ACWA Spring Conference Takeaways

By Scott Hamilton
President, Hamilton Resource Economics

The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) held its spring conference in Monterey, May 9-11. The conference brings water managers, water district directors, and water professionals from around the state. Unsurprisingly, there was keen interest in groundwater issues and recharge this year. The use of groundwater recharge as a management tool to aid in groundwater sustainability is familiar to Kern County, a long-time leader in groundwater recharge. Aaron Fukuda from Tulare Irrigation District provided an overview of how groundwater recharge was being implemented in his district utilizing three elements: recharge in unlined canals (150 cfs), on-farm (380 cfs), and dedicated recharge basin (370 cfs) for a total of 900 cfs. The incentive to take water for on-farm recharge, even when water costs are non-trivial, increased due to SGMA and his ability to get credit to the farm water account under his district’s program. The status of surface and groundwater accounts and water use are available to farmers through an impressive computer dashboard.

On-farm recharge is occurring but with caution throughout the state. While on-farm recharge has the potential to increase significantly the capacity to recharge groundwater, where the geology is suitable, and to reduce downstream flooding, there are concerns that farm chemicals and fertilizer could be transferred to the groundwater, impacting drinking water quality for domestic wells. From the farmer’s perspective, it can interfere with farm operations. Additionally, in orchards and vineyards, there are concerns about impacts on tree and vine health and yield. Anecdotally, some farmers have pushed the limits of recharge in orchards and vineyards accidentally or deliberately. Following a levee break, one pistachio farmer had his trees flooded up to the trunk fork for several weeks when the orchard was dormant and then experienced his best bud break. Don Cameron farms in western Fresno County, where there are no surface water rights.

See ACWA SPRING CONFERENCE on PAGE 3

Seminars on Soil Health, AgTech, International Trade and More Published by World Ag Expo

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

World Ag Expo is still eight months away, but attendees looking to learn more about soil health and other agriculture topics now have access to dozens of educational seminars on demand.

Holloway’s Soil Health Seminar on “Bringing Our Soils Back to Life” is one of more than 70 ag seminars now published on WorldAgExpo.com.

Other sessions include presentations on dairy and livestock, international trade, agtech, and are being made available for free at Re hy/ W A E / Vo ide o On D em and.

Holloway’s soil health seminar was hosted by Holloway CEO Brian Maxted and Director of Agronomy Steve Lenander, who discussed the importance of leveraging soil, plant and water samples from independent, third-party labs for input recommendations.

“It all starts with what the soils are telling us,” Maxted said. “When someone comes to us and asks, ‘How much compost, or gy ps, or should I put this NPK on?’ We say, ‘Well, what are your soils saying?’ Science should dictate what your farm needs.”

Along with discussing the importance of soil, tissue and water sampling, the soil experts fielded questions from local growers and discussed the many soil challenges they face.

See WORLD AG EXPO SEMINARS on PAGE 3

Garces Memorial High School FFA Chapter’s First Showcase

By Audrey Hill,
Feature Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

Some exciting things are happening at the Garces Memorial High School FFA chapter! Ashleigh Rossi, the chapter’s new leader, is helping guide her student’s success as they work diligently to be our future farmers of America.

“Our FFA program is unbelievable because of [Ms. Rossi] and all her hard work,” says Lou Ann Durrett, GMHS Director of Communications. Not only would [Ms. Rossi] and all her hard work,” says Lou Ann Durrett, GMHS Director of Communications. Not only would

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“Our FFA program is unbelievable because of [Ms. Rossi] and all her hard work,” says Lou Ann Durrett, GMHS Director of Communications. Not only would the chapter have missed out on the Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) Showcase if not for her, but also the tremendous amount of growth that resulted. The Garces FFA chapter’s first Supervised Agricultural Experience Showcase occurred on May 2, where every student from the classroom presented their project. SAE projects are a new facet of the FFA learning experience and encapsulate work-based, hands-on learning. They can come in the form of professional internships, small businesses, and almost every other form of animal and plant husbandry learning environment. These projects can last many months and allow students to deepen their education and generate some income! The students’ grades depended on their detailed records for their project and the extent to which they took the project.

Of the roughly 70 students presenting at the showcase, nine finalists were chosen, and the overall winner was freshman Joseph Deniz with his project “Joe’s Chickens.”

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The definition of fragment is a part broken off or detached, about how DWR describes the GSP is "fragmented." The Kern basin was deemed by DWR to be "Inadequate" in the submittal of the Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP). As I mentioned in April’s article, the cost to landowners/extractors is $300 to register your well and then an extraction fee of $40 per acre-foot. These fees can be increased at any time by the State Board, and most landowners/extractors have already paid for their water right, but that SGMA is about living within your water budget. The Kern basin is approximately 326,000-acre feet of overdraft and must be addressed by 2040. There are reasons why this overdraft has occurred. Since 2000 the SWP has not been a reliable source of water, where the reliability is currently at 52% as compared to prior to 2000, where the reliability was 88%. The state’s decision not to deliver SWP water has made the Kern basin critically overdrafted. If the reliability had stayed at the 88%, the Kern basin would not be in its current situation. But that should have been handled years ago with the state on reliability. Please don’t get me wrong, I am not a fan of SGMA and worked on the bill when it was going through the legislative process and was able to get some changes, like the 20-year timeline instead of the original 5-year. However, now is not the time to put landowners/extractors under the control of the state. SGMA does not impede or impact a landowner’s ability to move the needle. SGMA does not have any enforcement powers, as I mentioned in April, it is an "听取（听证会）" (public hearing) to discuss next steps on oversight of the water extractions in the Kern subbasin.

As we enter the middle of 2023, what a weather year it has been, and it is only halfway. First, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced that the State Water Project (SWP) increased water supply allocations on April 20 to 100%. The last time that occurred was in 2006. The same day, the Bureau of Reclamation (Federal) announced that the Central Valley Project (CVP) water supply allocations went to 100%. Today, anyone who drives around the Kern County area can’t miss the flow of the Kern River and the filled recharge projects. The last classified wet year was in 2017, and this year is going to surpass that. New comes the fun of ensuring that every drop stays within the Kern basin and is managed so that flooding is minimal. Let us hope Mother Nature keeps the weather gradually warming instead of an overnight heat spike. The Kern basin should be grateful that the agricultural water districts have continued to prepare for years like this and have spent millions on canals and recharge projects. This type of foresight should prevent what is currently happening in Tulare County, where flooding continues to occur; not to say that those agricultural water districts didn’t prepare, but not to the extent that has happened here in Kern. For example, in 2017, there were over three million-acre feet of water received/banked that helped weather the drought. This ability to manage the water will provide the Kern Basin with a little buffer if water will provide the Kern Basin with a little buffer if water flowing, unfortu

### President’s Message

**By Patty Paire**

President, Kern County Farm Bureau

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### Young Farmers & Ranchers

**By Timothy Collins**

Chair, Kern County Young Farmers & Ranchers

I recently purchased a 1946 Farmall H tractor that had been sitting for years, perhaps a decade or more. While working on it as a class project we were able to get it fired up again and brought back to life. In researching the old tractor, I read a statistic that in 1945, 30 percent of the United States, about 1.6 million farms, still used only draft animals. The Farmall is a relic compared to the technology on modern tractors, and it is certainly small, although considered mid-sized in its day. However, tractors such as these were revolutionary in their time when replacing literal horsepower.

Tractors have become so incorporated into our picture of agriculture. They have become a symbol of Americana often represented in art, decorations, and county music songs. When I think of farming, a tractor quickly comes to mind. While my memories of visiting my relatives’ dairy farm as a child bring back pictures of International Harvester tractors, my grandpa’s childhood memories would have included plowing with draft horses or mules.

From the dawn of civilization until only a little over 100 years ago there was no way to work the land and grow food other than to use animals and manual labor. The tractor has brought down food costs considerably. In America, in 1900 food was about 40% of a family’s income. Today that number is closer to 10%. We can produce ample food to feed a world of 8 billion people with only a small percentage of people even involved in the agriculture industry.

Perhaps a new challenge we face because of the strides in mechanization is getting people—whether it’s our elected leaders or the public—to understand and support agriculture. Indeed, each person is as reliant on the industry as anyone else, we all must eat. Never has the disconnect between what people eat and where and how it is grown been wider. I hope the Young Farmers and Ranchers can help in fighting this new problem because I know farmers as a group; they work well with each other for the greater good. And the greater good will benefit all by keeping the State in Sacramento, not in the Kern basin. I recommend that you engage and be at the table.
ACWA Spring Conference

Continued from PAGE 1  Don aggressively floods his permanent crops when flood water is available. And the Almond Board is actively studying the impacts of on-farm recharge on almonds.

Paul Gosling, DWR’s Deputy Director of Sustainable Groundwater Management, reported that groundwater plans for thirty subbasins had been approved, but six have not: Kern, Tulare Lake, Chowchilla, Kaweah, Tule, and Delta-Mendota, with Madera still under review. DWR has referred these subbasins to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) for consideration. The board can place these subbasins on probation and oversee their management. DWR took that action for several reasons, including insufficient attention to resolving groundwater subsidence, inadequate protection of domestic wells in disadvantaged communities, and insufficient coordination between groundwater plans within a subbasin. The prospects of probation throughout most of the southern San Joaquin Valley have many water district managers justly concerned.

The unsettling increase in power and authority of the SWRCB was raised in several forums but is receiving attention to the proposed solutions, and work together to improve the water situation in California. They need all the help they can get.

World Ag Expo Seminars

Continued from PAGE 1  brought about by excessive rainfall this past winter, including:

- Ponding
- Water penetration problems
- Disease
- Other excess water issues

Viewers can watch the full Soils Health Seminar directly as HollowayAg.com/WorldAgSeminar.

To access the full library of World Ag seminar videos, viewers will need to sign up for or log in to their “My Show Account” at Bit.ly/WAE23Planner.

Along with the seminars, two World Ag-hosted events are also available online: the Prayer Breakfast and the AGWATER Communications, Inc.) and a coalition of organizations throughout California.

Ernest Conant, Regional Director of the US Bureau of Reclamation and much-loved retired Kern County Water Attorney, reported on numerous efforts by the Bureau to increase storage in the state, including Sites Reservoir, Del Puerto Reservoir, and enlarging San Luis Reservoir. John Lehigh, from DWR, reported on concerns resulting from aging infrastructure on the State Water project—infrastructure that is now more than 60 years and repair bills likely to run into the billions.

California farmers continue to face a tidal wave of government oversight, regulations, and reporting that only seems to worsen with each legislative session. While conferences are sometimes regarded as an excuse to get away from the office for a few days and exercise the company credit card, the ACWA Conference provides opportunities for water leaders to discuss their problems, understand the proposed solutions, and work together to improve the water situation in California. They need all the help they can get.

GMHS FFA Chapter’s First Showcase

Continued from PAGE 1  feed stores.”

Deniz hatched over five different types of chickens and raised 13,000 dollars by selling them to feed stores and hobby chicken farmers up and down the Central Valley. Deniz will invest some of his earnings in his show project and the rest will be saved for college. He hopes to attend either Cal Poly, SLO or Texas A&M.

In the interview with 23ABC, Garces Memorial FFA Leader, Ashleigh Rossi spoke about why she got involved in FFA: “I started out being the cheer coach for a couple years and I knew right off the bat that the school needed an ag program because I also knew a lot of alumni that had graduated and gone into the ag field. I thought how great it would be for them to have sort of a jumping off point from an educational background.” After meeting the educational requirements to teach the class, and now having taught FFA for several years, Rossi states that “[the Garces FFA chapter] is a really well-rounded program. Some of our students aren’t immediately interested in agriculture, but once they start the program or do some of the activities that FFA offers, they see where their interest in agriculture fits.”

Ms. Rossi’s students learn about the different facets of the agriculture industry in class, but their SAE project allows them to dive deeper into specific areas that spark their interest. To Ms. Rossi, the addition of the SAE project that all students must complete is a necessary addition to the course since it lets them find passion in the subject themselves. Rossi states that she “wanted to give our school and community a chance to see what amazing projects our students were doing. I called it a showcase to give our FFA members the stage to showcase their hard work and knowledge of their projects. When students take pride in their work, it becomes more enjoyable and sparks creativity as well as growth.”

With help from educators like Ms. Rossi and programs like FFA, students learn dedication through keeping records, responsibility by managing money, and the reward of a good work ethic. Congratulations to Joseph Deniz as the Garces FFA SAE Showcase Champion and all the students who achieved personal accomplishments through completing their showcase projects.

WANTED:

Growers looking for excellence in almond processing.

JSS Almonds is a growing processing and marketing company in Bakersfield, CA. Our facility specializes in shelled and inshell almonds, as well as organic almonds.

We strive to deliver continuously competitive and profitable returns to our growers through solid performance.
Later Start Foils Holiday Push for Cherries

By Ching Lee, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

Reprinted with permission from California Farm Bureau Federation

As the first one out of the gate, cherries typically kick off the stone-fruit season with peak volumes heading into the Memorial Day holiday. But longer periods of cool weather this spring have slowed development of the fruit, delaying harvest by about two weeks, farmers say.

Growers in the southern San Joaquin Valley—whose fruit accounted for 34% of the state volume last year—have their cherry harvest set for this week, but statewide, harvests throughout the state are delayed because of the cool spring. (Photo: Ching Lee)

James Chinchiolo, who grows cherries in Lodi, said he’s likely won’t begin harvest until next week, noting that most of his fruit will miss the Memorial Day push. Some of his cherries are marketed directly to consumers by mail, and he said the lateness of the harvest has some customers “upset that their cherries haven’t shown up yet.”

“I’m like, guys, they’re still ripening on the tree,” he said. With harvest running behind, Chinchiolo said he may be able to stretch his season into the Fourth of July. This would be “super unusual,” he said, of the typical three- to four-week harvest. But warming temperatures this week could speed ripening.

For earlier varieties such as Coral, yields have been “right on target” because of the cool spring. For later varieties, this would be “super unusual,” he said, of the typical three- to four-week harvest. But warming temperatures this week could speed ripening.

The “unusually late” cherry season is not isolated to California, he said, noting the Pacific Northwest also is running two weeks behind. This makes for more orderly marketing, as the two region’s crops won’t overlap and flood the market.

“I think it’s a very marketable crop,” Gotelli said. “For the grower, the packer and the sales company, I think it’s a win-win year.”

Early-season cherries typically command a higher price, which levels off as harvest ramps up and more supply hits the market, he added.

In the packinghouse, Gotelli said new sorting machines that can detect fruit size, color and defects have allowed him to reduce his labor by 40% to 50%. The Italian-made fully automated equipment uses optical-sorting technology that’s 97% to 98% accurate, he said.

In Fresno County, grower Lance Jackson said he’s on the verge of harvest and may be able to start picking Coral Champagne and Brooks cherries this week.

Cherry Board.

Chinchiolo said there is concern that some of his later varieties may not size properly. The fruit is also maturing at different rates on the same tree, meaning he would need to do multiple picks, increasing costs significantly, he said.

Statewide cherry acreage stood at 34,000 in 2022, and 31,000 acres is the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s forecast for 2023. Though early-season prices have been “crazy” high, Jackson said they’re “never sustainable.”

“It’s always the guys down south that benefit from those big numbers,” he said.

With his season wrapping up this week, Kern County grower Greg Tesch said his focus has been on picking fruit that’s ripe and ready rather than chasing higher prices on early fruit.

The winter and spring deluge has affected the entire produce industry, he said, with delayed planting and crops destroyed by flooding. These weather impacts have left gaps in the produce aisle, with retailers scratching their heads about what to promote from week to week.

There’s been a shortage of everything from strawberries to melons, he said, so stores may be looking to cherries to fill more shelves—and paying a hefty price for the supply.

Even though “it’s a natural tendency to try to jump in” when the market is hot, Tesch said delivering unripe fruit to the market “will depress the price through the industry.”

The market will react the fruit if it tastes horrible, he said. “If (growers) don’t jump the gun, then it’ll be a really good experience for everyone,” he said. “They might receive a slightly lower price, but they’ll get slightly more fruit size, and they’ll be appreciated long term.”

“We’re sitting on our hands waiting,” he said. “It’s significantly behind, and we’re seeing that in everything,” from cherries to peaches and nectarines.

After multiple years of drought in which harvest tended to start earlier and earlier, Jackson said he got used to that timing. This year, “we go back to what’s closer to normal,” he said.

He described his production as “maybe 10%, 15% better than last year, but not a record by any means.” Rain early this month did not have “detrimental effects” on his cherries, he said.

San Joaquin County cherry farmer James Chinchiolo checks the status of Coral cherries. With harvest set to begin this week, he says he will likely need to pick twice due to fruit ripening at different rates. Growers throughout the state report a delayed harvest because of the cool spring. (Photo: Ching Lee)

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COMMENTARY: Ag Vision Seeks to Secure State’s Agricultural Future

By Karen Ross Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture

Reprinted with permission from California Farm Bureau Federation

It’s no secret that times are tough for many California farmers and ranchers. I have heard their stories and concerns over their livelihoods and the future of agriculture in the Golden State. I know that, for many, it’s hard to think beyond the immediate challenges at hand. While there is no silver bullet to address all they face, there is a new plan that will grow opportunity for farmers and ranchers, farmworkers, individuals and communities.

It’s called Ag Vision for the Next Decade, and it builds upon the existing good work of many in agriculture who are constantly adapting and serving as good neighbors and stewards of the land and natural resources. It’s a plan with numerous benefits. It connects farmers and farm products to local communities and builds bridges with urban audiences. It encourages innovation and training for the jobs of tomorrow to support farmworkers and others. It takes aim at something we have heard time and again is important to the farming community: fostering smarter regulations.

It’s a plan not only for agriculture to thrive well into the future but for all Californians. It was developed through an inclusive process including input from a diverse set of agricultural stakeholders. Interviews were held with members of an Ag Vision task force and the State Board of Food and Agriculture. Seven virtual roundtable discussions occurred with various segments of California agriculture—from dairy and livestock farmers to berry growers and tree nut producers—along with processors and supply-chain partners and historically underserved farmers.

While the plan is intended to outline areas where the State Board of Food and Agriculture can make the biggest difference, it’s dependent upon collaboration, partnerships and industry involvement. It focuses on five key areas:

- Fostering climate-smart, resilient and regenerative food systems: We will augment the good work that is already occurring in farming operations across the state and encourage others to take part in climate-smart agriculture programs. We will also support the development of ecosystem services markets and help turn waste streams into revenue streams.
- Building healthy, local communities: We will connect school districts, food banks and community members directly with California farmers and ranchers and support agricultural education. We will also support a host of strategies focused on equity, including the establishment of farmworker resource centers. Through these centers, farmworkers will have access to services related to housing, health care, immigration, training and other wrap-around services to improve quality of life.
- Driving next-generation talent and tools: Plans are unfolding to meet current agricultural labor needs, while supporting workforce development programs to ensure workers are equipped with the skills necessary for fast-changing precision and agricultural technology now and in the future. We will also collaborate with University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources, the California State University Agricultural Research Institute and community college representatives to stimulate innovation and develop a master plan for California agriculture science and research.
- Enhancing understanding of agriculture: In partnership with California Grown, CDFA will support engagement with rural and urban audiences on the value of California agriculture. At the same time, we will collaborate with other agencies in the administration, and with farmers and ranchers to highlight the benefits beyond nutrition security that working lands provide.
- Collaborating on smarter regulations: CDFA and the California Environmental Protection Agency are undertaking a pilot project to demonstrate how we can work with other state agencies and stakeholders to explore and support smarter regulations that rethink ways to meet public obligations for health, safety and environmental protection and support small and mid-size farmers with simplified, less expensive regulatory compliance, reporting and implementation.

The end result of advancing all five priorities will be creating opportunity and eliciting trust and support from communities. Today’s issues and opportunities are complex, and no one agency or stakeholder can achieve the vision on its own. CDFA will work with the California State Board of Food and Agriculture, along with other state agencies and traditional and nontraditional partners to bring the vision to life.

Industry also has an important role to play, and Ag Vision outlines numerous ways in which industry can get involved. As you go back to your farm or ranch, we know you have a lot on your mind. Our hope is that you can support and get involved with Ag Vision. At the end of the day, the plan is designed to be a catalyst for collaboration and partnerships, and we ask that you join us.

Visit CDFA.CA.gov/AgVision to learn more about how farmers and ranchers, trade groups, and the food and agricultural sector can help make Ag Vision a reality.
Senate Passes Farm-backed Bill on Fire Insurance

Last week, the California State Senate passed legislation that would build on solutions signed into law in 2021 to improve insurance options for farms exposed to wildfire risk. (Photo: Caleb Hampton)

By Caleb Hampton, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

Reprinted with permission from California Farm Bureau Federation

Wildfires that raged across California over the past several years have devastated farms, spoiling crops and burning farm buildings. After the flames were extinguished, the threat of wildfires has continued to cost farmers in other ways.

Since the Thomas and Tubbs fires in 2017, farmers in parts of the state have seen the premiums on their property insurance policies rise exponentially. Some have had their policies dropped altogether.

“We started being targeted for living in an area that was susceptible to wildfires,” said Peter Nissen, a Napa County wine grape grower and president of the county Farm Bureau. “In certain zip codes, insurance carriers would not renew—or even entertain in the first place—a property’s ability to get insurance.”

Last week, the California State Senate passed legislation that would build on solutions signed into law in 2021 to improve insurance options for farms exposed to wildfire risk.

The California FAIR Plan, the state’s insurer of last resort for those struggling to find coverage options, covers residences. But the FAIR Plan long excluded commercial farm structures. Structures such as tasting rooms, outbuildings, packinghouses and storage facilities, some containing thousands of bottles of wine or other valuable commodities, became impossible for many farmers and vintners to insure.

“Just like any business, you want to be able to have insurance to manage your risk,” said Peter Ansel, policy advocate for the California Farm Bureau, adding that the problem threatened the viability of farm businesses. Without insurance, business owners, like homeowners, are generally ineligible for the loans they need to establish their operations.

“If you are a homeowner, you typically can’t get a mortgage to buy that home without being able to access insurance,” Ansel said. “When we’re talking about farmers, they need to be able to access loans to build those farm operations and facilities.”

In 2021, lawmakers passed Senate Bill 11 to include commercial farm structures in the FAIR Plan. It was an important step, farmers say, but the policies were expensive and did not provide comprehensive coverage for many farms.

“People have had to get creative to meet the insurance threshold their lender requires,” Nissen said. “Before, they might have had one policy that covered five or six properties. Now, they may have several different policies to get the proper coverage because no one will cover everything.”

The FAIR Plan was not meant to be a permanent solution. “The goal is to get back into the competitive market where the rates will hopefully be better and the policies will be comprehensive,” Ansel said. To the extent that they have reassessed the risk profile of certain areas, “that’s also what insurance companies want,” he added. “They want to be able to compete and write more policies for businesses.”

The FAIR Plan has a clearinghouse where insurance companies can browse its policies and make coverage offers. However, the clearinghouse lists only residential policies, not commercial ones, preventing farmers from bringing all their properties back under the same, competitive insurance policy.

“You could find yourself in a scenario where your residential policy would end up on the clearinghouse list, but the policies written for the building across the driveway would still be in the FAIR Plan,” Ansel said.

Senate Bill 505, authored by state Sen. Susan Rubio, D-Baldwin Park, and sponsored by the California Farm Bureau, would add commercial policies to the FAIR Plan clearinghouse so that they can re-enter the competitive market and get better insurance coverage. It passed the Senate last week and now goes to the state Assembly.

“California’s farmers and ranchers need insurance options to safeguard their ability to continue producing the food that America needs,” said California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johanson. “Senate Bill 505 provides agricultural producers who turned to the California FAIR plan the ability to return to the competitive insurance market.”

The legislation is supported not just by farmers but also insurers, brokers and agents, he added.

“California businesses do best when they have more choices for insurance coverage,” said California Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara, who co-sponsored the bill with the Farm Bureau. “Giving them more options must be our top priority.”

California Court of Appeal Sides with Farmers in Precedential Water Quality Cases

Reprinted with permission from California Farm Bureau Federation

In a legal win for California farmers, a state appeals court rejected all arguments brought by environmental groups and sided with the California State Water Resources Control Board, the California Farm Bureau and others related to the Central Valley’s Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program.

In its March 17 decision, the Third District Court of Appeal addressed three cases brought by environmental plaintiffs against the California State Water Resources Control Board in which the groups challenged the adoption of general waste discharge requirements for growers within the Eastern San Joaquin Watershed.

“The Court of Appeal’s landmark decision supports reasonableness and balancing in protecting water quality, while also maintaining our food supply and the economic viability of agriculture,” said California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johanson. “The court’s decision is precedent-setting and applies to irrigated lands regulatory programs throughout the state.”

Johanson added, “The decision upholds farmer anonymity for nitrogen application data, the use of township-level nitrate data and surface water representative monitoring.”

Farm Bureau was represented in the case by Senior Counsel Kari Fisher and joined by fellow agricultural intervenors/respondents represented by Tess Dunham of Kahn, Soares & Conway and Jennifer Spaletta of Spaletta Law.

Access the Court of Appeal decision at murag.alert.com/Sites/CFB2%20Assets/Image/ESI-Court-of-Appeal-Decision-3-17-23.pdf.

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 3.3 million Farm Bureau members.

FARM, RANCH AND TRANSITIONAL USE PROPERTIES

| TABLE GRAPES — $27,500/AC & $28,500/AC |
| 119.92± & 150.27± acres | Delano Earlhart Irrigation District, Lower Tulare River Irrigation District, Quality Varieties, Productive Soils.

| WALNUTS — $22,099/AC (SALE PENDING) |
| 1 Well, High-Density planting. Good Soils. |

| ALMONDS — $29,994/AC (PRICED REDUCED) |
| 290.41± acres | Tulare, Ridge Maricopa WSD Non-Contract, West Kern WD Residential service, Recreational and Rural home site, Rental Income. |

| ALMONDS — $22,307/AC (PRICED REDUCED) |
| 295.46± acres | 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. |

| DRY LAND — $2.250/AC (PRICED REDUCED) |
| 160 acres | Valley Acres, Recreation and Rural home site, Good Soils. |

| WINE GRAPES — $18,378/AC |
| 161± acres | Wasco Area, Semi-Tropic WSD non-contract water, 1 Well, High-Density planting. |
California Citrus Mutual Takes Leading Role in Keeping HLB Out of State’s Groves

Farm Credit has supported advocacy group’s efforts on behalf of industry for over 20 years

Press release provided by Farm Credit Alliance

California Citrus Mutual, the advocacy arm of the state’s $3 billion a year citrus industry, works on behalf of growers on a wide range of issues, including water supply, labor and tariffs that limit exports to China and other nations.

But one of its most important roles is helping lead the fight to prevent a tiny insect known as the Asian citrus psyllid from getting a foothold in California’s 255,000 bearing acres of oranges, mandarins, lemons and grapefruit, said Citrus Mutual’s president and CEO, Casey Creamer.

“It’s wiping out the Florida citrus industry as we speak, so we’re now the No. 1 state by default. We advocate for funding to help find the cure,” Creamer said.

“We’re a small organization with a staff of six and some consultants, but annually we bring back funding on HLB alone (from the federal and state governments) totaling over $80 million in economic losses and tens of thousands of lost jobs.

Fortunately, there has been progress. Researchers at the University of California, Riverside, are working on a promising method of using peptides from an Australian citrus tree that is resistant to the disease that can be injected or sprayed onto American citrus trees to allow the trees to survive infestation. Citrus Mutual helped obtain funding for that research as well, Creamer said.

Keith Hesterberg, President and CEO of Fresno Madera Farm Credit, said Citrus Mutual’s work is particularly important in the Central Valley, which is home to 80% of the state’s citrus groves.

“We’ve seen how devastating this disease has been to Florida’s farm economy, and it’s encouraging that research is progressing to find a potential cure,” Hesterberg said. “Education and research like this is a top priority for Farm Credit’s philanthropic efforts on behalf of the industry.”

Most citrus production occurs in the Sierra foothills from Madera south to Kern County, with significant production in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties and in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

Creamer said sponsorships such as Farm Credit’s help support the entire Citrus Mutual organization and is particularly important to the success of its annual educational conference, which is free for members to attend. This year’s conference in March attracted about 1,000 people who were able to get the latest information about water, labor law, international trade and, of course, HLB.

“It’s the sponsors who put the conferences on. We couldn’t hold them without the help of our industry allies,” Creamer said. “And besides its sponsorship support, Farm Credit continues to service our members and protect their viability, keeping them afloat in tough times. That’s incredibly important.”
“DPR’s produce monitoring program is the largest and longest-running state program for testing fruits and vegetables for illegal pesticide residues,” DPR Director Julie Henderson said. “With a focus on food eaten by children, as well as the state’s diverse ethnic communities, this program helps protect all Californians from pesticide residues on both domestic and imported produce.”

DPR scientists throughout the year visit food distribution centers, stores and outdoor markets to collect samples of foreign and domestically grown produce. The samples are tested by California Department of Food and Agriculture labs for more than 500 pesticide residues and breakdown products.

U.S.-grown produce continues to have significantly fewer illegal pesticide residues than imported produce. Imported produce accounted for nearly 77% of illegal pesticide residue samples. Of the imported commodities sampled, cactus pads and fruit originating from Mexico continue to show high percentages of illegal pesticide residues.

When illegal residues are detected, DPR investigators trace the suspect crop through its lines of trade – from store shelves, to shippers, importers or growers. Tainted products and crops are quarantined and subject to reconditioning, such as washing to remove residues, or potential destruction. In addition to potentially losing their inventory, growers and distributors whose produce exceeds tolerances can face fines and other penalties.

During 2021, DPR issued 120 quarantine notices for more than 70,000 pounds of produce carrying illegal pesticide residues. In addition, DPR referred 22 cases of illegal California-grown samples to local County Agricultural Commissioners (CACs) for investigation of potential illegal pesticide uses. CACs issued statutory fines against growers in instances where produce sources were able to be identified.

As part of enforcement activities, DPR staff provide guidance to growers and importers for ways to prevent sales of illegal produce.

For previous reports and more information about the department’s residue testing program, please visit the Pesticide Residue Monitoring Program’s webpage.

About the Department of Pesticide Regulation

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation’s mission is to protect human health and the environment. The department achieves this mission by fostering safer, sustainable pest management and operating a robust pesticide regulatory system. DPR’s work includes registering all pesticides sold or used in California, conducting pre- and post-registration scientific evaluations of pesticides to assess and mitigate potential harm to human health or the environment for pesticides in the air and water, and enforcing pesticide use laws and regulations in coordination with 55 County Agriculture Commissioners and their 500 field inspectors.

DPR also conducts outreach to ensure pesticide workers, farmworkers and local communities have access to pesticide safety information. More information about DPR can be found on our website.

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New Report Finds 97% of Fruits and Vegetables Sampled in California Meet Pesticide Safety Standards

By Julie Henderson, Director, California Department of Pesticide Regulation

Press release provided by CA Department of Pesticide Regulation

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) today released a report finding that 97% of fruits and vegetables sampled within the state in 2021 met federal pesticide safety standards.

The 2021 California Pesticide Residue Monitoring Program Report shows that 97% of domestically grown and imported produce samples collected in 2021 had either no detectable pesticide residues or had residues within the allowable federally-established tolerances. In addition, more than 98% of produce samples labeled as “grown in California” had no residues or tolerances that exceeded allowable levels.

The pesticide residue monitoring program supports DPR’s mission to protect people and the environment. Federally established tolerances identify the maximum allowable residue level of a specific pesticide on food that provides a ‘reasonable certainty of no harm.’

The 2021 report’s findings are based on 3,444 produce samples collected by the department at approximately 500 locations.

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U.S. Cattlemen’s Association Applauds Introduction of DRIVE Act

The bill would prohibit the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration from “implementing any rule or regulation requiring vehicles over 26,000 pounds that are engaged in interstate commerce to be equipped with a speed limiting device set to a maximum speed.”

In 2022, the FMCSA issued a notice of intent that it was considering rules requiring speed-limiting devices for certain large commercial vehicles.

U.S. Cattlemen’s Association Transportation (USCA) Committee Chairman Steve Hilker issued the following statement:

“Our members are responsible for the daily transportation of millions of animals. Livestock haulers must take into consideration the welfare of their cargo which means avoiding rough-road conditions, adjusting speed, and being more aware of their surroundings to prevent animal injury.

“USCA is opposed to any federal mandate that limits a driver’s autonomy over their own truck and trailer. We’d like to thank Rep. Breakenridge for his support of our nation’s livestock haulers through the introduction of the DRIVE Act.”

The bill was co-sponsored by Reps. Pete Sessions, R-Tex., Lauren Boebert, R-Colo., Scott Perry, R-Pa., Eric Swalwell, D-Calif., John Mozrall, R-Mich. and Matt Rosendale, R-Mont.

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ACWA Supports Newsom’s Leadership on Streamlining the Delivery of Critical Infrastructure Projects

Press release provided by Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) Executive Director Dave Egerton released the following statement on May 19th, in support of Gov. Gavin Newsom’s leadership on streamlining the delivery of critical infrastructure projects throughout the state.

The Governor today signed an Executive Order and his Administration is posting budget trailer bills aimed at streamlining the delivery of critical projects, including water infrastructure projects.

“ACWA applauds the Governor’s leadership today in announcing actions aimed at streamlining the delivery of infrastructure projects – actions which will help ensure critical water infrastructure projects are built at the pace and scale needed to respond to the growing impacts of climate change.

“ACWA members have been on the front lines of preparing for a changing climate through continued investments in critical water infrastructure. That’s why ACWA has made permit streamlining a priority issue. Permit decisions can and must be made more efficiently, while protecting the environment.”

USDA Announces Signup for New Rice Production Program

The new Rice Production Program will provide up to $250 million in assistance to rice farmers. (Photo: A2Z / Adobe Stock)

Press release provided by U.S. Department of Agriculture

On Dec. 29, 2022, President Biden signed into law H.R. 2617, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, which provided the authority and funding for USDA to make payments to rice producers based on data already on file with USDA, including planted acres and acres prevented from being planted.

On July 10, 2023. Producers who filed late or modified their acreage reporting deadline but do not receive a pre-filled application may still apply by visiting their local FSA office by close of business on Monday, July 10, 2023. Applications may be submitted either in person, by mail, email, or facsimile.

Program Payments

FSA will make an initial payment to eligible producers at a reduced payment rate of one cent per pound. If funds remain at the end of the application period, a second payment, not to exceed one cent per pound, may be issued to eligible producers. To be eligible, a producer must have reported to FSA a share interest in eligible rice.

As directed by the omnibus legislation, FSA will calculate payments by multiplying the:

- Payment rate;
- Individual average actual production history (APH) as reported to RMA or the FSA-established yield; and
- Amount of certified rice acres determined by the number of planted acres and acres that were prevented from being planted.

If applicable, a prevented planted factor of 60% will be applied.

Payment Limitation

The payment limitation for the program is set by statute and is higher if the farmer’s average adjusted gross farm income (income from activities related to farming, ranching or forestry) is more than 75% of their average adjusted gross income (AGI). Specifically, a person or legal entity with an average adjusted gross farm income of less than 75% of their average AGI cannot receive directly or indirectly more than $125,000 in payments. Farmers who derive 75% or more of their average AGI from farming qualify for a $250,000 payment limit. AGI is based on the three taxable years preceding the most immediately preceding complete tax year.

Rice farmers may visit their local county office to submit the appropriate form and certification (FSA-510, Program Payments) to their recording FSA county office by close of business on Monday, July 10, 2023. Applications may be submitted either in person, by mail, email, or facsimile.

Producers who reported eligible rice to FSA by the acreage reporting deadline but do not receive a pre-filled application may still apply by visiting their local FSA office and completing the application by Monday, July 10, 2023. Producers who filed late or modified the 2022 rice acreage reports will not be eligible for RPP.

More Information

For more information, view the fact sheet or contact your local USDA Service Center.
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140.02 ± Acres of Transitional Use Vineyard & Farmland Near Bakersfield
Asking Price: $6,099,027.12 ($43,560.00 per Acre)

553.74 ± Acres of Almonds in Semitropic Water Storage District
Asking Price: $15,970,000.00 ($28,840.25 per Acre)

568.36 ± Acres of Prime Pistachios in Semitropic Water Storage District
Asking Price: $16,900,000.00 ($29,734.68 per Acre)

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COMMENTS: Advances for Farms, Workers Blocked by a 1977 Rule

By Bryan Little, Director of Employment Policy, California Farm Bureau

Reprinted with permission from California Farm Bureau Federation

California’s high concentration of tech inventors and engineers, venture capital firms and farmers are only beginning to imagine the ways autonomous technology can bring new efficiency to agriculture, continue improvements in farm safety and boost earnings. It’s the story of the last 500 years of human history, writ small in a California lettuce field or a strawberry patch.

Autonomous or remote-controlled tractors can perform many of the tasks that farmers use tractors for now, from towing an air-blast sprayer through an orchard to hauling bins of hand-harvested wine grapes from a vineyard to a winery. Yet, sadly, the prowess offered by driverless tractors is being blocked by state regulators under pressure from labor groups seeking to exploit antiquated rules to advance a false argument over saving jobs.

These technologies increase safety because they do not require a tractor driver, who normally would have to worry about protective clothing and a properly fitted respirator. Autonomous tractors or sprayers or weeders rely on GPS coordinates, visual recognition technology, laser-based detection of objects and obstacles, infrared sensors and other tech to guide them through rows of orchards or vineyards. Their visual detection technology can spot-check the health of trees and vines and precisely target a chemical application.

Autonomous weeders are already in use, employing visual recognition to separate newly sprouted lettuce from weeds and using lasers to burn weeds down to the root, removing the need for large crews of field workers wielding hoes or bending over seed beds to distinguish between sprouts and weeds.

This technology can be applied to assistive devices such as so-called mules, small electric vehicles that can follow a strawberry picker into a row and transport a full bin to the end of the row, which adds rest and helps maximize earnings.

Yet the California Labor Federation and other purported advocates for workers assert that autonomous technology will eliminate jobs. Never mind that the California Employment Development Department tells us California has only about half as many tractor drivers as it needs. Employment Development Department tells us California has only about half as many tractor drivers as it needs. Never mind that the California Occupational Safety & Health Standards Board denied a request to even bring together stakeholders, including farmers, tech entrepreneurs, engineers and farm employee advocates, to begin talking about how autonomous technology can be deployed safely.

It’s truly unfortunate that so-called worker advocates adamantly oppose an advisory committee, taking a position that there is no way such technology can be safely used. They used their considerable influence before the Cal/OSHA standards board to ensure no conversations even occur to discuss how such technology can be properly deployed.

The California Farm Bureau and other organizations representing our state’s farmers and ranchers are ready to sit down with our labor and regulator counterparts to talk about how autonomous agricultural technologies can be used with appropriate safeguards. Preventing the progress—and safety—offered by these advancements is not the answer.
IFG Expands the Cherry Season Window with Low-chill Cherries

Consumers Can Expect Large, Tasty and Crunchy Cherries Much Earlier in the Cherry Season

Press release provided by International Fruit Genetics

International Fruit Genetics LLC (IFG), the world’s largest table grape breeder, which boasts over 45 patented table grape varieties and ten patented sweet cherry varieties, is expanding its low-chill cherry program and closing a critical gap that has eluded retailers and cherry lovers for years. Given that IFG’s low-chill cherries are all early harvest, retailers can now offer more IFG cherry varietals much earlier in the season, providing a make-or-break experience that will entice the public to return for future purchases.

The low-chill cherries will be sold in the U.S. and in other countries as the plantings start to mature, which in turn allows for more IFG cherries to bloom early in the season. “Early is important, but there is a caveat—these cherries must be fully formed, large, tasty, and crunchy, with great flavor that will set the tone for a great cherry season,” says Alwyn van Jaarsveld, International Commercial Cherry Manager, IFG. “Low-chill cherries allow retailers to begin the cherry season several weeks earlier, but they must do so without disappointing consumers—which means we cannot allow the early cherries to be small, tasteless, or soft.”

Low-Chill Development Also Means Hardy, Tasty, Large Cherries

Over the past few years, according to van Jaarsveld, the low-chill cherry program at IFG has flourished, allowing growers to harvest cherries with fewer “chill hours” during the winter, resulting in the fruit ripening much more quickly. In February, IFG announced adding more cherry varietals to its low-chill program, including the new trademarked varieties “Cheery Nebula TM”, “Cheery Chap TM”, “Cheery Nebula”, and “Cheery Chap”.

There are many benefits to the IFG low-chill program besides providing cherries earlier in the season. This includes producing cherries that are more uniform in quality—offering rarely varietals that are less susceptible to damage from either hot drought temperatures or excessive rains while staying fresh despite potentially long shipping and storage durations. With cutting-edge technology, IFG’s Research & Development team can naturally breed low-chill cherries, ensuring the fruit can withstand several challenges and remain fresh, large, and tasty.

In response, growers worldwide are beginning to plant IFG’s Cheery Cherry varietals—most notably in Chile, which has become an essential cherry-growing region for IFG. “We welcomed growers in the orchards of Northern Chile, in Ovalle, IV Region, to showcase our Cheery Cherry varieties,” says van Jaarsveld. “In 2016, the first Cheery Cherry variety to be commercially planted was Cheery Moon TM, and acreage for all Cheery Cherry varieties has expanded to more than 120 acres (50 ha) today.”

In addition to Chile, IFG licenses are starting to harvest low-chill cherries in areas where cherries are rarely grown due to warmer climates, such as Spain and Australia. Given the growing popularity of the IFG low-chill cherry program, many growers are now installing the proper cooling and shipping routes—everything they need to make the low-chill cherries a reality. “Our growers now have access to the markets, pack houses, and cooling and shipping routes—everything they need to grow and distribute quality low-chill cherries,” says van Jaarsveld.

“And this is very lucrative for the growers and the retail industry. Thanks to overall advances in robotics and non-agriculture fields that benefit agtech startups, as well as the increasing talent pool that agtech startups are able to add to their teams. The Specialty Crop Automation Report is available for download here: AGHarvestReport.com.”

For more information, please contact: Ann Donahue, (949) 302-7600, ADonahue@WGCA.com

About Western Growers

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

Farm Credit West is now AgWest Farm Credit. And we’re still committed to sharing profits with our customers.

Patronage continues to be a unique benefit of our cooperative structure, providing earnings from our association back to our customer-members. This year, patronage dividends total $366.5 million to eligible customers throughout the West. It pays to be an AgWest customer.

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Contact your local branch or visit AgWestFC.com to learn more.
Evil and Love

By Joshua Stevens
Faith Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

At some point in every believer’s life, they will face the question, “Why does God allow bad things to happen?” Everyone who bears the eternal name of Christ will need to account for such a question. (Photo: Gorodenkoff / Adobe Stock)

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