeat about prospects for the state's current "it" crop.

More rainfall this season has eased the multi-year drought, with improved water allocations for farms. The colder winter has also provided adequate chilling hours for pistachio trees to produce flowers and fruit. With more pistachio trees coming online this year, growers appear on pace to produce a record crop that could top 1.2 billion pounds, according to Richard Matoian, president of the American Pistachio Growers.

"On the surface, the outlook appears to be positive," he said, though he warned "a lot can happen and has happened in the past between what we believe and where we end up."

At the association's annual conference in Carlsbad last week, Matoian shared his thoughts on the state of the industry, highlighting what helps growers sleep at night and what keeps them up.

On the rosy side, there's less inventory this year due to the lighter crop in 2022, when production hit more than 878,000 pounds. 2022 was considered an "off" year in the trees' alternate-bearing cycle and was preceded by two previous bountiful crops, yields of which reached more than 1 billion pounds. The record 2021 crop produced more than 1.15 billion pounds.

After two years of port congestion that led to delayed and stranded shipments of agricultural exports, Matoian noted those problems have largely been resolved. The quality of U.S. pistachios remains a "major selling point worldwide," he said, as are the nut's health benefits. Pistachio marketers continue to make inroads with consumers, who have become more familiar with the nut, he added.

But challenges remain on the trade front. Retaliatory tariffs in China from the Trump-era trade war remain, elevating the price of U.S. pistachios. The strong dollar has added to the pain, making the product even more expensive. The potential for a worldwide recession could further wreck sales, Matoian said.

Even though port traffic has improved, not all shipping issues have gone away, Matoian said. Any number of supply chain problems could strain the availability of pesticides, fertilizers and other materials, hurting pistachio production and sales.

The U.S. remains the world's top pistachio producer, a title it has held for more than a



decade. About 99% of the crop is grown in California, with 2023 bearing acres at just fewer than 454,000. Total state acreage stands at about 590,000, including 135,000 nonbearing acres.

Even with the potential for a record crop this year, Bikram Hundal, a pistachio grower and handler with orchards in Tulare, Kings and Madera counties, said he is not worried about finding markets for the nut—provided shipping problems don't return.

"That was the one factor that really jeopardized the overall sales for all the tree nuts," said Hundal, who also grows and processes almonds.

Should growers produce more than 1 billion pounds this year, he said, the pistachio crop still would not rival state almond production, which has reached more than 3 billion pounds. The price of almonds has plummeted in recent years, making the nut unprofitable to grow for many farmers. Pistachio prices have held, Hundal pointed out.

From September 2022 to January 2023, overall pistachio shipments jumped 1.9% year over year, Matoian said. Though domestic shipments dropped by 2.4%, exports rose 3.9%. These numbers are positive, he said, "especially when you think about other commodities and difficulties and troubles they've had."

It helps that current worldwide pistachio production is off by about 10%. Production in Iran—the world's No. 2 producer and the U.S.'s main competitor—has become "more erratic" in recent years, Matoian noted. Like California, the Middle Eastern nation has been plagued by drought, causing it to lose 20,000 to 40,000 acres a year, he said.

With Chinese tariffs on U.S. pistachios, Iran—

ment that there's going to be too much on the marketplace."

Calling the growth numbers "scary," Madera County grower Chris Wylie said the race to add new acreage does concern him. He also grows almonds and has seen how prices have responded to the increasing acreage. He said he wonders at what point pistachio prices will take the same dive. But he noted pistachio brokers and nut processors tell him the market can take a 2-billion-pound crop "and still be OK."

"I hope they're right," said Wylie, who added that overplanting "does worry me though."

Pistachios prices have already fallen, said Thom Dille, CEO of Little Creek Inc., which grows pistachios in Kern County. He noted that in 2020, the base price before bonuses was \$1.85 a pound, and this year it's a \$1.38.

Meanwhile, his production costs have more than doubled in 10 years. In 2010, it cost him \$1.2 million to produce the crop. In 2020, his costs rose to \$2.5 million, with much of the increase related to water. With the drought and the lack of water deliveries to farms, he's had to buy water on the open market at about \$1,000 an acre-foot; that's compared to the normal rate of \$220 an acre-foot in Kern County.

In planning for restrictions on groundwater pumping, Dille said the company bought an old almond orchard that it has fallowed, so that it can use the water allocations from that property for its pistachios. All this adds to the expense of producing the nut. With the rising cost of labor, chemicals and other inputs, he said it begins to make pistachios unprofitable.

"We seem to be better off than almonds, but it used to be much more profitable," Dille said.

Even so, Dille said he remains optimistic about producing a larger-size quality crop this year with the assumption that he will receive perhaps not a full allocation of water "but certainly the best one in probably 10 years."

which does not have tariffs on pistachios going to China—has taken that market, becoming its top supplier, Matoian said. Meanwhile, U.S. pistachio exports to China have plunged 21.5%. Some of the lost sales have been offset by growth in the European Union, the top destination for U.S. pistachios. Exports to the EU have increased 9.2%, Matoian noted.

The potential danger for California pistachio growers is the "tremendous amount of new acres coming into production," Matoian said. State acreage increased 20% between 2020 and 2022, from 371,386 to 446,000 acres. While it took 40 years for production to reach 1 billion pounds, he said he expects it will balloon to 2 billion pounds in the next 10 years.

"What effect all this additional acreage and growth has on the industry remains to be seen," he said. "There's an argument to say consumers want our product, and we're going to be just fine. But there's also another argu-

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Farm Credit Contributed Nearly \$1 Million to State's Ag Organizations in 2022

Largest Provider of Credit Also Committed to Long-Term Viability of California's Farms and Ranches

Press Release provided by Farm Credit

Farm Credit is the largest provider of credit to U.S. agriculture, but its support goes much deeper than that. Farm Credit is also committed to the sustainability and long-term viability of agriculture and rural communities and strongly supports non-profits working to preserve and protect California agriculture.

In 2022, the Farm Credit Alliance – AgWest Farm Credit, American Ag Credit, CoBank, Colusa-Glenn Farm Credit, Fresno Madera Farm Credit, Golden State Farm Credit and Yosemite Farm Credit – contributed nearly \$1 million to nearly 100 agricultural organizations around the state.

The funding supports farming and ranching in four main areas – raising awareness of agriculture, preservation of agriculture, education and research, and support for young, beginning and small farmers.

“By providing funding to a wide range of non-profits working to promote farming and ranching in California, Farm Credit is making an investment in helping the industry thrive today and to ensure it can continue providing food for the nation and the world in the years to come,” said Mark Littlefield, President and CEO of AgWest Farm Credit.

The lion's share – more than \$480,000 – was directed to organizations that raise awareness through a variety of methods.

One beneficiary is Western United Dairies' educational and advocacy program. The organization's Dairy Leaders program educates up-and-coming dairy industry leaders about the state and federal legislative and regulatory process, how milk products are marketed and ways they can communicate effective messages about the dairy industry.

Another is the Family Winemakers of California. The group is a strong advocate for small family-owned wineries at the state Capitol, where it focuses on reforming post-Prohibition restrictions on selling directly to consumers. Farm Credit support also helps the group hold two large wine tastings a year to promote small family-owned wineries that can't afford large advertising budgets.

Farm Credit is also a strong supporter of groups seeking to preserve agriculture in the Golden State, donating over \$150,000 to organizations involved in that cause. One recipient was Cultivate California, which educates policymakers and residents about

the crucial link between water and their food supply and counters misinformation about farming's use of water. The Cultivate California program helps bolster the natural support people have for agriculture and farms and provides them with facts and information about the connection between their food and the water supply.

Education and research is another Farm Credit priority, receiving over \$150,000 as well in 2022. The Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom has been educating students around the state for 36 years that the food they eat doesn't just come from the supermarket. Its most recent program was highlighting the “99% club” – 16 commodities grown almost exclusively in California. A total of 16,000 students participated in the interactive program during the previous school year.

In addition, for more than a decade Farm Credit has supported the California Cattlemen's Association Livestock Memorial Research Fund, which played a major role in funding the development of a vaccine against a tick-borne disease – epizootic bovine abortion – that had wreaked havoc on the state's cattle industry for decades. The Research Fund is now helping fund research against another tick-borne disease – bovine anaplasmosis – that causes billions of dollars in losses worldwide.

Finally, Farm Credit continues to strongly support programs to nurture the next generation of farmers and ranchers to ensure the future of agriculture in California, donating over \$125,000 to organizations such as FFA. By supporting FFA for more than 20 years,



Photo credit: Ieva Zigg/Adobe Stock

Farm Credit helped make numerous programs possible, including the new Change Makers Summit, which provides college-bound high school seniors with information about the many careers they can pursue in agriculture.

Farm Credit also supports aspiring farmers, such as by providing the Center for Land-Based Learning with funding to create a new six-week Explorer Course for people interested in farming but who don't have the time to participate in its seven-month Beginning Farmer Training program. A large percentage of participants aren't ready for a lengthy program but do want to know

what steps they would need to take to become successful farmers. This is especially important because the average farmer is nearly 60 years old, so encouraging people with an interest in farming is vital.

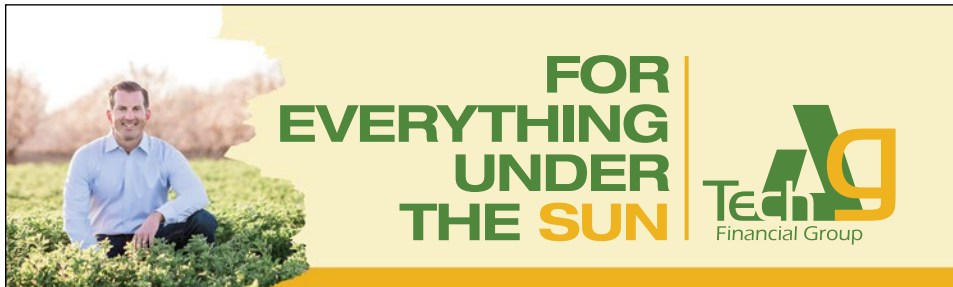
“We know the importance of continuing to support, young, beginning, and small producers as they take the step to learn the complex and dynamic business of agriculture,” said Jeana Hultquist, who runs the local community impact program for American AgCredit. “Farm Credit is committed to the prosperity of not only today's rural families, farms, and businesses, but also the next generation of agriculture.”

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Ranch Group Praises Bipartisan, Bicameral Reintroduction of Checkoff Reform Legislation



Photo credit: Adobe Stock

Press Release provided by R-Calf USA

On February 28th, Sens. Mike Lee (R-Utah), Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Rand Paul (R-Ky.), Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.); and Reps. Dina Titus (D-Nev.) and Nancy Mace (R-S.C.) reintroduced the Opportunities for Fairness in Farming Act (OFF Act). The OFF Act will reform all commodity checkoff programs, including the beef checkoff program.

The bill finds that “although the laws establishing checkoff programs broadly prohibit the use of funds in any manner for the purpose of influencing legislation or government action, check-off programs have repeatedly been shown to use funds to influence policy directly or by partnering with organizations that lobby; the unlawful use of checkoff programs funds benefits some agricultural producers while harming many others.”

If passed the OFF Act would:

- Prohibit checkoff programs from contracting with any organization that lobbies on agricultural policy.
- Prohibit employees and agents of the checkoff boards from engaging in activities that may involve a conflict of interest.
- Establish uniform standards for checkoff programs that prohibit anticompetitive activity, unfair or deceptive acts, or any act or practice that may be disparaging to another agricultural commodity or product.
- Require transparency through publication of checkoff program budgets and expenditures.
- Require periodic audits of compliance with the act by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Inspector General.
- Require a Government Accountability Office (GAO) audit of checkoff board compliance and a report with further recommendations related to checkoff programs.

R-CALF USA CEO Bill Bullard issued the following statement in support of the bipartisan and bicameral legislation.

“The decades old beef checkoff program is ill-suited to meet the needs of today’s cattle farmers and ranchers, in fact, the program promotes corporate control and globalization over the interests of America’s cattle producers. We applaud these Senators and Representatives for introducing this legislation to meaningfully reform the beef checkoff program so it can begin working for, rather than against, American cattle producers.

“The OFF Act will provide the necessary accountability and transparency to prevent the misuse of producers’ checkoff dollars.”

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CDFA Announces Vacancies on Certified Farmers' Market Advisory Committee

Press Release provided by the California Department of Food and Agriculture

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is announcing vacancies on the Certified Farmers Market Advisory Committee (CFMAC).

The CFMAC advises the CDFA Secretary on all matters pertaining to the Direct Marketing Program, including legislation, regulations, enforcement, and administrative policies and procedures pertaining to the direct marketing of California-grown agricultural products at Certified Farmers' Markets (CFMs). California currently has more than 2,700 certified agricultural producers participating in approximately 650 CFMs within the state.

Current CFMAC vacancies include producer or representative of agricultural organization that represents producers; alternate producer or organization that represents producers; alternate CFM operator or representative of operator; and county agricultural commissioner alternate.

The term of office for committee members is two years. While members do not receive compensation, they are entitled to payment of necessary traveling expenses in accordance with the rules of the California Department of Human Resources.

Individuals interested in being considered for an appointment should complete the Prospective Member Appointment Questionnaire (PMAQ) available at https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/i_&_c/pdfs/CFM-PMAQ.pdf and obtain a letter of recommendation from an industry member. Applications will be accepted until the positions are filled.

Applications should be sent to Sarah Cardoni, CDFA Inspection and Compliance Branch, 1220 'N' Street, Sacramento, CA 95814, or via email to Sarah.Cardoni@cdfa.ca.gov.

For further information regarding the Direct Marketing Program and CFMAC vacancies, please contact Jennifer Leidolf at Jennifer.Leidolf@cdfa.ca.gov.

Delano Growers Grape Products Hails Agreement between the U.S. and Argentina on White Grape Juice Concentrate

Press Release provided by Delano Growers Grape Products

Delano, California - Delano Growers Grape Products cooperative announced that the U.S. Department of Commerce has signed an agreement with the Government of Argentina suspending the Department's antidumping investigation, and an agreement with Argentine exporters suspending the countervailing duty investigation on white grape juice concentrate from Argentina. In lieu of potential antidumping and countervailing duties, the agreements would apply an annual export limit and minimum selling prices for imports from Argentina.

Commerce initiated these investigations after a petition was filed by Delano Growers on March 21, 2022. Rick Lord, General Manager, said, "We are very pleased with this outcome, and believe that the suspension agreements achieve several important objectives for the good of the industry, our co-op members, other grape growers and, importantly, our customers and all users of white grape juice concentrate."

White grape juice concentrate is a valuable natural sweetener used by beverage and food manufacturers and made from the crushing and processing of grapes into a high brix (sugar) content concentrate. In 1993, two researchers from U.C. Davis published an article in the California Agriculture Journal which stated, "Grape concentrate is a growing market, thanks to an innovative industry and consumer preference for fruit sweeteners over table sugar," further noting that "The International Trade Centre (ITC) has concluded that the fruit juice business will remain a growth industry for a long time." In the late 1990s, U.S. production was approximately 30 million gallons, however, in the years preceding the Delano Grower's petition, production had dropped to less than 8 million gallons. Delano Growers is the largest remaining commercial producer in the U.S.

Kent Stenderup, a grape grower in Arvin, California,

Chairman of Delano Growers' Board of Directors said, "White grape juice concentrate is a vitally important product for grape growers. Processing grapes into juice concentrate provides an important economic stabilizer for the California grape industry. In addition to providing a market for dedicated juice grapes, it also absorbs a supply of other grapes which provides a positive return to growers. We are delighted with these suspension agreements."

By setting reasonable and market driven volume and selling prices for imports from Argentina in lieu of potential duties, these agreements also allow any preliminary cash deposits collected as a result of the preliminary findings of the investigation to be refunded to current U.S. importers.

According to Lord, "These agreements ensure that the U.S. market for white grape juice concentrate will remain adequately supplied since they reflect recent historical levels and are also structured to be flexible for unforeseen adverse market conditions. It is a win-win situation."

Lord continued, "This is a big milestone for a small co-op. The U.S. Department of Commerce has a total of only eight suspension agreements in place, with two of them now being for white grape juice concentrate."

The petition was filed on behalf of Delano Growers by JPH Law, LLC, of Washington, D.C., a firm specializing in the representation of cooperatives, growers and agricultural associations in policy, regulatory, labor and international trade matters. "We are indebted to our counsel," said Stenderup. He continued, "We greatly appreciate the efforts of the Department of Commerce's Compliance and Enforcement division for facilitating these agreements and their dedication to enforcing U.S. trade law. "Finally, we'd like to acknowledge the good faith negotiations during the agreement process by the Argentine industry and the Government of Argentina."

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(Illustration: rudall30 / Adobe Stock)

By Joshua Stevens
Faith Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

For many reasons, placing a person on a pedestal only leads to disappointment. A good example of this is even found in Moses. He was chosen by God to lead, he experienced the presence of God, and despite such qualifications, he still fell short of God's glory. His congregation still made a golden calf to worship instead of the YHWH who brought them out of Egypt.

Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people." And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." And he said to him, "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?" And the LORD said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." Moses said, "Please show me your glory." Exodus 33:8-13

For reference, this interaction between Moses and God takes place just after the people of Israel create a golden calf to worship while Moses is on Mt Sinai. Fearing that Moses had lost his way or been killed in the fire (Exodus 32:1), they made a god of their own from the gold that they owned. The Israelites were punished then God met Moses in Moses' tent to speak to him (Exodus 33:10-11). It is during this interaction in the tent we get verses 33:8-13; from this, we can pull 3 key points.

First, note how Moses was being honest and open with the Lord several times Moses asked for help. Specifically, he asked the Lord first to, "Show me your ways..." Then, ending this section by asking "Please show me your glory."

How in our own lives do we invite the Lord to show us His ways? What may it look like in your own life?

Second, be mindful of the golden calves that may arise in life and in your congregation. When Moses' congregation was afraid, they turned to idols made from the

gold they owned. While God's mighty hand worked within eyesight upon a mountain, the Israelites turned to a constructed god they were comforted by. In times of stress or fear, where do our eyes turn to first? In our congregation are there times when we place the gospel on the back burner for an election or festival?

Third, be bold in your requests. Moses is just a man tasked with leading his people. His congregation had committed a great sin (Exodus 32:30), and after repentance, he returned, and asked to see God's glory. From the failure of his people, Moses landed a response of humble adoration toward YHWH who gave them freedom and guided them. How precious a response, when we sin and repent could we too ask to see God's glory. In our congregations when we err do we repent and ask to seek the ways of the Lord?

This lesson from Moses teaches that when we fail, we should repent from our sin, renew our commitment to living in the ways of the Lord, and request that the Lord be with us.

Dear Lord,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to learn from those who have come before us. That you did not hide the stories from the foundation of our faith but instead allowed for each word to be used as a guide toward You and Your glory. Thank you that we have such a vast array of knowledge from which we can learn anything we need or want. I ask that as we continue throughout this month that we will remember to repent, renew, and request. We will wake up and be able to ask you to show us your glory and that you will meet us in that place and every place with opportunities not only to experience your goodness but to be able to proclaim the saving gospel we have with all who are around us.

In Jesus' name I pray,

Amen.

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



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