



THE LOCAL VOICE FOR OUR FARMERS, RANCHERS, AND DAIRY PRODUCERS SINCE 2013 VALLEYAGVOICE.COM VOLUME 13 • ISSUE 10 • OCTOBER 2023

New Post-harvest Fungicide Anticipates Registration by 2026 First use of cyproconazole for green mold and sour rot in citrus.

By Natalie Willis, Reporter, Valley Ag Voice

A serving of mashed potatoes at dinner is always a welcome treat, but fruit that resembles the creamy side dish is best avoided. Two of the most pervasive diseases in citrus cultivation are sour rot and green mold, which

wreak havoc on fruit quality and profitability during post-harvest processes.

At the 41st Citrus Post-Harvest Pest Control Conference, Ph.D. candidate Albert Nguyen, who specializes in plant pathology, explained that the decay in a citrus plant caused by sour

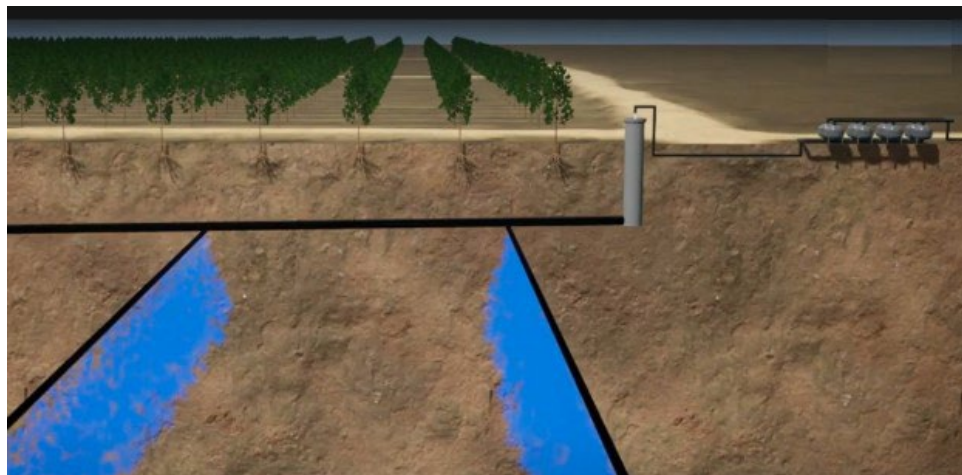
rot can quickly spread to surrounding fruit.

“This pathogen creates a lot of pectic enzymes that break down the fruit’s structure, and over time, as the decay develops, the fruit becomes macerated, sort of like mashed potatoes,” Nguyen said.

Common packing house treatments for sour rot and green mold include Imazalil and Propiconazole. These fungicides, along with potassium sorbate and sodium bicarbonate, are globally accepted for post-harvest treatment.

See **POST-HARVEST FUNGICIDE** on PAGE 7

Kern County Still Short on Recharge Capacity



A conceptual diagram of a reverse tile drain system. Filtered water is conveyed to standpipes that feed perforated pipes buried in gravel. (Photo courtesy of Lidco inc.)

By Scott Hamilton
President, Hamilton Resource Economics

It was an impressive year for groundwater recharge in Kern County. However, far more is needed if Kern is to achieve groundwater sustainability without significant loss of farmland. The current water shortage is in the vicinity of 2 million acre-feet per year of which the San Joaquin Valley portion of Kern County accounts for around 300,000 acre-feet. Between 15% and 18% of the irrigated farmland in Kern County could go out of production if nothing is done — a revenue loss that exceeds \$1 billion dollars per year.

In their groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs), water district managers in Kern County have identified more than 30 projects that could increase groundwater storage and improve water supply reliability. Those projects will cost around \$225 million and contribute over 100,000 acre-feet per year to fixing the water shortage. The average capital cost of those projects is around \$130 per acre-foot. Additional projects were identified in GSPs but did not specify yield or cost information, and so, could not be included in the total. Regardless, likely half of the projects needed to achieve sustainability

See **RECHARGE CAPACITY** on PAGE 9

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Buyer 9 Leaves Room for a Replacement

By Audrey Hill,
Feature Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

The importance of understanding American food systems has been recognized by the masses over the years, and as a result, many have faced the reality that meat and animal products can be quite difficult to track down. Of course, there are farmers market stands and small business fronts, but there are other ways of getting top-notch cuts, large and small, from Kern County sources. Perhaps they were raised just down the street from you. Those willing to come out to the Kern County Fair, talk with the students, and take part in the livestock auction have access to this market. Unfortunately, many don’t know how to organize the processing of this valuable product.

Meanwhile, in the auction barn, a problem has set in for the students who show livestock at the Kern County Fair. Students purchase animals early in the year, raise them throughout the summer, show them at the county fair, and sell them at auction to finish the year. The departure of “Buyer 9” from this auction has created a lot of uncertainty for students and families who struggle to financial support for their livestock projects. Buyer 9 is the auction number assigned to a long-standing and widely known purchaser of livestock at the Kern fair and surrounding county fairs. Buyer 9 set a price per pound for each species and brought every animal that came across the auction block under that price. The meat was reportedly donated to homeless shelters and the food bank.

According to Dawn Stornetta, the Kern County Fair Livestock Supervisor, the anonymous buyer purchased 74% of the entire auction in 2017, 83%

See **BUYER 9 LEAVES ROOM** on PAGE 13



FARM BUREAU NEWS

The United Voice of Kern County's Farming Community



President's Message

By Patty Poire
President, Kern County
Farm Bureau

The saying 'time goes by fast when one is having fun' seems to describe best how I am feeling this month, but I won't say that I was just having fun! Well, this is my last article as President of the Kern County Farm Bureau, and I can't believe that it's been two years! So, let me get right into it.

The legislative session ended in September and of course the legislators continued their "regulate everything" concept. The area that the legislators seemed most focused on this year had to do with labor. At the time that I am writing this, two bills come to mind, SB 497 which creates a rebuttable presumption that any adverse personnel action is retaliatory if it coincides within 90 days of the occurrence of activities protected from retaliation under the Labor Code, and SB 799 that permits employees participating in a strike to collect unemployment insurance benefits. I truly hope that neither one of them got signed by the governor but if they did, make sure that you have the "facts" of the requirements as employers so that you are not blindsided later. Contact the Kern County Farm Bureau to obtain clarification if they did get signed.

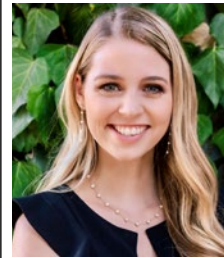
In the previous month's article, I provided a quick update on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) about a rumor that the April 2024 probationary hearing for the Kern subbasin was slightly slipping. Well, that is no longer a rumor, it has slipped to later in 2024 which will help the basin find acceptable solutions to the inadequate determination. I will say this — there are some individuals in this basin who are still requesting that the GSAs placate the state's demand to become sustainable within five years and are now recommending extraction caps on agricultural wells located next to certain infrastructure. If you are that agricultural landowner and are not aware of your wells having limitations placed on them to extract water, then you had better be engaged and start asking questions.

Once this concept is presented to state staff it will be almost impossible to pull it back, especially if the presentation is kept by the staff.

As I mentioned last month, the statute states that the basin has until 2040 to become sustainable — not tomorrow nor in 2025. The Kern subbasin is approximately 326,000 acre-feet in overdraft, and that number is shared by all water districts with only three that showed any form of surplus. The state staff is seeking revised groundwater sustainability plans that include "demand reduction" as the means to become sustainable. This is where being at the table and being a part of the discussion and decision making is vital. My recommendation: don't let others determine your destiny. Engage.

Thank you again for the privilege of representing the nation's No. 1 agricultural county. I hope that you all come to the Bounty of Kern being held on October 7 so that I can thank you all individually. It has been an honor!

Executive Director's Report



By Rachel Nettleton
Executive Director,
Kern County Farm
Bureau

A few weeks ago, the Kern County Farm

Bureau attended the Central Region FFA Jacket Ceremony, also known as the Blue Jacket Bonanza. This event was held at the Kern Agricultural Pavilion where sectional officers from across the region filled the room to receive their very own, custom FFA jackets.

Alongside the California Farm Bureau, the Kern



The Kern County Farm Bureau participated in the Central Region FFA Jacket Ceremony. (Photo by Rachel Nettleton)

Young Farmers & Ranchers



By Timothy Collins
Chair, Kern County
Young Farmers
& Ranchers

The Young Farmers and Ranchers recently toured Montana Ranch and Cattle just south of Bakersfield. While they have ranches in Montana and Oregon, they also raise cattle and chickens at their Bakersfield location, which was more recently established to reach the population of southern California. Michael Galloway provided dinner, a tour, and a pound of ground beef to take home. He explained their history and his more recent push for locally produced and controlled produce markets, as opposed to multinational corporations controlling production and distribution. Galloway encouraged us, as young people interested in agriculture, to get involved with local production as he is trying to set up a business model that can be duplicated.

He explained that an attainable goal for nearly all of us is to grow our own garden. The amount of land, effort, and resources devoted to ornamental horticulture in the yards of thousands of homes here could easily be used for growing food. After all, we do live in the most productive agricultural county

in the nation with a climate that allows us to grow different types of produce all year.

Thanks to my dad, I grew up having fruit trees and a garden each year. I've always appreciated the satisfaction that comes from growing our own food such as tomatoes, sweet corn, peppers, beans, melons, and zucchini. We also had an occasional winter with peas, carrots, and broccoli. Now with my own house and yard, I've already been enjoying the fruit trees the previous owner planted, and I look forward to growing a large garden throughout the year. Maybe it's because of the work I put into it or the fact that it's fresh and not subject to transportation and processing, but home-grown fruits and vegetables taste better.

Make this the year to tear up some grass or fill that empty flower bed and start a garden. Everything you could ever want to know about gardening is at your fingertips online. It will take some work, but what's good in life that doesn't require work?

The Young Farmers and Ranchers invest in a garden project each year with the proceeds of our Farmers Market. What better way to promote growing your own food and all the benefits that come with it than to support local school gardens? Perhaps something as simple as growing a garden can play a role in the sustainability the agriculture industry is looking for.

Email: KernYFR@KernCFB.com

Instagram: [@Kern_YFR](https://www.instagram.com/Kern_YFR)

Facebook: [KernYoungFarmersAndRanchers](https://www.facebook.com/KernYoungFarmersAndRanchers)



Members of the Young Farmers and Ranchers members working at the Buena Vista Edible Schoolyard Garden earlier this year. (Photo by Timothy Collins)

County Farm Bureau had the opportunity to help distribute these jackets. The FFA ceremony symbolizes a rite of passage for young farmers, marking their entry into the world of agriculture. It was heartening to witness the enthusiasm and passion that these students exemplified as they continue to embrace the vital role of farming in our communities.

As the echoes of the Central Region FFA Jacket Ceremony still resonate in our hearts, we find ourselves looking ahead with excitement to our next grand celebration! The much-awaited 12th Annual Bounty of Kern County event is this Saturday, October 7th. This annual event is a beloved tradition that unites our community and pays homage to the dedicated farmers and ranchers who play a pivotal role in sustaining and nourishing our region.

Over the past decade, the Bounty of Kern County — also known as Farm to Fork — was created to bring together members of our community, agricultural members, and industry leaders to celebrate our county's agricultural achievements. This event continues to serve as a platform to highlight the important role that agriculture plays in our community as well as to express gratitude to the hardworking farmers and ranchers who help feed our nation.

Throughout the evening, you will find hints of locally-sourced ingredients woven into the food and refreshments. But the festivities do not stop there!

After dinner, the Kern County Farm Bureau will continue its new tradition and host an exclusive after party that consists of custom cocktails, late-night snacks, live music, and exciting sponsor giveaway items.

This day will be full of exciting activities as we celebrate the incredible bounty that this county has to offer.

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Local Family-Owned Farm Safety Operation Celebrates Kern Agriculture

By Ben Laverty IV, Chief Operations Officer, California Safety Training Corporation

In agriculture, we often hear about multi-generational farming operations, but it's not often we hear about multi-generation farm safety operations. California Safety Training Corporation (CSTC) is still family-owned and operated after 38 years. The same passion for helping farmers to protect their workforce has been ingrained into the CSTC culture for every employee.

It all started with an opportunity to fill a need when local farmers said, "Ben you speak Spanish, and you really care about people. Please help us with our safety training." Ben was at a turning point in his farming career, and he took off on the agricultural safety adventure! Ben holds a Ph.D. and an M.S. in Environmental Safety and Health as well as a Bachelor of Science in Horticulture and Agronomy. He is a Certified Environmental Inspector (CEI), certified by US-EPA for Federal WPS training, a Lifetime Accredited Agricultural Appraiser, a Board-Certified Forensic Examiner, and a Certified Safety Professional.

Ben developed the idea of Cross Compliance Training Programs. He is committed to corporate organization and direction and active in all phases of the company operations including bilingual training, accident investigations, and expert witness testimonies. A running joke at CSTC is who's the "real" Ben Laverty with Ben the fourth often claiming "that's me, the real Ben Laverty".

Ben IV grew up playing sports and working in farming with his father Ben III. After high school, he served a 2-year mission in Australia, attended Cal-Poly San Luis

Obispo, and graduated with a degree in Agricultural Business in 1995. In 1999, Ben received his multiple subject teaching credentials from the State of California and taught elementary school for 6 years. He has three daughters with his lovely wife, Kathy. Ben still loves to teach and enjoys sports including hiking, swimming, climbing, surfing, and many other adventures with his family.

Working Full Time at California Safety Training Corporation since 2005, Ben's focus is the establishment and optimization of day-to-day operations at CSTC including: strategic business planning and resource allocation, establishing operational processes and quality control. Ben's mission is to help people and companies work safely and efficiently, "Assist all people working and playing safely regardless of background, education, history or opportunities. Do all good things possible and do not harm." He also performs safety training classes weekly, subject matter expertise in Fall Protection, program audits and safety inspections performed in agricultural, construction and oilfield settings and acts as an "Employer Representative" for a variety of clients in the Cal/OSHA appeals process. Ben's younger sister Terra is a key piece of the CSTC team.

Terra has grown up with CSTC. As soon as she was able to work, she jumped in. She started as the janitor and is now the Chief Financial Officer. Terra attended Cal State University, Bakersfield and graduated with a degree in Liberal Studies with a concentration in Business in 2000.

Terra received her multiple subject teaching credential from the State of California in 2001 and taught elementary school for 10 years. In 2009, Terra received her M.A. from California State University,

Bakersfield. Terra thrives on using her education and skills of teaching in presenting classes and in curriculum development. Terra is now solely dedicated to CSTC and enjoys the dynamics of her many roles.

Terra supports and oversees the accounting department, working to improve efficiency and quality in our programs and curriculum. She teaches many classes including CPR/First Aid and Forklift Safety. In addition, Terra is intricately involved in representing our clients with OSHA and with leading the charge in technology development.

The next generation is also involved with the operations at CSTC and may be found helping with the work, especially in the technology realm. The past years have seen CSTC develop specific software which helps us to be efficient and comprehensive in how we approach safety. Our proprietary training materials, inspection programs, and documents distinguish us as a leader in the safety arena. Thank you to all our

clients who have supported us through the years, CSTC appreciates all of you for your trust in the last 38 years.

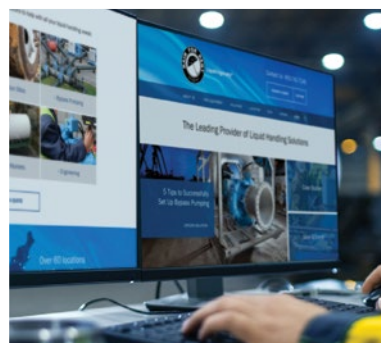
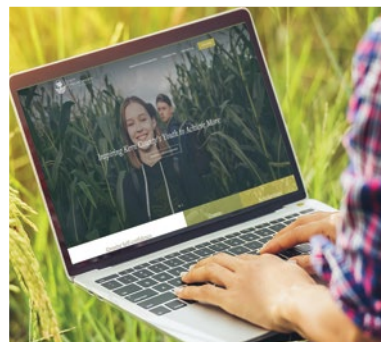
Remember to be safe because life is precious. Safety is vital to the success of California's \$50 billion agricultural industry. Kern County is the No. 1 agriculture producing county in the nation. We grow more food here than anywhere else in the world. When you buy local Kern County grown produce, you are supporting our local workers. It takes people to grow food. CSTC is dependable, authentic, compassionate, driven, and united to help you to protect your greatest asset – people.

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Egypt Threatens California's Citrus Industry

By Natalie Willis, Reporter, Valley Ag Voice

At the start of 2023, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, through its Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, drafted a test risk assessment for the importation of citrus into the United States. While Egypt previously had access to the U.S. market, citrus importations were limited due to the detection of a dangerous fruit fly.

Now, the world's largest exporter of citrus fruits has petitioned APHIS for access to the U.S. market for oranges and tangerines, beginning a risk assessment process to evaluate potential threats from a phytosanitary standpoint.

According to James Cranney, president of the California Citrus Quality Council, the readmittance of Egypt into the U.S. citrus market would have drastic economic repercussions.

"This is a very threatening proposal from a citrus standpoint because the Egyptian industry is very large," Cranney said. "It's about twice the size of the California citrus industry, and they have a reputation for shipping fruit all around the world to export destinations at very low prices."

He explained that Egypt is a low-cost producer as a result of lower labor rates and other inputs, whereas California citrus growers have higher input, labor, and water costs, rendering it improbable to compete economically.

The California Citrus Quality Council commented on APHIS' risk assessment, noting that the state's citrus industry faces more regulatory burdens than other global producers as well as higher transportation costs.

According to a USDA Foreign Agricultural Service forecast in July, citrus production in Egypt is estimated to rise by 600,000 tons this year to tie a record of 3.6 million tons.

Egypt also directly competes with California citrus exports to China, offering an average price point of \$9 per carton compared to \$40 per carton from California.

"They're going to be able to deliver fruit at very low prices — navel oranges and other types of oranges and tangerines — into the U.S. market at much lower prices than the California industry would be able to deliver," Cranney said. "That will result in the loss of market share for citrus that's produced in California. So, that's the problem."

Egypt remains persistent in re-entering the U.S. citrus market as it is limited in exporting to Russia, one of its largest markets, because of the Russia-Ukraine war. The war in Ukraine created logistical challenges for the Egyptian citrus industry as well as a loss of approximately \$200 million from its import market.



Photo By Sheviakova (Adobe Stock)

Mostafa Adel from Egyptian citrus company MMA Fresh Produce, explained in a press release that exporting expansions is a top priority for the industry.

"We would love to export to the United States, for both our citrus and onions," Adel said. "The U.S. market is huge, and once you have the rich quality that meets their standards, sales can be done with ease."

APHIS will continue its risk assessment and evaluate comments received from U.S. citrus growers, but it is likely to implement a cold

treatment and other mitigation efforts reach a phytosanitary solution that allows Egypt back into the market. The USDA has not announced a timeline for the risk assessment findings.

"We don't know if it's imminent or not... one of the problems, though, is that when they conduct this assessment, it just has to be a scientific assessment of the pest risk," Cranney said. "APHIS is not allowed to take into consideration any economic considerations or economic impact that this decision might make."

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COMMENTARY: Precision Agriculture Tech Needs Broadband Access



By Bernt Nelson,
Economist, American
Farm Bureau Federation

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from the California Farm
Bureau Federation*

Farming is truly a special walk of life. As the saying goes, “Man—despite artistic pretensions, his sophistication and accomplishments—owes his existence to a 6-inch layer of topsoil and the fact that it rains.”

Farmers tap into biology, using soil, sun, water and nutrients that have existed for millions of years to produce food that sustains people all over the world. But one aspect of farming that is often overlooked is the evolution of agricultural technology.

Farmers today use technology to plant and harvest mile-long fields with equipment guided by satellites for sub-inch accuracy, allowing them to feed nearly 8 billion people across the world with fewer resources than ever before.

These days, “precision agriculture” means managing, tracking or enhancing crop or livestock production inputs, including seed, feed, fertilizer, chemicals, water and time to improve efficiencies, commodity quality and yield, and positively impact environmental stewardship.

To help such efforts, data has become the new crop of the 21st century. Yield monitors, first created in 1992, allowed farmers to record observable changes in crop yields throughout an entire field. This data could be paired with grid sampling, taking soil samples from grid points mapped out on a field to create a map of input adjustments needed to improve yields.

Now GPS auto-guidance systems are revolutionizing the way farmers operate machinery, offering environmentally friendly technologies that allow for more efficient use of inputs. Today, the majority of corn, cotton, rice, sorghum, soybeans and winter wheat acres are planted

GPS technology for use in farming is demonstrated at Farmfest show in Minnesota. Tech-driven precision agriculture can improve crop quality and yields, but reliable internet access is critical. (Nicole Pacheco/Ag Alert)

using auto-guidance.

These technologies deliver exactly what a plant needs, exactly where it’s needed, reducing waste and runoff. Thanks to auto-guidance systems that allow a GPS signal to steer tractors with pinpoint accuracy, this can all be done while simultaneously gathering and recording field data.

Most precision agriculture systems operate today using real-time kinematic positioning signals. RTK can be used for field operations such as tillage, planting, harvesting, spraying and a wide range of other field activities. This technology is used to collect data relating to soil temperature, soil moisture, seeding depth, seeds per acre, yield and more while a farmer carries out normal operations.

The data is accumulated and can be used to provide production performance over time. Topography data can even be gathered and used to design tile drainage systems that help more efficiently manage water. Precision agriculture allows farmers to deliver exactly what a plant needs, exactly when and where it needs it.

To provide further access to these technologies, it is critically important that the 2023 Farm Bill bring connectivity to the rural areas that most American farmers call home. Farmers need broadband access to use precision agriculture technologies. Setting up a private network is expensive. And that’s if the farm’s location can access these resources. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service, nearly 20% of U.S. farms lacked access to broadband internet in 2021.

In the 2018 Farm Bill, lawmakers highlighted the importance of precision agriculture by including the Precision Agriculture Connectivity Act. This legislation created a task force housed at the Federal Communications Commission to focus on the connectivity and technology

needs of precision agriculture.

Now the Linking Access to Spur Technology for Agriculture Connectivity in Rural Environments Act, introduced in July by Sen. Deb Fischer, R-Neb., would establish a new rural development competitive grant and loan broadband program dedicated specifically to extending connectivity to farms and ranches. The legislation, known as LAST ACRE, would allow eligible farmers and ranchers to work with internet providers to submit bid applications for projects.

The upfront costs can be a major hurdle to farmers adopting precision agriculture technology. These investments offer returns over time, but it can be difficult to sacrifice the necessary capital when income is tight, and operational costs such as land rent are higher than ever before. Thankfully, there may soon be assistance available to help overcome these obstacles.

The Precision Agriculture Loan Program Act is a bipartisan bill that would establish a loan program within the Farm Service Agency to help farmers purchase precision agriculture equipment. Another bipartisan bill, the Producing Responsible Energy and Conservation Incentives and Solutions for the Environment Act, would expand farmers’ access to precision agriculture tools through existing USDA programs including the Conservation Stewardship Program and Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

Technology has helped to propel farmers forward faster than ever before. These policy proposals would provide robust resources for rural communities to access necessary assistance and education. It is monumentally important to support technology in agriculture and its adoptability in the rural communities where most farming takes place.



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Farm Bill Expires, Political Powers Evaluate Priorities

By Natalie Willis, Reporter, Valley Ag Voice



Representative Glenn "GT" Thompson, Pennsylvania 15th District

Before the Farm Bill expired on Sept. 30, Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee Glenn 'GT' Thompson explained in a webinar that Congress has more information to build the 2023 legislation on than any past farm bill.

Despite the extension of the current farm bill as well as over 70 listening sessions with agriculture industry leaders throughout the nation, legislators are still debating over top priorities for the 2023 bill.

"Our nation's producers face insurmountable challenges every year, and it's time for Congress to reciprocate, and quite frankly, we do that through a highly effective farm bill and the farm policy that's included in it," Thompson said.

The farm bill will likely not be submitted for final approval until December, and House members are pushing for firm legislation by the end of the year. While the past three farm

bills from 2008, 2014, and 2018 exceeded their deadlines, the disruption to farm programs is inevitable as not all programs included with the bill are affected the same way by expiration.

The continued delay of farm bill progress is linked to political dissent between the Republican and Democratic parties, each with its own priorities. Republican Representative Marc Molinaro told The Hill that the farm bill is a critically important piece of legislation that ensures national security. Molinaro's priorities center on milk production and foreign market access to foreign markets.

On the other side, Democratic Representative Jake Auchincloss prioritizes the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and marked a need for improvement. As the politics play out, the agriculture industry awaits a new 5-year bill to stabilize farm policy and improve their livelihood.

"We are still listening, but we are obviously starting to legislate with the farm bill," Thompson said. "The committee's been putting pen to paper, and we will be prepared to advance the farm bill legislation through the committee and to the House floor once leadership provides us that commitment for floor time."



(Photo by the Almond Board of California)

Kern Farmers Lose Roughly \$1 Billion in Crop Revenue

By Natalie Willis, Reporter, Valley Ag Voice

Kern County farmers saw a 7% reduction in crop revenue in 2022 because of harsh weather conditions and increased water regulations. The top five commodities in Kern remain the same from 2021 — grapes, citrus, milk, almonds, and pistachios — but milk products replaced pistachios as the third commodity, according to the 2022 crop report.

The sharp decline in crop revenue is likely linked to the \$1 billion decrease in value for the top five commodities — in 2021, they represented \$6.1 billion of the total value and \$5 billion in 2022.

Kern County Agricultural Commissioner Glenn Fankhauser told the Bakersfield Californian that he was unaware of the reason behind the revenue drop, but unfavorable weather conditions during the three-year drought shrunk California's total farmland.

The drought peaked in the Central Valley last year, resulting in extreme revenue losses with 1.3 million acres left unplanted, according to a study from UC Merced. Compounded with less acreage, crop losses due to weather events last year totaled \$21.4 billion.

Farmers also saw a reduction in water allotment from the state in 2022, leading to a combined

752,000 fallowed acres of irrigated farmland, the UC Merced study explained.

Surface water deliveries for 2021 and 2022 decreased by roughly 43% and resulted in increased groundwater pumping. Now, 12 basins in the Central Valley are in critical overdraft. The rainfall the state received this year is unlikely to improve groundwater allotments, John C Moore III told the Californian.

TOP FIVE

For the first time since 2018, pistachios did not have a record-breaking crop year and lowered in value by half a billion. Despite the loss, California pistachio growers are hopeful for a larger 2023 crop and began harvest in late August.

The abundance of rain throughout the Central Valley this year resulted in flooding, which placed several orchards underwater, but the colder bloom is expected to benefit the crop overall.

However, the heavy rain obstructed the bloom period for almonds, and Tropical Storm Hilary further delayed the harvest season. Almonds ranked fourth in commodities for 2022 despite a 21.8% decrease in value from the previous year.

The top two commodities — grapes and citrus — saw a drop in overall value but remained stable in a broader market outlook.



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Delayed Harvests and High Input Costs Threaten Small Farmers

Valley agriculture navigates expensive production, colder weather, and low crop prices.

By Natalie Willis, Reporter, Valley Ag Voice

Unusual weather events, higher input costs, and lowered crop prices hindered agricultural economics in the Central Valley this year, creating a grim outlook for local producers.

According to Aaron Hedge, chair of economics at Cal State Bakersfield and director of the Grimm Family Center for Agriculture Business, Central Valley farmers will face a lack of return for their work this year as well as an impacted labor market.

“In terms of consumers in the short term, they may have the inconvenience of not getting some stuff, but in the long term, not much,” Hedge said. “But it could be detrimental for some farmers if they’re not able to plant and they lost the entire season. They still have bank loans and all of these other things...if they’re on the verge of not being extremely profitable, that might push them over.”

Jenny Holtermann, a Kern County fourth-generation almond farmer, explained that heavy rainfall and a colder summer obstructed the bloom period for almonds, delaying normal harvest season from late July to early August. The presence of a tropical storm further delayed the process.

According to Holtermann, whose homestead received roughly an inch and a half of rain last weekend, they stopped shaking trees for a few days to mitigate the number of almonds on the ground that could be susceptible to mold and mildew.

“We really don’t know the damage of that yet, but the



(Photo courtesy of Almond Girl)

goal was to get them all dried and then picked up... with the weather and the bloom situation we had, [it] kind of slowed down the progress of the almonds, and we started harvest later than we usually do,” Holtermann said.

Industries outside of traditional farming practices, such as produce haulers, have also felt the impacts of the delayed harvest. According to David Nickum, president and CEO of Valley Farm Transport, his company and truckers were mainly affected by late production.

“We haven’t really seen so much production being off as much as we’ve seen production being late,” Nickum said. “I would say in most regions so far that we’ve

hailed, the production’s been two weeks late, and that’s mostly because of the late rains that we had in the winter months.”

Along with disruptive weather, Central Valley almond farmers were faced with a low return on the market. U.S. almond prices fell to a 20-year low ahead of harvest, and almond supplies are expected to continue outweighing demand.

“The almond pricing has been pretty bad, pretty low,” Holtermann said. “The almond pricing has been very low the last couple of years, and it flirts with that breakeven price point, which has kind of put almonds in a hard situation.”

Hedge explained that farmers in the Central Valley are

likely to take a hit from lower market prices, adversely affecting their ability to invest in farm labor as well as a reduced return on what they already put into the economy.

HIGHER INPUTS

Holtermann also cited higher input prices as an obstacle for small farmers, further diminishing return rates on agricultural investments.

“Inputs have been more expensive—the cost of everything is more expensive. I think the average person is probably aware of them, but everything is more expensive now,” Holtermann said. “Fertilizers are more expensive, parts are more expensive, water is more expensive...but then our return—the amount that we’re selling our almonds—has been lowered.”

Increased input costs have permeated the entire agriculture industry, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture explaining that costs are expected to elevate through 2024. Some input costs, such as fertilizer and chemical expenses, were projected to decline, but seed costs, labor, machinery, insurance, taxes, and equipment are steadily rising.

The USDA’s input cost projection trends showed that average crop prices will drop below breakeven levels, posing a threat to smaller farms.

“There are going to be less and less acres being grown in the Central Valley, and there will probably end up being less and less family farms,” Holtermann said. “Without these family farmers, I hate to see what’s going to happen to the rest of these businesses and these small towns.”

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The tile recharge equipment digs the trench, lays the perforated pipe, deposits gravel around the pipe and provides some back fill. The remainder of the backfill is completed in a separate operation. (Photo courtesy of Lidco Inc.)

Recharge Capacity

Continued from PAGE 1

have been identified.

If there were more places to recharge water, more water could have been stored this year. San Luis Reservoir was full toward the end of March and State Water Project pumps were operating at reduced capacity for an additional three months. Given Kern County's ability to divert water from the California Aqueduct, around half a million acre-feet were not brought into the county because

about the potential impacts of mobilizing fertilizer and pesticides from farm fields into the groundwater table. The science underlying these fears is far from extensive, and the work that has been done generally shows improvements in groundwater quality from recharge operations, not degradation. Those concerns aside, the overlap of an orchard's dormant season with the availability of flood water can be fairly short.

Another alternative is reverse tile drains. These are like conventional tile drains but the water flows in the opposite direction —

season without the risk of compounding disease problems, greatly extending the duration of recharge.

The systems are not inexpensive. Lidco Inc. installed more than 25 systems in the Valley over the last five years. Glenn Drown, Lidco's Central Valley manager, indicated installation costs run between \$100 and \$160 gallons per minute (multiply that by the capacity of the farm filter system to get an estimate for a field). That cost is substantially cheaper than building dedicated recharge ponds. But whether or not that is a good farm investment depends on a number of factors. Primary among these is how much credit the farmer is likely to receive for the water recharged on

his or her farm. Water districts throughout the Valley have vastly different policies for what credit farmers get for recharging flood water on their own property. In some districts, farmers get a credit to their groundwater account of 90% of the recharged water. As the need for more on-farm recharge becomes apparent, incentives are likely to increase in many districts. As SGMA implementation incrementally reduces the capacity to pump groundwater and limit farm operations, more on-farm recharge may make sense for farmers in water-short districts. A second consideration is the frequency of which flood water will be available. That also varies district to district. And some farms are better suited to a reverse tile drain recharge. Farms with sandy soil at depth that does not overlie the Corcoran Clay will be able to recharge more water for longer periods. Recharge in less than perfect conditions can still be effective and economical.

When California is wet, it tends to be wet everywhere — meaning the eastside rivers are running high while 100,000 cubic feet per second might be passing through the Delta to the Pacific Ocean. During very wet years when some fields are being flooded, it is difficult to think about capturing more water. But doing so will reduce flooding and is essential to achieving groundwater sustainability in Kern County.



Installation of a reverse tile drain system. (Photos courtesy of Lidco Inc.)

there was no place to put it. The recharge facilities were full of Kern River Water. How then can groundwater recharge capacity be increased?

Dedicated multi-benefit recharge basins (such as those providing groundwater recharge and wetland habitat) are one option. They have appeal as an effective way to utilize ag land that may be fallowed, but with land acquisition, earthwork, and new plumbing, they can be expensive.

Traditional on-farm recharge — the flooding of dormant orchards or fallow fields — has been gaining acceptance as an economical method for recharging groundwater. But it is not without its problems. These include the unpredictability of water supply and having to manage recharge around farm operations. There has also been concern

into the field instead of away from it. The reverse tile drain systems are installed prior to development of fields for orchards. They have also been installed on row crop land. The reverse tile drain system consists of perforated pipes installed in gravel in trenches 9 to 12 feet below the soil surface. That depth is necessary to separate the recharge from the root zone. The trenching, installation, and refill occurs in a single pass. When the system is not being used for irrigation, the recharge water delivered by the water district passes through the farm filtration system and into standpipes that connect to the buried perforated pipes. The system has a number of advantages over surface flooding of fields: the recharge does not interfere with farm operations; there is little risk of mobilizing recently applied fertilizer or pesticides; and recharge can occur through the growing

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Fueling Kern County's Ag Industry One Relationship at a Time

**By Michael Martens,
Ag Relationship Manager, Mission Bank**

Mike Martens knows the Central Valley — the stretch of Highway 99 that links Bakersfield to Fresno is as familiar as the back of his hand. He's driven that straightaway countless times over the last decade, whether it was for school, to see family, or to visit customers, there isn't a field, orchard, pasture, or off-ramp he doesn't recognize.

"I went to high school in Bakersfield, college at Fresno State, and now with Mission Bank I'm spending a lot of time everywhere in between meeting with my customers. Some of the most interesting people I know live here on the valley floor and make the most of the land. Farmers are great people and I'm lucky to be working with them."

Martens is a Relationship Manager in the Ag Division at Mission Bank, a husband, father of two, and an avid football fan. He played football at Centennial High School in the suburbs of Bakersfield and took his talents to Fresno State where he jokes that he majored in football and minored in Business Management.

"Playing football was my main concern, but I hit the books hard too and developed a healthy respect for math, business practices, and the importance of banking literacy. I learned that working in finance was really about the relationships you build with

people, and it just made sense to follow that path after college."

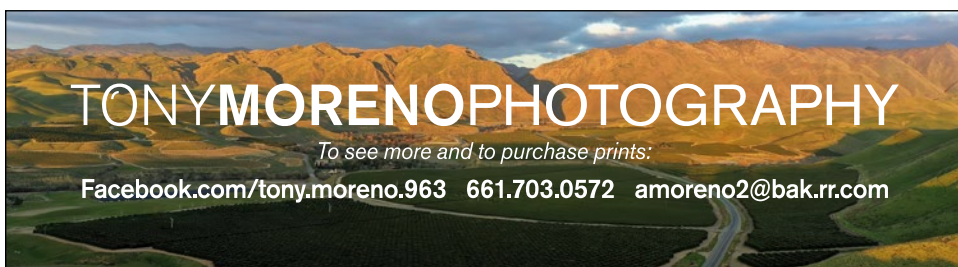
Martens joined Mission Bank five years ago and learned everything he could about the Ag Division. Working with farmers and working at Kern County's only locally based business bank seemed like a perfect starting point for his career.

"It felt right to join the team where community really mattered. Mission Bank is out in force, supporting local non-profits and educational institutions. We're volunteering our time and making a difference, because our customers are local and we're all working together to make our part of California a better place."

Martens works with a team of experts providing financial solutions specifically designed to meet the needs of agricultural operations and agribusiness. From Operating/Crop Lines of Credit to Equipment Loans, Cattle Loans, Ag Real Estate Loans, and Farmer Mac Loans, Mission Bank's options are comprehensive, and Martens is here to help.

"I feel lucky to be where I am and I'm happy to make positive impacts. I married my high school sweetheart, played college football, have a daughter and a son, dogs, and I get to work with farmers. When it comes to Kern County, I really have it all."

If you have questions about the Mission Bank Ag Division or would like more information on financial solutions specifically designed for agricultural operation and agribusiness call (661) 859-2500 or visit www.Missionbank.bank.



A Lasting Legacy In Honor of Agriculture Leader Chuck Kirschenmann.

By Natalie Willis, Reporter, Valley Ag Voice

Charles Kirschenmann, Kern County's leader in the potato industry, passed peacefully in his home on August 17, 2023, at 77 years old. He leaves behind a legacy as a father, grandfather, and agriculture leader.

Kirschenmann took on his family's farm at 16 years old after the unexpected passing of his father, propelling him and his older brother Arnold into a high-stakes career after high school. After 23 years of farming alongside his brother—both contributing to the creation of a potato empire—Arnold passed away, leaving Kirschenmann and his three children to carry on the farming legacy.

"He was thrown into farming at a very young age, unfortunately, when his father passed away in the 1960s," Brian Kirschenmann told KGET. "He was 16 years old. He always told me...I'm tired. I've been farming way too long. I didn't want to start at 16."

Kirschenmann shared 55 years of success in the potato industry, with products featured in Frito-Lay potato chips and potatoes in In 'n Out Burger meals. Kirschenmann was an honored veteran and patriot who served in the National Guard and Army in 1968.

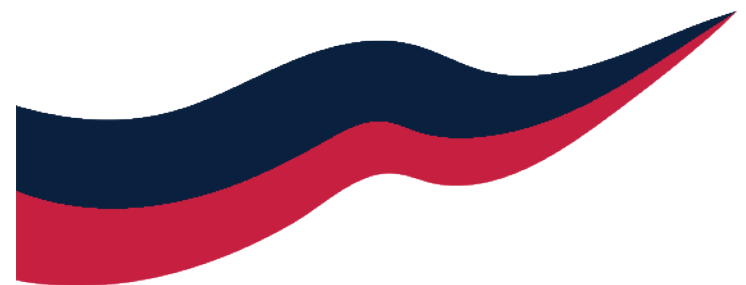
Outside of farming, Kirschenmann enjoyed his family, who moved next door to him with families of their



Charles Allen Kirschenmann (1946-2023)

own, allowing him to experience the joys of being a grandfather. His farming legacy lay in the hands of his children and grandchildren, including his daughter Christy Hornbuckle and son Brian Kirschenmann as well as six grandchildren.

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(Photo courtesy of Bloom Fresh International)

Candy Snaps™ Season Extended and Flavorful Excitement Continues with BLOOM FRESH's New Variety

Press release provided by Bloom Fresh International

BLOOM FRESH International (BLOOM FRESH), the world's largest premium fruit-breeding company, created by the merger of SNFL Group (Special New Fruit Licensing) and International Fruit Genetics, LLC (IFG), is pleased to unveil the latest addition to its acclaimed Candy Snaps™ line. The newly patented table grape varietal, known as IFG Forty-one, will enhance the Candy Snaps™ experience by extending its availability in retail stores for several additional weeks during the early to mid-summer season.

Originally introduced as IFG Twenty-one in 2011, Candy Snaps™ has consistently delighted consumers as an early-season table grape. Through BLOOM FRESH's commitment to natural breeding and genetics research, IFG Forty-one now ensures that aficionados of this strawberry-flavored red grape variety can enjoy its delectable taste for an extended duration. With a familiar round, oval shape, and a satisfyingly crunchy texture, IFG Forty-one boasts the tropical flavors and delightful undertones of strawberry, pineapple, and melon that Candy Snaps™ enthusiasts adore.

Breeder Chris Owens, the driving force behind this innovation, reflects on the dedication

and years of research that culminated in the creation of IFG Forty-one: "Our journey to develop this new variety has been marked by unwavering dedication and a relentless pursuit of excellence. We are immensely proud to offer consumers an extended Candy Snaps™ season, thanks to the extraordinary capabilities of IFG Forty-one."

Jennifer Maguire, Director of Global Licensing at BLOOM FRESH, emphasizes the significance of this development for table grape growers: "Candy Snaps™ grapes have long been cherished by consumers, but their availability has been limited by an early harvest window. With the introduction of IFG Forty-one, growers now have the opportunity to supply these delectable grapes under the Candy Snaps™ brand for an extended period of time. This is a game-changer for our industry, offering both varietal popularity and more options for improved growing results."

BLOOM FRESH remains committed to delivering deliciously flavorful specialty grapes to excite shoppers while continually advancing the boundaries of innovation. IFG Forty-one is set to usher in a new era of enjoyment for Candy Snaps™ aficionados, ensuring that the season for these delectable grapes is now extended, and the delight of consumers can endure longer than ever before.



(Photo by Ag Alert)

Almond, Walnut Exports to Benefit as India Lifts Tariffs

Reprinted with permission from the California Farm Bureau Federation

India has formally removed retaliatory tariffs on some U.S. farm products that made commodities such as almonds and walnuts from California less competitive.

Duties on almonds, walnuts, apples, chickpeas, and lentils were lifted Sept. 6.

The tariffs were eliminated two days before President Joe Biden's meeting last week with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of the Group of 20 economic summit in New Delhi.

The Almond Board of California applauded removal of the duties.

"We are very happy to see the retaliatory tariffs removed, which will both help increase demand in India and reduce the cost to consumers there," said Julie Adams, the almond board's vice president of technical and regulatory affairs.

"The almond industry has been working hard along with government officials to reduce the impediments for exports of California almonds to India," she added.

Tariffs on American goods increase the price that importers pay, making U.S. products more expensive for consumers abroad.

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 provides U.S. exporters improved access to a key market.

India remains a top export destination for California agricultural products, including tree nuts, cotton, dairy and processing tomatoes. The state shipped \$1.03 billion worth of farm exports to India in 2021, according to the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

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

In her statement, Adams said the almond board will "continue to discuss further opportunities to improve export conditions related to tariffs and technical barriers."

India imposed 20% retaliatory tariffs on certain U.S. agricultural products in 2019 in response to the Trump administration's tariffs on steel and aluminum.

Contacted for comment on the duties being lifted, the California Walnut Commission shared its June 22 announcement on the then-pending removal of the tariffs.

In a statement, Pam Graviat, the commission's senior director of global programs, said India remains "an integral part of the industry's overall long-term strategic growth and market development plan."

"Indian consumers and trade partners continue to recognize the premium quality of California walnuts and the nutritional value and great taste they bring to the Indian diet," Graviat said. "Elimination of India's retaliatory tariffs will benefit Indian consumers and businesses, as well as the California walnut industry."



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New 'Waters of The U.S.' Rule Still Problematic For Farmers



(Photo by Ching Lee, Ag Alert)

By Ching Lee, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

Reprinted with permission from the California Farm Bureau Federation.

After the U.S. Supreme Court set boundaries for what bodies of water the federal government can regulate, some farm groups say they're disappointed a revised rule meant to conform to the court ruling fails to bring clarity and certainty to agricultural landowners.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued a final rule late last month that amends what "waters of the United States," or WOTUS, are covered under the Clean Water Act.

The updated rule, which took effect last week, revises the federal definition of WOTUS so that it's more in line with the Supreme Court's decision last May in Sackett v. EPA.

Farm groups praised the ruling, which they said reined in the agencies' authority and resolved years of uncertainty for farmers, who for years have sought

President Zippy Duvall said in a statement.

As directed by the court, the revised rule removed from the WOTUS definition all references to the so-called "significant nexus" test, so that it can no longer be used to determine what is a WOTUS. Under that standard, a body of water falls under federal jurisdiction if there is a "significant nexus" between it and navigable waters.

Farm groups say the significant nexus test has been used by the federal government for years to assert ever-increasing jurisdiction over vast swaths of the nation's land and water by regulating even areas that ordinarily are dry.

Under the previous rule, wetlands separated from other WOTUS by dikes, berms, barriers, beach dunes or similar features are considered "adjacent wetlands" and can be regulated under the Clean Water Act. In the revised version, "adjacent" now means "having a continuous surface connection" to other larger water bodies such as oceans and rivers.

The new rule makes clear that wetlands do not fall under federal jurisdiction merely because they cross state lines. In addition, streams and wetlands are federally regulated only if they are "relatively permanent, standing or continuously flowing" and share a continuous surface connection with a WOTUS.

Farm groups say phrases such as "relatively permanent" are ambiguous, as the rule does not set measurements to quantify what constitutes relatively permanent flow. They say the new rule also does not clearly define what it means for a wetland to have a "continuous surface connection."

As such, the rule still leaves "a lot of uncertainty" about how the agencies will treat features such as ephemeral streams, said Erin Huston, federal policy consultant for the California Farm Bureau, referring to areas of land that occasionally get wet or that become wet only due to rainfall. Such features, she said, are abundant in the West.

The Waters Advocacy Coalition, which represents various industry groups including AFBF, said some of its members have reported that the EPA and Army Corps "are unwilling to say that ephemeral streams cannot satisfy the 'relatively permanent' standard." The group noted the agencies previously "interpreted the 'continuous surface connection' requirement expansively, so there remains considerable confusion as to whether that expansive interpretation is consistent

with the Sackett ruling.

The Biden administration's previous WOTUS rule already excluded certain farming activities and water features from needing a federal permit. They include prior converted cropland, ditches, artificially irrigated areas, artificial lakes or ponds, water-filled depressions, swales and erosional features such as gullies and small washes that are characterized by low volume, infrequent or short duration flow.

In a podcast, Mary-Thomas Hart, chief counsel for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, described the agricultural exemptions as "hugely important." With narrowing of the WOTUS definition, she said farmers also "don't have to worry about other isolated features."

Though she said she thinks ephemeral features may be largely safe from federal regulation, she said she would like to see more clarity from the agencies in the form of future guidance documents or rulemaking.

AFBF's Courtney Briggs said the EPA and Army Corps have addressed only the "headline grabbing aspects" of the Supreme Court decision by getting rid of the significant nexus test, "but they are trying to exploit aspects of the rule in order to expand their jurisdictional reach."

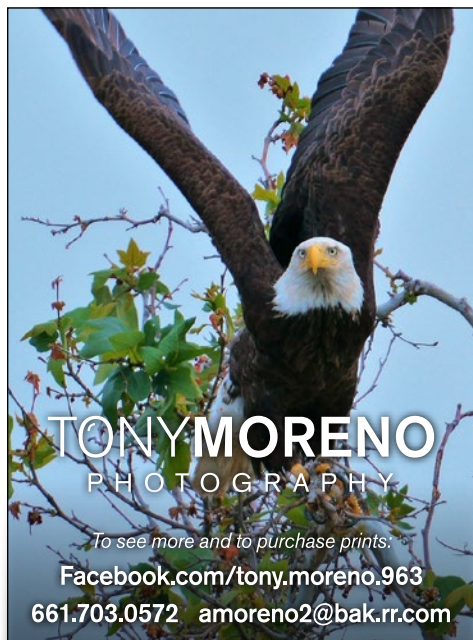
"Even worse, the agencies blocked public input and engagement in the revision process," Briggs said.

The EPA and Army Corps said they were making the rule effective immediately in part because many states and industry groups that challenged the previous rule had "advocated in litigation for quick action..." citing the need for regulatory certainty and less delay in processing approved jurisdictional determinations and certain Clean Water Act permits."

Twenty-three states, including California, are subject to the updated rule. The other 27 states have pending lawsuits against the Biden administration for its previous WOTUS rule, which had been in effect since March. Those 27 states are subject to the pre-2015 WOTUS rule consistent with the Sackett opinion, the agencies said.

"Thus, we are back to multi-rules and different states regulated in different manners," said Kari Fisher, senior counsel for the California Farm Bureau.

Regardless of where farmers are in the country, Fisher stressed that the Supreme Court opinion applies only to the federal Clean Water Act and not to state laws that regulate waters within their borders. In California, for example, the State Water Resources Control Board has its own wetlands policy on how it defines a wetland and how it regulates dredge-and-fill activities in the state.



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Buyer 9 Leaves Room

Continued from PAGE 1

in 2018, and 91% in 2019, their last year at the fair. Now, students have lost the massive safety net that Buyer 9's services once provided.

Kailani Smith is a freshman at Frontier High School who has grown up seeing her older cousins show at the fair. This year, she has decided to join the FFA program and show a goat. This will be her first year showing, and she noted that it's "nerve-racking" but she is ready. Smith has not yet secured a buyer for her goat, Harlow, at the auction. Instead, she is focusing on spending the limited time she has left with him, as many youths would. Harlow is housed at the school's farm, which will not accomodate animals after the fair. This is standard protocol for

all high school FFA programs, 4-H divisions, and individual showmen, as the intended purpose of the shows and auction is to sponsor education in animal husbandry and create a marketplace for local meat products.

My family and I have spent many years out in the livestock barns and Buyer 9 has supported us many times. It's unfortunate that they cannot continue this charity fund, but the community is grateful for their extensive support in the past. Hoping to carry the same torch that Buyer 9 did, although much smaller, my mom Laura Hill, CEO of the local firm Pinnacle Recruitment Services, Russell Johnson, co-owner of Valley Ag Voice, and I have started a non-profit called Auction Angels.

Auction Angels hopes to connect local sponsors with exhibitors selling their projects at the Kern County

Fair with the intention of donating the meat back to the community. With the funds raised, live animals will be purchased at auction from the exhibitors, and processed by local butchers such as Contract Killerz, Michelle's Custom Cutting, and Farmers Wholesale Meats. The meat will then be donated back to the community. The concept behind Auction Angels was founded when my mom and I realized the lack of support for these exhibitors. The long-term plan for this non-profit is to create a recognizable source for future farmers who rely on community support to help fund their livestock projects. Last year, the team — Laura, Russell, and I — purchased 15 animals from exhibitors who had no other financial support. The majority of the meat was donated to Victory Family Services, a non-profit organization supporting foster care for youth. This year, we are shooting for roughly 20-30 animals.

Laura Hill noted, "I cannot think of a more worthy cause to draw the community together than to support these extremely hard-working youths in raising their livestock projects. I am humbled by the outpouring of support for our community, and I can't wait to see what we will do with this new endeavor."

If you're interested in donating, please call me directly for more information at (661) 204-9325 or visit the website within the Kern Community Foundation network.

My family has been buying and consuming show stock from the fair for many years, and the quality of meat grown right here in Kern County is spectacular. The competition style of raising these animals, meaning extremely high-quality feed and exercise regimes, transfers directly into the meat. I have never seen a goat that looked so much like Kobe beef or tasted as good as what the Kern Fair offers.

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State Flows Plan Advances In, Out of Court



Near Riverbank, this aerial view shows a fish monitoring station on the Stanislaus River, one of three San Joaquin River tributaries subject to a plan that redirects flows of 30% to 50% for fish as part of the state's water quality control update for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. (Photo provided by California Department of Water Resources)



By Christine Souza,
Assistant Editor,
Ag Alert

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permission from the
California Farm Bureau
Federation*

Central Valley water districts subject to a state plan that diverts flows from the San Joaquin River tributaries downstream for fish are working to achieve a more holistic approach for the fishery through voluntary agreements, while also challenging the state's flows-only approach in court.

Central to the issue is a plan adopted in 2018 by the California State Water Resources Control Board that requires affected water users to leave unimpaired flows of 30% to 50% in three San Joaquin tributaries—the Stanislaus, Tuolumne and Merced rivers. The work is the first phase of the state's water quality control plan update for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San

Joaquin Delta, known as the Bay-Delta plan.

Districts, farmers and residents of the affected region have protested the plan, saying it would do little to restore salmon and other fish populations while cutting water supplies to the northern San Joaquin Valley.

“Notwithstanding our commitment and efforts in this collaborative process, MID continues to defend our water rights against the state water board's regulatory overreach,” said Melissa Williams, public affairs manager for Modesto Irrigation District, which jointly operates Don Pedro Reservoir on the Tuolumne River with Turlock Irrigation District.

The districts and their partner on the river, the San Francisco Public Utilities District, signed a memorandum of understanding last November to work with the state to advance a voluntary agreement for the Tuolumne River.

Williams said MID and related partners have participated in numerous meetings with state staff. “The comprehensive nature of the voluntary

agreement greatly outweighs the devastating and one-sided, flow-only approach,” she said.

Michael Cooke, director of regulatory affairs at TID, spoke before the state water board during a meeting last week. He said local water districts look forward to partnering with resource agencies to develop a comprehensive approach to improving conditions for fish that includes flow, habitat, funding, science, monitoring and adaptive management.

Williams said voluntary agreements for the Tuolumne River and the Sacramento River

Tina Cannon Leahy, staff counsel with the state water board's Office of Chief Counsel, discussed the pending litigation during the water board meeting.

She said an entire week of oral arguments was presented in state water board cases on Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act claims. In addition, she said there will be four days of court arguments on California Environmental Quality Act claims this month. That will be followed by two days of arguments on other legal matters, including claims on waste and unreasonable use and public trust, she said.



High-flow events from early this year show a flood plain inundation on the lower Tuolumne River. Irrigation districts that rely on water from the tributary are working with the state to develop a comprehensive approach to improving conditions for fish, including flow, habitat, funding and more. (Photo provided by Modesto Irrigation District)

basin—Phase 2 of the Bay-Delta plan—are expected to be presented to the state water board in 2024 for consideration and adoption.

As water districts, government agencies and other interests continue to negotiate voluntary agreements, oral arguments in about a dozen lawsuits challenging the state's plan were heard in Sacramento County Superior Court in late August.

The cases, which challenge different aspects of the state's Bay-Delta plan for the San Joaquin River tributaries, include a lawsuit filed by the California Farm Bureau.

Chris Scheuring, senior counsel for the California Farm Bureau, said the suit, scheduled to be heard Sept. 25 in Sacramento County Superior Court, challenges adoption of the plan and claims the

See STATE FLOWS PLAN on PAGE 15

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Photo from 2023 customer, utilizing Holloway gypsum, agronomy service

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State Flows Plan

Continued from PAGE 14

state’s environmental review document underestimates the harm the plan would cause to Central Valley agriculture.

“The big plan is to put in place this water quality control plan, so a water quality overlay onto a major chunk of the San Joaquin River system for those three rivers that would purport to constrain water rights in the name of water quality, which is legally not a precise fit,” Scheuring said, adding that water quality law in the past has addressed pollution issues.

“This is important statewide because this water quality control planning process, if validated, is probably going to move to other river systems, so it’s coming to a watershed near you,” Scheuring added.

Affected water right holders, he said, are aware that working with the state and other interests is the way to solve these issues.

“We’ve always said that the problem is much more multifarious than just throwing water at it by a regulatory process in which the state agency says get the water back in the river,” he said. “Farmers are just as interested as anybody else, and probably more so, in solving fisheries conflicts.”

As litigation continues, the state water board took its first action on the Bay-Delta plan in more than five years last week, adopting biological goals for flow objectives to support salmon in the San

Joaquin River tributaries.

Stephen Louie of the state water board’s division of water rights, said the biological goals are for salmon abundance, productivity, diversity and population spatial extent, distribution and structure.

He said the goals are not regulatory but serve as metrics for monitoring and assessment. Once established, the board may use the goals to measure the effectiveness of the flow objectives and other aspects of the Bay-Delta plan.

Thomas Berliner, an attorney representing the Merced Irrigation District, addressed the state water board last week, encouraging the board to delay a decision to adopt biological goals.

Berliner noted the board resolution states that addressing water rights is an essential part of the Bay-Delta plan and meeting the biological goals. But he said, “There has not been any water rights proceeding.”

Williams of MID said the district is considering legal options on the board’s approval of biological goals, adding the goals are not consistent with amendments of the Bay-Delta plan or state law.

“Despite the state water board’s disappointing action,” Williams said, “MID remains committed to the voluntary agreement process as we firmly believe it is the best chance to provide balanced, comprehensive solutions to address water quality concerns in the Bay-Delta and its tributaries, including the Tuolumne.”

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The Citrus Research Board and UC ANR hosted the 41st Annual Citrus Post-harvest Pest Control Conference. (Photo: Valley Ag Voice)

Small, Post-harvest Community Gathers in Visalia

Limited post-harvest technologies result in citrus fruit decay.

By Natalie Willis, Reporter, Valley Ag Voice

After harvest, crops undergo a detailed post-harvest process to ensure the food is safe and FDA-approved. The 41st Citrus Post-harvest Pest Control Conference on Sept. 6 brought the small post-harvest community together to discuss new technologies, food safety protocols, and numerous regulations for citrus fruit.

Post-harvest losses due to disease account for roughly 30% to 50% of total production, a study from the Journal of Horticulturae explained. The EPA also estimates approximately 31 million metric tons of food is wasted each year after harvest, accounting for 14% of solid waste dumped into landfills.

According to Tarcisio S. Ruiz, director of Post-harvest Technologies at Fruit Growers Supply, most of the losses for citrus are due to decay, but post-harvest fungicides are limited.

“For citrus, particularly, we only have six fungicides, maybe seven, for decay control, but we have two main pathogens for citrus in post-harvest, and one of them is penicillium — green mold and blue mold — and the other one is sour rot,” Ruiz said. “Well, for sour rot, we only have one fungicide available, for penicillium, we have the other ones, and we need more tools in order to protect the food.”

In comparison, there are more than 1,000 pre-harvest pesticides used to mitigate weeds, insects, and other pests, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

At the conference, Pauline Voorbraak from Janssen Preservation and Material Protection explained that the post-harvest fungicide market is estimated at \$245 million, whereas pre-harvest fungicide is \$18 billion. She explained that the need for more fungicide technologies is evident, but the cost of introducing a new chemical to the market has limited the scope of reality for post-harvest efforts.

POST-HARVEST CONFERENCE

The Citrus Post-harvest Pest Control Conference started in 1978 with the intention of addressing critical areas for the post-harvest citrus community. The annual conference is moderated and organized by Mary Lu Arpaia, horticulturalist and statewide extension specialist for subtropical fruit at UC Riverside.

The 41st conference was held in Visalia and sponsored by the Citrus Research Board as well as the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources. Industry professionals presented various technical aspects of the citrus industry, including post-harvest disease control, managing chemical residues, and food safety.

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Local Pumpkin Patches Gear Up for Halloween

By Valley Ag Voice Staff

The Fall season in Kern County offers the community with ample opportunities to support local farms and participate in one of the most beloved traditions — picking out pumpkins! Bakersfield hosts some of the most iconic pumpkin patches in the county, with new activities added to the roster each year.

The newest edition to the industry opened last year in a temporary location and has since moved to a 20-acre plot at 4011 Wegis Ave. Cherry Acres was founded by Sarah Flippin and her business partner in 2022 out of a desire to pursue an agriculture business in that nation’s top-producing county.

“I was really interested and always liked the farming business, so I really wanted to do something in [agriculture],” Flippin said. “So, we built it last year within a month—we had a pumpkin patch for the public, and now we’re here a year later doing the same thing.”

The pumpkin patch will open on Oct. 2 with an array of activities planned including, but not limited to, a pumpkin patch, sunflower field, corn maze, petting zoo, live music, movie nights, and even a pumpkin launcher.

Flippin explained that supporting other local businesses is a large part of her mission and hosts several vendors and food trucks throughout the season.

“We try to keep people buying local you know, so we will have little boutiques with Fall stuff out there,” Flippin said. “But we try to get people involved, and they just pay a small fee to have a vendor boost.”

Banducci’s Family Pumpkin Patch is another Bakersfield, Fall staple. The family-owned business generally opens at the start of October and offers a range of festivities including corn mazes, pony rides, and, of course, pumpkins.

Located at the iconic Big Red Barn, Murray Family Farms also has several Halloween festivities in motion. October Fun Fest will open on Sept. 30, offering family-friendly entertainment and activities. Festivities are open from Monday to Friday from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. as well as weekends from noon to 8 p.m.



Photo courtesy of Sarah Flippin/Cherry Acres Pumpkin Patch



Photo courtesy of Sarah Flippin/Cherry Acres Pumpkin Patch

LOCATIONS

Cherry Acres Pumpkin Patch
4011 Wegis Ave. Bakersfield, CA 93314

Banducci’s Family Pumpkin Patch
10747 Taft Highway, Bakersfield, CA 93311

Murray Family Farms, The Big Red Barn
6700 General Beale Rd, Bakersfield, CA 93203



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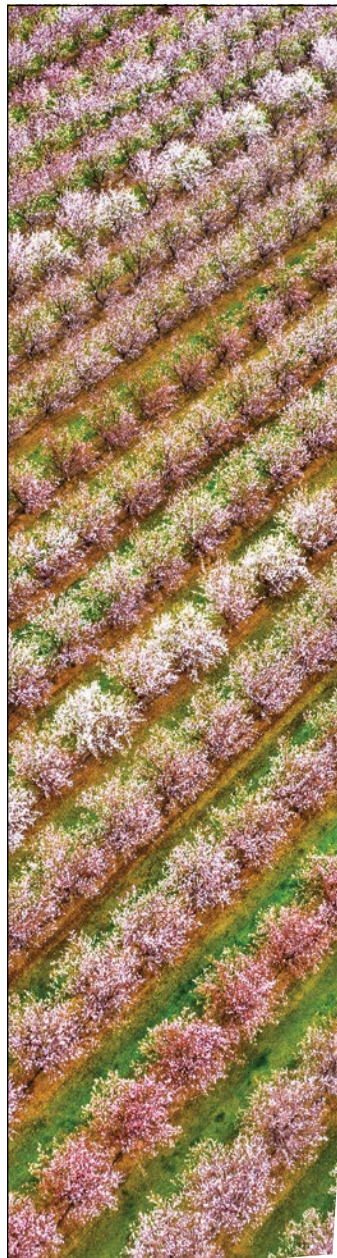
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(Photo: Adobe Stock)

Purposeful Life

By Joshua Stevens
Faith Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:8-10¹

So far in this chapter of Ephesians, Paul has outlined two essential things. 1) We are sinful and corrupt creatures, and 2) We would still be stuck in our mire and filth if not for God’s intervention in our lives. This leads Paul to the crescendo of this chapter as everything comes together, and at the very climax, what does he write? It’s not about you.

Salvation is not a personal badge to be worn in public for admiration. Salvation is a free gift God gives us, not because we earned it. No amount of sweat, toil, tears, or gold could earn salvation.

Now, when it is written, “not as a result of works,” he is speaking specifically to an idea some in Ephesus held, which believed people were judged by the total amount of their works. However, this is not just some old issue that has disappeared with age, but even today, there will be people who claim that one is not a Christian until they can achieve “X,” whatever “X” may be. For some, it is partaking in the sacraments, baptism, or speaking in tongues. But the scripture is clear – we do not earn our salvation. The works we do will not grant us extra salvation. “Created in Christ to do good works” goes back to the earliest parts of Genesis and is a well-established Jewish belief that God created humankind to live righteously and with a heart of gratitude because of the relationship humankind has with God.²

“Which God prepared beforehand, that we

should walk in them.” Some take this to mean that God has chosen every good act in a Christian’s life. Still, as some have noted, this may not be meant to be taken so literally and could, in fact, generally mean that God reshapes the Christian so that whatever the Christian may do would be pleasing in the sight of the Lord.³ We will be sticking to this later interpretation for the remainder of this chapter.

Throughout this chapter, Paul has continuously prompted the church to turn their eyes off the mirror and to the cross. He has shown the readers that no one is righteous; no one is good enough to claim salvation. He reminds Christians that our salvation does not depend on our actions. For Christ has claimed us, and though we were once dead in our sins, we are now risen with Him because God stepped into our lives to make it so. This passage gives a clear claim to humility to all who read it and another consistent reminder that Christians should persevere in doing what is good and righteous, not because it may benefit us but because it brings glory to the Father and may help others. In so doing, we act as worthy representatives of Christ here on earth.

Will you pray with me?

Lord who is rich in mercy and has continued a good work in us, thank you for interceding in our lives so that you might redeem us and bring us into a worthy relationship with you. Thank you for continuing that good work you started in us, a good work you will not abandon. Help us grow closer to you, walking in the ways you have set before us. In Jesus’ name I pray,

Amen.

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

2 Liefeld, E. W. (1997). *The IVP New Testament commentary series*, Intervarsity.

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KERN COUNTY WILDLIFE PROFILE: SAN JOAQUIN KIT FOX



(Photo by Moose Peterson / MoosePeterson.com)

The San Joaquin kit foxes are small mammals with a slender build, typically weighing 2 to 3 pounds. They have a grayish-buff fur coat with a distinctive, black-tipped tail and large ears, which help them dissipate heat and regulate their body temperature. Their fur can vary slightly in coloration, but it generally provides good camouflage in their desert habitat. They prefer areas with sparse vegetation and sandy soils suitable for their burrowing behavior. San Joaquin kit foxes are primarily nocturnal, solitary animals; each fox typically has its own burrow system. These burrows serve as shelter from extreme temperatures and as a place to rear their young. Breeding typically occurs in late winter to early spring, and litters range from 3 to 5 pups raised in the safety of their burrows. They are weaned at around 6 to 8 weeks of age and become independent at around 5 to 6 months old.

Their diet primarily consists of small mammals, insects, birds, and fruit, depending on the availability of prey in their habitat. They are opportunistic hunters and adapt their diet to what is locally abundant. Efforts to conserve and protect the San Joaquin kit fox have been ongoing to ensure the survival of this endangered subspecies.

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