



# Merced County Farm News



## Drought emergency declared in Central Valley, Klamath region

**By: Rachel Backer, CalMatters**

California Gov. Gavin Newsom today declared a drought emergency in 39 additional counties, including most of the parched Central Valley and Klamath River area.

The declaration comes amid mounting pressure from lawmakers and growers in the Central Valley, who this year are receiving only 5% of their expected water allocations from the state. Growers say the sharp cutbacks in state and federal water supplies will mean they will suffer huge economic losses and be forced to fallow fields

and sell off cattle.

A bipartisan group of Central Valley lawmakers wrote to Newsom in April pushing for a statewide emergency that would give the state more flexibility in granting water transfers. They also sought easing of some rules for reservoir releases, which would “allow for more water to go to communities throughout the state.”

The governor’s emergency drought order “sounds positive to us, particularly the flexibility for water transfers,” said Mike Wade, spokesman for the California Farm Water Coalition, which represents

state growers. “We have water in some areas and we want to make it available in other areas. Those transfers have to be approved in time periods that work for growers on another end.”

Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot said the order will expedite transfers of water wherever possible among growers and agencies — which means one grower can sell water to another. But he told CalMatters that the state cannot increase reservoir releases to give growers more water at this point. In fact, the emergency declaration will allow state officials to modify water quality standards

to allow more storage of water in reservoirs for the dry days ahead.

“That being said, we want to support growers however we can,” Crowfoot said.

The California Farm Bureau said today that it is grateful for the “short-term” relief for some growers that may come with the emergency order, but that what they really need is major investments in water supply projects.

“By widening the drought emergency, the governor has recognized the reality facing much

*See 'Drought' Page 4*

## Support Merced County Fair’s In-Person Livestock Show & Sale, June 10-12

**By: Merced County Fair**

While the Merced County Fair isn’t taking place this year, the fair will have a modified in-person livestock show and sale that aligns with COVID-19 health and safety protocols to keep this important aspect of the fair tradition alive and support the hardworking 4-H and FFA students in our community. The modified and in-person 2021 Merced County Fair Livestock Show will take place Thursday, June 10 – Friday, June 11. Then the Livestock Sale will take place on Saturday, June 12 at 9:30 a.m. in the Yosemite Hall at the Merced County Fairgrounds. All animals will be livestreamed from the Hilmar

Cheese Barn to allow for a greater number buyers and auctioneers to attend and promote social distancing. Merced County Fair is currently seeking buyers to support these hardworking 4-H and FFA students. If you are interested in becoming a buyer or would like to place an add-on bid to show your

support, visit the Merced County Fair’s website at [www.mercedcountyfair.com/livestock-exhibits](http://www.mercedcountyfair.com/livestock-exhibits) or email [livestock@countyofmerced.com](mailto:livestock@countyofmerced.com).



Address

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*from the*  
**President's  
Corner**

**Eric Harcksen**

**G**reetings Merced County Farm Bureau. I hope this article finds you and your family

well. Well, our governor rolled out a \$100 Billion Economic Recovery and Relief Plan this week. He also made a stop on the Westside of Merced County to declare 39 more counties in California in a drought emergency. I hope this will start to open some eyes on water here in California, mostly on water storage and delivery. One would think that more water storage would mean more water! That would mean

more water for farmers, fish, people and groundwater recharge. This is something that California really needs to get in front of or we will be looking at fallowing row crops and permanent crops here in California. We need to stand together and get our water back to our family farms so that we are able to pass them onto our children and grandchildren.



*from the*  
**Director's  
Desk**

**Breanne Vandenberg**

**W**ell, first things first, if you noticed a name change and are a bit confused, you're not seeing things. Among everything going on in the world, Justin and I were married this past weekend. Aside from some wind, everything went perfectly.

We are back to hosting events. We've partnered with Fluetsch and

Busby Insurance and will be hosting a training session for a topics such as heat illness, sexual harassment and equipment safety. We've been lucky enough to secure some equipment dealers that are willing to bring some equipment out as well. In addition to this event, we've also scheduled some haz mat training sessions. Please check page 24 of your Farm News for details of this. We will be capping the ag haz mat classes so please call early.

This week brings with it our Issue Advisory Committees at the state level. These committees allow for the initial development of California Farm Bureau policy and

any recommendations that we see fit to make to the American Farm Bureau. Over the week, I'm happy to say that we have had six individuals from Merced County participate. If you have interest in participating in the future or have questions on how these committees work, I'm happy to answer. Topics have a large range and include animal health & welfare, marketing and organics, and ag labor.

If you or your employees need connections to vaccinations, please give our office a call as we can help in arranging for that to occur. We're beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel and hope to be back to normal sometime soon.

## Farm Bureau President Urges Additional Flexibility In Conservation Programs

**By: CAFB**

**L**and that produces food and farm products also provides crucial conservation and climate benefits-and federal conservation programs must focus on keeping working lands working, according to California Farm Bureau testimony before a congressional subcommittee today.

California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson testified virtually before the U.S. House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry.

Johansson said the California Farm Bureau supports participation by farmers, ranchers and foresters in voluntary, climate-smart practices that

sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build climate resilience.

"Our farmers and ranchers have a proven track record of doing more with less," he said, noting farmer investments in water recharge, irrigation efficiency, energy conservation, cleaner-running farm equipment and numerous other on-farm conservation practices.

"With so much already happening at the field level, it is important to consider how new federal policies and programs will overlay with existing state climate programs and grower-led initiatives," Johansson said.

To achieve the best results, he said, federal conservation programs must

retain and enhance their flexibility to incorporate all crop types and farm sizes. Practices encouraged by the programs must be "broad and outcome-based," Johansson said, "emphasizing a list of options as opposed to a prescriptive checklist."

Noting that he and his family have been forced to evacuate due to wildfires on three separate occasions, Johansson urged the subcommittee to include forestry and grazing practices as strategies to restore forest and rangeland health, and to ensure sufficient disaster assistance for farmers and ranchers.

In encouraging long-term adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices, financial and technical assistance

to farmers and ranchers must be "consistent, sustainable and long term," he said.

"To further the adoption of on-farm climate-smart practices, we must not only compensate early adopters but also consider the economics of the farm and assist those being expected to do more," Johansson concluded. "Only in working together can we achieve solutions that make agriculture more climate resilient while remaining viable."

The California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of nearly 32,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of nearly 5.6 million Farm Bureau members.

### Merced County Farm Bureau's Mission Statement

Merced County Farm Bureau is an independent, non-governmental, grassroots organization that advocates for the men and women who provide food, fiber, and nursery products for our community, state, and nation.

Merced County Farm Bureau exists for the purpose of improving the ability of individuals engaged in production agriculture to utilize

California resources to produce food and fiber in the most profitable, efficient and responsible manner possible, guaranteeing our nation a domestic food supply.

Merced County Farm Bureau supports policies and legislation that promote and protect our Country's number one industry - agriculture for future generations and the security of our nation.



*from the*  
**Editor's Notes**  
**Denelle Flake**

outstanding teachers from Merquin Elementary School each \$500 to use towards classroom supplies. These teachers went above and beyond by each teaching two agriculture lessons and discussing their plans to continue with more. Please see page 12 of the Farm News, as it highlights these deserving individuals.

If you are a member of the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition and still have outstanding 2020 INMP Sumamry Reports or Farm Evaluations, please turn them in as soon as possible. The required annual member meeting is now available to complete online at [esjcoalition.org/](http://esjcoalition.org/) meeting. If you have any questions, please call our office at (209) 723-3001.

**T**his is Merced County Farm Bureau's (MCFB) second year offering the Rooted in Agriculture Rewards Program to all Merced County TK-6th grade teachers. The Rooted in Agriculture Rewards Program is an opportunity for teachers that incorporate agriculture in their classroom to apply for a reward from MCFB. This year MCFB rewarded two



**Farm Bureau  
 Extension**

**MAY 20**

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***Calendar of Events***

**May 17-21**

**Ag Container Recycling Event (pg. 16)**

**May 20**

**CAFB Extension - Pesticide Compliance 101 (pg. 3)**

**May 25**

**Ag HazMat Training (pg. 20)**

**June 9**

**Farm Safety and Equipment Training Day (pg. 24)**

**June 10-12**

**Merced County Fair Livestock Show & Sale (pg. 1)**

**Merced County Farm News**

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## Drought

continued from page 1

of rural California: Our future is not guaranteed,” said Jamie Johansson, the bureau’s president.

The emergency declaration spans 31 counties in the Sacramento and San Joaquin basins, four counties in the Klamath River basin in the far north and four counties in the Tulare Lake basin in the southern San Joaquin Valley.

The new order expands the drought emergency to a total of 41 counties that make up more than half of the state’s land. Declarations already were announced last month for Mendocino

and Sonoma counties due to severe conditions in the Russian River watershed.

The news comes as drought spreads across California, with most of the state experiencing extreme drought conditions or worse.

Water levels in the state’s major reservoirs have dropped far below average, and there’s little hope of refilling them.

Rainfall in almost all of the state has dropped below half of average. The Sierra Nevada snowpack dropped to 8% of average by May 10, and the dry air and soil are drinking up potential runoff. Streamflow in Sierra Nevada watersheds rivals lows seen during the peak of the recent five year

drought.

“None of that water is entering the rivers and streams and flowing into reservoirs,” said Daniel Swain, a climate researcher at the University of California, Los Angeles. “It’s been steadily getting worse and steadily approaching the peak magnitude of the last big one.”

All told, water supplies have fallen short of expected levels by 500,000 acre feet, according to the governor’s office. “Enough to supply up to one million households with water for a year.”

Crowfoot said the emergency order will allow the state to modify water quality requirements in rivers and the Bay-Delta in order to hold more water in reservoirs such as Lake Oroville, the largest reservoir the state operates.

No water quality requirements have been waived yet. The emergency declaration simply gives state officials the authority to change them, Crowfoot said. The goal is “so that we can hold more water within the reservoirs for later in the season, and next year, if it’s a dry year,” he said.

But environmental advocates are concerned that waiving water quality rules could harm fish and wildlife in streams.

“Everyone knows that (the existing standards) are too weak to protect fish and wildlife, particularly in really dry years,” said Doug Obegi, senior attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council. “Weakening those standards, whether it’s salinity standards in the Delta or instream flow standards on the Feather River, are certainly bad for fish and wildlife, and bad for people as well.”

And what’s more, Obegi said, they could have been avoided had officials reduced water allocations earlier. Despite the reductions, he calculates that state and federal water projects are still on track to tap into reservoirs for millions of acre feet of water.

“The state doesn’t have a plan for drought,” Obegi said. “And to the extent they do have a plan, it’s simply to violate water quality standards

and pray for rain, rather than curtailing unsustainable water diversions that are devastating native fish and wildlife, and communities in the Delta.”

The emergency powers also ease the way for the state to curtail water rights in drought-stricken river systems in order to protect threatened fish and prevent saltwater from backwashing from the San Francisco Bay into the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, which 29 million Californians rely on for at least some of their drinking water. The Delta is also a key source of water for irrigating the state’s multi-billion dollar agricultural industry.

“We need to make sure there’s enough water flowing into the Delta to repel salinity, in other words, to keep the salt water from intruding,” Crowfoot said.

The emergency powers will cut down on requirements for purchasing and contracting in the affected counties that Crowfoot said could otherwise slow critical services such as trucking fish stranded by low flows and warm water to the Pacific and providing assistance to communities whose groundwater wells have dried.

It will also waive some requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act, which requires an assessment of a project’s environmental effects, for constructing physical rock barriers in parts of the interior delta to protect against saltwater intrusion. Crowfoot said he expects the project to begin later this spring.

Among the groups that have been lobbying state officials is California’s commercial, recreational and tribal salmon industry, which says it is often at the end of the line when state water is doled out. California’s salmon provides \$1.4 billion in economic value and supports 23,000 jobs throughout the state, particularly in the Bay-Delta region.

“Obviously, there’s not enough water to go around, and obviously drought hurts everybody,” said John McManus, president of the Golden State Salmon Association.

“Those of us in the salmon industry would like to see a little bit more compromise and a more balanced allocation of water,” he said. “The way it’s currently being allocated borders on a social justice inequity. Fishing families, especially on the coast, are being forced to shoulder more of the pain from the drought than the big growers in the Central Valley.”

*Editor’s Note: See page 11 for full California Farm Bureau press release.*



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# Farm Bureau: Details Will Determine Impact of Federal 30'x30' Plan

By: **CAFB**

Noting that climate goals outlined today by the Biden administration will have real, on-the-ground implications for farmers and ranchers, the California Farm Bureau urged the administration to listen to farmers' and ranchers' voices as it fleshes out its "30 x 30" plan.

California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson said the administration's plan appropriately acknowledges the role farmers, ranchers and foresters already play and can play in addressing climate change, but said that acknowledgement must carry through as the plan is implemented.

"The voluntary efforts California farmers already perform—such as cover cropping, no-till farming and the establishment of land-conservation tools such as easements—should be accounted for as government agencies refine working-lands policies," Johansson said. "We will work with the administration to ensure it considers the practical implications of its policies for farmers and ranchers."

The state of California has already announced its own intention to protect 30% of land and water by 2030, and Johansson said farmers and ranchers have shown willingness to adapt as

needed in response to climate change.

"California's working lands represent part of the solution to climate goals, and the objective of climate policy should be to keep working lands working," he said. "California farmers, ranchers and foresters are world leaders in promoting soil health, using water efficiently, enhancing wildlife and simultaneously producing safe, affordable food and farm products for consumers."

Noting the state's agricultural diversity, Johansson said California farmers and ranchers must have flexibility to manage land in ways that will succeed for their crops and employees, and for the type and scale of their operations.

"One-size-fits-all approaches will fail," he said. "Providing farmers a menu of options most appropriate for their farm or ranch holds the best chance for success. On-farm strategies for addressing climate change must be backed by research and be practical for farmers to implement—because for farms and ranches to meet their conservation goals, they must also meet economic goals."

The California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of nearly 32,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of nearly 5.6 million Farm Bureau members.



American Farmland Trust (AFT) was one of the first national land trusts in the United States and continues to work with other land trusts to protect farmland. As an agricultural land trust for 40 years, AFT develops innovative agricultural conservation easement projects in partnership with interested landowners located in priority regions across the state. In California, a regional focus is the San Joaquin Valley and AFT is seeking farmers with interest in conservation

easements. If you live in Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, or Tulare, you can reach AFT to discuss conservation options. Your support in this effort would better enable us to actualize our goal of protecting farmland in one of the most significant agricultural regions in the nation.

To express your interest in learning more about conservation easements you can reach Stacy Shutts, AFT California Climate and Agriculture Program Manager, at [sshutts@farmland.org](mailto:sshutts@farmland.org) or by phone at (916) 282-3991.

# CARA highlights agricultural history from across California

By: **Emily Lin, UC Merced Library**

UC Cooperative Extension archival collections continue to grow at UC Merced Library. In addition to the Merced County, UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Records located in our California Agricultural Resources Archive (CARA), we have the UCCE records from many other counties around the state. These collections contain California's unique historical agricultural resources and are made up of documents, photographs, films, and many other formats. Recently, 500 images were added to the Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties, UC Cooperative Extension Records. Spanning the 1920s through the 2010s, the total number of items

from those two counties is now 1,672. Check out the entire collection on Calisphere: <https://calisphere.org/collections/27428/>



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# One Year On - Merced County 4-H Weathers the Pandemic Storm



## from the 4-H Youth Development Advisor

**Russell Hill**

**UC Cooperative Extension,  
Merced, Madera, Mariposa  
Counties**

The story is the same for so many, March 2020 hit every industry, organization, and business with the swift and unrelenting waves of the pandemic. Schools, universities, childcare facilities, Boys and Girls Clubs, Scouts, 4-H, FFA, and so many youth serving organizations were denied the ability to provide in-person activities for nearly a year. The totality of the pandemic's effects has yet to be seen, but we do know that children and those who support them bore an uneven burden, including a loss of social interactions, declines in mental health, and being denied many of the activities that generations of their predecessors enjoyed. 4-H and FFA youth had already begun creating their projects and many had already selected their livestock to exhibit at the Spring Fair and Merced County Fair when it was later determined that all large events would be cancelled for 2020. A clear day at sea ended up with one of the most tumultuous storms current generations have ever weathered.

At one point it seemed that we were in the eye of the storm; effects of the pandemic subsided, we could

meet person, albeit in limited numbers with new health mandates in place, and we believed we had seen the worst the storm had to offer. Schools prepared for in-person and hybrid virtual activities and local restaurants promoted safe outdoor dining and gathering again. The eye passed over and in the fall of 2020 the storm returned with a vengeance. Through all this our community's youth suffered and continue to suffer the effects of COVID-19 beyond the actual virus itself.

California saw enrollment decline by nearly 40% and Merced county was not spared. This decline affected youth sports, arts, music, drama, other leisure programs; in short, all youth-serving organizations have been hard hit. "So what?" you may ask. 4-H is a "hands on, learn-by-doing" program supported by caring adults and without the opportunity to do hands on activities in person with those caring adults, youth and their families never enrolled because those opportunities were not available in our traditional format. UC 4-H and its staff worked hard to adjust our heading by developing alternatives so that we could still work with youth. To continue using the analogy, we were still on this ship and we couldn't get off in the middle of the storm, so we worked with what we had to keep her afloat! Dedicated staff and volunteers found ways to provide youth with the opportunity to lead, engage in community service, develop and improve their skills, and exhibit their projects!

Through the pandemic this community continued to rally around the 4-H program and did not fail us at our most vulnerable time. The Merced community is strong, resilient, and supportive of programs like 4-H and without it, we would not have weathered this fierce storm. To the Merced Community, on behalf of the University of California, 4-H, and specifically Merced 4-H, please accept this heartfelt THANK YOU for all you have done. As we have done over the past 105 years, we look forward to continue serving and supporting Merced.

# California Farm Bureau Legislative Update

**By: CAFB**

**M**ay 7, 2021 - **Agricultural Employment**  
AB 616 (Mark Stone, D-Monterey Bay) creates a new "ballot card" election option for labor unions seeking to unionize employees under the Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ALRA). The "ballot card" procedure amounts to "card check," allowing union organizers to coerce, intimidate, or otherwise induce agricultural employees to sign "ballot cards." AB 616 denies agricultural employees the right to an Agricultural Labor Relations Board-supervised secret ballot election that protects employees from intimidation from any party with an interest in the outcome (the reason secret ballot elections were strongly advocated by civil rights icon Cesar Chavez). AB 616 was passed by the Assembly Appropriations Committee on May 5 and is awaiting Assembly floor consideration. Farm Bureau opposes.

AB 857 (Ash Kalra, D-San Jose) is a re-tread of SB 1102 (Monning, 2020), which was vetoed by Governor Newsom. AB 857 requires the DIR to create a duplicative notification requirement for H-2A employers and mandates a notification template the mis-characterizes the existing requirement for employers to compensate travel time at the employee's regular rate of pay rather than the minimum wage. AB 857 passed the Assembly Appropriations Committee on April 21 and passed the Assembly on May 6 on a vote of 43-21 with 14 Assembly members not voting.

SB 331 (Connie Leyva, D-Chino) would severely restrict the use of non-disparagement clauses as part of agreements employers and employees frequently use to facilitate payment of a severance financial package for the employee. The inability to include non-disparagement clauses in severance agreements will discourage their use, to the detriment of both employers and employees. Farm Bureau opposes this bill. SB 331 passed the Senate on May 6, 29-8.

**Animal Health**

AB 888 (Marc Levine, D-Marin) recently passed in the Assembly Agriculture Committee and awaits further action in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. AB 888 would expand the utilization of on-farm slaughter by a registered mobile slaughter operator (MSO) to also include goats, sheep and pork. AB 888 is a Farm Bureau sponsored bill.

## **Budget**

The Senate Budget Subcommittee on Resources, Environmental Protection and Energy released their "Agricultural Relief" Proposal for consideration in lieu of the Governor's proposed 2021 State Budget. The proposal includes the following:

- Convert the Department of Pesticide Regulation's Pesticide Mill Proposal (establish a "tiered" mill assessment based on toxicity) from an increase to the mill assessment to a General Fund appropriation of \$45 million over two years to enact the same activities (IPM grants, air monitoring, state/local enforcement, community engagement and structural deficit assistance).
- \$170 million General Fund to the Air Resources Board for the Funding Agricultural Replacement Measures for Emission Reductions (FARMER) Program.
- \$180 million General Fund (\$60 million annually for three years) for the Air Resources Board and local air districts to administer grants for alternatives to agricultural burning.
- \$12 million General Fund to the Department of Food and Agriculture to create a DNA barcode reference library for California insects.
- \$50 million General Fund to the Department of Food and Agriculture for the Alternatives Manure Management Program (AMMP).

These funds are in addition to the multi-billion-dollar drought relief package the Senate presented the

*See 'Legislative' Page 7*

## Legislative

continued from page 6

week prior. The items were discussed in Committee this week, but no official votes were taken, meaning items are still open for consideration and amendments. Farm Bureau staff testified with concerns that temporary General Funds for DPR activities will lead to an increased mill assessment when funds expire, that agricultural burn alternative funding should be specific to the districts experiencing the mandate to phase out burning by the Air Resources Board, and for technology neutrality on methane emission reduction projects. It is expected this item will be heard again following the May Revision.

### Commodities

A Farm Bureau supported bill, AB 239 (Carlos Villapudua, D-Stockton) has successfully passed the Assembly and is now awaiting assignment in the Senate. This bill would allow a licensed winegrower to sell or deliver wine in containers provided by the customer at an offsite tasting room. This allowance is currently operational under a temporary standard and common-place at breweries.

### Crop Protection

SB 489 (John Laird, D-Santa Cruz) would increase the membership of the Agricultural Pest Control Advisory Committee at the Department of Pesticide Regulation with two additional public members. The author has stated his intention is to empower consumer voices about environmental issues related to pesticide use that is discussed by the Advisory Committee. The bill has passed the Senate and is now awaiting assignment by Rules Committee in the Assembly.

### Grant Opportunity

The Department of Food and Agriculture has released a request for proposals for the California Underserved and Small Producers Program. This grant would provide grants to (1) technical assistance providers that help farmers and ranchers apply for relief grants and providing business planning and marketing strategies for recovery; and (2) to underserved farm and ranchers to aid in their relief activities. Grants would range from \$25,000-\$100,000 for the former and up to \$150,000 for the latter. Technical

assistance funds are available to non-profits, tribal governments and resource conservation districts with demonstrated experience. The Request for Proposal can be found here. Applications are due May 10th by 5pm.

### Natural Resources

A bill which would apply to every future natural resource general obligation bond, AB 1099 (Robert Rivas, D-Salinas), was held in the Assembly this year without a policy committee hearing. This bill would establish a set of environmental equity principles, such as set asides for disadvantaged communities and technical assistance, that would apply to every general obligation bond related to natural resources under consideration by the California voters on or after January 1, 2022. This bill can be reconsidered in 2022.

Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia (D-Coachella) has introduced, AB 1500, a bill which would place a \$6.95 billion general obligation bond on the June 7th, 2022 general election ballot. Among its various appropriations, the bond, if approved, would provide \$50 million to the Department of Food and Agriculture for soil health, carbon sequestration and water quality improvements, \$40 million for on-farm water efficient, \$40 million for methane emissions management (dairy digesters are specifically excluded), and \$100 million for agricultural infrastructure (food systems, market access, and worker equipment and training). The bond would also include various funds for groundwater and surface water, wildfire abatement, climate planning, fairgrounds, and wildlife. Farm Bureau is discussing the specifics of the measure with the author's office.

### Nutrition

AB 558 (Adrin Nazarian, D-Sherman Oaks), a bill which would establish the School Plant based Food and Beverage Program at the Department of Education has failed to pass a major legislative deadline to be heard in policy committee this week. This bill would have created a program allowing for additional funding reimbursements per meal for schools that choose to offer students plant-based meal and beverage options and grants for schools to make related trainings, and equipment purchases related to these products. Farm Bureau had discussed this bill with the author's office noting that plant-

based options are already available, at the discretion of the school, for those students choosing to access these products and that school meals are woefully underfunded, regardless of the nutritional preference. This bill will no longer be heard for the remainder of this year but may be in 2022.

The Senate Budget Subcommittee on Education met this week to discuss the Department of Education and specifically funding for school meals. The subcommittee discussed various actions taken by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and activities schools have taken to date to adjust their feeding programs due to COVID restrictions. The subcommittee also discussed the concept of universal school meals (lunch and breakfast), State cost implications and integration into the federal school meals systems. The item was left open and not voted upon.

### Taxation

AB 80 (Autumn Burke, D-Inglewood) a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) tax conformity bill has passed in the legislature and was recently signed by Governor Newsom. The passage of AB 80 now ensures that business who received a PPP loan during the COVID-19 pandemic would not be forced to pay state taxes on the loan.

### Utility

Assemblymember Lorena Gonzalez (D-San Diego) has entered into the debate on net energy metering with AB 1139. As amended on May 4, 2021, the bill would require that a net metering customer taking service from the large investor-owned utilities (PG&E, SCE, SDG&E) that receives service pursuant to the existing net energy metering tariffs be transferred to the successor tariff no later than 5 years from the date that customer first received service pursuant to those existing tariffs. The transfer would apply even to customers, who put in place their systems under the original net metering tariffs and pursuant to a CPUC decision in 2014 authorized customers to remain on the original tariff parameters for 20 years. CAFB is assessing AB 1139 but will likely oppose it. There is also an open CPUC proceeding that is considering how to develop the successor net metering tariffs for 2024 and beyond. Any successor tariff is anticipated to have significantly higher ongoing costs than what are currently in place. AB

1139 is currently in Appropriations Committee and is expected to move on to the Assembly Floor, given that Assemblymember Gonzales is Chair of the Committee.

### Water

The Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee held an informational hearing this week entitled, "Is California Ready for Another Drought?" The Legislative Analyst's Office began by giving an overview of the 2012-16 drought response by the state. Next, a panel with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Department of Water Resources, the Division of Water Rights from the State Water Resources Control Board, and the Division of Drinking Water also from the Water Board, presented an overview of current conditions, planned responses and lessons learned from the last drought. The final panel presented their perspectives and how the drought impacts regions differently. Presenting were Sonoma County Supervisor David Rabbitt, Environmental Justice advocate and Community Water Center Executive Director Susana De Anda, Doug Obegi, Senior Attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council, Joe Del Bosque of Del Bosque Farms and a former California Water Commissioner, and Sandra Kerl, General Manager of the San Diego Water Authority. Hearing background material, the agenda, the California Natural Resources Agency "Report to the Legislature on the 2012-16 Drought", the LAO's handout and other materials are available online.

As previously reported, a measure that would provide grant funding for repairs on the Friant-Kern Canal, the State Water Project and the Delta Mendota Canal is scheduled in the Senate Appropriations Committee next week. SB 559 (Melissa Hurtado, D-Sanger), would establish the Canal Conveyance Capacity Restoration Fund to support subsidence repair costs, for the Friant-Kern Canal, the Delta-Mendota Canal and the California Aqueduct. Local and federal funding has also been identified, and the state funds provided in the measure are contingent upon those local and federal funds being provided. Farm Bureau supports the measure.

### Wildfire

AB 926 (Devon Mathis, R-Visalia), a bill which would provide greater

*See 'Legislative' Page 8*

## Legislative

continued from page 7

transparency and accountability to CalFire's Fire Prevention Grant Programs and further prioritizes wildfire mitigation projects that do not require CEQA, or have a completed or nearly completed CEQA document,

recently passed in the Assembly Natural Resources Committee. AB 926 further incorporates project criteria that were utilized in the CalFire 45 Day Report (2019) to expedite wildfire mitigation projects near high-risk communities. The bill awaits further action in the Assembly Appropriations Committee and is a Farm Bureau sponsored bill.

AB 1431 (Jim Frazier, D-Fairfield), a bill which would codify various objectives and goals established in California's Forest Carbon Plan (2018) and would bring greater accountability to fuel treatments and vegetation management activities conducted within the state, recently passed in the Assembly Natural Resources Committee. Assembly Bill 1431 will

hold the state respective agencies accountable for increasing the pace and scale of these forest management activities to not only protect our environmental resources, but also the lives and private property of Californians. The bill awaits further action in the Assembly Appropriations Committee and Farm Bureau is in support of the legislation.

# Nationwide Financial Helps CAFB Grow a Retirement Plan for Employees of Farm Bureau Ag Members

**By: Nationwide**

**A**re you ready for the new state retirement plan mandate that may apply to you as soon as June 30, 2021? If not, Nationwide may be able to help.

The California Farm Bureau ("CAFB") worked with Nationwide to create a multiple employer retirement plan ("MEP") that is available only to employers that are agricultural members of county Farm Bureaus in California, even those that already sponsor a retirement plan. The CAFB-sponsored MEP provides a cost-efficient method to comply with the new law that began to apply in 2020 to California employers with over 100 employees. The law will expand and apply to smaller employers over the next two years so that by 2022, all California employers with five or more employees will be required to either:

1. sponsor their own retirement plan (e.g., a SIMPLE IRA, SEP IRA, or 401(k)), or
2. facilitate automatic payroll deduction to enroll their employees into the CalSavers retirement program.

Those employers who do not comply will be subject to significant penalties based on their employee headcount.

**Please note: Employers with 51 or more employees, the deadline to comply with the new state retirement plan mandate is June 30, 2021.**

**We encourage you to take action right away to ensure adequate time to set up the plan prior to this deadline.**

Employers who join the CAFB's MEP will not only comply with the California requirement described above but will also be able to take

advantage of federal tax incentives available to employers that provide a retirement plan for their employees. In addition, participating employers will be providing their employees the opportunity to save for retirement with the help of Nationwide, who was recognized by both J.D. Power (in 2020) and DALBAR (from 2016-2021) as a leading retirement plan provider. These national recognitions are attributable to Nationwide's Retirement Resource Group, which includes licensed retirement specialists that provide one-on-one financial planning not only on retirement, but also on healthcare costs, Social Security, and more. Another differentiator is Nationwide's robust foreign language capabilities to provide verbal and written retirement plan information in employees' native language, including Spanish.

Nationwide is a perfect partner for the CAFB because since its founding, helping protect the agricultural community has been a main priority. In fact, Nationwide was created by the Ohio Farm Bureau to provide auto insurance to its members at reasonable rates. Originally named the "Farm Bureau Mutual Automobile Insurance Company," it quickly spread from Ohio to several other states and changed its name to reflect its intent to sell insurance products "nationwide." Today, as the #1 writer of farm and ranch insurance<sup>1</sup> in the country, Nationwide has more than met its goal.

As Nationwide expanded geographically, it also expanded the products and services it offered Farm Bureau members, first to fire and life insurance in the 1930s, and eventually with the creation of Nationwide Financial, into financial services. Like the growth of Nationwide's agricultural insurance business,

Nationwide Financial also quickly expanded. By December 31, 2020, Nationwide Financial managed over \$172 billion in assets for more than 2.5 million participants in over 35,000 retirement plans. Those numbers include \$28 billion in assets attributable to 2,500 retirement plans in California alone, where approximately 540 Nationwide associates live and work.<sup>2</sup>

Based on its agriculture heritage and its solid presence in California, Nationwide is uniquely positioned to help protect the retirement futures of MEP participants. Those who opt to join this newly established MEP will be able to take advantage of:

- lower costs because of the economies of scale that are realized through the pooling of
- all participating employees' assets, and the sharing of fiduciary services,
- simplified administration because of the need to file only a single Form 5500, and correspondingly to conduct only one plan audit for all MEP participants, and
- shared ERISA 3(16) plan administration and ERISA 3(38) investment management.

It follows that participating employees will also share the same investment line-up. Notwithstanding the common investments,

each employer that joins the MEP will still be able to customize a plan design that best meets its own needs.

Eligible employers who do not already sponsor a retirement plan for their employees are able to join the CAFB's MEP, and those who sponsor an existing plan are also able to transfer plan assets into the MEP.

For more information on the benefits of the MEP offered through the CAFB's partnership with

Nationwide, consider joining the following presentation/teleconference, planned for:

Thursday, May 20th from 4:00 – 5:00 pm, PST

Register for this session from a computer, tablet or smartphone here: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/7679883525786327565>

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Thursday, May 13th from 6:00 – 7:00 pm PST, or  
Thursday, May 20th from 4:00 – 5:00 pm, PST

Register for this session here:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/7679883525786327565>

# Merced County Farm Bureau Heritage Members

## Platinum Heritage Members



## Gold Heritage Members

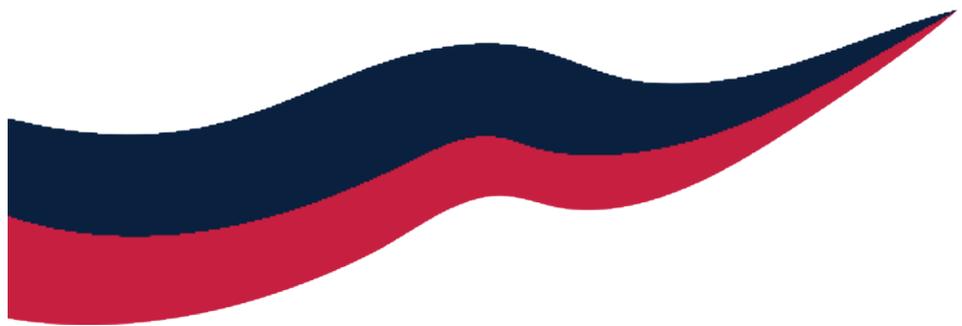
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# As Wildfire Season Nears, Many California Farmers Can't Get Fire Insurance

By: Dylan Svoboda, Civil Eats

May 10, 2021 - On an October night in 2019, Scott Newman stood on his Sonoma Valley farm and watched the smoke plumes from the Kinkade Fire over the mountains to his north. He texted a friend, the local fire chief, "It looks like we might be in the fire path." Minutes later, Newman recalled, the chief replied, "Sadly, yes." By the following day, the fire had reduced nearly everything on his 500-acre property to blackened rubble. Only a single barn remained unscathed.

Newman's crop and fire insurance policies covered just about all the damages, including six homes, 14 structures, and vineyard and ranching equipment worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. Over the next year and a half, he built anew on the property that had been in his family for

50 years.

But now, as Newman prepares for the next fire season, his Travelers fire insurance agent informed him that the company would no longer cover his property. Like several hundred other California farmers who have found themselves in the same situation, he now finds himself without fire insurance.

California's fire season has become longer and more intense in recent years, in part due to climate change. Shorter rainy seasons, warmer temperatures, and drier vegetation in California's fire-prone regions have all created a tinderbox, waiting to blow. Last year the state had its worst fire season on record, and this year is already raising concern among meteorologists and fire experts. California Governor Gavin Newsom recently declared a drought emergency in Sonoma and Mendocino counties,

and 85 percent of the state is already in a severe, extreme, or exceptional drought.

Residential and commercial properties have been hit especially hard by the state's insurance crisis. The number of non-renewals on residential properties grew every year between 2015 and 2019, affecting more than 950,000 customers. But those customers are afforded a state-mandated backup plan that explicitly excludes "farm risks."

California farmers are already dealing with increasingly life-threatening conditions in wine country, the Sierra Nevadas, and the central and southern coasts. Now, that problem has been compounded by climbing costs and heightened risks as insurance companies retreat from these high-fire danger regions as well. And it's more than just farmers who could face the consequences in the state that produces about half of the nation's fruits and vegetables and 90 percent of its nuts.

## Unprecedented Risks

As Newman rebuilt, he took steps to secure his property against future wildfires. He built barns out of metal rather than wood. He now keeps his tractors and pickup trucks in the middle of his property, away from the more flammable vineyards. He assumed his fire insurer would look favorably on these changes and continue to insure his farm.

But that hasn't been the case. While Travelers continued coverage on his property's homes, and the federal crop insurance program covers his vineyards and cattle, nearly \$1 million in equipment and infrastructure is "sitting there uninsured." That includes everything from hay barns to irrigation pumps, forklifts, pickup trucks, and a bulldozer, according to Newman.

Across the state, hundreds of farmers and ranchers are unable to obtain a fire insurance plan or have had their plans canceled in recent years, according to California Farm Bureau Federation (CFBF) spokesman Robert Spiegel. In Sonoma and Napa counties alone, nearly 500 farmers have lost coverage. On both the Central and Southern Coast, dozens of farmers are uninsurable. Growers as far north as Modoc County can't get wildfire

coverage, Spiegel said.

Where there is still fire insurance available to farmers and ranchers, costs are skyrocketing. "The cost of the coverage that's available is double or triple," said Michael Martinez, the legislative director for the California Department of Insurance, during a State Senate hearing in March. Agricultural insurance brokers who have worked in the industry for decades say they've never seen anything like it, said Steve Valencia, who has been selling California farmers policies since 1980. The situation has gotten so bad, that the California Farm Bureau Federation has made affordable fire insurance for farmers and ranchers "priority number one" in 2021.

The insurance industry has been hit hard by the unprecedented California wildfires of the last half-decade. According to the most recent data, in 2017 and 2018, more than 25,000 structures were damaged or destroyed by California wildfires, costing insurers more than \$24 billion. Risk modeler RMS estimates 2020 losses, when fires damaged more than 11,000 structures, to be between \$7 billion and \$13 billion.

The state's wildfires haven't spared its agriculture industry. In 2020, the LNU Lightning Complex and Glass Fires in Napa County caused more than \$175 million in combined damages to farmers and ranchers. Total agricultural infrastructure losses alone exceeded \$35 million, according to a recent report from the California State Senate Insurance Committee.

## Today's food system is complex.

That level of risk, said Seren Taylor, a legislative advocate at the Personal Insurance Federation of California, is no longer worth it for insurers.

"Those historic financial losses put tremendous upward pressure on commercial insurance rates and have forced many insurance companies to safeguard their solvency [...] by limiting the amount of insurance they sell in the high fire-risk areas of the state," Taylor said.

Climate scientists only expect the situation to get worse. Josué Medellín-



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## Wildfire

continued from page 10

Azuara, the associate director of the U.C. Agricultural Issues Center at U.C. Merced, said California farmers should anticipate more extreme weather events, like wildfires. Average temperatures could increase from three to seven degrees Fahrenheit by 2050, placing Golden State growers in a precarious position, according to Medellín-Azuara.

A 2018 report from his colleagues put it plainly: “The increased rate and scale of climate change is beyond the realm of experience for the agricultural community.”

### A Way Forward?

California agricultural interest groups are now working to provide a backstop for farmers and ranchers who have lost their fire insurance.

Home and business owners who are denied insurance can turn to the California FAIR Plan, a state program subsidized by private insurance companies that provides a “last resort” option for home and commercial insurance to high-risk properties.

Currently, a clause in the FAIR Plan excludes farmers from accessing the policy. Farmers like Newman can insure his homes and storefront, but not his farming equipment, structures, or automobiles. As the Farm Bureau’s Spiegel put it, “there isn’t a backstop for the commercial agriculture community.”

But that may soon change. In December, Democratic state senator Susan Rubio introduced a bill in the state Senate that would update the plan to include barns, greenhouses,

tractors, and other farm equipment and structures currently excluded from the law. The bill, Senate Bill 11, passed the California State Senate Committee by a unanimous vote in April.

In general, the FAIR Plan costs more than standard home or commercial insurance policies. Both coverage options increase substantially with wildfire risk. This year, the FAIR Plan Association increased insurance rates by 15.6 percent. That increase follows a 20 percent increase in 2018. By definition, the FAIR Plan is funded by a high-risk pool of insurers, who break up the coverage so none are left with a large payout. So it makes sense that it would cost more, Taylor said. “[But] the alternative is worse because it means insurers won’t write [policies] in California or they [won’t] have enough premium to pay the claims. No one wants that.”

The FAIR Plan is far from a long-term solution for California farmers, Taylor added. “The real solution is to help regular insurers come back to these regions,” he said. “And I think that will happen.” But fire insurance rates, and thus, prices, will have to continue to rise, he said, because “insurers have to stay solvent” in our “new normal.”

Newman hopes Sacramento lawmakers can settle the fire insurance issue before late summer, when high pressure builds in the deserts of Nevada and Utah, causing hot, dry wind to blow southwest toward the coast, exacerbating fire conditions across the state.

Newman said it’s “hard to imagine” what he’ll do if another fire rips through his Sonoma Valley property without proper insurance coverage. “I guess this time I’m more likely to hang back and try to fight it,” he said.

# Governor's Actions Point to Need for Long-Term Water Investment

By: CAFB

Actions in a widened drought emergency order issued today by Gov. Gavin Newsom will provide some short-term benefit through voluntary water transfers and exchanges in parts of drought-stricken California, the California Farm Bureau said, while the organization expressed concern about emergency powers granted to the state water board and re-emphasized the need for significant, long-term investments to secure future food production in the state.

“The pandemic has reinforced that farming is an essential business and the drought has reinforced that water is essential to farming,” California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson said. “We appreciate any effort the state can make to provide more water in the short term to farmers who need it. At the same time, we must not lose sight of existing water-rights priorities and the need to balance supplies for food production, fisheries and cities.

“By widening the drought emergency, the governor has recognized the reality facing much of rural California: Our future is not guaranteed,” Johansson said. “By proposing to invest in canal repairs and other projects, he has shown a willingness to address part of that longer-term problem, but where are the projects the voters invested in when they approved a water bond seven

years ago?

“Following a year of economic shutdown for our communities, record wildfires, blackouts on the state’s electrical grid and soaring home prices, it is apparent Californians face a quality-of-life issue. We hope this is a watershed moment in which we realize that building, not just planning, will preserve that way of life,” he said.

“In addition to longer-term infrastructure needs, we also need to ensure family farms—and the people, communities and businesses that rely on them—are able to survive this year. We urge the governor to engage with family farmers, at the local level, to understand how best to ensure that our farms and the food they produce will be available to Californians for years to come,” Johansson said.

“Water to farms means food for families, jobs for farm employees and much-needed help for rural economies,” he said. “With predictions that climate change will lead to even less certainty about precipitation and water supplies, California must commit to a full-scale program to increase storage, enhance efficiency and create new supplies through water recycling and desalination.”

The California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of nearly 32,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of nearly 5.6 million Farm Bureau members.

**Thank you for being a member of Merced County Farm Bureau.**



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# Merced County Farm Bureau Rooted In Agriculture Rewards Program Recipients

## Christine Dores

**School:** Merquin Elementary School

**Grade:** 4th

**Lessons Taught:** Mangoes & Planting cilantro in school garden

**Why do you believe it is important to teach agriculture in the classroom?**

Growing up on a dairy and around agriculture my entire life shaped who I am today and positively impacted my health. I believe it is important to teach agriculture in the classroom so children can be engaged in real food experiences. Knowledge about food and nutrition is empowering, especially in a time where fast, convenient, and processed foods are so prominent. I want my students to have necessary tools to make healthy food choices.



Photos from Christine Dores' lessons

## Victoria Azevedo

**School:** Merquin Elementary School

**Grade:** Transitional Kindergarten

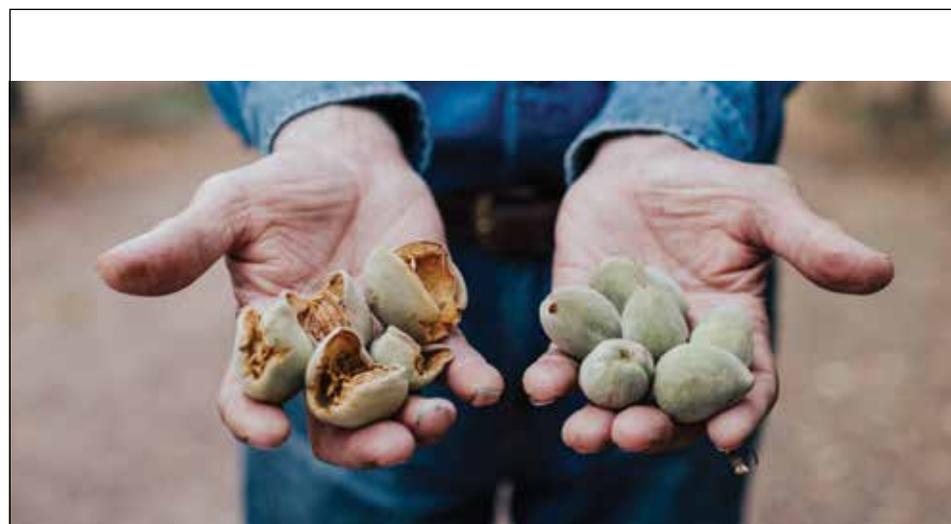
**Lessons Taught:** Oviparous Animals & Planting radish in school garden

**Why do you believe it is important to teach agriculture in the classroom?**

I believe teaching agriculture in the classroom is very important because our students are our future!! We need to teach our students that agriculture is important and teach them where our food and our animals' food comes from. There was a time that I would drive to work and see empty fields not being farmed. I recently learned that they weren't being farmed because it was too hard to get water or that some farmers could not afford the water. Our students need to understand that we need water to be able to grow the food we and our animals need to survive. We need to continue teaching our students to value and understand agriculture so that we have future advocates for our farmers. Farmers work so hard and are often unrecognized for the work they do. If we do a good job teaching about agriculture in the classroom our students will have an appreciation for farmers and will grow up to be the advocates we need for our farmers in the future.



Photos from Victoria Azevedo's lessons



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# Hilmar Cheese Company Hosts Vaccine Clinic for Employees and Supply Chain



CDFA & Governor Office Staff Visiting HCC Vaccine Clinic

By: Denise Skidmore, Hilmar Cheese Company

HILMAR, CA. April 2021. Hilmar Cheese Company has put tremendous effort into protecting lives and livelihoods throughout this pandemic. The company appreciated the opportunity to coordinate an on-site vaccination clinic for its employees and supply chain. The clinic used a

sign-up system to reduce wait times to about 15 minutes or less for most and participants were treated to a delicious visitor center cookie after receiving their vaccine. The clinic in March, with booster doses in April, vaccinated 1,100 people.

The clinic was visited by California Department of Food and Agriculture Undersecretary, Jenny Lester-Moffitt along with Maria Herrera, the Central Valley Deputy Regional Director for

Governor Gavin Newsom's office.

Thank you to the Merced County Department of Public Health, Merced County CEO Jim Brown, Merced County Supervisor Lloyd Pareria, the Central Valley Community Foundation, California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross for advocating for essential worker vaccines and to the staff of Optum Serv for administering the vaccines.

# Hilmar Cheese Company To Open New Cutting-Edge Cheese and Whey Production Facility in Dodge City, Kansas



By: Denise Skidmore, Hilmar Cheese Company

HILMAR, CA. May 5, 2021. Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly and Hilmar Cheese Company, Inc. today jointly announced the Company's decision to build a new state-of-the-art cheese and whey

protein processing plant in Dodge City, Kansas.

Hilmar Cheese Company, founded in 1984, is one of the world's largest producers of high quality American-style cheese and whey products, with customers in more than 50 countries.

The new facility is expected to create 247 new jobs and represents \$460 million in capital investment.

The project is estimated to bring an additional \$550 million in capital investment and 750 new jobs within a fifty-mile radius of Dodge City by

late 2023.

Hilmar Cheese Company CEO & President David Ahlem called Dodge City an "ideal choice" given its central location, critical existing infrastructure, proximity to the growing local dairy industry and business-friendly climate.

"Our first-class workforce and central location make Kansas one of the best places in the nation to do

business," said Governor Laura Kelly. "It's great to see another major food manufacturer like Hilmar choose to put their trust in our state and Dodge City for their newest facility."

The state-of-the-art facility will showcase sustainable solutions.

See 'Hilmar Cheese' Page 14



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## Hilmar Cheese continued from page 13

Hilmar Cheese Company is a leader in sustainable practices and has adopted the U.S. Dairy Stewardship Commitment and goal to achieve a Net Zero dairy industry by 2050.

“We want our plant to be as good for the environment as it will be for the local economy,” Ahlem said. “We’ll use technologies and sustainable practices to promote carbon neutrality.”

Nick Hernandez, City Manager added, “One of the biggest advantages for both Hilmar Cheese Company and Dodge City is the cohesive nature of our sustainability efforts. They have a standing commitment to being stewards of the environment much like Dodge City, and through this mutually beneficial partnership, we will be able to further utilize our wastewater for crop irrigation and biogas production.”

The new facility will help Hilmar Cheese Company meet the growing

demand of its customers and the marketplace for cheese and whey products worldwide. In addition to job creation, the plant will create opportunities for the Dodge City community, promote growth for Kansas dairy producers, and help Hilmar Cheese Company fulfill its purpose to improve lives.

Joann Knight, Executive Director Dodge City/Ford County Development Corporation, stated that the economic impact to the community “will be compounded substantially by the additional dairies, transportation and services that will be required to support the processing facility once operational as well as the impact that the construction phase will have on our region.”

The project has been a collaborative effort of many organizations. The State of Kansas Department of Commerce, Department of Ag and Department of Transportation; the City of Dodge City, Ford County, Dodge City/Ford County Development Corporation, Black Hills Energy, Victory Electric, United Tel•Com, Dodge City Public Schools

USD 443, Dodge City Community College and area agricultural producers have helped bring the new business to the community.

“We greatly appreciate the warm welcome from the State of Kansas and the City of Dodge City officials whose values of integrity and excellence closely align with ours,” Ahlem said. “Dodge City gives us many opportunities including a local and skilled labor force, a supportive and expanding agricultural region, and an excellent transportation network that allows us to easily reach our expanding markets.”

“We’re really happy with our decision and excited about becoming a part of this outstanding community.”

Hilmar is expected to break ground on the facility in the summer of 2021 and be fully operational in 2024.

Hilmar Cheese Company was established in 1984 by 12 local dairy farm families in the Central Valley of California. The company added a state-of-the-art production facility in Dalhart, Texas in 2007. Privately owned, the company currently employs

more than 1,500 local residents of the two areas. The company offers great benefits, training and long-term career growth opportunities. Since its inception, Hilmar Cheese Company has been dedicated to processing high-quality cheese and whey products. It currently produces a variety of cheese including Cheddar, Monterey Jack, Pepper Jack, Colby, Colby Jack and Mozzarella. The whey is processed into Whey Protein products that are used as ingredients in many foods including nutritional beverages and bars; and Lactose, which is marketed internationally as an ingredient in confections and infant formula.

The company is also known as a strong community partner supporting local events, education and health care. Hilmar Cheese Company’s annual scholarship program awards students of our employees, milk producers, and community scholarships to support continuing education. The company’s California Visitor Center and the exhibits at the Texas XIT Museum are visited by thousands of students on field trips each year.

# What Can the 2015 Drought Tell us about the Impacts of a Drought in 2021?

**By: California Farm Water Coalition**

Taking a look back at a similar water year can help us understand what might be in store for us through the rest of this year and possibly beyond.

California is in a critically dry year, the same as in 2015. Water will be extremely tight for thousands of farmers around the state, and many of them have already received notice that their water supplies are being cut by up to 95 percent.

In 2015, water supply cuts of that magnitude led to over half a million acres of land taken out of production. Had there been sufficient water supplies in 2015, the amount of land that was fallowed could have produced:

8.6 billion heads of lettuce, or  
594 million cartons of melons, or  
54 million tons of grapes, or  
27 million tons of tomatoes.

Instead, because no water was available, those fields produced nothing but weeds.

California is the No. 1 farm state in the nation with tens of thousands of agricultural jobs, with wages at all income levels covering all 58 counties. When farms aren’t growing food for people, it affects jobs, personal income, and their quality of life. In addition, farm-related jobs contribute hundreds of millions of dollars annually to state and local tax revenue which provide services local communities value, like police, firefighters and teachers.

In 2015, a total of 21,000 jobs were lost with an economic impact of \$2.7 billion across the state.

### Preparing for Drought

Farmers have been preparing for another drought and have invested heavily in water use efficiency projects, including drip and micro-sprinkler irrigation systems, soil moisture monitoring, and computerized irrigation controllers. But the savings achieved by those investments haven’t been enough to avoid wide-scale land fallowing due to the massive water supply shortages farmers are experiencing again this

year.

Info Graph – Long Term Impacts on California From Water Supply Cuts

Looking long-term, continuing water shortages will have a devastating effect not only on California farms but also on the farm related jobs throughout our economy.

The Blueprint Economic Impact Report indicates that over the next 30 years, water supply cuts will lead to the permanent loss of 1 million acres of productive farmland.

Fewer healthy foods will be available from California farms. The report estimates that California will permanently lose:

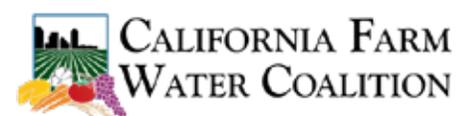
- 86,000 acres of vegetables,
- 130,000 acres of fruit-producing trees,
- 129,000 acres of wine and table grapes,
- 327,000 acres of nuts, and much more.

These reductions translate into the permanent loss of 85,000 jobs, half of which are off the farm, such as food processing, transportation, wholesale, retail, and ports. They also mean the

permanent loss of over \$535 million in tax revenue which, again, is used to provide the services local communities value, like police, firefighters and teachers.

Actions, including better flood management for groundwater recharge, improved conveyance to move water to potential groundwater banking areas, new and enlarged storage projects, and regulatory reform designed to improve in-stream flows for ecosystem benefits while protecting agricultural water supplies can help minimize the effects described above. Federal investments toward improving water supply infrastructure is essential to providing a secure water future to sustain the nation’s food supply, meet urban and suburban needs, and provide for a healthy environment throughout California.

LEARN MORE AT:  
FARMWATER.ORG



# Is your private well water safe to drink?

With our **FREE** program, we will test your well water and if you have high levels of nitrate, we will deliver **FREE bottled water** to your home.



## How our program works:

### STEP 1:



Apply Online at [valleywaterc.org](http://valleywaterc.org) or call (209) 750-3867

### STEP 2:



We sample & analyze your well water

### STEP 3:



If your water is above the nitrate drinking water standard, we will deliver **FREE bottled water!**

# ¿Es seguro beber el agua de su pozo privado?

Con nuestro programa **GRATUITO**, analizaremos el agua de su pozo y, si tiene altos niveles de nitratos, le llevaremos **agua embotellada GRATIS** hasta su casa.

## ¿Cómo funciona nuestro programa?

### 1er Paso:



Haga la solicitud por Internet en [valleywaterc.org](http://valleywaterc.org) o comuníquese al (209) 750-3867

### 2º Paso:



Tomamos muestras y analizamos el agua de su pozo

### 3er Paso:



Si el agua contiene niveles de nitratos superiores a las normas para el agua potable, le llevaremos **agua embotellada GRATIS!**

Apply online at [valleywaterc.org](http://valleywaterc.org) or call (209) 750-3867



**VALLEY WATER COLLABORATIVE**  
[www.valleywaterc.org](http://www.valleywaterc.org)



Haga la solicitud por Internet en [valleywaterc.org](http://valleywaterc.org) o comuníquese al (209) 750-3867

Valley Water Collaborative is a non-profit organization working to ensure that all people in the Modesto & Turlock areas (using domestic supply wells with high nitrate) have access to safe drinking water.

Valley Water Collaborative es una organización sin fines de lucro que trabaja para garantizar que todas las personas en las áreas de Modesto y Turlock (que usan pozos de agua privados con altos niveles de nitratos) tengan acceso a agua potable segura.

*Save the Date*

# FARM SAFETY AND EQUIPMENT TRAINING DAY

*Wednesday, June 9, 2021*

*8 AM-12 PM*

*@ Fluetsch & Busby Insurance*

*725 W 18th St #1, Merced, CA 95340*

English and Spanish Farm Safety Training for  
Farmers and Farm Employees.

Topics include: Heat Illness, Sexual Harrassment,  
Equipment and Pesticides

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To RSVP or for more information contact MCFB by calling  
(209) 723-3001 or emailing [info@mercedfarmbureau.org](mailto:info@mercedfarmbureau.org)



## ***USDA invests more than \$90 million in grants for local and regional food producers affected by pandemic***

### **USDA News Release**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced the availability of \$92.2 million in competitive grant funding under the 2018 Farm Bill's Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP). The LAMP grants announced today are funded through the Farmers Market program as part of USDA's Pandemic Assistance for Producers Initiative. USDA launched this initiative in March to address shortfalls and disparities in how assistance was distributed in previous COVID-19 assistance packages, with a specific focus on strengthening outreach to underserved producers and communities and small and medium agricultural operations. These grants support the development, coordination and expansion of direct producer-to-consumer marketing, local and regional food markets and enterprises and value-added agricultural products.

"We have an opportunity to transform our nation's food system with a greater focus on resilient, local and regional food systems," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "These grants will help maximize opportunities for economic growth and ingenuity in local and regional food systems to kickstart this transformation. LAMP grants have a history of generating new income sources for small, beginning, veteran and socially disadvantaged farmers and creating new market opportunities for value-added and niche products."

USDA encourages projects that assist underserved local and regional agricultural businesses, producer networks and associations, and local and tribal government in responding to COVID-19 disruptions and impacts. Funding is not contingent upon applicants directly addressing these issues.

The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to ensuring equity across the Department, removing barriers to access, and building inclusive programs for the agricultural sector. For grants intending to serve smaller farms and

ranches, new and beginning farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged producers, veteran producers, and/or underserved communities, USDA encourages applicants engage and involve those beneficiaries when developing projects.

### **Increasing Local Food Access Through Direct and Intermediary Producer-to-Consumer Markets**

USDA will award \$76.9 million (\$22.5 million in the 2018 Farm Bill, \$47 million provided as emergency funding through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 and \$7.4 in annual appropriations) to FMLFPP. Projects under the Farmers Market Promotion Program support direct-to-consumer markets like farmers markets and CSAs. Projects under the Local Food Promotion Program supports indirect-to-consumer markets like food hubs and value-added product incubators.

### **Building Robust and Resilient Local and Regional Food Economies**

USDA will award \$15.3 million (\$5 million in the 2018 Farm Bill and \$10.3 provided as emergency funding through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021) to RFSP to fund public-private partnerships that build and strengthen viability and resilience of local or regional food economies. Projects focus on increase the availability of locally and regionally produced agricultural products and alleviating unnecessary administrative and technical barriers. Projects can cover the planning and design of a local and regional food economy as well as implementing or expanding an existing one.

### **Application and Grant Eligibility**

Applications undergo external expert peer review and the process is highly competitive. All grants require matching funds from community partners or stakeholders. The amounts and match amounts vary by program and are specified in the RFAs.

Applications must be submitted electronically through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on the due dates established in the respective Request for Applications (RFA's). Any grant application submitted after the

due date will not be considered unless the applicant provides documentation of an extenuating circumstance that prevented their timely submission of the grant application.

For more information about grant eligibility and previously funded projects, contact us at [USDAFMPPQuestions@usda.gov](mailto:USDAFMPPQuestions@usda.gov), [USDALFPPQuestions@usda.gov](mailto:USDALFPPQuestions@usda.gov), or [IPPGGrants@usda.gov](mailto:IPPGGrants@usda.gov).

### **Technical Assistance**

AMS offers RFA webinars for new applicants to help walk them through the RFA while also providing helpful hints on what has made past recipients successful. Additionally, Frequently Asked Questions are posted on <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants> and grants management specialists are standing by to answer any incoming questions and emails during regular business hours.

## **Training Dates**

**May 20  
CAFB Extension  
Pesticide  
Compliance 101  
(pg. 3)**

**May 25  
Ag HazMat  
Training (pg. 20)**

**June 9  
Farm Safety and  
Equipment  
Training Day (pg.  
24)**

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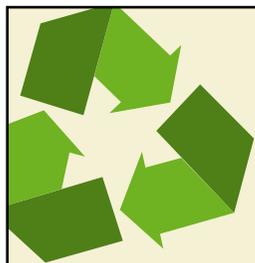
**Julie Giampaoli**

Catered meal by Dominic Barroso Catering  
for 10 people

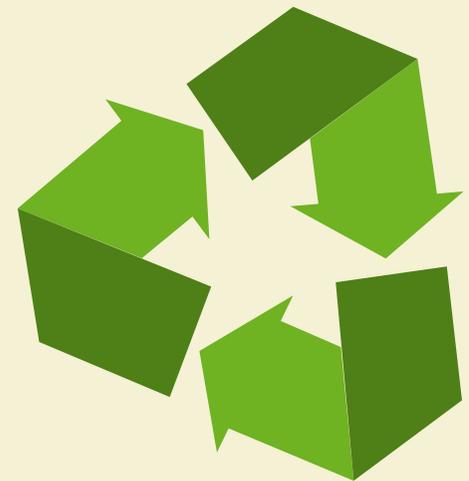


**Jo Ann Freitas**

Vintage Farm Suds Basket



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- Have a known quantity of containers prior to making appointment
- Make a pre-inspection appointment with the Ag Commissioner's office to ensure your containers are approved (must be done a week in advance of the event)
- Finalize your appointment drop off for the event



# Beef Market



from the  
**Mariposa  
CFB**  
Danette Toso

*This month's article was written by California Cattlemen's Association President Tony Toso. It was published in the California Cattleman Magazine, May 2021. Tony is passionate about the cattle business, and he studies and researches daily. Thank you Tony for allowing me to pass on your article to our Farm Bureau friends. ~~~*

**D**espite our many similarities as cattle producers, we also hold many diverse opinions on an array of subjects. But none can be so polarizing as the subject of cattle markets and how they affect the bottom line of our operations. During these discussions, we often find ourselves in the age-old debate of how the market can be manipulated by such a high level of packer concentration within the cattle/beef industry complex.

No matter our stance on the subject, ranchers have a common goal to have a fair shot at the best price we can receive for our hard-earned production. However, over the past year and half or so, we find ourselves once again having our patience tested, as many producers were negatively impacted by two significant market events that affected our profitability.

The Tyson fire in Holcomb, Kansas in August of 2019, and the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic have illuminated just how fragile the beef supply chain from pasture to plate can be. As frustrating and maddening as those two

events have been, and as fresh as they are in our minds, we must acknowledge that they were simply events that we could not control. Since then, we have learned the hard way that the US beef supply chain simply cannot bear much adversity. That Tyson plant represented 5-6% or about 30,000 head of the US weekly harvest and caused a backlog that hammered fed cattle prices and CME Live Cattle contracts, and the COVID crisis was just right around the corner.

I have heard many theories as to why these and other adverse market conditions occur, and I've seen many fingers pointed and I've heard many friends argue over why the rancher is not getting his "fair share" of the consumer dollar back to the ranch. Some are clear and to the point, and some are simply the frustration coming out. Despite the hits, we simply cannot allow our frustration to compromise our judgement and affect how we make policy decisions, but rather we should be looking at what these events exposed and use them as lessons in the pursuit and development of robust discovery policy (supply/demand) that supports a viable market.

Industry focus is lasered in on the accurate discovery of price as it pertains primarily to fed cattle. To the rancher, logic dictates that as the price for fed cattle goes, so goes the price for feeder cattle back to the ranch and therein lies the rub. Market evidence is telling us that we have moved away from negotiated trade (bid/ask) and now rely more on alternative marketing arrangements commonly referred to as "formulas". According to the USDA's 2018 Livestock Mandatory Reporting, report to Congress the numbers indicate that negotiated purchases declined from 56% of all transactions in 2005 to 26% in 2016. Just out of curiosity I checked and fed cattle were  $\pm$ \$91.92 in April of 2005 and were  $\pm$ \$1.2985 in April of 2016, which is a  $\pm$ 41.3% total increase, or roughly 3.75% per year, according to data compiled by Iowa State.

But market imperfections are nothing new to the cattle industry, so let's take a quick step back and think about how and why we got here. The rancher and packer dilemma has been ongoing for over 100 years now dating back into the late 1800's with four or five main packers controlling a majority of the cattle harvested like we have today. Due to concerns over

anti-trust, collusion, price fixing and the like, we have seen three significant pieces of legislation over the years that have been implemented to try and establish a level playing field in which to conduct business.

The Packers and Stockyards Act is 100 years old this year, then there is the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 and Livestock Mandatory Reporting from 1999. All have addressed supply chain flaws, dishonest marketing practices, market manipulation and transparency, in their respective eras and have been amended through the years in pursuit of adapting to modern market conditions.

Yet here we are today, dealing with similar conditions producers had to deal with in those earlier days. It was about 25-30 years ago producers struggled to find alternatives to cash pricing of pens of fat cattle as producers worked to create value in our herds and that opened the doors to grids and formulas to reward the individual animal as opposed to buyers averaging a pen of cattle offered on a show list. On the positive side, formulas and grids have helped to increase value, and ranchers have worked incredibly hard to create that value in the way of higher yielding, higher grading, healthier, safer, and more palatable beef. But as we have pointed out, it has become easier, or more market efficient as some say, for feeders to commit cattle and for the packer to receive cattle without negotiating cash or at least a base price to fill their daily harvest needs. This appears especially true for larger feeders and the four packers that harvest  $\pm$ 80% of the fed cattle supply in the US and it simply cannot help but affect discovery and transparency of prices.

Wrought by the grassroots, NCBA

leadership appointed a working group on the issue that reported its findings at NCBA's Summer Business meetings last July to the Live Cattle Marketing Committee. After over six hours of debate in that committee meeting, proposed policy was adopted in Denver by the membership, to appoint a subgroup to construct a voluntary framework which includes "triggers" that would be based upon regional levels of negotiated trade. The idea is to get to sufficient negotiated trade levels to improve price discovery in the major cattle feeding regions. The caveat was that failure would "trigger" the consideration of a legislative or regulatory solution by NCBA membership. The full text of the policy can be found on the NCBA website.

After that July meeting, the Regional Triggers Subgroup, on October 1, delivered their findings in a report called "A Voluntary Framework to Achieve Price Discovery in the Fed Cattle Market", that is now known as the 75% Plan. The subgroup will evaluate the weekly negotiated trade data for each of the AMS's cattle feeding reporting regions on a quarterly basis which began on January 1 of this year. In addition, the Subgroup will include in its assessment, an analysis of packer participation data. If designated levels of cash trade and packer participation are not achieved (or tripping a "trigger") in any two out of four rolling quarters, the subgroup will recommend the organization pursue a legislative or regulatory solution to compel robust price discovery. As I write this column, we are a few days from the first assessment and by the time this is in your hands we should know more about how the program is faring.

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*Businesses Supporting the Farm Bureau*

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AC King..... 722-3552  
 Atwater Radiator & Muffler, Inc. ....358-2638  
 Car Plus..... 722-3552  
 Freitas Auto Wreckers ..... 722-7086

## **CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTORS**

Allison Sierra, Inc. ....966-4082  
 Dias Construction, Inc..... 634-9601  
 M-Mig Construction, Inc..... 631-6017

## **LANDSCAPE**

Bergman Landscape ..... 669-9138

## **FARM EQUIPMENT**

Garton Tractor, Inc..... 726-4600  
 Holt Ag Solutions ..... 723-2021  
 J M Equipment Co Inc ..... 386-1797  
 Kirby Manufacturing ..... 723-0778  
 Laird Mfg LLC..... 722-4145  
 N&S Tractor .....383-5888

## **REAL ESTATE**

Flanagan Realty..... 723-4337 (Merced)  
 Flanagan Realty. (559) 665-1313 (Chowchilla)  
 Property Team ..... 769-4698  
 Dick Templeton Property Team ..... 761-4441  
 Rucker Real Estate..... 722-6532  
 Valley Real Estate Sales, Inc. ....854-1000

## **GROUPS & ORGANIZATIONS**

Blue Diamond Growers..... (559) 474-2996  
 California Sweet Potato Growers.....394-7935  
 California Women for Agriculture .... 723-5878  
 Central CA Irrigation District..... 826-1421  
 Cortez Growers Association..... 632-3118  
 Dos Palos Co-op Gin..... 387-4151  
 Farmers Rice Cooperative ..... (916) 923-5100  
 Gustine Drainage District .....854-6782  
 Hilltop Ranch Inc. ....874-1875  
 Livingston Farmers Assoc..... 394-7941  
 Merced Boosters ..... 761-0815  
 Merced Irrigation District..... 722-5761  
 Turlock Irrigation District.....883-8205  
 Merced College Ag Division .....384-6250

## **FARM SERVICES**

A-Bar Ag Enterprises .....826-2636  
 Caddy Shack Rodent Servc. (559) 363-3315  
 Cal Ag Safety..... 351-0321  
 Cal Corn Growers Inc.....(559) 665-5775

Chipponeri Electric..... 634-4616  
 Chozen Few Ranches.....585-8633  
 Dutch Door Dairy..... 648-2166  
 Farm Management Inc. .... 667-1011  
 Guerrero Farm Labor .....492-0408  
 Horizon Farms, Inc. ....383-5225  
 J & F Fertilizer.....854-6325  
 La Follette Enterprises, Inc.....632-1385  
 Machado Feed Company.....658-5943  
 Marciel & Co ..... 777-0911  
 Mid Valley Ag Service ..... 394-7981  
 Modern Dairy..... 722-7452  
 Modesto Dairy Supply.....669-6200  
 Silva & Sons Custom Spreading.....667-2566  
 Silva's Hay Source ..... 777-7440  
 The Pollination Connection..... (877) 970-BEES  
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A V Thomas Produce ..... 394-7514  
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 Minturn Huller Co-op..... (559) 665-1185  
 Parreira Almond Processing Co.....826-1262  
 Sensient Natural Ingredients (800) 558-9892  
 Yosemite Farms..... 383-3411

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 Castillo Brothers Hay..... 392-3817  
 Diamond J Farms .....564-0870  
 Minturn Huller Co-op..... (559) 665-1185  
 Northern Merced Hulling.....667-2308  
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 Agri-Valley Irrigation .....384-8494  
 Dickey's Pump Service ..... 394-3112  
 Frasier Irrigation Company ..... 387-4202  
 Irrigation Design & Construction, LLC.....  
 387-4500  
 Precision Aqua..... 756-2025  
 Quality Well Drillers..... 357-0675  
 Rain for Rent/Westside Pump(559) 693-4315  
 Robal Inc.....826-4540  
 Shannon Pump Company ..... 723-3904

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 Malm Ag Pest Management .....392-6905  
 Star Creek Land ..... 704-1790

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 Cal Farm Service .....358-1554  
 Kellogs Supply ..... 722-1501  
 Livingston True Value  
 Hardware & Farm Supplies.....394-7949  
 Marfab .....826-6700  
 Modesto Dairy Supply.....669-6200  
 Stanislaus Farm Supply..... 723-0704

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 Western States Petroleum Assoc. .... (661)  
 321-0884  
 Valley Pacific Petroleum..... 948-9412  
 Van De Pol Petroleum .....667-0236

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 Fluetsch & Busby Insurance ..... 722-1541  
 Diane Norton Insurance ..... 357-3626  
 Rico, Pfitzer, Pires and Associates ..854-2000  
 Walter Mortensen Insurance ..... 353-2700  
 Western Valley Insurance .....826-5667  
 Winton Ireland Insurance .....394-7925

## **FINANCIAL SERVICES**

Alice B. Contreras CPA ..... 722-6778  
 American Ag Credit .....384-1050/826-0320  
 Farmers & Merchants Bank ..... 626-4100  
 Grimbleby Coleman CPAs ..... 527-4220  
 Trans County Title Company .....383-4660  
 Yosemite Farm Credit ..... 383-1116

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Coldwell Solar .....259-9260

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

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 Berliner Cohen LLP ..... 385-0700  
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 The Hat Source..... 357-3424  
 Merced County Fair..... 722-1506  
 P. B. Iyer, M.D.....854-1120  
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## Mariposa County Business Member Directory

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- Mariposa Feed & Supply.....966-3326
- Bootjack Equipment Rental & Feed.966-3545

### ASSOCIATIONS

- 35-A District Agriculture Assn.....966-2432
- Mariposa Chamber of Commerce....966-2456
- Mariposa County Farm Advisor .....966-2417
- Mariposa County Farm Bureau .....742-5875

### CONSTRUCTION

- Bucks Construction.....878-3702
- Tobey Guenthart Construction .....374-3334

### FINANCIAL SERVICES

- Inter-County Title Company.....966-3653
- Yosemite Bank.....966-5444

### HARDWARE STORES

- Coast Hardware.....966-2527
- Foster Ace Hardware .....966-2692

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- Mariposa Physical Therapy.....742-7242

### MISCELLANEOUS

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- Happy Burger Diner .....966-2719
- Mariposa Friends of the  
Fairgrounds Foundation.....742-4680
- Hugh A. Yamshon Ranch
- Mariposa Gun Works .....742-5444
- Miners Roadhouse 14 .....966-2444
- Pony Expresso .....966-5053

### REAL ESTATE

- Cathey's Valley Real Estate.....742-2121

### SERVICES

- Chases Foothill Petroleum.....966-3314
- Edward Lien & Toso Ag Appraisers...634-9484
- Palmer Tractor .....374-3470
- Ranch Fence, Inc.....966-5914
- Valley Pacific Petroleum.....948-9412
- Yosemite Glass & Window Inc.....966-3292

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Merced County Farm Bureau .....	723-3001	Shannon Pump Co. ....	723-3904
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# ATTENTION

**Farmers and Farm Employees  
who need to renew their DL-267 Endorsement  
or acquire their initial endorsement.**



The Agricultural Hazardous Materials Transportation Program is being offered by the Farm Bureau and Nationwide Insurance. This class is for persons 21 years or older and have a current California Class C drivers license.

Due to new requirements, once a person completes the course, they must:

- Submit completed training record along with a completed CHP application
- Await paperwork return from CHP
- Pay any applicable DMV fees
- With returned CHP paperwork apply for DL-267 certificate from the DMV

**May 25, 2021**  
**9:00 AM – 10:30 AM Spanish**  
**10:45 AM – 12:15 PM English**

**Merced County Farm Bureau  
Conference Room  
646 South Highway 59  
Merced, CA 95341**

**\$25.00 for Farm Bureau Members**  
**\$45.00 for Non Members**

**TO REGISTER: Please call the MCFB Office at (209) 723-3001  
or email [dflake@mercedfarmbureau.org](mailto:dflake@mercedfarmbureau.org)**

**NOTE: Instructor will be via webinar, but attendance at the above site is required for testing purposes. Space is limited to 20 attendees per session to maintain social distancing rules.**

**Please pay by cash, check or credit card in advance.**