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Kern County Teachers Take Ag to Class

By Natalie Willis, Reporter, Valley Ag Voice

The main lesson Kern County teachers learned at the 2023 Teacher's Ag Seminar was that the agricultural community is a neighbor to all and family to each other. On the way to a farm tour, teachers felt the full extent of this lesson when the tour bus suddenly halted, stuck on top of the railroad tracks.

Despite best efforts, the bus was immovable, and teachers evacuated. Without delay, a nearby

farmer took the initiative and towed the bus from the tracks with his tractor, highlighting the overarching message of the seminar—the ag community takes care of its own.

“I’ve met so many wonderful people in agriculture as I’ve been able to make connections, whether that’s my own personal connections or through the seminar,” Scott Haner, seminar co-coordinator and Kern High School District teacher, said. “The connection with folks who are in agriculture seems to me to be a little bit tighter.”

Since 1992, the Kern County Farm Bureau has hosted a summer seminar for K-12 teachers interested in adding agriculture to their curriculum. This year, roughly 35 teachers attended and experienced three days of agriculture speakers, tours of agricultural properties, and a chance to create lesson plans based on seminar teachings.

Julia Segundo, a sixth-grade teacher at Standard Elementary School, expressed interest in incorporating agribusiness into her class as well as showing students the scope of agriculture in their everyday life.

“I think having them do a little bit of research and having the students learn that agriculture is not just farming—picking things on the farm—but [also] mechanics, the business side of it, and all of the different components and opportunities that it presents,” Segundo said.

Several Kern County institutions were involved, including high school district FFA students. Students presented the history of their high school's FFA program and spoke on the importance of having an agricultural education. On the second day of the seminar, Shafter's FFA students hosted an omelet breakfast for those in attendance.

See **TAKE AG TO CLASS** on PAGE 5

The Need to Challenge Bad Environmental Regulations

The endangered North Atlantic right whale. The current population is estimated at 368, down from around 500 in 2011. During their migration from the southeast coast of the United States to Scandinavia, they encounter a number of man-made threats. (image ©Dawn Witherington)



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By Scott Hamilton
President, Hamilton Resource Economics

Regulations have become increasingly intrusive in farming, increasing reporting requirements and costs. They also affect water supply as regulators struggle to protect endangered aquatic species. When the data or the science are lacking, which is usually the case, there is significant uncertainty on what level of protection is needed. Wildlife agencies, whose directive is to protect species and their habitat, typically err on the side of the species.

This approach, referred to as “the precautionary principle,” asserts that there is a

need to be cautious in assessing man-made risks to the environment, especially when the scientific understanding is limited, and the potential harm is great. The basis for utilizing the Endangered Species Act (ESA) comes from a single sentence in a 1979 conference report forming part of the congressional record.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) include it in their Endangered Species Consultation Handbook. In giving the benefit of the doubt to the species, applying the principle typically gives little regard for social and economic consequences, such as impacts on water supplies.

See **ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS** on PAGE 8

Mexico's Ban on Genetically Modified Corn

By Audrey Hill, Valley Ag Voice

In late 2020, Mexico initiated a ban on genetically modified (GM) corn and made plans to be free of GM corn by January 2024. Mexico stated that the ban protects its people from health risks associated with GM corn and glyphosate, although some believe Mexico has no scientific backing to support its claim.

Mexico is the largest long-standing importer of U.S. corn – only recently being surpassed by China – and purchased \$4.9 billion in corn imports from the U.S. in 2022, according to the USDA. Most of this is not white corn for human consumption but yellow corn



for animal feed. Since pressured by the U.S., Mexico rescinded its goal to be completely free of GM corn by 2023 but will focus on restricting GM corn for human consumption as 2024 approaches.

According to the World Health Organization, GM corn is safe for human consumption, and Mexico — with no definitive scientific grounding — is violating the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. On March 6, U.S. Trade Representative, Katherine Tai, met with Mexico's ambassadors to discuss the violation of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures Chapter of the USMCA, including an obligation to scientific

See **MEXICO BANS MODIFIED CORN** on PAGE 7



FARM BUREAU NEWS

The United Voice of Kern County's Farming Community



President's Message

By Patty Poire
President, Kern County
Farm Bureau

At the State Water Board June 21st meeting, Kern County ranked No.4 based on the board's prioritizing system, which includes basin overdraft, drinking water impacts, subsidence impacts, water quality degradation, and implementation and coordination

hearing is held, Board staff may review the updated GSPs—their review could inform the Board's decision on whether to place a basin on probation. You might ask, as a landowner, 'How does this affect me specifically?' Well, if the basin is declared probationary, you will receive a letter from the state requiring that you start reporting your extractions and register your well in addition to paying for the extractions and registration. The state also has the authority to require that you place a meter on your well.

subbasin landowners should expect to receive the public hearing notice around December 2023 (see Tulare Lake Potential Schedule).

The State Board staff presented steps toward a hearing to provide a process to follow (see Steps Towards a Hearing).

It is up to you as landowners how the basin deals with this. The Kern subbasin is approximately 326,000 acre-feet in overdraft per year, and that overdraft does not belong to one district, but most water districts in the Kern subbasin are in some amount of overdraft.

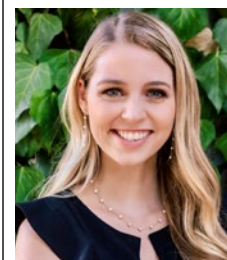
Where are you with discussing overdraft with your water district? At this time, those GSPs that were approved had "glide paths" to sustainability that provided DWR and the state the ability to understand how sustainability would be achieved by 2040. A "glide path" can be achieved via demand reduction or new water supplies; however, either one needs to cover the overdraft every year going forward, and both agencies (DWR and State) are not going to approve any GSPs waiting to start the glide path until 2035. As you know, I am not a fan of SGMA, but, unfortunately, it is not going away, and having landowners engaged with me is the only way the Kern subbasin will be successful. If the State Water Board holds the probationary hearing and determines that the Kern subbasin is not able to coordinate and update its GSPs adequately, then the State will begin the process of working on an interim plan. You don't want to go there!

Of all the legislation that has burdened agriculture, this is the one that I believe will have the most impact only because the State has reduced the reliability of water deliveries for environmental reasons in the Delta and overdrafted the Kern subbasin. If the reliability had maintained 89% prior to 2000, the



Photo by Romolo Tavani / Adobe Stock

Executive Director's Report



By Rachel Nettleton
Executive Director,
Kern County Farm
Bureau

Hello, Kern County!
I am thrilled to have the opportunity to introduce myself as the new Executive Director of the Kern County Farm Bureau. My name is Rachel Nettleton, and I am honored to serve our local farmers and ranchers in this important role. With a diverse background in marketing and a passion for supporting our community, I am eager to bring fresh ideas and a renewed commitment to the agricultural industry.

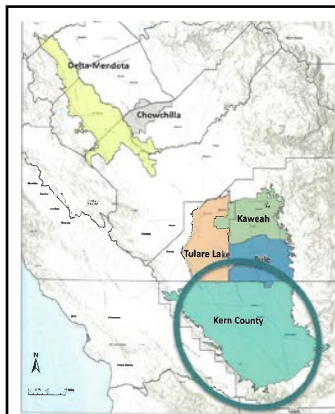
Over the years, I have had the privilege of working with several well-known organizations here in Kern County, such as the Bakersfield Condors and Housh Community Blood Bank. Working closely with our community, I developed a deep appreciation for the power of collaboration. These experiences have equipped me with a robust skill set that I am excited to bring to the Kern County Farm Bureau.

As the Executive Director, I aim to bolster the efforts of our local farmers and ranchers, ensuring that their needs are met. I firmly believe that agriculture is the backbone of our community, and it is crucial to nurture and support this vital industry. Collaboration will be the heart of my approach. Together, we will tackle challenges, explore innovative strategies, and celebrate the remarkable contribution of Kern County's agricultural sector.

I believe that effective leadership is built on open communication and a strong sense of community. With your input and support, we can forge a path forward that preserves our agricultural heritage. I am grateful for this opportunity, and I am looking forward to working alongside our great community.

Proposed Schedule for Holding Probationary Hearings

Tulare Lake	Dec 2023
Tule	Jan 2024
Kaweah	Mar 2024
Kern County	Apr 2024
Delta-Mendota	Sep 2024
Chowchilla	Oct 2024



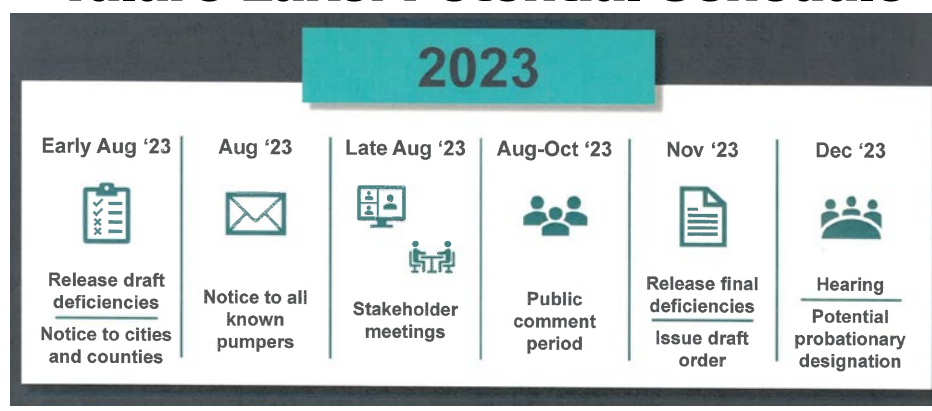
Rationale

- Fundamental coordination issues
- Interdependent criteria would allow widespread threshold exceedances before management actions triggered
- Impacts could be extensive, but data gaps make this unclear

under the Sustainable Groundwater Development Act (SGMA) (see the slides above about schedule and rationale for the Kern subbasin).

This means that around April 2024, the Kern subbasin will be looking at a State Water Board Probationary Hearing to determine if the Kern basin should be classified as probationary. The state developed "frequently asked questions," which states that if GSAs opt to revise and resubmit one or more Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) before a probationary

Tulare Lake: Potential Schedule



Steps Towards a Hearing

- **REQUIRED:** Minimum 90-day & 60-day notices
- Draft deficiencies identified (staff report)
- Public comment period
- Outreach and public engagement
- Staff evaluation of information received
- Finalize deficiencies and issue draft order

How can you, as a landowner, participate in the probationary hearing? The State Water Board will mail a notice of a hearing to anyone who pumps water from the basin using publicly available information at least 60 days before the public hearing. If the schedule for Tulare Lake basin is kept, the Kern

Kern subbasin would not be in this situation, especially since the water districts have been proactive for decades in recharge efforts which is evident today in this 2023 wet year. But and there is a but, the Kern subbasin is 326,000 acre-feet of overdraft, and we must deal with it.

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KERN COUNTY FARM BUREAU

Rachel Nettleton, Executive Director
661-397-9635 • KCFB@KernCFB.com

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(Photo: Timothy Collins)

Young Farmers & Ranchers



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

As a heat wave rolled into Bakersfield on a Saturday in mid-July, we held our 8th annual Kern County

Young Farmers & Ranchers Charity Farmers Market. For those unfamiliar with the event, once a year, we reach out to local growers and pick up donated produce. After collecting everything, we set up a Saturday market and offered the produce for suggested donations. Most of what we receive goes toward supporting a local garden project. The remaining income helps fund our Ag Grants, scholarships, and monthly meetings/tours. None of this would be possible by ourselves, so I would like to give a big thank you to all the growers who donated produce and everyone that came out on a very hot morning to get that produce!

This year we are happy to be able to support the school garden project for Kern Resource Center. Their students focus on a hands-on approach to gardening and nutrition and are taught how to incorporate the fresh produce they grow into healthy meals. We are looking forward to working with them soon!

The week leading up to our farmers market is always crazy for all of us on the YF&R officer team, and it takes a great amount of work to make this event

happen. Then Saturday comes, and we remember why we have kept doing it for eight years. We see regular customers that look forward to the event every year. This year we had Kern Resource Center set up a booth, and we enjoyed learning about their school and met some of the very appreciative students and staff. We talked to members of the media who were encouraged to see a local ag charity event happening here, where it should be part of the community, in the top ag-producing county.

While traveling across this county this summer, I was reminded again of what a unique and diverse industry we have in California agriculture. There is simply no other state where we could get this variety of produce, and most of it from right here in Kern County. As I have said before, this is where to get involved in agriculture. Come check out YF&R!

In closing, I would like to thank all the volunteers and give a shout-out to this year's donors, including Murray Family Farms, Sunview, Driscolls, Pandol Bros, Bolthouse Farms, Grimmway Farms, Country Sweet Produce, Fachin Honey, Famoso Nut, J G Boswell, Johnston Farms, JSS Almond, Kirschenman Ent., Kuntz Family Farms, Taste-ful Selections, The Garlic Company, Vine Ripe Sales, Suntreat Packing, Varsity Produce, Elite Site Services, Wild Culture Mercantile, Delish Cakepops & Sweets, Kern Machinery, and all of the Wonderful Company.

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Kern Agriculture Preserved Space Garnerers High Assessment Rating

Natalie Willis, Reporter, Valley Ag Voice

Kern County's annual assessment roll featured three large-scale agriculture institutions in its Top 20 Secured Property Assessments. Paramount Farms, Bolthouse Farms, and the Wonderful Company were estimated at upwards of 290 million.

Despite high property values, certain preservation stipulations under the Williamson Act and the Farmland Security Zone reduce the amount a landowner actually pays.

Laura Avila, Kern County Assessor-Recorder, explained that these agricultural preserves act as a "discount" wherein farmers are guaranteed the lowest of three possibilities—market, factor-based year value, and the actual restricted value.

"The industrial properties that process [agricultural] products may be in the preserve, but only the land under the buildings get the reduction, not the buildings themselves," Avila explained in an email. "The only other type of property, other than land, that gets the benefit of the preserve is

the living improvements, or trees and vines."

Areas of preserved farmland under the Williamson Act Program allow local governments to enter contracts with private landowners to restrict specific parcels of land to agricultural use. The contract lasts, at a minimum, for 10 years. In return, farmers receive reduced property tax assessments based on generated income rather than the potential market value of the property.

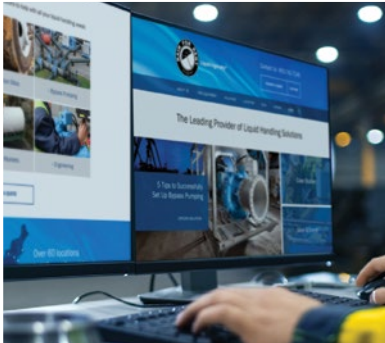
According to Avila, the Williamson Act was designed to benefit the state of California as a way to preserve property—preserved land can only be used as open space or for agriculture, and it cannot be developed for residential purposes.

An agricultural property assessment provided by Avila shows that two of the Wonderful Company's properties —Paramount Farms International and Wonderful Citrus Packing—have one of the largest property values at a combined \$877 million. Several acres of this land are under preservation contracts, according to the assessment.



Thomas J. Willis, D.V.M.

3441 Allen Road
Bakersfield, CA 93314
(661) 588-3299
Fax: (661) 588-6373
SJVHVet@aol.com



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OPINION: Crony Capitalism and USDA Animal Disease Traceability Proposals

By Austin Snedden
Ranching Contributor,
Valley Ag Voice

Apparently, the United States Department of Agriculture has never heard the cliché about not beating a dead horse. The USDA has proposed mandatory ID for every bovine on multiple occasions and has always been met with bold opposition. The usual cast of characters is responsible for conjuring up the fictitious need for mandatory individual ID every time, but it is never derived from a real demand for it or targeted toward the players that need it.

Animal disease traceability gives a warm feeling to many, like a pacifier or a blankie, but the only real threat, as it has been for many decades, is Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD). FMD is highly virulent and spreads through cattle and other species quickly. FMD is virulent enough that we don't necessarily know where it is going next, but we absolutely know where it isn't right now. The United States is FMD-free. The primary, and some would say only, threat to our domestic livestock health is a foreign-borne disease that does not exist here. The USDA's solution to our only realistic animal health threat is to require all

domestic producers to individually ID all mature cattle in a clean country.

Yes, it sounds asinine and a completely unreasonable threat analysis, but it gets worse. The USDA doesn't require country of origin labeling (COOL) on cattle, and this same agency currently allows imported cattle and meat to be labeled "Product of USA." The trifecta of mandatory ID proponents pushing the USDA to lay another mandated burden on domestic producers is tag manufacturers, animal pharmaceutical companies, and multi-national meat packers.

There is a natural and obvious motive for tag manufacturers to support mandating individual ID—government-enforced market expansion. A requirement that almost all cattle be individually distinguished with an electronic identification tag (EID) would be a huge windfall to tag manufacturers. A closely related beneficiary of this government-mandated program would be third-party verification companies and databases. These companies began circling like vultures in anticipation of mandatory enrollment, convincing some that third-party verification and archiving would protect their privacy.

The animal pharmaceutical companies play a role in this as well. The need for animal disease trace-

ability is built on the assumption that a virulent disease will be exposed to domestic livestock. I am not going to infer that pharmaceutical companies are hoping for FMD in the United States, but if it were to happen, they would be waiting in the wings to offer vaccinations to herds, not totally condemned. I am not a conspiracy theorist, and I usually walk away from those types of conversations, but we have seen in recent history that pharmaceutical companies have made billions in offering a vaccine regardless of efficacy. The animal disease traceability mandate would give us a false sense of security, enabling importation from infected countries, which brings us to our next mandate advocate.

The multi-national packer would love to source cattle and beef from anywhere on the globe to bring to the gem of the world market—the U.S. consumer. Droughts, abundance, and cattle cycles create situations where there are regional surpluses and shortages when it comes to the cattle and beef supply. As we currently see record cattle prices due to a national drought-created cattle shortage, meat packers would seize the opportunity to source cattle and beef from an infected country like Brazil. There is an opportunity with mandatory disease traceability that regulators would feel secure enough

to import from infected regions. Couple that with a vaccine bank, and packers would have amassed a lot of leverage. A collateral benefit to the packer would be a national database informing them of inventory in the pipeline.

The burden of all this, from labor to cost, would be on the domestic cow-calf producer and livestock marketers. Ranchers will be mandated to buy tags and pay for the labor to tag cattle, but tags aren't infallible. Domestic sale barns and livestock marketers will have commerce slowed as they bring cattle into compliance and account for technical and physical failures of tags. Almost every grassroots, cattle, and livestock marketing association has opposed government-mandated individual ID.

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) has not opposed mandatory national animal ID. Instead, they have suggested what they would like the mandate to look like. Keep in mind, the NCBA has repeatedly spoken out against mandatory country-of-origin labeling on imported cattle and beef—just so we all know where their bread is buttered. Government teaming with giant corporations in crony capitalism to lay a mandate and burden on domestic cattle producers to prevent a problem that is created by imported cattle and meat... is still a bad idea. The USDA and its buddies are again trying to reanimate this dead horse. The correct answer is still no.



Ag in the Classroom: Teaching Students about California Almonds

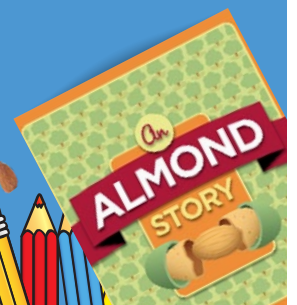


The Almond Board of California is committed to providing accurate information about almond production and the almond industry to students across the country, through Ag in the Classroom.

The Almond Board of California Ag in the Classroom program provides the following materials:

- **Lesson Plan** - This five-lesson unit for grades 3-5 covers all aspects of the almond industry, written in conjunction with California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom
- **Video** - At almost 8 minutes in length, this fun and educational video teaches students about the almond growing process.
- **Activity Book** - "An Almond Story" activity book allows students to explore California Almonds on a variety of levels.

Scan the QR code to view, download, and order
your Ag in the Classroom materials today



Take Ag To Class

Continued from PAGE 1

Teachers also heard from specialists in the agricultural industry, such as Bakersfield College agriculture professor and agronomist Jeff Rasmussen, who demonstrated various diseases, pests, and climate problems crops may experience.

Rasmussen emphasized the value of bringing agriculture into the classroom and introducing students to a world they may have never known.

“I’ve been involved in agriculture for a number of years, and it’s very important that you guys took your time to come out—to do and learn and understand agriculture in a different way,” Rasmussen said. “I do this because a lot of people have different opinions of what we do in agriculture, and so for you to come in and get educated, teach your children and your classrooms, I appreciate it.”

According to Pam Bruni, the seminar’s coordinator for the past 13 years, many younger children do not understand their relationship to food.

“Many kids don’t think about it, and when asked, they think there is a big factory in the back of a grocery store or something,” Bruni said. “It’s imperative, especially in the number one producing county in the nation, to know how important agriculture is to our way of life.”

Mandi Kissack, cattle rancher and special ed teacher at Rio Bravo, provided resources for teachers interested in developing an agriculture-based curriculum. In a survey of kindergartners and first graders, students were asked where hamburgers come from. Kissack showed various replies ranging from the “grocery store” to “McDonald’s.” One student explained that it comes from cows and questioned if “they get it out like milk.”

Kissack explained that there are ways to get a responsible and valid curriculum for the classroom. She referenced a website called LearnAboutAg.org which features K-8 lesson plans and explains how teachers can implement them in class.

“It’s really great because, even if you’re not familiar with this type of curriculum, the way that the lesson plans are laid out, you feel as if ‘Okay, I get this!’ And I’m going to be able to tell this to kids in a way that if Johnny asked me a weird question, I’m not going to have to [say] ‘Ask your mom,’” Kissack said.

Kissack also cited the Kern County Cattlewomen’s website as a resource, explaining that the lesson plans are fully laid out and are transparent on the standards they align with.

The seminar concluded on June 12 with several teachers expressing interest in attending again next year. According to Haner, implementing knowledge from the annual seminar allows students to make educated choices about agriculture and gives them access to unique experiences that shape their lives.

“I found that those students who in some way were related to or had an idea of where their



Photos by Natalie Willis

food comes from were a bit more polite. A bit more easygoing—compassionate towards their peers,” Haner said. “It was my experience in the classroom that led me to believe that those young people who were involved in agriculture, to some degree, just kind of were a little bit more personable.”

Bruni, who will be retiring as coordinator, explained that getting teachers involved in agriculture education will strengthen.

“It feels like our own state has waged war of the [agriculture] industry, and I don’t understand why,” Bruni said. “The state should be helping and supporting the ag industry instead of attacking at every turn—the only way I know how to fight back is with education.”



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A Citrus Threat is Contained in State, But Caution Urged

By Lisa McEwen, Freelance Writer

Reprinted with permission from the California Farm Bureau Federation

The gravest threat to America's citrus industry—huanglongbing, also known as citrus greening disease—arrived in Florida in 2005. Spread by the invasive Asian citrus psyllid, the crop plague has since devastated that state's citrus production.

But in California, where the psyllid was first detected in 2008 and the first huanglongbing, or HLB, infection was found in a residential tree in 2012, no commercial citrus grove has been infected.

Officials credit an intensive psyllid detection and eradication program, industry-wide awareness and mitigation tools, as well as the Golden State's climate, for warding off spread of the disease.

Still, Tulare County citrus farmer Jim Gorden looks with trepidation at what he calls the "psyllid pasture" of the Los Angeles Basin. More than 5,000 residential citrus trees have tested positive in the region, the majority in Orange County, with other detections in Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties.

"Once the psyllid is established in an urban landscape, there's not much you can do," Gorden said. "The urban landscape is our big risk. I tell people we must be truly arrogant if we think we can control this thing in such a vast and diverse landscape."



A truck in a Tulare County citrus grove is tarped to prevent hitchhiking Asian citrus psyllids. (Photo courtesy Citrus Pest & Disease Prevention Program)

Gorden, a pest management pioneer, is one of the original organizers of the Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Program committee. Part of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the CPDPP is tasked with protecting the state's \$7 billion citrus industry, which employs 22,000 people.

If the psyllid and the disease became established in California, it would wreak havoc on the nation's leading supplier of fresh oranges, lemons, and mandarins. Citrus crops cover nearly 292,000 acres from the desert, coast, and the San Joaquin Valley, where the vast majority of California's citrus is grown.

On March 23, after new residential tree infections in Riverside County in February, CDFA Secretary Karen Ross declared that the Asian citrus psyllid and citrus greening disease "pose a significant, clear, and imminent threat" to agriculture and the environment.

In Florida, citrus production since 2005 has dropped 90%, from 150 million boxes to an expected 16 million in 2023, according to a market brief from the American Farm Bureau Federation. The number of citrus growers plunged 62%, and a fraction of juice processors remain in business.

key to controlling HLB. "It's truly a gargantuan effort to try to control this insect and this disease that it carries," he said. "But we've so far done a better job than anyone else has."

Much of that prevention fight has focused on keeping psyllids from becoming established in the San Joaquin Valley. The effort is helped by the psyllid's inability to survive the valley's heat and the natural buffer that is the coastal range. Psyllids are unable to fly higher than 3,500 feet. To prevent them from hitching a ride during transport, growers tarp loads on the way to the packinghouse.

Nick Hill, a grower in Tulare and Fresno counties, said growers are the first line of defense. "We must keep growers mindful of this problem, especially here in the San Joaquin Valley," he said. "If something does happen, we must mobilize quickly. It's tough to pull out trees, that's the ugly side of this thing. If we want to save the industry, we've got to stay on top of it."

As a grower of mandarins, navels and lemons, Hill said he is careful to follow guidelines, such as cleaning equipment when moving from one field to the next and removing stem and leaf residue from bins.

"Growers must stay at the top of their game, and I know the costs that can bring on. It's hard to swallow," he said.

Florida's misfortune is not an advantage for California growers because Florida's crop is mainly for juice while much of California's citrus



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A state inspector surveys residential trees in a Southern California neighborhood. (Photo courtesy Citrus Pest & Disease Prevention Program)

"There is heightened awareness of the severity of what could happen," said Casey Creamer, president of the trade association California Citrus Mutual. "The early predictions were dire, and we initially thought that HLB would be in commercial groves by now. But programs and procedures are in place to protect the industry."

There is no cure for the disease. HLB causes small, misshapen, bitter fruit and is always lethal to the tree. The fruit retains the green color at the navel end of the orange when mature, which is the reason for the name citrus greening disease.

Gorden said controlling psyllid populations is

fruit is sold as fresh.

"We can't afford to grow for the juice market," Creamer said, noting the higher production costs in the state. Because of its tropical climate, which happens to be a year-round breeding ground for the psyllid, Florida can't grow anything else. "It's not like California, where our growers can switch to another commodity," he said.

But California researchers, growers and industry leaders are learning from Florida's experiences, banding together to fund research into short- and

See CITRUS THREAT CONTAINED on PAGE 15

Contact American Ag Today
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Photos provided by Cal.net

New AgTech Helps Central Valley Farmers Save Water

Natalie Willis, Reporter, Valley Ag Voice

Cal.net, Terranova Ranch, and Microsoft introduced an AgriTech partnership at Terranova Ranch last month, demonstrating a broadband solution to control the amount of water farmers and ranchers use. A diverse audience of agriculture industry experts, governmental institutions, and agriculture education organizations attended the event and subsequent demonstration.

The precision irrigation technology ran a test program at Terranova Ranch in Fresno County, automating water pumps through low bandwidth radio technology. Precision agriculture requires seamless integration of technologies in order to maximize crop productivity, a press release from Cal.net explained.

According to Jack Barker, CEO of Cal.net, water, and broadband are the two most important factors for the Central Valley’s future.

“First—God and Sacramento appear to control the amount of water—and it’s pretty hard to influence either of those,” Barker said. “But I think we can control how much we use and what we get for it.”

Baker explained that this technology will enable farmers to collect field sensor data, transmit it to the cloud, and return it to the water pump and valve with instructions to deliver the exact amount of water needed.

In order to implement this technology, Barker underscored the importance of Cal.net’s pervasive internet availability to expand its reach to Terranova’s tomato field. According to Don Cameron, president of Terranova Ranch, the project utilizes both broadband and automation to improve crop yields and gather data to share with the broader agricultural community.

“Agriculture is the lifeblood of the Central Valley, and water is the lifeblood of agriculture,” Cameron said at the event. “Our quest for years has been to increase stewardship of water through innovative technologies and approaches.”

Due to increased water scarcity and regulation, precision ag techniques hope to expand upon

efficient water usage as well as improve run times, trackability, and crop yield. Its technological advancement takes three forms—standards-based technology, low-bandwidth radio, and ubiquitous internet availability.

Barker explained that, through standards-based technology, solutions would avoid dependence on a single supplier and provide capability at the lowest possible cost. Further, the use of low-bandwidth radios to collect data from field sensors expects to minimize waste.

Cal.net’s expansion of broadband infrastructure showed the leverage of cloud-based AgTech to make informed decisions about resource allocation—providing a sustainable solution to maintain water resources.

CONNECTIVITY GAP

Cal.net and Microsoft partnered to expand broadband access across 22 counties through the Airband Initiative, which includes a significant number of agriculture enterprise customers. At the event, presenters explained that their digital partnership improves agriculture data management for farm enterprises to implement efficient water irrigation and crop management.

Despite the abundance of Central Valley produce, affordable high-speed internet connection is difficult to come by, which means most residents are not able to utilize precision agriculture applications. This is referred to as the connectivity gap, a press release from Microsoft explained.

Microsoft’s partnership with Cal.net plans to equip small internet service providers with the means to provide large-scale access to precision agriculture technology in rural communities.

“Cal.net is one of our most active partners in our effort to expand broadband access to the unserved and rural population in California,” Jasmine Thomas, senior director of Microsoft Airband Initiative, said, “We appreciate their commitment to bringing digital skills training to rural communities and schools, as well as developing and sharing agricultural data management solutions with growers in the region.”

Mexico Bans Modified Corn

Continued from PAGE 1

principles and disguised trade restrictions. The exact verdict is still undecided, but if Mexico is no longer a reliable importer of this corn, serious damage to America’s agriculture industry could ensue.

Regardless of whether or not GM corn is safe to eat, Mexico has a deeply rooted cultural connection to corn. Corn was first domesticated in Mexico roughly 8,700 years ago, and several unique varieties of grain remain very important to Mexico’s cultural heritage and food staples, according to the National Science Foundation. An article from NPR released on July 3 tells the story of Alejandro Piñon.

“There was a time when tortillas here in Mexico City were diverse. They came in greens and blues and pinks and purples. They were beautiful and handmade,” Piñon told NPR. “But as tortillas industrialized, they were standardized, and you notice it immediately. The color is different. The taste is different.”

Piñon says that cheap American corn flooded Mexican markets and now threatens the diverse varieties that remain in the birthplace of domestic corn. Although President Andrés Manuel López Obrador frames the dispute as a public health issue, many Mexicans back the ban for its promotion of national sovereignty and cultural heritage. Mexico argues they are not violating the USMCA because it never obliged them to buy American corn. The U.S. insists that their claims of health risks aren’t scientifically supported and, therefore, Mexico is violating the USMCA.

Because Mexico has lightened up its new restric-

tions, the country will allow roughly 80% of its 2022 imports of U.S. corn to maintain in trade, as that is roughly how much Mexico purchases for livestock feeds. However, the remaining 20%, which makes up human consumption of American GM corn, will no longer be in trade. If Mexico successfully restricts GM corn from human consumption, it will need to find another source for roughly 20% of its corn market. Many U.S. corn farmers and associations believe Mexico cannot sufficiently do this.

The European Union has a long-standing “ban” on GMOs under what is known as the precautionary principle, or a form of skepticism due to lack of certainty—in this case about the health and safety of GMOs. It’s likely that Mexico could follow in the EU’s footsteps to dismiss the U.S. warnings of violating the USMCA. The only problem for Mexico would be finding enough non-GM corn to feed their people.

Although this trade dispute isn’t particularly pertinent to Central Valley agriculture, as corn isn’t a very prominent crop, it still plays a major role in feed and foods consumed everywhere. In an email exchange, Congressman David Valadao emphasized the importance of enforcing trade agreements in order to protect market access.

“Our trade agreements only work if they are enforced. Mexico’s unscientific restrictions on genetically modified corn imports would negatively impact domestic growers and undermine the USMCA, which was negotiated to benefit America and Mexico alike,” Valadao said. “I’ll continue working to protect fair market access for Central Valley farmers.”

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DELANO COLD STORAGE – \$5,900,000 15.66± acres, Delano Area, Rd 176 and 1/3 mile North of County Line Rd. Total Cold area 81,416± sqft. Pallet capacity including precoolers 5,040, Equipment yard, Shop, Storage and Office space.	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.
TABLE GRAPES – \$25,500±/AC & \$26,500±/AC (PRICED REDUCED) 119.92± & 150.27± acres Delano Earlimart Irrigation District, Lower Tule River Irrigation District, Quality Varieties, Productive Soils.	ALMONDS – \$22,307±/AC (PRICED REDUCED) 295.46± acres Arvin Area, Arvin Edison WSD Contract Water, 2 Wells, Excellent Soils, Almonds in Full Production.
ALMONDS – \$29,994±/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.	WALNUTS, TABLE GRAPES, PISTACHIOS – \$23,500±/AC (PRICED REDUCED) 345.95± acres Selma Area, North Fork GSA, Excellent Soils, Quality Well Water, Diversified Portfolio, Solar System.
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.	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 – \$17,660±/AC (NEW LISTING) 906.8± acres Wasco Area, Matador/Sunbird Ranch, Semi-Tropic WSD Contract and non-contract water, Well water, Productive Soils, and Young Almonds in production.
PISTACHIOS – \$51,898±/AC 237.31± acres Wasco Area, Southern San Joaquin Municipal Utility District, Pistachios in full production, Productive Soils.	ALMONDS – \$17,988±/AC (PRICED REDUCED) 995.11± acres Wasco Area, Semi-Tropic WSD Contract and non-contract water, 5 wells, Productive Soils, and Almonds in full production.
VINEYARD – \$24,000±/AC (NEW LISTING) 240.88 Delano Area, Southern San Joaquin Municipal Utility District, Allison Table Grapes, strong soils.	ALMONDS – \$18,261±/AC (NEW LISTING) 1,237.33± acres Wasco Area, Portwood Ranch, Semi-Tropic WSD Contract non-contract water, 7 Wells, Productive Soils, and Young Almonds in production.

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Environmental Regulations

Continued from PAGE 1

This principle was scrutinized in a recent court of appeals case in Washington, D.C. The case concerned the impact that lobster fishermen in the Gulf of Maine had on the survival of North Atlantic right whales—an endangered and migratory species whose numbers had been declining during the last decade—and the subsequent regulations that were imposed by NMFS on the fishermen under the Endangered Species Act.

Right whales suffer from strikes by ships, entanglement in fishing gear, and lack of food. However, of the 47 likely deaths due to entanglement in fishing gear, only two were likely caused in the United States. The origin of the other likely deaths, and even the type of fishing gear, could not be readily determined. In applying the precautionary principle, the National Marine Fishery Service essentially said they don't know if the lobster fishermen caused the deaths, so new fishing regulations need to be extra protective as a precaution. Those new regulations were estimated to cost \$50 to \$90 million over six years. The lobster fishermen and the State of Maine's Department of Marine Resources drew exception to the NMFS determination and pursued legal action.

The three Circuit judges on the case ruled in favor of the fishermen, striking down the precautionary principle. They ruled that

NMFS, when faced with uncertainty, may not give the "benefit of the doubt" to an endangered species by relying upon worst-case scenarios or pessimistic assumptions.

Their ruling was notable for several reasons. First, they ruled that the Congressional directive, cited as the basis for the principle, was never included in that Act itself. If Congress had wanted it in the Endangered Species Act, they would have included it along with other safety margins in previous legislation. Second, they said the ESA employs an alternative standard—"best scientific and commercial data available." This means using the best science that is currently available, without precautionary interpretation, and implementing regulations based on that information.

The judges said: "Nothing in Section 7 (of the ESA) requires distorting the decision-making process by overemphasizing highly speculative harms whenever the available data is wanting."

In the case of the right whale, there was no evidence to suggest that the lobster fishermen were responsible for deaths that would have had population-level impacts. Third, they ruled that "it has been a clear precept of administrative law that an agency action may not stand if the agency has misconceived the law," meaning NMFS had misconceived the legal relevance of the precautionary principle and that determinations based on

that misconception were invalid.

The court ruling has implications for regulations in the Delta affecting water supplies, as referenced by Paul Weiland's blog at CalWaterCenter.org. There are broader implications for farmers in the San Joaquin Valley. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is not friendly to public water agencies (PWAs) that have contracts with the State of California and the Bureau of Reclamation to receive water from Northern California. In the last permit issued by CDFW to allow water exports to continue, CDFW instituted 70 new regulations.

The scientific basis for many of the biological measures in the permit is lacking. Several measures "may" help fish, but the application of the best available science is wanting. For example, one regulation—increasing outflow during the fall of wet years to help delta smelt—has not been supported by more than a dozen studies during the last decade. But CDFW seems not to care—if the public water agencies want the water, they must comply with CDFW's regulations. The unsavory recourse is for the PWAs to pursue legal action to protect their water supplies and the integrity of science.

Some of the most egregious measures are being opposed by PWAs. Little is known about the status of these lawsuits because, appropriately, public agencies deal with legal issues in "closed session" board meetings.

Lawsuits are expensive and time-consuming. To be successful, PWAs must also be confident that the best available science supports their position. That requires years to process because much of the research does not address the effectiveness of management regulations that have been implemented to protect aquatic species. That could be done through the rigorous implementation of a process known as "adaptive management." Too often, agencies in Sacramento pay lip service to the process and rarely implement the necessary hypothesis formulation and monitoring required to provide definitive results.

Recognizing deficiencies in the scientific process, the Center for California Water Resources Policy and Management Committee has embarked on a science program financially supported by many water districts in Kern County, to understand the real causes of declines in endangered species. This will identify management actions that may more effectively help the species. However, there is also the need for much stronger legal support.

Unless CDFW knows that their science, when inadequate, will be challenged, water-costing regulations will persist. A decision for farmers and water districts to consider is how much to budget to fight regulations and increased water costs caused by poorly informed regulations. Bad regulations must be challenged because the regulators don't always get it right. Just ask the lobster fishermen.

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India To Remove Retaliatory Tariffs on Almonds, Walnuts



(Photo Ag Alert)

By Ching Lee, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

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India's agreement to remove retaliatory tariffs on some U.S. farm products is seen as a positive development, but with some trade impacts remaining, farmers and agricultural exporters say it may take time to regain market share.

Under a deal reached on June 21 between the U.S. and Indian governments, the South Asian nation will drop additional duties on American almonds, walnuts, apples, chickpeas, and lentils. The duties, to be lifted within 90 days of the agreement, were imposed in retaliation for U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum imports implemented by the Trump administration in 2018.

Tariffs on American goods increase the price that importers pay, making U.S. products less competitive. The higher value of the dollar also has hurt U.S. exporters. With grower prices for almonds and walnuts on a downward trend in recent years, India's repeal of the retaliatory tariffs would provide U.S. exporters improved access to a key market, industry people say.

India remains a top export destination for California agricultural products, including tree nuts, cotton, dairy and processing tomatoes, with total export value reaching nearly \$1 billion in 2020, according to the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

"It has shown amazing growth over the last 10 years, and now it's way in front in terms of being our No. 1 export market," said Richard Waycott, president and CEO of the Almond Board of California.

Valued at \$854 million in 2021, almond exports to India represent 46% of all U.S. agricultural exports, according to the almond board.

With the recent agreement, tariffs will drop from 42 Indian rupees per kilogram to 35 rupees per kilo for in-shell almonds. A rupee is worth \$0.0121, meaning that the in-shell almond tariff will drop by 10 cents. For almond kernels, tariffs will drop from 120 rupees per kilo to 100 rupees per kilo.

Due to the higher existing tariff rates on kernels, India imports almost 100% in-shell almonds, Waycott noted.

He said though he's pleased tariffs have come down for U.S. almonds, California farmers and shippers of the nut remain "at quite a disadvantage" to Australia, which signed a bilateral trade agreement with India that cuts tariff rates in half.

Instead of paying the current 35 rupees per kilo, for example, importers pay 17 and a half rupees per kilo for Australian in-shell almonds. With the tariff reduction, Waycott said Australian almond shipments to India have increased.

The Golden State remains the world's largest almond producer, accounting for more than 80% of global supplies. That means there aren't too many places India could turn to for almonds, and India will "continue to be a customer of ours regardless of the tariffs," Waycott said.

California almond exports to India rose despite the retaliatory tariffs, the almond board reported. But with the Australia-India trade deal, it has allowed almonds from Down Under to enter India with a larger market share than they've had, Waycott added.

"That is a very discouraging phenomenon," he said, considering "a lot of California grower dollars" have gone into building the India market during the past 30 years. What the industry needs, Waycott said, is "something much larger," such as a U.S.-India bilateral agreement, "to put us on an even footing with Australia."

But he noted the U.S. government currently "is not interested in forging those."

Don Barton, president of GoldRiver Orchards, a walnut grower, processor and shipper in San Joaquin County, described elimination of the 20% retaliatory tariff on U.S. in-shell walnuts as "a huge lift" for those in the walnut business. He said it will now allow California growers and exporters of the nut to "compete on a level playing field with Chile," the world's third-largest walnut producer and one of the state's biggest competitors in export markets.

Chileans, Barton noted, have "taken full advantage of the lower tariff they were operating under" since 2018, when India imposed the retaliatory tariffs on U.S. walnuts. Indian buyers like Chilean walnuts, he said, and Chile will "have a leg up on California for the foreseeable future, even with the removal of the retaliatory tariff."

Robert Verloop, CEO of the California Walnut

Commission, said many factors besides trade tariffs during the past few years "created a very challenging global marketplace" that affected sales and distribution of California walnuts to India, resulting in lower grower returns.

Those impacts include pandemic-induced supply chain and transportation disruptions, overstocked supply pipelines, global economic downturn, inflationary pressures, high dollar values, and persistent drought and heat that damaged the 2022-23 crop.

He said he expects the tariff reduction "will allow for more equitable access to the India market." Plus, with the current California walnut crop looking "outstanding" and the economy growing globally and in India, he said "we hope to see demand and moderate shipment volumes to start improving immediately."

For GoldRiver Orchards, Barton said lifting the tariff will certainly help in the long term. More immediately, impact of the change will be "minimal," he said, because "our trade contacts in India will have to be rebuilt after a five-year hiatus due to the tariff trade barrier."

"This will take some time," Barton said, adding that although he anticipates doing some business in

India during the 2023-24 crop year, "it will likely take another two to three years beyond this one to fully rebuild our presence in India."

Even though California ships virtually no apples to India, withdrawal of the 20% retaliatory tariff on U.S. apples was a welcome change, said Todd Sanders, executive director of the California Apple Commission.

Nearly one-third of the nation's apple crop goes to foreign markets, with exports valued at about \$1 billion, according to the U.S. Apple Association. Prior to 2018, India was the No. 2 export market for U.S. apples—and quickly growing.

When India retaliated by bringing total tariffs on U.S. apples to 70%, sales fell to nearly zero, costing U.S. growers half a billion dollars in sales, the association said.

Most U.S. apple exports are shipped from the Pacific Northwest, and when the retaliatory tariffs "essentially vaporized" the India market, Sanders said it created a "trickle-down effect on every other state."

"Those apples that would have normally gone to India now needed a new home, which led to the displacement of our apples," he said.

The tariff change means more accessible markets, Sanders said, which will take pressure off the domestic market and international markets closer to the U.S., namely Mexico and Canada.

He said the commission and other apple organizations around the U.S. have been working with Congress and the Biden administration to reduce tariffs, and "we applaud the result."

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Assembly Speaker Salutes Farming Legacy



San Benito County Farm Bureau President Donald Wirz, left, talks with new Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas, right, while farmer Pat Wirz looks on during a June 30 gathering in Sacramento. Rivas, also from San Benito County, chaired the chamber's agriculture committee before becoming speaker. (Photo by Caleb Hampton)

By Caleb Hampton, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

Reprinted with permission from the California Farm Bureau Federation

For the first time in a generation, the California State Assembly is led by a lawmaker from a rural district who grew up in an unincorporated farm community and whose family has a background in agriculture.

New Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas, D-Hollister, who until last month chaired the Committee on Agriculture, was sworn in June 30.

“My family and I, we grew up in farmworker housing, and today I stand before you as a speaker of the California State Assembly,” Rivas said at the swearing-in ceremony. “That is the California Dream.”

During the event, a group of farmworkers cheered from the Assembly floor. Growers from his Central Coast district also traveled to Sacramento to congratulate Rivas, expressing hope that his background will translate into sensible legislation around farming and adjacent issues.

“To have someone who has a working knowledge and lived experience (of agriculture) in that position gives me hope that agriculture and the state legislature will have a positive relationship,” said Donald Wirz, president of the San Benito County Farm Bureau, who has known Rivas since both were in high school together. “I’m hoping that he brings a pragmatic touch.”

In the 1960s, Rivas’ grandfather immigrated to California’s Central Coast from Mexico and began working as a grape picker for Almaden Vineyards, later becoming a mechanic for the company.

As a child, Rivas lived with his mother, brother, grandfather and several other family members in a grower-provided duplex in Paicines, an unincorporated community in San Benito County.

When he was around 8 years old, his family bought a house and moved to the nearby town of Hollister. Although Rivas struggled in his youth with a stutter, which he overcame through speech therapy, people who know Rivas describe him as outgoing yet humble.

“I’ve known him to be an incredibly hardworking and disciplined and friendly person, from the time that we were 14 years old on the high school track team,” Wirz said.

After graduating from high school as class president, Rivas enrolled at Butte College in Oroville. He later earned degrees in government from Sacramento State University and in public administration from

San Jose State University.

Rivas got his introduction to state politics from two pioneering Latino Democrats from the Central Coast, working as a field representative for former Assembly Member Simon Salinas and as a campaign staffer for state Sen. Anna Caballero, D-Salinas.

After being sworn in as speaker, Rivas credited both as mentors who paved the way for him. “I’m not anyone special,” he said. “I stand on the shoulders of those that came before me.”

Rivas was elected at 31 to the San Benito County Board of Supervisors, where he served two terms. In 2018, he moved on to the state Assembly, representing a district that stretches from Gilroy to King City, including much of the Salinas Valley and its multibillion dollar agricultural sector.

As an Assemblymember, Rivas, now 43, has worked to secure funding for farmers employing sustainable agricultural practices, for farmworker housing and aid, and for research on crop diseases. While serving as agriculture committee chair, he participated in farm tours across the state.

“The challenges we face, we know the speaker is aware of them,” California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson said at a reception held for Rivas after he was sworn in. Johansson later told him, “We look forward to working with you. We look forward to challenging you, because we know your role changes as speaker.”

As speaker of California’s 80-member Assembly, Rivas wields more power than any lawmaker in Sacramento outside the governor’s office. The speaker appoints committee chairs, controls the flow of legislation by scheduling hearings and votes, and negotiates the state budget with the governor.

After winning over a majority of his colleagues during a monthslong power struggle, Rivas took the speaker’s gavel from Anthony Rendon, D-Lakewood, who presided over the chamber for seven years.

“This is a really important inflection point for California agriculture,” said Lt. Gov. Eleni Kounalakis. “I absolutely have faith that he will help bridge the divides that exist, and we will get to the point where California will truly celebrate what we are as the nut basket, as the fruit basket, as the row crops basket feeding the country and feeding the world.”

Rivas, whose grandfather organized on behalf of farmworkers alongside Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, met with leaders from the United Farm Workers and California Farm Bureau on the day

he became speaker.

California Farm Bureau Administrator Jim Houston spoke about the importance of “authentic relationships that allow collaboration and allow the growth and problem-solving that is necessary.”

Past and present lawmakers also praised Rivas’ ability to bridge divides and overcome differences. “There are some issues that really divide us in our community,” Caballero said. “Everybody has confidence that he is going to be able to be collaborative, to bring people together and to help us to solve some of the issues.”

With lawmakers eligible to serve up to 12 years in the Legislature, Rivas may have a unique chance to drive state policy for years to come.

“He’s got the opportunity to be in that position for quite some time and to influence California politics,” said Wirz, the San Benito County Farm Bureau president. “Hopefully, the way that he influences politics is in a way that is friendly towards agriculture and all the parts of the state that ag touches.”

Those areas include labor issues, water rights and infrastructure, and environmental policies, said Wirz, who is a winemaker for Delicato Family Wines and whose family grows winegrapes and raises beef cattle in San Benito County.

“I’m hoping that his perspective makes it so that legislation that comes through specifically for things like water and for labor have got a pragmatic bent to it,” Wirz said. “A lot of times legislators may have great intentions in these areas, but when it comes to writing legislation, that lack of experience makes it so that they think that they’re doing something

positive, but there are unintended consequences.”

Wirz added, “I would like to think that someone that has Robert’s life experience and his legislative experience at the county and state level would be able to say, ‘That sounds great, but will this work?’”

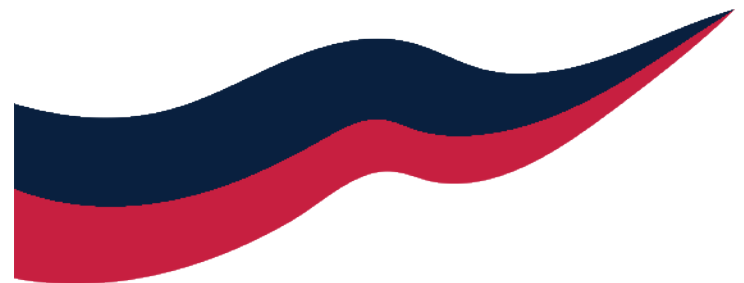
Addressing a gathering of agricultural leaders, Rivas said his approach will be informed not only by his own experience but by the experiences of his constituents and by Californians of all stripes.

“The best results in the work we do is when we get buy-in from every group—all the stakeholders—and I know that’s challenging in this hyper-partisan environment, but that’s the role we have to do, bringing people together and stretching and trying to build and find that consensus,” he said. “I appreciate the Farm Bureau. I appreciate all the work you guys do and look forward to engaging with you moving forward.”



The grandson of a vineyard worker, Rivas grew up in farmworker housing in San Benito County. He served two terms as a county supervisor before getting elected to the state Assembly in 2018. (Photo provided by the Office of Robert Rivas, Speaker of the Assembly)

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Kern County Hosts Potato Variety Trial

Potatoes are graded on marketability, yield, and resilience.



Photo by Natalie Willis

Natalie Willis, Reporter, Valley Ag Voice

On Wed., the UC Cooperative Extension in Kern County and California Potato Research Advisory Board displayed new potato varieties at Hart Memorial Park. Growers, seed sellers, and potato enthusiasts convened in a small section of the park to inspect various piles of potatoes, rated by their marketable and total yields.

The field day is an alliance between the Southwestern Regional trial and the observational trial of private breeders, explained Jaspreet Sidhu, vegetable crops farm advisor at UCCE. The collaboration features growers and experts from California, Colorado and Texas that publicly breed new varieties of potatoes to test for Kern County growers. The Southwestern Trial featured 15 entries this year, seven of which were replicated in Kern, but the total Observational Trial highlighted 70 varieties.

Given the unique climate and topography of the Central Valley, Sidhu explained the importance of testing potato varieties for adaptability.

According to Sidhu, growers plant seed from breeders in the Southwestern region and other countries such as Canada and the Netherlands to observe how they will fare in future seasons. Potato performance is dictated by yields, tuber size, skin, color, and disease resistance. The potatoes were planted in early February and harvested on June 19, two days before the trial field day.

The UCCE has hosted the Kern variety trial for 15 years and relies heavily on grower feedback to modify future trials. According to Sidhu, growers provide the direction for breeders based on their current marketable interests, such as bite-sized potatoes.

"We had a few varieties that performed well, and based on grower input, I think a couple of them have made their way to Kern County," Sidhu said. "Another thing is that the growers here have expressed interest in the bite-sized or the small potatoes...so they are testing to see how it performs."

Spectators at the field event received a collection of data from the Southwest Regional Trial entries that factored every distinct variety's clone and marketable yield. Sidhu pointed to varieties that performed exceedingly well, including two chippers—Atlantic and Snowden.

While most varieties were replicated in Kern, a few newer varieties are still in observational trials.

"We look at them for like two or three seasons and make our decisions," Sidhu said. "Because we need to know how it adapts to our climate, how it performs, the disease resistance, [and] the yields."

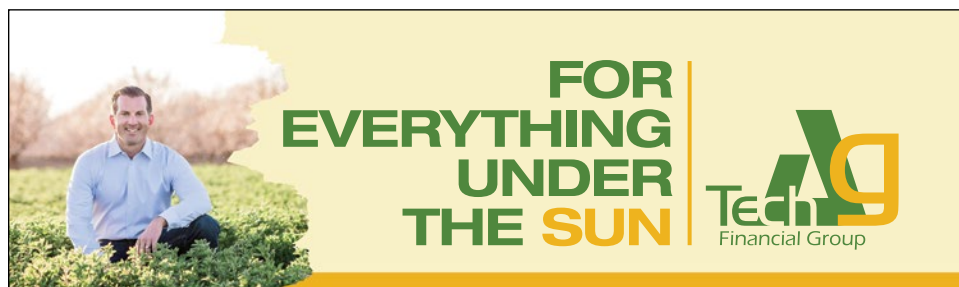
According to David Holm, professor of horticulture at Colorado State University, the trial is a foundation for the future market and provides an indication of what crops will work in Kern's climate.

"We've made a lot of varieties over the years, and some of them work quite well here, but there's always a transition," Holm said. "You've got to always find something better that's maybe newer, has better disease resistance, or whatever other traits are important."

The fluctuating conditions in the Central Valley, specifically in terms of climate, have a sizable impact on a potato's performance and the specific problems they may develop such as section growth or hollow hearts, Holm explained. The industry in Kern County is a high stakes game, he continued, due to elevated land prices and resources that are generally higher than other production areas.

As the Potato Breeding and Selection Project Leader, Holm's research highlights breeding that will improve postharvest as well as other processing qualities. He has spent roughly 30 years working with Colorado and out-of-state growers to test and observe new potato varieties.

"It's not much different than raising kids, really," Holm said. "Every kid is [an] individual, and it's the same thing with potatoes—they're like individuals. You just have to be able to learn what's the best way to grow them."



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The Golden State produces more than 400 farm commodities, but less than one-fourth is covered by crop insurance. The California Farm Bureau seeks expanded coverage in the 2023 Farm Bill. (Photo California Farm Bureau Federation)

COMMENTARY: Farm Bureau: Protect more Crops in 2023 Farm Bill

By Matthew Viohl, Director of Federal Policy at the California Farm Bureau

Reprinted with permission from the California Farm Bureau Federation

With summer in full swing, lawmakers in Washington, D.C., are scrambling to get the 2023 Farm Bill done by this fall. Intended to be updated every five years, this legislation remains critical for the nation's agricultural sector.

The money authorized in the bill helps fund a significant portion of U.S. Department of Agriculture programs. Although it is known as the "farm bill," it is important to note that much of the legislation's funding goes directly to food benefit programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. Scoring by the Congressional Budget Office put the 10-year cost at around \$1.5 trillion, 81% of which would go to SNAP alone.

The rest of the funding would go to myriad support programs, ranging from crop insurance to research, forestry and conservation. California Farm Bureau has worked with

our state's congressional delegation and the American Farm Bureau Federation to push for crop insurance to be one of the top-line priorities for our industry.

California produces roughly 400 agricultural commodities, but less than a quarter of them are covered by a specific crop insurance program. As disasters such as drought, wildfires and flooding continue to negatively impact producers in the West, the need for more support has grown. In recent years, this has taken the form of emergency disaster assistance such as the Emergency Response Program, formerly the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus.

However, the reliance on what is known as "ad hoc" disaster funds can be extremely challenging for those who may need to access them. Given the acrimonious political nature of the nation's capital these days, it is often difficult to secure one-time disaster fund approvals. Not only that, but the slow and deliberative process of Congress means producers are often left waiting years before they receive financial aid. This is simply not a sustainable practice if the goal is to keep

our industry afloat.

Thankfully, this message has been generally well received in our discussions with lawmakers in Washington, D.C. There seems to be a majority belief that crop insurance must be expanded to help fill the gaps in support, meaning that California farmers and ranchers could be in line to see help in the coming years.

Elsewhere, we are also pushing for a robust forestry title that truly helps ensure our land management practices work effectively and efficiently. Ongoing regulatory hurdles have bogged down recovery efforts in areas impacted by wildfires. Despite the growing threats of more blazes happening, jurisdictional challenges between public and private land ownership have complicated prevention efforts.

It is our hope that many of the changes we seek in this area will put California in a significantly better spot to combat these challenges. As many people learned in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere on the East Coast a few weeks ago during smoky

and haze-filled commutes due to wildfires in Canada, the impacts can be felt hundreds or even thousands of miles away. Fire prevention and better land management practices benefit more than just agriculture.

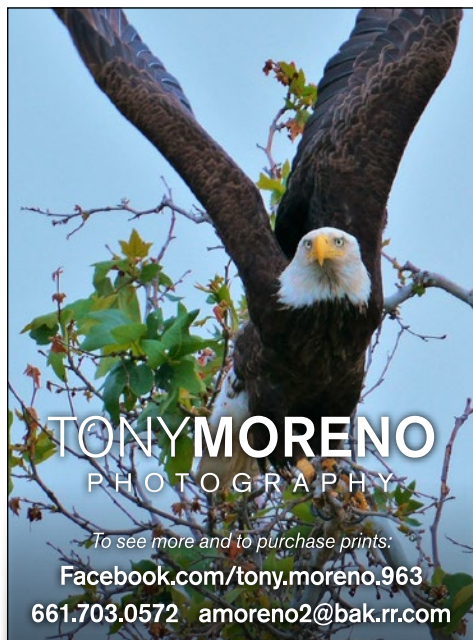
Californians are also often at a disadvantage in accessing many USDA programs merely by nature of where they live. Adjusted gross income limits baked into many of these programs often restrict who may access them. The intent is to prevent large-scale operators from using benefits or resources intended for smaller producers. Unfortunately, given the costs of land and doing business in California, our AGI limits are often much higher than you might find in the middle of Montana or Wyoming.

To address this, we have worked with several offices to push for a fix on income limits that would consider the relative costs of doing business out West. While this might be a more challenging ask, our state is the largest agricultural producer in the country and USDA resources should not be unfairly applied to leave at-risk farmers and ranchers in the dust.

These priorities scratch only the surface of what the 2023 Farm Bill will encapsulate. We pushed for changes in nearly all of the bill's 12 different titles. Trade and market challenges, increased research funding and workforce development issues within USDA and its field offices are just some other areas we've asked lawmakers to address.

It remains to be seen whether the Sept. 30 deadline can be met. Congress only very recently closed its public and internal portals for farm bill recommendations. Given the size and scope of the legislation, it will take much work for them to get it done prior to the deadline. Some have suggested a short-term extension will provide the needed time to pass the bipartisan bill.

In any case, California Farm Bureau pushes ahead with the expectation that we can deliver a big win for agriculture, especially for our western producers.



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Garces FFA Hosts Farmer's Academy

Garces is the first California school to participate in Fun Farmer's Academy.

Natalie Willis, Reporter, Valley Ag Voice

“Why are farmers important to us?” Ashleigh Rossi, Garces Memorial agriculture education teacher, and FFA advisor, asked a room full of students.

“They feed us,” they replied.

From June 19 to June 22, Garces Memorial’s FFA students hosted a week-long summer camp to promote agricultural education and awareness for K-8 students. The program, Fun Farmer’s Academy, was established by Abbey Brown in Atlanta, Georgia, to aid FFA chapters across the nation in getting younger generations involved in agriculture. Garces is the first school in California to adopt the summer course.

According to Rossi, Brown’s program gave her a foundation to build on as she adapted the agenda to California’s landscape and resources. The four-day program boasts a variety of activities, including obstacle courses, creating seed bombs, and a scavenger hunt. Students also discuss the importance of agriculture in daily life and learn about various agriculture processes such as ear notching. Eighteen kids attended the program this year,

with ages ranging from 6 to 13.

After seeing how the younger students at OLPH interacted with the livestock at Garces, Rossi felt a need to connect that generation with agriculture and allow them to experience the connection firsthand. She explained that her primary objective is for the kids to enjoy themselves and learn more about agriculture as well as to allow FFA students to experience leadership.

“Not only are we teaching the little kids about fun facts that they wouldn’t know or wouldn’t realize in their daily life, but it’s coming from our young leaders, and it gives them an opportunity to kind of put their skills to work,” Rossi said.

Ten FFA officers helped Rossi lead and modify the program.

While the school is the first in the state to implement Fun Farmer’s Academy, Garces did not hold an FFA chapter until 2018. When Rossi established the program, 27 students joined. Almost five years later, the chapter includes 80 students and held its first showcase in May.

This year, Rossi explained that FFA students will have the opportunity to enter the Career and Leadership Development Events for



Photo by Natalie Willis

various competitions and conferences. She pointed proudly to a wall in the far corner decorated with various ribbons and accolades. The transition to the CDE world will be gradual as Rossi and her students balance additional work and activities.

“More than the competitions or other things

that go along with that, I want them to have fun first,” Rossi said. “I want them to laugh; I want them to make memories. It’s about riding in the car. It’s about going to stay in hotel rooms. It’s about silly things like this that I think they look back on and say, ‘I’m glad I did that.’”



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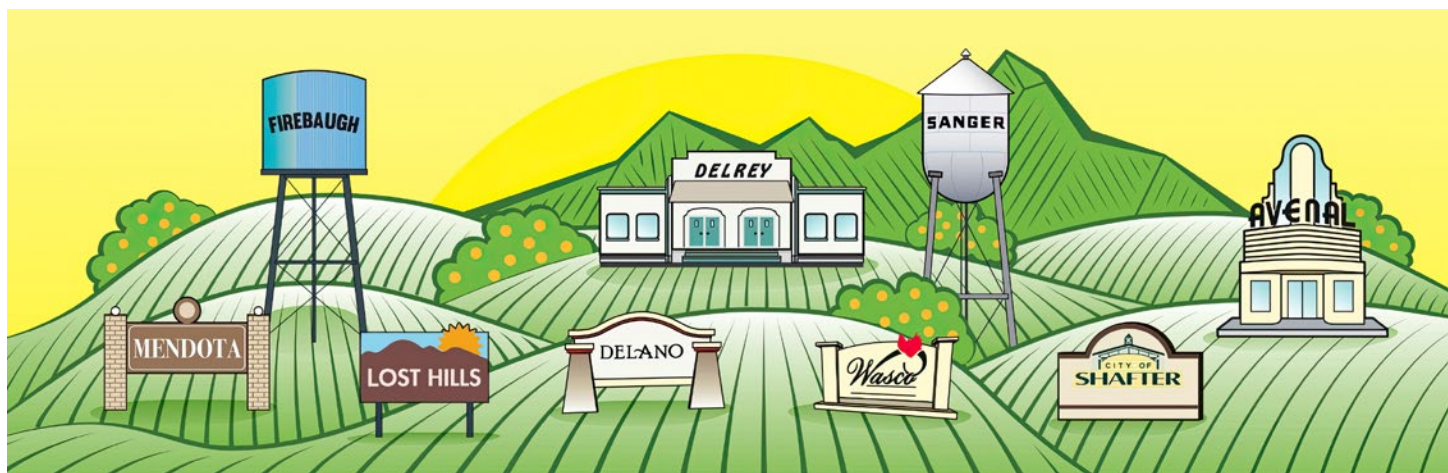
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The Wonderful Company Opens Application Window For \$1 Million Central Valley Community Grants

Grants Empower Innovative Initiatives at Schools and Nonprofit Organizations, Building on the Company's Dedication to the Health and Well-Being of Local Communities.



Press Release provided by the Wonderful Company

The Wonderful Company, one of the largest and most philanthropic privately held companies in the United States, is pleased to announce that its \$1 million Wonderful Community Grants application process is now live, building on a long-standing commitment to help local organizations and schools in California's Central Valley further their missions and programs. Over the last eight years, The Wonderful Company and its co-owners, Lynda and Stewart Resnick, through their foundation, have awarded over \$6 million in Wonderful Community Grants

to more than 77 nonprofits and 165 schools in the San Joaquin Valley.

Wonderful Community Grants are designed to help drive increased engagement with local and regional organizations, with funds directly supporting game-changing initiatives focused on health and wellness, recreation, community beautification, art, and social services. These local programs not only demonstrate a genuine community need but also deliver tangible and visible results.

Every year, The Wonderful Company and its co-owners invest more than \$30 million

in community development, education, and health and wellness initiatives across the Central Valley and beyond. This program is at the center of the company's ongoing commitment to being Wonderful Neighbors by supporting the communities its employees call home, fostering a sense of inspiration, and increased involvement with local and regional organizations.

"The community grants program is an essential part of our philanthropic work and a dynamic catalyst for change," said Andy Anzaldo, chief operating officer of corporate social responsibility at The Wonderful

Company. "Giving back is ingrained in our company's culture, and we firmly believe that focusing our efforts on the community level is the most effective way to make a positive and lasting impact."

Organizations in the Central Valley are encouraged to apply. To learn more about the application process and eligibility requirements, join the Wonderful Philanthropy team at one of the following upcoming virtual information sessions. Visit www.wonderful-communitygrants.com to sign up for one of the below:

- Monday, July 10: 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
- Wednesday, July 26: 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- Thursday, August 3: 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

All applications must be received by Thursday, August 31, at midnight PDT for consideration. The 2023–2024 class of Wonderful Community Grants recipients will be announced in October 2023.

For more information and to submit an application, please visit www.wonderfulcommunitygrants.com or email communitygrants@wonderful.com.

About Wonderful Community Grants

The Wonderful Company and its co-owners, Lynda and Stewart Resnick, have a long-standing commitment to investing in the communities where their employees live in and work, especially in California's Central Valley. In addition to the millions of dollars the Resnicks and The Wonderful Company invest in the Central Valley every year, the Wonderful Community Grants program provides critical funding to organizations impacting change throughout the area. Local governments, area nonprofits, schools, and faith-based organizations can apply for grants in the categories of health and wellness, recreation, art, social services, and community beautification for amounts between \$1,000 and \$100,000. Funds are available for program development/expansion, innovation, small-scale capital improvements, technology, and equipment. More information about Wonderful Community Grants can be found at www.wonderfulcommunitygrants.com.

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Citrus Threat Contained

Continued from PAGE 6

long-term solutions to HLB, including breeding disease-resistant citrus varieties.

In December, Congress approved \$1 million to establish a citrus breeding program at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service field station in Parlier. The funding will be re-appropriated annually. Additionally, the House Appropriations Committee provided an additional \$1 million in federal funding for the Parlier program in June.

The program is an expansion of the existing USDA citrus breeding program in Florida. It will identify new varieties that are best suited for changing climatic pressures such as drought, consumer taste preferences, and resistance to pests and diseases such as HLB.

The Florida and California breeding programs, along with the efforts of the citrus breeding program at the University of California, Riverside, are working together on behalf of the industry.

The 2023 federal budget also included funding for the Citrus Health Response Program, which supplements industry and state funding for on-the-ground efforts aimed at preventing the spread of HLB, and continued funding for the Huanglongbing Multi-Agency Coordination group, which funds research programs aimed at identifying short-term solutions to HLB.

“Florida is our living laboratory for research,” said Victoria Hornbaker, who directs California’s citrus protection program. “We are all in agreement that resistant varieties are as close we can

come to a solution. It is a way to buy time for scientists to find a cure.”

Kevin Ball is a grower in Ventura County, which is now under quarantine for psyllid presence.

He said growers are feeling the pinch of spray costs, as three area-wide treatments are encouraged annually that kill a variety of pests, including the psyllid. In addition to the 7 cents per carton assessment growers pay to help fund the CPDPP, growers also must absorb the extra costs of covering fruit loads with tarps during transportation. If a psyllid is located in a nearby orchard, additional sprays are mandated.

“It’s expensive all the way around,” he said. “Last year and this year, citrus prices have not been very good, and it’s having an effect on a lot of growers.”

He said no psyllids have been found in the area since November.

“But they’ll be back. We’ll be ready for it and really take advantage of opportunities to knock them back in order to stay in business,” Ball said. “Growers who want to stay in business see it’s in their own self-interest to do their part to keep the bug out of our groves. You don’t want to be ‘Patient Zero’ with HLB.”

Despite California’s success to date, Ball said growers can’t become complacent.

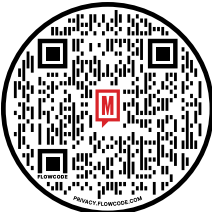
“We haven’t won anything yet,” he said. “We must keep HLB out of commercial groves long enough for us to have effective tools to eliminate the disease. We’re fighting for time until we get that magic bullet.”



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Next Phase of Recycled Water Begins For California

State advances nation-leading proposed regulations to convert wastewater to high-quality drinking water.

Press Release provided by the State Water Board

SACRAMENTO – Achieving a major milestone in the state’s efforts to maximize the potential of recycled water, the State Water Resources Control Board announced today proposed regulations that would allow for water systems to add wastewater that has been treated to levels meeting or exceeding all drinking water standards to their potable supplies. The process, known as direct potable reuse, will enable systems to generate a climate-resilient water source while reducing the amount of wastewater they release to rivers and the ocean. This development advances Gov. Newsom’s all-of-the-above Water Supply Strategy, which includes the goal of recycling and reusing at least 800,000 acre-feet of water per year by 2030. This turning point in California’s history with recycled water, which began in the mid-20th century with the use of recycled water for crops, comes after an expert panel of 12 scientists and engineers evaluated work by the State Water Board’s Division of Drinking Water and determined that the proposed regulations are protective of public health. The regulations are the most advanced in the nation and reinforce California’s position as a leader of innovative solutions to climate challenges. They are now open for public comment and subject to revision based on that input. “This moment has been some time in the making because we have been careful and thorough to produce regulations that ensure, down to a chemical level, that water treated to these

standards will be pure and wholesome,” said Darrin Polhemus, deputy director for the Division of Drinking Water. “In fact, the extensive treatment requirements we’ve proposed mean that direct potable reuse processes in California will produce water of higher quality and lower risk than many traditional drinking water sources.” Direct potable reuse relies entirely on immediate, multi-barrier treatment that can recycle wastewater to drinking water standards in a matter of hours. This contrasts to the method currently being deployed in major projects launched throughout the state, called indirect potable reuse, which further improves treated wastewater over time through groundwater recharge or dilution with surface water. While no formal direct potable reuse projects can be initiated in California until the regulations are adopted, water agencies in Santa Clara, San Diego, and the city of Los Angeles have launched pilot projects in recent years. “We’ve seen real enthusiasm and interest from major urban water agencies, who are the ones that will take direct potable reuse forward, adding it to their water supply portfolios to increase resiliency,” added Polhemus. “California has been a leader for years in water recycling, and this last step—going directly from treatment to usage as drinking water—builds on that experience and the expertise of scientists and engineers who have worked with recycled water for many years.” The board will consider adoption of the regulations before the end of the year.

USDA Final Forecast Projects Slightly Larger 2023 Almond Crop



Photo provided by Almond Board of California.

Harvest 2023 expected to be up 1% from 2022 despite stormy bloom and cool spring.

Press Release provided by the Almond Board of California

MODESTO, Calif. – The 2023 California Almond Objective Measurement Report published Wednesday by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA-NASS) estimates that the crop harvested in 2023 will come in at 2.6 billion meat pounds, 1% above last year’s 2.57 billion pounds.

The estimate is up 4% from USDA-NASS’s Subjective Forecast in May and comes after one of the wettest winters on record, limited bee flights because of rain and wind, and a cool spring. USDA’s Forecasted yield is 1,880 pounds per acre, down 20 pounds from 2022 and the lowest since 2009.

The slight increase comes partly because of larger nut size and despite difficult conditions, USDA-NASS said. “Record level rainfall and unprecedented stormy conditions hindered bee pollination activity in orchards across the state. Cooler than normal temperatures continued through early summer and delayed the maturity of the crop,” the report said.

“Almond farmers have faced a series of challenges in recent years, and this wet, cool winter and spring created different obstacles after three years of drought. Yet the forecast for a larger crop shows the resiliency of California almond orchards,” said Richard Waycott, president and CEO

of the Almond Board of California (ABC). “Almond farmers have worked hard while dealing with higher production and financing costs and a bloom with highly compromised bee flight hours. They are very thankful, however, for the abundant rain and snow which vastly improved the water situation, at least for now, and for shipping logistics that continue to improve. The perseverance of California’s almond farmers is admirable as is their commitment to meet future growth in global demand with high quality California almonds.”

The forecast for the average nut set per tree is 3,953, 3 percent down from 2022. The Nonpareil average nut set of 4,004 is 1 percent more than last year. The average kernel weight for all varieties sampled was 1.67 grams, up 14% from the 2022 average weight. The Nonpareil average kernel weight was 1.69 grams, up 9 percent over from last year.

The 2023 Objective Report is based on actual almond counts using a statistically rigorous methodology. The survey was conducted from May 26 to July 3 and 1,824 trees were sampled in 912 orchards, 32 more orchards than in 2022. USDA-NASS conducts the annual Subjective Forecast, Objective Report, and Acreage Report to provide the California almond industry with the data needed to make informed business decisions.

John Deere Acquires Overspray Technology

Natalie Willis, Reporter, Valley Ag Voice

John Deere acquired Smart Apply Inc.—a precision spraying equipment company—on July 13, citing that the technology will allow the company to gain insight into high-value crop production. According to Dustin Lemmon, John Deere’s public relations manager, Smart Apply technology is based on research and field testing by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as well as multiple universities.

Almost 95% of the pesticides produced are used in agriculture for crop protection, according to a study from the National Library of Medicine. While this results in higher crop production, waste, and runoff can pose a threat to human and environmental health. The goal of precision sprayers is to mitigate problems high-value crop growers face as well as to increase efficiency, precision, and profitability, Lemmon explained.

John Deere began working with Smart Apply in 2020 to provide John Deere dealers with a durable air-blast sprayer that offers precise coverage. In a press release, Mike Bailey, director of small tractor and HVC production systems, noted that the acquisition is a progression of the partnership.

“It’s a continuation of our commitment to high-value crop customers and dealers, further expanding a portfolio of solutions to help growers address their biggest challenges around labor, input

costs, and regulatory requirements, and achieve environmental goals,” Bailey said.

Lemmon explained that Smart Apply’s precision spraying technology decreases chemical runoff by roughly 93% as well as reduces airborne drift by 87%. As it sprays, Smart Apply collects data with documentation of its sustainability achievements.

Smart Apply operates through light detection and ranging technology which analyzes the presence of individual trees and vines in a given area in order to adjust the spray volume. According to the press release, the system adjusts automatically.

The spray technology is also equipped with GPS-enabled software to capture a broad spectrum of data as it sprays, documenting volume, chemical savings, tree counts, tree health, and the number of acres sprayed.

The increasing demand for high-value crops presented John Deere with the opportunity to expand its emphasis on supplying precision technology to producers. In a press release, Jerry Johnson, president and CEO at Smart Apply, explained that the precision technology will solve several sustainability issues for high-value producers.

“Both John Deere and Smart Apply recognize the importance of high-value crops and are committed to investing in innovation and technology that best serves producers who raise high-value crops and helps solve their problems,” Johnson said.

Kern Introduces New SGMA Plan Manager

Natalie Willis, Reporter, Valley Ag Voice

As Groundwater Sustainability Agencies continue to implement various sustainability plans under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, Kern County brought on a new SGMA Plan Manager to coordinate the Kern subbasin’s 19 GSAs.



Kristin Pittack, SGMA Plan Manager

Born and raised in Kern County, Kristin Pittack’s interest in water policy and planning began at an early age—she recalls trips with her parents to lakes, rivers, and creeks to sail, kayak, and fish. She continued this path into adulthood and wrote her master’s thesis on SGMA before it was officially implemented.

Pittack explored various careers in planning as the Kern County and City of Bakersfield planner before transitioning to water resources.

“As the former City Water Resources Planner, my understanding of surface and groundwater in Kern County became not just a job but a personal passion,” Pittack said.

The implementation process for the subbasin began in 2017 when the GSAs formed and submitted GSPs to

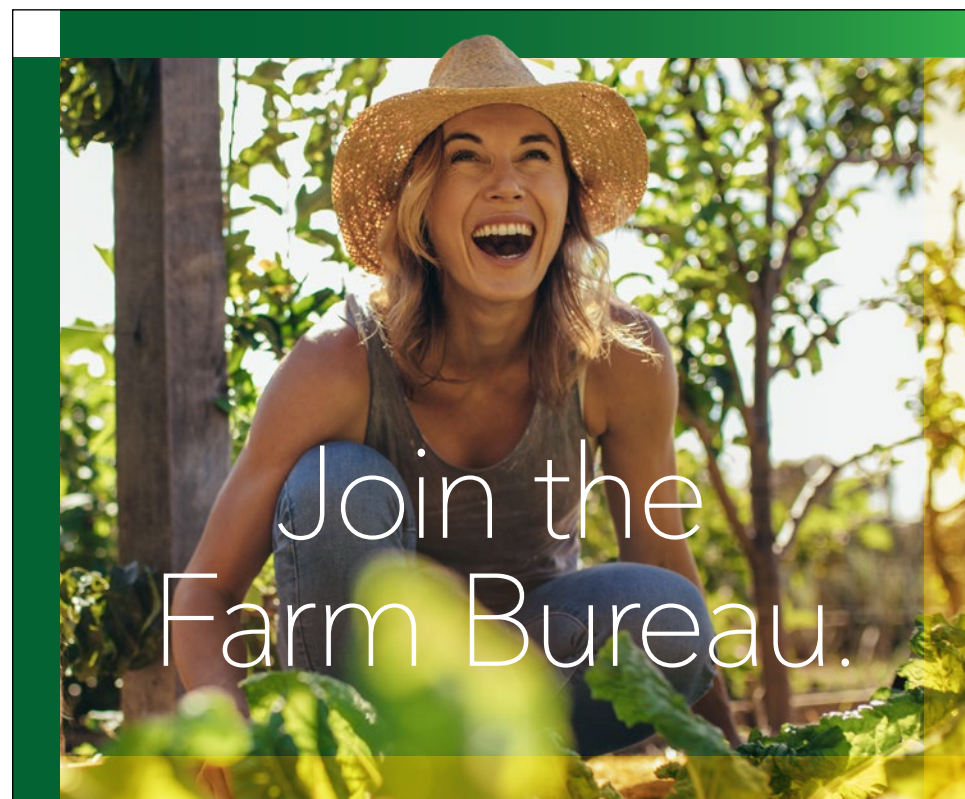
the Department of Water Resources in 2020 for review. Pittack explained that on March 2, the DWR determined the subbasin was deficient in its implementation of SGMA.

DWR’s report noted that the primary issue was a lack of coordination between the GSAs and state agencies. This presented a need for a planner to promote collaboration amongst the various GSAs.

Because SGMA requires annual reports on water budgets, management, and groundwater elevation readings, there is a need for effective coordination between the GSAs.

Pittack explained that while the county—for decades—has implemented water resource management practices, SGMA has specific guidelines that require the subbasin to present the overall water usage between agricultural and domestic water users.

“[The agricultural] industry is already seeing impacts from SGMA on local farming operations, which is changing how water is used and managed throughout the Subbasin,” Pittack said. “This is all new territory for both the Subbasin and the state, and I expect that creative solutions will continue to develop to support sustainability of local groundwater resources.”



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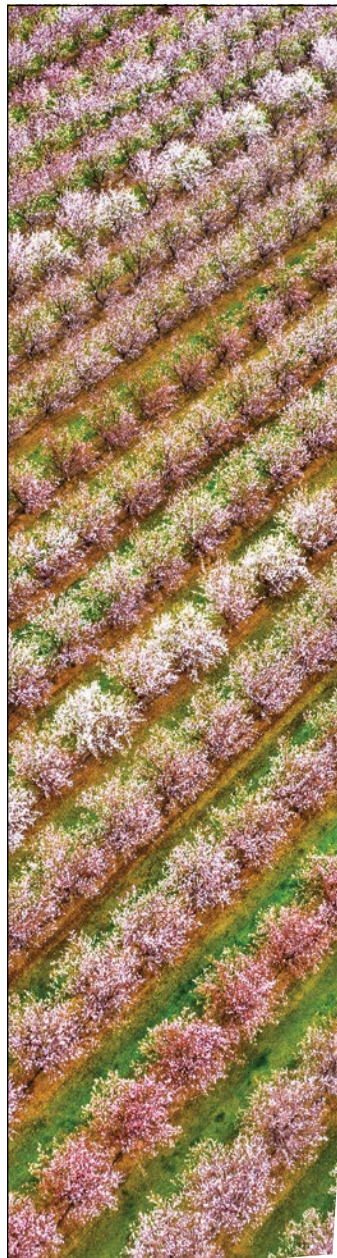
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THE LETTER OF PAUL TO
EPHESIANS

(Photo: Tyler Olson / Adobe Stock)

Ephesians 2, Dead in Our Sins

By Joshua Stevens
Faith Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.¹

Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians between 60-62 AD, likely directed to all Christians in Asia Minor, not just the Ephesus church. In the first ten verses of chapter two, Paul focuses on two big ideas: a declaration of God's purpose that weaves throughout the chapter and the emphasis on regeneration from death to life.

Paul comes out swinging, reminding those reading where they came from. They were not only dead but also followed Satan and worldly desires. They were not separate from anyone else. These first three verses should be nothing but humbling to any Christian who recognizes where we all started.

But this passage was not just written to humble those reading or to remind us of our own depravity. Even in these first three verses, we are given hints of where the message is leading. Consistently, we see that this passage is in the past tense and creates a timeline for the regenerative process, which brings us to spiritual life.

This is particularly important in places like Ephesus because of the presence of Greek philosophy that brought life to Christian Gnosticism. This issue of Gnosticism in Ephesus and Asia Minor was so important that Paul, in his letter to Timothy, instructed him to stay in Ephesus and continue to guide them so that they wouldn't be swayed by false teachers (1

Timothy 1:3-7).

These false teachers are believed to have emphasized works-based salvation, overexaggerating Old Testament figures and requiring circumcision and dietary restrictions as a part of salvation. 2

In Timothy 1:3:8-11, Paul explains that the law is good when used correctly. As Walter Liefeld writes, “One legitimate use of law is to point out sin in whatever form it may take in a given culture.”³

Paul is doing the same thing here as he instructed Timothy, not explicitly telling the church the law's purpose but taking a roundabout method to show them that they were dead—nothing they did brought them life or even began the process.

Next month, we will continue in Ephesians 2, but until then, I hope we can use these few verses as reminders of where we came from and where those we preach the gospel to are currently. Let us have grace and patience when given opportunities to show and share the gospel.

Will you pray with me?

Dear Lord, thank you for the opportunities we have to freely share the gifts you have given us with those around us and the tools to learn more about you daily. Help us to see those occasions where we are allowed to share the saving work for Christ and to do so in a way that honors and glorifies you. Continue your work in us, and make us more like you. Let us serve you faithfully and well with every breath you have given us. Thank you, Lord.

In Jesus' name, we pray,
Amen.

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

2 Rydeynik, M. &. (2014). *The Moody Bible Commentary*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.

3 Liefeld, W. L. (1999). *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. New International Version Application Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Kern County Wildlife Profile: Burrowing Owl



(photo by Moose Peterson / MoosePeterson.com)

The burrowing owl is a small, diurnal owl found in North, Central, and South America. Standing 7 to 10 inches tall, they possess distinctive brownish-gray plumage with white spots. Their faces feature bright yellow eyes and white eyebrows, giving them a distinctive facial expression. The burrowing owl's unique behavior involves nesting in underground burrows, either dug by themselves or acquired from other animals like prairie dogs.

Unlike most owls, they are active during the day, preferring open habitats such as grasslands, deserts, and farmlands. Their diet consists of small mammals and insects. During the breeding season, they lay 3 to 12 eggs, and both parents care for the young. At the Kern Water Bank, they ensure that wildlife habitats are protected by utilizing cattle for vegetation management, and a natural setting is kept to protect its wildlife. Burrowing owls' charm and unusual habits have captured the interest of bird enthusiasts and conservationists alike.



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