



Merced County Farm News



MID lawsuit seeks to protect disadvantaged communities, farmers from state water orders *Statewide electric grid also harmed by orders curtailing District's local water rights*

By: Mike Jensen, MID

Merced Irrigation District has filed a lawsuit challenging the emergency drought curtailments issued by the State Water Resources Control Board last month. The lawsuit intends to protect MID water rights, local growers and multiple disadvantaged communities in eastern Merced County.

“As requested by Governor Newsom, we attempted to work cooperatively and proactively with the State Water Board in order to avoid the disputes that we knew would follow these unnecessary and illegal regulations. Unfortunately, the Water Board still hasn’t agreed to meet or even discuss our proposals,” said MID General Counsel Phillip McMurray. The lawsuit was filed on Thursday,

September 7. It is among others filed by water agencies across the San Joaquin Valley last week.

Earlier this summer, months before the curtailments were adopted, MID joined with several other local water agencies and senior water rights holders in sending letters to the State Water Board. The letters proposed a variety of actions intended to address the drought, benefiting both water

supplies and the environment. Without a substantive response, the State Water Board ordered curtailment of water rights for the Sacramento and San Joaquin river systems in August.

MID is one of the oldest irrigation districts and holds some of the most senior water rights in California. The District owns and operates Lake

See 'Water' Page 5

State's plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions harmful to farmers

By: Jamie Johansson, Special to CalMatters

It can't be said enough; California's farming industry is a cornerstone of this great state – our growers provide food for your families and the world. As we hear so often during this pandemic, farming and agriculture are essential.

Yet, we are facing unprecedented obstacles to growing and producing the food you pick up at the grocery store or farmers' market. Many challenges are the result of climate change. We are all too familiar with its impacts.

Our member-farmers strive to be good partners and stewards of the earth

to combat climate change, leading our industry to make significant advances to grow more with less water, while cutting greenhouse gas emissions, and limiting the environmental impact of growing enough food so people can eat.

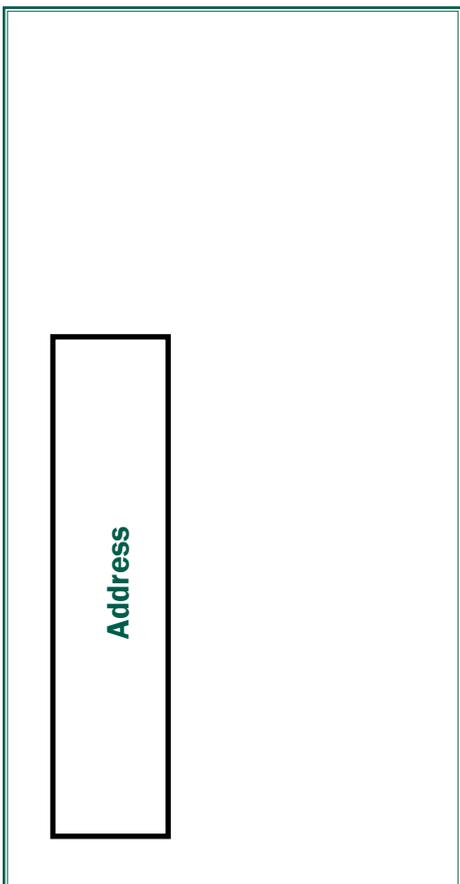
We have also increased carbon capture on natural and working farmland by using better soil and tillage practices; that helps offset the amount of carbon emitted in the atmosphere every year. In fact, the most successful greenhouse reduction program on a dollar per ton basis is the Dairy Digester program that traps methane and turns it into electricity or renewable natural gas.

Unfortunately, California's administration and legislative leadership's approach to setting mandates to cut greenhouse gas emissions has left agriculture to become collateral damage rather than a meaningful partner in meeting them.

Sacramento leadership continues to be hyper-focused on cutting greenhouse gases rather than furthering other means of reducing carbon, like carbon capture. Every tool and technology available to us to combat climate change must be on the table, we can't afford otherwise.

For example, jumping from 40%

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16 Calif.'s drought, desperation are peaking. Sacramento needs to boost water storage.

As the recall date looms, I know you've been flooded with the ways in which a California Recall Election works. If you do want to review this topic, I encourage you to visit California Farm Bureau's (CAFB) website. You can do so by logging on at <https://farmbureau.cfbf.com/california-recall-guide-2021/>. You can easily drop your ballot in one of the many drop boxes around the county or opt to mail it in. All drop boxes and vote centers are listed on Merced County Registrar of Voters website. Should you elect to mail your ballot in, please have it postmarked by September 14 and it must be received by September 21.

CAFB's Annual Meeting is around the corner! Taking place in

Orange County, the event will be held December 5-8, 2021. This conference is scheduled to be in-person and will include educational workshops focused on policy, advocacy, legal and more. In addition, CE sessions counting towards pesticide licensing will be included. The conference is always one where we come back with more information, more connections, etc.

This year's event will also include the California Young Farmers and Ranchers (YF&R) Conference. This conference will take place December 4-5, 2021. The opportunity for our young agriculturists to meet and discuss the issues they are facing is paramount as we continue to farm in California. Along with the camaraderie that this conference brings, it will also include a long-standing program called

Discussion Meet.

Discussion Meet is an event "designed to simulate a committee meeting where discussion and active participation" are had by multiple participants. During this contest, individuals exchange ideas and information on a pre-determined topic which they are judged. There are cash prizes for each of the open and collegiate contest. California YF&R is conducting regional meets prior to Annual Meeting and have the final round conducted during the larger conference. Regional meets will take place Saturday, November 13 in Bakersfield and Saturday, November 20 in Sacramento. Registration will open September 13. Please watch for details and call if you have any questions in how to participate.



from the
**Director's
Desk**
Breanne Vandenberg

Merced County rural areas must get high-speed internet just like anywhere else in CA

**By: Breanne Vandenberg,
The Merced Sun-Star**

Broadband is as essential to farming as it is to any other industry. Internet connectivity is key for farmers looking to ship their goods, communicate with far-away markets, or find innovative farming techniques and technologies.

The pandemic made clear that rural broadband is a necessity, not a luxury, but far too many rural Californians are still without proper access.

While California's recently pledged \$6 billion investment in broadband is a historic accomplishment, there are some key areas where work remains to close California's remaining digital divide once and for all. We believe, in its current form, SB 156 risks leaving a number of communities — particularly those who have been historically overlooked by the state — without

broadband internet access, despite the massive amount of allocated funding.

According to recent data from the California Public Utilities Commission, nearly 10% of our population remains completely unserved without any access to broadband service. Twenty communities, such as San Lucas in Monterey County and Cowan Tract in Stanislaus County, remain 100% unserved at 25/3 Mbps.

Without changes, the state broadband plan does not guarantee that any of these remaining unserved residents will actually gain internet access. The risk is that rural communities and small businesses across the Central Valley and elsewhere could once again be left behind, even after the \$6 billion is spent.

Proactive steps must be taken to ensure that these broadband funds actually reach the unconnected in our

region and beyond. As the governor and Legislature approach the final weeks of the 2021 legislative session, it's essential that they pass legislation that includes the following adjustments to SB 156 to make it the most effective policy possible.

- Prioritize unserved households by clarifying that any middle-mile network deployed must serve unserved locations. This proposal seeks to eliminate overlapping and conflicting middle-mile "priorities," and instead focuses the middle-mile effort solely on areas where it is needed to connect unserved areas. Ultimately, it is in the state's best interest to take advantage of current providers' middle mile networks, instead of haphazardly pursuing middle mile projects where such infrastructure already exists.

- Leverage the power of public-private partnerships to deploy broadband to underserved consumers. This will help close what is known

as the adoption gap — while 98% of Californians have access to broadband, only 64% have a service subscription. We can use these partnerships to complete middle mile projects where last mile connectivity is absent, and free up remaining funding to help make high speed internet more affordable to those with access in both rural and urban areas.

Rural Californians cannot be left behind any longer. The state cannot afford to have its agricultural powerhouses stuck on the other side of the digital divide. We have one opportunity to ensure broadband for all in our state, but we cannot do this unless we prioritize network investments for California's hardest-to-reach communities. By amending some portions of SB 156, we can help ensure that unserved communities get the access they deserve and finally close the digital divide in rural California.

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.

Emissions

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reductions to 90% reductions in emissions, as Assembly Bill 1395 would mandate, is too significant not to be fully baked. That merely leaves 10% for carbon capture to meet emissions neutrality, but what if we could do more to offset carbon during the transition?

Additionally, the California Air Resources Board is mostly left to its own devices when implementing policy mandates like AB 1395, introduced by Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi, a Democrat from Torrencer. Right now, the Air Resources Board is even considering making energy use more expensive for everyone to reduce travel and ultimately emissions. The scathing report released by the California State Auditor on CARB makes it clear that they need more oversight and transparency.

When the administration sets arbitrary climate goals, like banning the traditional gas engine by 2035, without proper infrastructure or other investments it ends up squeezing

out the small farms they tout so proudly – we lost 400 small farms in California in 2020, 2021 figures to be worse. Rural areas are hit especially hard because they don't have the infrastructure to support making drastic changes to energy use.

In the end, growers are paid less for their produce because processors are footing the bill for major overhead to meet new energy policies. Large-scale farms are struggling, but it's the little farm that is forced to fold up shop.

California cannot sell itself as a bastion for technology yet decide on tunnel-vision for our energy future, especially when policy decisions are disproportionately paid for by low-income communities or the small, underprivileged grower. It's common knowledge that living and doing business in California is expensive. Everyone feels that burden getting heavier from our energy bills to our grocery bills as a direct result of hastily under-baked energy policies.

Reducing our carbon footprint and lowering emissions cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach. Californians deserve more accountability and oversight of these energy policies and mandates, who pays dearly for them, and California Air Resources Board's execution of them.

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info@mercedfarmbureau.org

Calendar of Events

September 17

Deadline to apply for CAFB Farm Dog Contest (pg. 16)

September 30

Deadline to apply for CAFB Photo Contest (pg. 24)

October 5 - November 2

UCCE Merced CE series

October 7

Farm Bureau Extension CE course

October 12

Merced YF&R October Meeting (pg. 24)

November 18

Farm Bureau Extension CE course

December 4-5

CA YF&R Conference

December 5-8

CAFB Annual Meeting (pg. 24)

California Farm Bureau Legislative Update

By: CAFB

September 3, 2021 -

Agricultural Employment

On September 1, the Assembly concurred in Senate amendments to AB 616 (Mark Stone, D-Monterey Bay); AB 616 proceeds now to the Governor's desk for final action. Farm Bureau will ask the Governor to veto. AB 616 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). Farm Bureau is planning a rally at the State Capitol on September 9, demanding the state provide water, construct agriculture-critical infrastructure and veto AB 616.

Commodities

CDFA's Pest Exclusion Branch is announcing five midterm vacancies on the Industrial Hemp Advisory Board (IHAB). The Board is composed of thirteen members and the term of office for board members is three years. The Board advises CDFA and makes recommendations on matters including, but not limited to, industrial hemp law and regulations, enforcement, annual budgets, and the setting of an assessment rate. Individuals interested in being considered for this Board appointment should send a letter of interest and a brief resumé to Juan Koponen by September 30, 2021, or by e-mail to industrialhemp@cdfa.ca.gov. For additional information, visit the Industrial Hemp Program webpage at: <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/plant/industrialhemp/>, contact the Nursery, Seed, and Cotton Program at (916) 654-0435, or send an email to industrialhemp@cdfa.ca.gov.

Education

CDFA is accepting proposals for the 2021 California Agriculture Special Interest License Plate (CalAgPlate) grant program. This program projects an estimated \$225,000 in grant funding available to promote agricultural education and leadership activities for students at the K-12, post-secondary, and adult education levels. Funding is available on a competitive basis for state-adopted Agricultural Education Programs, government agencies, and non-profit organizations that administer agricultural education programs. The application deadline is Thursday, September 30, 2021, at 5:00 p.m. PT. Prospective applicants are encouraged to visit the

programs website www.cdfa.ca.gov/calagplate for detailed application instructions.

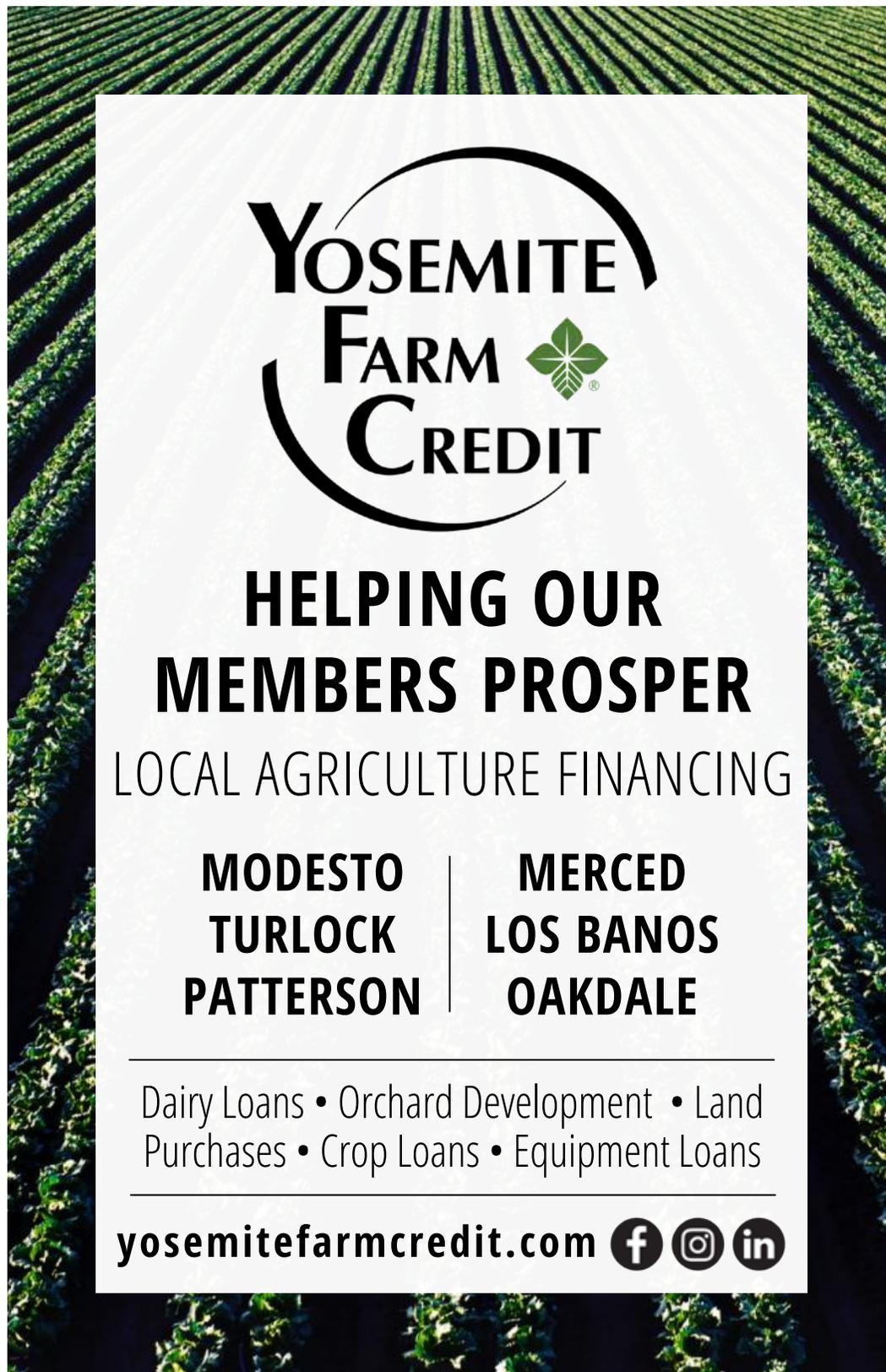
Food Safety

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), Meat, Poultry and Egg Safety Branch (MPES) announces two vacancies on the Rendering Industry Advisory Board (RIAB). RIAB makes recommendations to CDFA's Secretary on all matters pertaining to the MPES Rendering Program. Both vacancies are for an industry member and the term is 36 months. Applicants for the industry member must be affiliated with a licensed renderer, collection center, dead animal haulers, or registered transporter of inedible kitchen grease. Applicants interested in being considered for RIAB appointment should send a resume by September 17, 2021 to: Laura Barlow, Program Manager Meat, Poultry and Egg Safety Branch Laura.Barlow@cdfa.ca.gov. Additional information is available on the MPES web page at: <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/mpes/index.html>. You may also contact Paula Batarseh, Branch Chief, Meat, Poultry and Egg Safety at (916) 900-5004.

Transportation

For the past few months, a coalition led by the California Farm Bureau and California League of Food Producers has attempted to provide greater flexibility for agricultural haulers. Given the scarcity of licensed commercial drivers in California, specifically in agricultural hauling, the coalition was successful in providing a temporary, ten-percent increase in hauling weights. This temporary exclusion was set to expire on August 31, 2021 but has since been extended until December 31, 2021 for ANY perishable agricultural commodity. For those of you familiar with this issue, the original exclusion was only authorized for the transportation of a few commodities (tomatoes, peaches, pears, grapes, onions, carrots, citrus, almonds, pistachios, walnuts, olives, pomegranates, rice, wheat, corn, safflower, and potatoes) but has since been expanded by this recent extension.

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Legislative Update

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We do appreciate the commitment and concerns expressed by our colleagues at the California State Board of Food and Agriculture, and Secretary Karen Ross, and for continuing the conversation and dialogue with the appropriate transportation officials. This temporary authorization will allow California agricultural haulers to haul up to 88,000lbs on state routes, only. Agricultural haulers, or carriers, would have to also apply for a special weight

permit for the overweight loads and can be accessed here:

<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/transportation-permits/perishable-agricultural-products>

The authorization is temporary and will expire on December 31, 2021. The permits are valid for up to 60-days and should provide additional transportation flexibility for California's farmers and our associated hauling partners.

Waste

As Friday review readers may recall, Farm Bureau has supported AB 332 (Assembly Environmental Safety), a bill which would re-authorize the alternative management standards of treated wood waste that have been

in place in regulation since July 2008. This bill was passed onto the governor's desk and was signed into law on Tuesday, August 31.

Please be advised that the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) has added a new item to the Treated Wood Waste Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) webpage. The new FAQ is titled "What is the process for extending a TWW variance." Scroll down the page to find the added FAQ, which is the second from the bottom. <https://dtsc.ca.gov/treated-wood-waste-tww-frequently-asked-questions/>. If you have any questions about the TWW variance process, please refer to the information DTSC's website such as the TWW fact sheet and FAQs or send an email to

TWW_help@dtsc.ca.gov.

Water

A measure that would provide funding for technical assistance to farmers in critically over drafted groundwater basins was placed on the inactive file this week, meaning it is now a two-year bill. AB 350 (Carlos Villapudua, D- Stockton) would have established a program at the Department of Food and Agriculture to provide funding for technical assistance providers to help farmers in critically over drafted groundwater basins in the San Joaquin Valley to plan and implement water use efficiencies. Farm Bureau had been working with the author on amendments to address concerns.

MID

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McClure on the Merced River. Water deliveries are made to about 2,200 growers farming on approximately 132,000 acres in eastern Merced County. Cities and

communities within MID's service territory include Merced, Atwater, Livingston, Winton, Le Grand,

Cressey and El Nido, as well as the Castle Airport and Aviation Development Center. Each of these communities are deemed disadvantaged by the state.

Concerned with significant impacts to disadvantaged communities and local growers, MID's lawsuit was filed to protect the District's water rights and supplies. The lawsuit states, among other things, that the State Water Board has acted arbitrarily and beyond its jurisdiction through its water right curtailments. In addition to harming disadvantaged communities, the State Water Board's actions will directly impact and substantially harm hydroelectric production from New Exchequer Dam. The clean and renewable electricity generated at New Exchequer Dam benefits the statewide grid and the California Independent System Operator.

The following violations are among more than a dozen MID is taking issue with in the State Water Board's actions:

- Failing for more than five years to show effort toward developing a methodology or process to address

routine drought conditions, as ordered by a California Superior Court in 2018.

- Failure to adequately demonstrate the existence of an emergency as required by state law.

- Excessive vagueness in the regulations, lack of clarity.

- Delegating essentially unfettered control and authority over the vast majority of water rights in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Watershed to a single staff member of the State Water Board, without boundaries of discretion or limitations of reasonable judgment.

- Ignoring directives of Governor Newsom, who ordered water right holders and the State Water Board to work together in good faith to fashion activities and policies to avoid the need for regulation.

- Violation of due process requirements.

- Lack of authority to regulate senior water rights on the basis of water unavailability or shortage.

- Failure to follow California's established water right priority system, which guarantees that those with senior water rights be able to beneficially use those rights before those with junior water rights.

"While there is little question about the current dry conditions in California, there is plenty questionable about how the State Water Board has gone about carrying out its response," said MID General Manager, John Sweigard.

"In the last drought, we were able to develop some significant compromises with the State Water Board that allowed us to take tangible actions for

the benefit of MID, the environment and other water users in California," he added. "For whatever reasons, this time around the State Water Board seems intent on ignoring facts, science and even California's governor. It's

unfortunate for MID, the Merced River and everyone in the San Joaquin Valley and Bay Delta. Moving ahead, we will continue doing all we can to protect our growers and our local community from these orders."



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Radio Spots by UCANR Broadcast Services added to UC Cooperative Extension Archive

By: **Rebecca Gourevitch, UC Merced Library**

Since our last post on the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR) Archive, we have continued to process audiovisual objects found in the collection. Most recently, the library has made 154 audio clips accessible for listening through Calisphere. These recordings came into the archive stored on CD-Rs (compact disks), but since this format is obsolete and equipment to play CD-Rs is no longer prevalent, they were converted to digital audio files. In addition to making the clips accessible, the digital files are preserved for the long term in a sustainable format in the California Digital Library's digital preservation repository.

The CD-Rs are dated from 2003 and contain recordings of radio broadcasts produced and narrated by Robert Singleton, the UCANR radio broadcaster (who retired under the title Senior Public Information Officer) from 1985-2003. During his long tenure, Singleton interviewed UCCE farm and home advisors, researchers, and other employees about certain topics related to their

work. Essentially, Singleton used radio communication to disseminate UCANR's research and programs to communities around the state as each story he recorded was sent to local stations. The addition of these audio clips to the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, UC Cooperative Extension Records enables a deeper understanding of the breadth of work undertaken by UCCE offices around California and demonstrates the ways in information made its way to the public at the end of the twentieth century.

An ANR Report article about the UC Cooperative Extension Radio Feed from February 2000 explains that "half are stories of consumer interest, covering such topics as home gardening, financial management, nutrition and environmental issues. The other half focus on agricultural issues, primarily research developments and public policy." While Singleton led the production of his own stories, ANR researchers were also encouraged to submit topic ideas related to their own research fields. The range of UCANR extension work is evident in these audio clips, though they are only a fraction of the stories

distributed by Singleton and ANR Broadcast Services, and of the work of ANR overall.

On Calisphere, the audio files are arranged alphabetically by topic, revealing some general themes. Many of the radio spots cover financial programs and literacy and warn listeners of unwarranted issues such as predatory lending and homeownership scams, the risks of adjustable-rate mortgages, and information about online banking and earned income credit programs that educate listeners on their benefits and risks. There are also audio clips concerning environmental issues. One spot details fire prevention of homes and buildings and highlights actions that people can take to prevent the loss of their homes. Another set of clips deal with the various risks associated with farm labor. Heat stress among farmworkers, for example, is described by a University of California farm safety representative who explains how to identify and prevent the dangerous effects of excessive sun exposure. Harvest related injuries in older workers, night work injuries, and technology use by workers are also covered by Singleton in his news stories, along with a plethora of other

topics such as pesticides, information about crops like rice and purple carrots, and diseases such as the West Nile virus.



Transporting Rice, 1959

University of California Agricultural Cooperative Extension, San Joaquin County Collection UC Merced, UC Cooperative Extension Archive, San Joaquin County Historical Society and Museum

To listen to all the ANR Broadcast Services radio feed clips on Calisphere, visit:



Livingston FFA Slushie Social

By: **Livingston FFA**

On August 31st we kicked off the school year with our very first meeting; our classic Slushie Social! This year members had a blast coming together in the cafeteria, socializing, and playing fun board games. They did all this while also snacking on some delicious slushies! Greenhand and seasoned members alike came together to hear about the new and old business in our chapter, which was presented by a select group of members. We had a great turn out!

Unlike our previous years, the Slushie Social meeting came

with a special twist. Our very own Livingston firefighters generously made an appearance and taught our members about the importance of fire safety. Local firefighter, Mr. Bates, gave a riveting presentation that had the members both laughing at his entertaining jokes and reflecting on their previous knowledge of fire safety. Vanessa Medel, one of our senior members, told us about her experience at the meeting. She states, "I thought it was really cool how the fire department came to the meeting. Their presentation was really relevant! I learned a lot about how to deal with and prevent fires."

After the meeting, students were

able to play games and met some awesome new members! Many freshmen members attended this meeting and were able to find friends in their older peers. Alondra Aquino, our chapter secretary, commented that she was able to meet a lot of the freshmen who she didn't have classes with. She said, "I am glad so many greenhand members came to this event. It was a great opportunity for them to meet some of our older members. I heard some of them discussing GLC and other conferences with their more experienced peers."

As the event was finishing, members tossed out their slushie cups and wished their new friends goodbye

as conversation hung in the air. Officers, advisors, and students alike all had a blast! This was definitely a perfect meeting to start off the year!



Livingston FFA Slushie Social

First Gustine FFA Meeting of the Year

By: Garret Gomes, Gustine FFA Reporter

Gustine FFA has officially kicked off its year by hosting our first FFA meeting on Tuesday August 31st at the Gustine High School auditorium. The FFA meeting was our Back to School BBQ, the ag teachers barbecued hamburgers and hot dogs for all parents and members.

During the meeting, Gustine FFA members and officers reported on past events Gustine FFA participated in over the summer and shared upcoming events as well. We also had Mr. Dennis Borrelli and Mrs. Marybeth Nunes deliver a speech in recognition of Mr. Fantazia, a Community member and past Gustine FFA member that sadly passed away this past summer. Mr.

Fantazia donated a generous amount of money to multiple organizations throughout our community, including Gustine FFA. Mr. Borrelli shared history about Mr. Fantazia in FFA, sharing with our members that “The FFA jacket you wear in this organization will have forever lasting memories. I still have mine and Mr. Fantazia had his,” he stated while holding an FFA jacket that belonged to Fantazia.

Freshman Jake Campbell shared with me that “I really enjoyed my first ever FFA meeting, I look forward to this year and all that it has to offer.”

After the business meeting ended, members got to eat delicious food provided by the Ag teachers, play multiple games including Jenga, corn-hole, and bucket ball, and had the chance to hang out with friends and

talk to the newly elected officers.

While members played games, and had fun, the Ag boosters met discussing upcoming events this year.

The Gustine FFA officers would

like to thank all parents and members that took part in our first Gustine FFA meeting. We would also like to invite you to our next meeting which will be hosted on September 21st.



Gustine FFA members gathered after the business meeting ended to play games and eat food provided by the Ag teachers.

Atwater FFA Welcomes Students to the Show

By: Shayleigh Miller, Atwater FFA Reporter

“Welcome to the Show” was selected as the 2021-2022 Atwater FFA theme by the 2021-2022 Atwater FFA officer team during their annual Atwater FFA Chapter Officer Leadership Retreat in Pismo Beach, California. The primary goal of the four day retreat was to plan the calendar, identify yearly objectives, and strengthen team building skills among the student officers and agriculture department staff.

“Our officer team starts the school year with focus, vision, and enthusiasm in leading their organization and our students,” said FFA advisor Kim Mesa. This year’s officer team hopes to inspire student leadership, expand personal success, increase participation from current members, and strengthen recruitment of new members. “This year’s theme represents the variety and opportunities Atwater FFA will provide and showcase to students in encouraging engagement towards academics, personal growth, leadership, and skill-based learning through agriculture education,” said Atwater FFA President Allison Garner.

Leadership retreat highlights included touring the “Lufa Farm” located in Nipomo, canoeing in Morro Bay, and participating in a 1980 inspired escape room at the “Locked Inn” escape room in Grover Beach. “FFA is not just agriculture, it is building life-long friendships and skills that help you prepare for the future,” said FFA officer Caden Hultgren.

The Atwater High School agriculture program has been recognized as one of the state’s most productive agriculture programs by the California Agricultural Teachers Association (CATA) and the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE). “We have tremendous support from our school administration, school district, and our community in supporting FFA and agriculture education as a way to get students involved and provide individuals with purpose, direction and self-confidence in life,” said agriculture instructor and FFA advisor Shelby Fishman.

The new officer team is looking forward to the challenges and rewards that the upcoming 2021-2022 school year holds for them. This year’s officer team includes Allison Garner, President; Hannah Slate, Vice

President; Kendal Borba, Secretary; Caden Hultgren, Treasurer; Shayleigh Miller, Reporter; Katrina Andujar, Sentinel; Ella Boyenga, Historian and Julia Callahan, Parliamentarian. Former Atwater FFA chapter officers Tristan Cardey and Gurkirath Gandhok also joined the leadership retreat to serve as mentors to the new officer team. “The opportunity to engage

students in person after the long hiatus due to COVID was very refreshing and rewarding as we begin a new school year with new opportunities,” said Atwater FFA advisor Jose Vargas.

For more information on the plant sale, Atwater High School Agriculture Department and Atwater FFA, please log on the website www.AtwaterFFA.org.



The 2021 - 2022 Atwater High School FFA officer team's Hannah Slate (Vice President), Kendal Borba (Secretary), Katrina Andujar (Sentinel), Shayleigh Miller (Reporter), Caden Hultgren (Treasurer), Julia Callahan (Parliamentarian), Ella Boyenga (Historian), and Allison Garner (President) gather at Pismo Beach during their recent leadership retreat.

Breakthrough!

By: Gabriella Butticci, Merced FFA Reporter

Beginning the year strong, the chapter is beyond excited to be back to school in person. We are glad to see the members face to face and be more present than behind a screen. This year's officers were excited to welcome the incoming freshmen at their roundup and introduce FFA to the new faces. We had a table set outside with our rabbit, Ralph, and goats Star and Ariel. Club Rush was also a huge success! We had a big crowd and were very busy throughout the event. We handed out pens, lanyards, and even some FFA t-shirts. More people wanted to join FFA and asked how they could change

their classes to be FFA members. Students asked many questions about showing animals, different ag classes, and how they can become active members. This year's officer team decided to do an Ice Cream Social as a welcome back for our members. The event was held Friday at lunch in the Ag Department. We had many people come and get their ice cream and had quite a crowd throughout the time.

As a chapter, we would like to welcome our new officers for the 2021-22 school year. Starting with our president, Esteban Castaneda (10th), our Vice President, Torin Oliverez-Kidwell (10th). Our secretary, Taylor Melgosa (12th), Treasurer Forrest Johnson (10th), Reporter Gabriella Butticci (10th), Sentinel Joshua Ortega

(11th), finished with our Historian, Fayth Bautista (11th). With a brand new team we are ready to make an impact and “breakthrough” any challenges. We chose this theme because we will “breakthrough” different obstacles personally and

as a chapter. Our goal is to help our members grow and represent what it means to be FFA for all. We will be focusing on leaving stereotypes behind, conquering fears and innovating new ways to engage our members.



Merced FFA Chapter Officers

Californians will pay more for pork under Prop. 12

By: Ria DeBiase, Communications Director, Giannini Foundation of Agricultural Economics

California's Proposition 12 will soon require farms to add space for certain farm animals, including breeding pigs, or mother sows. As the January 2022 date for full implementation of Prop. 12 approaches, some pundits warn of upcoming bacon shortages and up to 60% higher pork prices, while others downplay any negative effects on Californians.

What are the real impacts of Prop. 12, which was approved by California voters in 2018?

UC Davis economists estimate that California pork consumers will lose \$320 million per year (roughly \$8 per person) from the market impacts of Prop. 12. California consumers will pay about 8% more for pork regulated under Prop. 12 and will consume around 6% less of that pork per year.

Co-author Richard Sexton, UC Davis distinguished professor of agricultural and resource economics, noted, “The roughly 9% of North American sows affected will each get about 20% more housing space. But,

the additional space will be for those sows that already have more space, not those confined in small individual stalls.”

California's Prop. 12 is now set to be implemented as planned following the 9th Circuit Court's recent rejection of legal challenges. Republican senators from Iowa have proposed federal legislation to stop implementation of Prop. 12, fearing economic damage to their hog farmers, but federal action is unlikely. Meanwhile, Prop. 12 supporters claim that the new regulations will give more space to sows confined to stalls so small that they can't turn around.

Prop. 12 requires each sow whose piglets are raised for uncooked cuts of pork sold in California – about 9% of North American sows – to have a minimum of 24 square feet of space. Because Prop. 12 applies only to sows, not to their offspring who are raised for meat, it will apply to well less than 1% of the 90 million North American hogs.

Around 30% of North American sows are already in group housing with 20 square feet each, rather than confined in stalls. The high cost of converting stalls means that the

California pork supply will come from sows already in group housing. “Thus,” said Sexton, “the California Prop. 12 regulations will not help those sows confined in stalls to gain more space and mobility.”

The added costs of 20% more space for group-housed sows that are transitioned to comply with Prop. 12 – plus the costs of segregation, product tracing and new labeling – will cause the cost of regulated pork products in California to rise by about \$0.25 per pound. The UC Davis research also indicates almost no change in the prices of pork products sold outside of

California.

To learn more about the coming impact of Prop. 12 on California consumers and the North American pork supply chain, read the full article by Ph.D. candidate Hanbin Lee, Sexton and distinguished professor Daniel A. Sumner, all in the UC Davis Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics: “Voter-Approved Proposition to Raise California Pork Prices.” ARE Update 24(6): 5–8. UC Giannini Foundation of Agricultural Economics: <https://giannini.ucop.edu/filer/file/1629132628/20134>.



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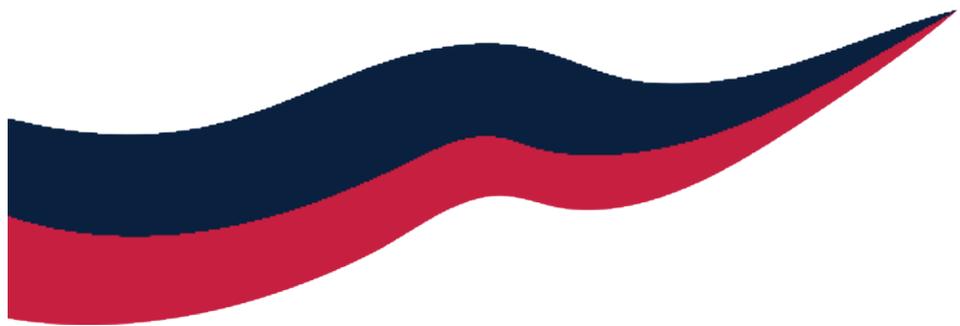
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What does never-ending drought mean for California agriculture?

By: Jesse Klein, GreenBiz Group

California farmers are living in the drought future they thought would take 20 more years to arrive.

Last week, for the first time, federal officials declared a water shortage for the Colorado River, which provides water to 40 million people in seven western states and turns dry desert into fertile farmland, including in California.

The situation has economy-wide ramifications. Earlier this summer, one of California's largest hydroelectric plants shut down because water levels dropped too low to power the turbines. The Shasta Lake reservoir that feeds water to the farms and agricultural land in Sacramento Valley is at 30 percent capacity. And in Mendocino, a small town two hours north of San Francisco that's highly dependent on tourism, restaurants, ice cream shops, markets and gas stations have closed their restrooms to patrons because each flush is too expensive.

For California agriculture, which supplies one-third of the vegetables in the U.S. and two-thirds of the country's fruits and nuts, drought is nothing new but this level is in some ways biblical.

"We're going into next year with the reservoirs extremely low," said Don Cameron, chair of the California Board of Agriculture. "We pray that we get a big snowpack and we get it early in the season. If we don't, things are really going to get extremely difficult. You're gonna see a lot of crops not being planted."

But with climate change, it's unlikely that snowpack will appear. Without it, Cameron expects price increases for tomatoes, onions and garlic next year as growers limit the planting of these crops due to water shortages.

Growers are already planning the crops for next season, and based on this year's temperatures and lack of rainfall, they are being conservative. In the Central Valley — a 450-mile area running from Northern California's Redding to Bakersfield in Southern California that grows much of the country's produce including lettuce, almonds, oranges, tomatoes and 230

others crops — temperatures hovered in the low 100 degrees Fahrenheit this summer and hit 114 degrees in early June. Cameron, as vice president of the Terranova ranch, saw his peppers, tomatoes, onions, garlic, almonds, grapes, kale and many others suffering more and earlier during the hot periods without an easy supply of water to protect them.

"If it's too hot for people, it's too hot for plants," he said.

California is a unique water state that relies on groundwater, water held underground as opposed to precipitation, to quench thirsty crops. And according to agricultural and water experts, the 2012-2015 drought really put the farming world in California on notice. There was less water coming into groundwater basins, and seawater intrusion made the water more salty.

In response to that drought, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) was passed in 2014, taking effect this year. The law should drastically change the amount of water farmers can pump to the surface, but to give farmers time to adjust, the law gives areas 20 more years to stop overpumping and achieve sustainability.

Of course, drought came sooner than that. The policy represents the first time groundwater has been regulated in California. The intention is to prevent overdrafting in 20 years and stabilize groundwater levels. Traditionally, groundwater resources have been used mainly as a savings account during wet years, replenishing the supply enough for farmers to pull upon those irrigation resources during dry ones. But as drought levels have increased and intensified year-over-year, there is a renewed emphasis on protecting groundwater for a non-rainy day, if you will.

"It is going to require changes to [farmers'] thought process and management style," said Daniel Sonke, director of sustainability for Blue Diamond Growers, the almond giant. "For some farmers, that means they might have to use less groundwater than they did in the past. But this is actually a protection for them to be able to continue to farm long term."

But right now, farmers who have

zero allocation for water are paying to maintain the infrastructure without receiving any water in return. That requires letting some of their land sit idle, which brings in less income. That squeeze trickles down in turn to rural economies.

California is trying to innovate itself out of disaster

California growers knew these intense droughts and increased regulations were coming, and many have tried to set themselves up for success by investing in more water-efficient systems and moonshot innovations for water sources. The Almond Board of California has funded 228 studies on water efficiency since 1982 and compiled them into a 150-page Irrigation Continuum that helps farmers benchmark their irrigation efficiency and identify ways to increase it.

Growers of California almonds and strawberries, crops that need 1.1 gallons of water per nut and 0.4 gallons of water per berry have shifted away from flood irrigation methods to micro and drip irrigation that delivers water directly to the root systems, reducing evaporation rates. This technique came from the Middle East and is almost ubiquitous across most specialty crops in California, according to Tannis Thorlakson, senior manager of environment at Driscoll's. Blue Diamond's Sonke confirmed that 85 percent of almond farmers in California use this type of irrigation system.

Many berry growers have also moved to growing in pots above ground, which improves water efficiency by 30 percent per pound of berries.

"All of a sudden you have a lot more control of the entire plant system and roots," Thorlakson said. "And you're also importantly able to have the opportunity to capture the water coming out of the bottom of the pot and reuse that water."

Precision monitoring of the soil and digital water consumption tracking also helps growers avoid over-watering. According to Sonke, Blue Diamond invested in a digital platform that is helping to map every single orchard that supplies the

company. Once everything is mapped, Blue Diamond will be able to see what irrigation systems growers are using, along with well information, groundwater status and other metrics on a member by member, field by field basis.

"And then from that we can extrapolate what are the impacts in a drought year or a wet year to the delivery of water to that field, helping connect farmers that might be at more risk to resources that can help," he said.

Cover crops are not usually thought of as a water infrastructure, but they too increase the ability for the soil to hold water and avoid runoff.

According to Danielle Veenstra, sustainability communications manager at the Almond Board of California, these changes were low-hanging fruit for many growers, resulting in a 33 percent reduction in water per pound of almonds since 2000. The board has made a further commitment to reduce water usage by 20 percent per pound of almonds by 2025, a goal that will require a little more ingenuity and working on creating new sources of water.

For example, according to Thorlakson, Driscoll's is working with the city of Oxnard to reuse recycled water and put it on crops after extensive filtering. And Sonke said the almond industry is investing in a life-cycle analysis of almond trees to better understand when the trees need water (during the early spring and summer as the nuts are forming), when the trees can go without (during mid-summer when the nuts are already formed) and how deficient irrigation can actually increase yields.

"So for those real moonshot opportunities, for creating a new source of water, that really takes every stakeholder coming around the table to find those solutions," Thorlakson said.

More drought means more floods, and that could be a good thing

As California experiences more periods of drought, in turn, that comes with times of more intense precipitation. California agriculture

Baked Oatmeal and Fig Stuffed Pears



bottom of the pear halves so that they have a flat surface to rest on in the pan.
3. Enlarge the hole from removing the seeds and core just enough so that a fresh fig half can nestle down inside and be flush with the top of the pear.

These tender baked pears have a surprise hidden underneath their baked oatmeal top, a perfectly roasted fig half! On its own this dish isn't super sweet, its more savory with a hint of maple or honey. If you prefer a sweeter final product drizzle with maple or honey at the table.

Course: Breakfast, Dessert

Cuisine: American

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 4 people

Author: Meg van der Kruik, California Grown

Ingredients

For the fig stuffed pears

- 2 large California pears, halved lengthwise, seeds and core removed with a spoon or melon baller.

- 2 fresh California figs halved, stem removed

- 1/3 cup apple cider

- 1 teaspoon maple syrup

- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon

For the baked oatmeal topping

- 1 1/2 cups whole milk

- 1 cup old fashioned oats gluten-free if necessary

- pinch of coarse kosher salt

- 4 teaspoons maple syrup or honey

- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

- 1/2 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice

- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract

Instructions

For the roasted fig stuffed pears

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F.

2. Shave a small slice off of the

If needed you can also shave a small slice off of the outside edge of the figs if it helps to nestle them down into the pear.

4. Pour the apple cider into the bottom of the pan so that the bottom of the pears are submerged. Brush the cut-side of the pears with the maple syrup and sprinkle with cinnamon.

5. Cover the baking dish with foil and bake in the oven for 25 minutes or until the pears are tender.

While the fig stuffed pears bake make the oatmeal topping.

1. Bring the milk to a boil in a small saucepan. Add in the oats and salt. Reduce the heat and simmer for 5 minutes stirring frequently.

2. Remove the saucepan from the heat and stir in the cinnamon, ginger, 4 teaspoons maple syrup or honey and the extract. Cover until the pears are tender.

3. When the pears are ready divide the oatmeal amongst them and pile on top. Return to the oven for an additional 5-8 minutes until golden brown and the oatmeal is warmed through.

4. Serve immediately as-is, with maple or honey on the side, or with whipped cream and ice cream for more of a dessert vibe.

Notes

This recipe stores great in the refrigerator for up to 3 days and can be reheated when ready to eat in a 350°F oven.

Upcoming Master Gardener Training Class

Master Gardeners of Merced County are accepting applications for the Master Gardener Training Program which starts in January 2022. Applications are due by October 22, 2021.

Two information sessions will be held at the UC Cooperative Extension Office, 2145 Wardrobe Avenue, Merced on:

September 18th at 12 noon following the Fall Gardening workshop
September 25th at 9am

Master Gardeners are University of California trained volunteers who share research-based information on home horticulture, vegetable gardening, pest management and sustainable landscape practices with residents of Merced County. Training includes lectures, demonstrations, and hands-on field experiences. No gardening experience is required. One just needs curiosity and willingness to learn.

Find more information about the program and how to apply at cemerced.ucanr.edu or visit with us the second and fourth Saturdays of the month at the Merced Downtown Farmers' Market.



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UC Master Gardener Program

Merced County Youth Wins National Title

By: Alissa Kuhr; National Little Miss United States Agriculture

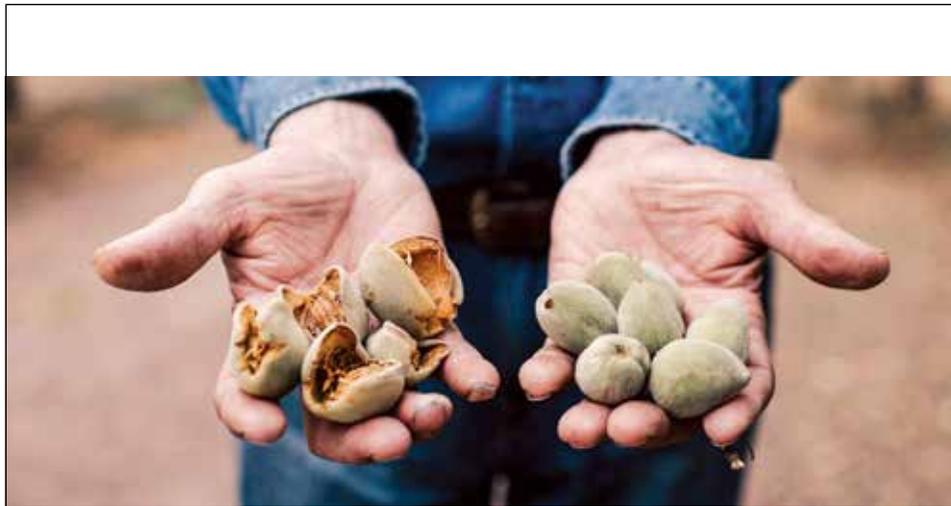
Alissa Kuhr, the 10 year old daughter of Jerod and Stefanie Kuhr was recently named the 2021 National Little Miss United States Agriculture! The national contest was held in Orlando, Florida where Alissa competed against girls from all over the United States who all share one common passion: a love for agriculture. One area of the contest included “State Fashion” in which Alissa wore a dress adorned with flowers that were made from wood that resembled slivered almonds to represent all the almonds growers in Central California. During the year she spent serving as the 2021 California Little Miss United States Agriculture and preparing for the national pageant, she visited over 150 different agriculture businesses and farms throughout California. From driving equipment to harvesting produce, Alissa got to experience numerous hands-on experiences. Alissa wants to thank all the businesses owners who opened their doors to allow her to visit and learn about their operation

especially during this time.

In addition to industry tours, Alissa hosted numerous community service events such as donated over 3,000 non-perishable food items to the Merced County Food Bank, over 4,000 books to Madera County Juvenile Hall, 40 pounds of pull tabs to the Ronald McDonald House at the Sacramento Children’s Hospital, and finally a clothing drive bringing in over 25,000 pieces of gently used clothing.

Alissa is the fourth generation of agriculturalists in her family. One of Alissa's favorite parts of her reign was making educational videos highlighting local agriculture. For example, she visited Hunter Farms Pumpkin Patch and made a video showing the journey a pumpkin goes through to go from the patch to the porch. The videos can be found by searching “The Sash in Ag” on YouTube.

Alissa will reign as the 2021 National Little Miss United States Agriculture until June of 2022 when she will crown her successor. “I am so excited to be representing California Agriculture at a National level.” Alissa said. You can follow along with Alissa’s journey on social media. If you would like Alissa to help out or make an appearance at an upcoming event or if you would be willing to host Alissa for an industry tour, please email her at AlissajKuhr@gmail.com



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Alissa Kuhr; National Little Miss United States Agriculture

Free STEM Educational Tours Back at Hilmar Cheese



By: Denise Skidmore, Director, Education & Public Relations, Hilmar Cheese Company

HILMAR, CA. September 8, 2021. The Hilmar Cheese Company Visitor Center is welcoming back students this fall and spring with their free STEM educational tour program.

“We have missed hosting students on our free educational field trips. We look forward to engaging students in learning and teaching them about agriculture and the dairy industry,” said Kody Stevens the tour and communications specialist at Hilmar Cheese Company. “To take extra precautions due to COVID, we will be having 80 minute tours instead of 90 to make sure our team can sanitize and clean in between each school and only one school per tour time.”

With tours for students in Pre-K through High School there is something for all grade levels. With each tour students will see the Cheese Theatre show and watch employees

package “the Big Cheese,” 640-pound crates of cheese. Interactive exhibits use multiple senses, activities and skills to learn about the technology on today’s dairy farms, how farmers care for cows, careers in agriculture, recycling and the health benefits of dairy. Each tour also comes with a Hilmar Cheese pencil, activity booklet, souvenir ear tag and cheese samples.

Pre-K through 3rd grade can experience the science experiment of turning a liquid into solid by making ice cream. 4th and above can experience the science experiment of making cheese and will drain curds from the whey.

Hilmar Cheese Company will be offering tours during this school year in the months of September, October and January through May.

All teachers who are interested in booking or would like more information can

email tours@hilmarcheese.com or visit the website.

Follow Hilmar Cheese Company on social media to stay up-to-date with

specials and activities. Hilmar Cheese Company Visitor Center is open Monday – Friday 7 am to 6 pm. Call 209.656.1196 with any questions.

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Drought

continued from page 10

is asking the question: How can we capture that water when it comes so that it can be used beneficially later?

Driscoll's is eyeing stormwater capture. According to Thorlakson, in Watsonville, the company helped create a recharge basin that captures excess stormwater by slowing it down on its way to the ocean so it will infiltrate the basin instead. The Watsonville Slough System Managed Aquifer Recharge and Recovery Project uses the slough and other diversions, filtration and recharge facilities to capture water that would otherwise run into the Monterey Bay and store it in a San Andreas aquifer.

Cameron has been working for 30 years to get flood water diverted from the north fork of Kings River and applied to his soil. He was finally able to obtain a grant in 2012 and embarked on a project that will eventually cover 20,000 to 30,000 acres.

"We actually proved we could do it by flooding by growing wine grapes

for about five months," he said. "We now have infrastructure in place to be able to capture the floodwater, spread it on farmland and allow it to percolate down to the water table to build up our water so we'll have water during periods of drought."

Diverting flood water could be a win-win as it also prevents the flooded rivers from creating downstream damage.

What does the future of agriculture look like?

While these small improvements, precision tactics and large innovations have the potential to dampen the effects of drought on California's agriculture system, the truth is things are going to change. Cameron expects more of farmers' land will remain unplanted and the crops they do plant will be different.

"I think that the crop mix is going to change somewhat," he said. "I think the lower dollar value crops may go away in many areas. A grower is going to put the best economic use of that water to work."

Cameron anticipated reductions in crops for animal feeds such as alfalfa hay and corn, while almonds

and pistachios will increase. The market for almonds has been strong and growing; over the past 10 years, farmers planted 500,000 more acres of almond and pistachio trees.

But almonds are fighting their own drought battles as the hot market and drip irrigation systems encouraged farmers to plant almond orchards even in areas without adequate water supply.

"Frankly, we're going to come to a

place where we have to ask ourselves, as California agriculture, what should be grown here? What is best suited to grow here? And what can be grown in other climates?" Veenstra from the Almond Board said. "How can we do this in the most responsible way and the most precise way, but then also help to address some of these bigger issues with regard to water supply, and climate change overall."

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Senators Vie To Reestablish Mandatory COOL

By: Greg Henderson, Drivers

The American Beef Labeling Act was announced by four U.S. Senators on Wednesday that would reinstate mandatory country of origin labeling (MCOOL) for beef.

The legislation will be formally introduced next week by Senators John Thune (R-S.D.), Jon Tester (D-Mont.), Mike Rounds (R-S.D.), and Cory Booker (D-N.J.). Thune and Booker are members of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

According to a statement issued by Senator Thune, the American Beef Labeling Act would require the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), in consultation with the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, to develop a World Trade Organization-compliant means of reinstating MCOOL for beef within one year of enactment. USTR would have six months to develop a reinstatement plan followed by a six-month window to implement it. If USTR fails to reinstate MCOOL for beef within one year of enactment, it would automatically be reinstated for beef only.

“Transparency in labeling benefits both producers and consumers,” said Thune. “Unfortunately, the current beef labeling system in this country allows imported beef that is neither born nor raised in the United States, but simply finished here, to be labeled as a product of the USA. This process is unfair to cattle producers and misleading for consumers. When you see a ‘product of the USA’ label on the grocery store shelf, it should mean just that.”

(Of note is the fact one of the four U.S. Senators who support MCOOL is Cory Booker, who claims to be a vegan and who proposed legislation earlier this year that would - among other things - force the closure of controlled animal feeding operations (CAFOs) by 2040.)

Country of origin labeling was included in the 2002 and 2008 farm bills at the behest of northern U.S. ranchers who compete with the Canadian cattle industry. It also was backed by consumer advocates who said it helps shoppers know where their food comes from. COOL first became law on March 16, 2009,

and also covered chicken, pork and several other products. Processed meat products, meat purchased at restaurants and certain commodity meats such as turkey were exempt.

Implementation of COOL, however, was criticized by trading partners Canada and Mexico who claimed it was a trade barrier that created an unfair advantage for U.S. producers. They took their case to the World Trade Organization (WTO), which agreed. In 2015 the WTO authorized Canada and Mexico to place retaliatory tariffs on American goods which totaled more than \$1 billion.

“The WTO has warned us multiple times, and Congress has ignored the warning,” said then Chairman of the Senate Ag Committee Pat Roberts (R-Kan) in 2015. “Retaliation is real. Now more than ever, we need to repeal COOL.”

The Senate has debated mandatory COOL for three decades, and Roberts championed the opposition. In December 2015 the Senate and the U.S. House repealed mandatory COOL and avoided the retaliatory tariffs from the WTO. Roberts has

since retired, and his successor, Senator Roger Marshall is also on the Senate Ag Committee. Marshall was noticeably absent from the group of senators proposing to reinstate MCOOL.

Since it was repealed nearly seven years ago, MCOOL has remained a flashpoint for some ranchers who believe its reinstatement could help level the playing field. Disruptions from the COVID pandemic have reinforced that belief among many.

“Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling has long been a top priority for the South Dakota Stockgrowers,” said James Halverson, executive director of the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association. “MCOOL is the only way every single American producer can differentiate their beef from foreign products without leaving it up to some arbitrary program. We greatly appreciate working with Senator Thune on this legislation and hope we can continue to work together to get this across the finish line.”

“During the nearly seven years since MCOOL for beef was repealed, U.S. cattle producers experienced

lower cattle prices and were deprived the means to build demand for their U.S.-produced cattle,” said Bill Bullard, chief executive officer of R-CALF USA. “Senators Thune and Tester's bill to restore MCOOL for beef will now provide that means.”

“We greatly appreciate the work of Senators Thune and Tester in continuing to push forward solutions to define what constitutes a U.S. beef product,” said Justin Tupper, vice president of the U.S. Cattlemen's Association. “From the perspective of the U.S. Cattlemen's Association, that label should pertain only to beef that was born, raised, and harvested in the U.S.A.”

Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack said July 1 he will continue the Trump administration's process of developing a country of origin labeling rule. The push will include a “top-to-bottom review” of the existing rules and what the terminology means to consumers.

“I am committed to ensuring that the Product of USA label reflects what a plain understanding of those terms means to U.S. consumers,” Vilsack said.



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HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION
Oct 14th : 10-11am

DRONES & ANIMAL ACTIVISTS; WHAT TO DO WHEN THEY SHOW UP?
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Calif.'s drought, desperation are peaking. Sacramento needs to boost water storage.

By: Assemblyman Vince Fong, The San Joaquin Valley Sun

Californians are facing the most severe drought conditions since 1977. Some communities in the Central Valley lack access to even basic necessities like clean drinking water. Farmers, if they haven't already, will be forced to abandon portions of their crops, eliminating jobs and income and prompting higher food prices for families across the country. This reality is unfathomable.

Californians need water storage now.

California's last significant water infrastructure investment, the State Water Project, was built over 50 years ago when the state's population was a mere 16 million. Today, California is home to nearly 40 million people and the state's farmland to produce vital food supplies has increased by 3,140%. It goes without saying – California's water storage infrastructure needs to increase to meet growing needs.

With a \$38 billion one-time windfall, the Governor and the Legislature has the resources to make needed investments in critical water storage. California voters made it clear that water storage was a top priority by passing Proposition 1 in 2014, but much of the committed \$2.7 billion is stuck in a regulatory vortex.

Last month, state regulators ordered 4,500 farmers, water districts and landowners to stop drawing water from the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River basins. These restrictions represent the most extensive cuts to California's water rights system to date and are especially crippling for farmers who do not have any other source of water.

Farmers throughout the state have fallowed their crops, pulled out vines and trees and left land empty. Crops are left withering and food production limited.

One Central Valley farmer, Phil Hansen, was forced to make the difficult decision to fallow 2,000 acres

of his family operation in response to the drought. While Hansen described this choice as a devastating economic blow, he is already bracing himself for the compounding impacts next season. A record dry year coupled with inadequate state water storage infrastructure sets farmers like Hansen up for failure in the years to come.

The reduction of farmland will not only be felt by farmers. Families will face higher prices for food. The affordability crisis in our state will intensify.

Agriculture contributes over \$50 billion to California's economy, and the Central Valley feeds and clothes the world. The livelihood of over 800,000 farmworkers and their families depends on the viability of California farms. Despite such a strong and positive economic impact, the Central Valley continues to bear the brunt of the state's lack of planning for long-term water storage.

The state's budget was signed into law over two months ago, yet

there is still no formal commitment for long-term water storage funding. Meanwhile, the state's conveyance systems are crumbling and Californians face an uncertain water future.

The state's lack of urgency to build drought resilience through water storage is a direct hit to the Central Valley and underserved communities in desperate need of water.

California must act immediately, and use part of the \$38 billion windfall to fund new water storage projects and make repairs on existing water infrastructure. And we have the resources to do it.

Facing a bleak and uncertain future in this historic drought, Californians – especially those in the Central Valley – need the Governor and Legislature to prioritize water storage in this year's budget.

The prosperity of the state's agricultural global standing and the lives of nearly 40 million Californians depend on it.



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Hurtado pulls bill to repair sinking canals after legislators yank funding

By: **Daniel Gligich, The San Joaquin Valley Sun**

A bill navigating the California State Legislature that would have provided significant funds to repair some of the state's major waterways came to a screeching halt on Wednesday.

Sen. Melissa Hurtado (D-Sanger) announced she would be pulling Senate Bill 559 – The State Water Resiliency Act of 2021 – after the Assembly gutted its funding and amended it to include additional bureaucratic hurdles.

Senate 559 would have provided \$785 million to repair canals, roads and bridges that have been damaged by subsidence. The funds would have gone directly towards repairing sections of the Friant-Kern Canal, the Delta-Mendota Canal, the San Luis Canal and the California Aqueduct.

Gov. Gavin Newsom allocated \$200 million over two years to canal repairs in his May revision to the budget, which was ultimately approved and enacted by legislators.

But the Hurtado's bill, which directed specific funding allocations to key canal projects, was seen as the vessel to send funds directly to Valley water agencies to expedite improvements on key water arteries.

Instead, along with stripping specific spending, the amendments out of the Assembly Appropriations Committee sought to require all appropriations receive clearance from the Department of Water Resources following a bevy of studies.

The additional proposed hurdle through DWR was reminiscent of local struggles to obtain Proposition 1 funding for water storage projects from the California Water Commission.

"Western states are at war with climate change driven drought. The situation continues to worsen, and solutions for us to adapt are clear. The cries for help from communities that are running out of water and from struggling farmers wasn't enough to stop forced Assembly amendments to a sound solution," Hurtado said in a statement to The Sun.

"It is unfortunate, but I will not add further pain to struggling farmworkers and communities. For this reason – I

am withholding SB 559 for a vote this session. I am disappointed, but will keep pushing to secure adequate funding for water infrastructure, and I hope to further inform my colleagues on the consequences of drought – namely food insecurity and water shortages as I chair hearings on the Select Committee on Human Security."

The bill was a bipartisan effort to fund the much-needed repairs for the state's water infrastructure.

Coauthors include Senators Andreas Borgeas (R-Fresno) and Shannon Grove (R-Bakersfield) as well as Assembly Members Joaquin Arambula (D-Fresno) and Devon Mathis (R-Visalia).

It was also part of a three-pronged approach in partnership with Congressman Jim Costa (D-Fresno) and Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.).

In April, Costa introduced the Canal Conveyance Capacity Restoration Act to the House of Representatives, which would secure \$653 million in federal funds to go toward Central Valley canals.

The third leg in the process was to receive the other third of the needed funding directly from the water users themselves.

But now the plan is up in the air now that Hurtado's efforts have fallen through for the time being.

The Friant Water Authority, San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Authority and State Water Contractors released a joint statement expressing their disappointment that the bill fell through.

"We are disappointed that SB 559 did not proceed to a full vote this year, however we support Senator Hurtado's decision in light of the most recent amendments she was forced to accept. Ignoring California's water infrastructure needs by delaying action on repairs has devastating effects on our economy, quality of life, climate resiliency, food security, ecosystem health and public safety," the groups stated.

"Just imagine if we had completed these repairs prior to this current drought, California would be in a much better place than we are now. Securing California's water future by repairing and updating the infrastructure that 31 million people

and 3 million acres of farmland rely on isn't a choice, we must get it done. We look forward to continuing our work with Senator Hurtado next year on a bill that will secure much-needed state funding for canal repairs."

The bill's failure also struck a chord of disappointment with some of California's top farmers.

California Fresh Fruit Association President Ian LeMay said the decision by the Assembly to axe the bill's funding while the state is facing drought is a clear attempt to drive food production away.

"In light of the staggering state budget surplus, the decision to defund the repair of our critical conveyance systems is not financial, but ideological, and will harm thousands of multi-generational family farms and countless disadvantaged communities in the San Joaquin Valley," LeMay said in a statement.

Western Growers President and CEO Dave Puglia also took aim at the Assembly, saying that this decision will lead to farms having to reduce operations.

"In once again eviscerating Senator Hurtado's legislation to repair critical water infrastructure, the Assembly's leaders leave no uncertainty as to the future they want for the farms, farmers, farmworkers and communities of the San Joaquin Valley," Puglia said in a statement.

"They will do whatever it takes to keep taxpayer money flowing to a high-speed rail project we can do without and do whatever it takes to deny funds to help repair water infrastructure we cannot do without. We are enormously grateful to Senator Hurtado for her tenacity and to those who stood with her even as their leaders gave them, and all of us, the middle finger."



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TID fears state orders will deprive farms

By: Pawan Naidu, Ceres Courier

The California State Water Resources Board issued curtailment orders to 45 water rights holders in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Delta, including the Turlock Irrigation District. These orders could cause water shortages in the coming years if they stay in place for an extended period of time.

The curtailment order instructs local agencies to immediately stop diverting flows to rivers. The Turlock Irrigation District, along with the Modesto Irrigation District, owns and operates Don Pedro Reservoir that is a collection site from the Tuolumne River and main source of irrigation water.

The current water year will be coming to a close on Oct. 1, and there is enough water stored for the rest of the year, according to TID. Also on Oct. 1, the state water board will rereview the curtailment and determine whether to lift it or not.

“There’s not really much water coming down anymore, so what’s going to be stored from this really dry year is already stored,” said TID Communications Specialist Brandon

McMillan. “So, while they’re calling for a seizure of diversions, at least for TID, it really doesn’t impact us this year. We will be able to meet all of the demands of our farmers this year. However, this could have a significant impact in 2022 and beyond if the curtailments aren’t lifted.”

These are the first curtailment orders Turlock has faced. The State Water Board issued these same orders during the last drought in 2015. Those orders were challenged legally and the state lost those curtailment orders. According to McMillan, TID is potentially going to file a petition for reconsideration to the State Water Board regarding these orders and “have not ruled out seeking an injunctive relief.” TID is also looking to file a legal challenge with other agencies as a joint powers group called the San Joaquin Tributaries Authority.

The State Water Board has stated its goals for the curtailment are to: Protect drinking water supplies, prevent salinity intrusion in the Delta, and to minimize impacts on the fisheries and the environment.

“TID’s position is that the Tuolumne River doesn’t need these curtailment

orders because TID is meeting these goals based on our operations,” said McMillan.

According to McMillan, TID believes that local entities are best equipped to manage water related issues pertaining to their own communities.

“We are locally owned; we have a five-member board who are locally elected officials. We have local control here. Because we have that local control, we were able to make good, smart and proactive decisions. The board was essentially able to save water and help us get through a multiyear drought. Within that we are still meeting our requirements, or going beyond them, for instream environmental flows. We’re still making all the releases we’re required to for the environment and we already set the water aside to make the releases for next year,” he said.

Don Pedro is currently at a low level right now and water, rain and snow is needed to refill the reservoir.

“So much of the economy in our area is based on agriculture. Whether it’s the farmers or the food processor, like Blue Diamond, therefore so much

of the area revolves on TID having ag and revolves around TID having water. We need to be able to refill Don Pedro, to refill Don Pedro we need to be able to store water and we can’t store water if the curtailment orders aren’t allowing water to run.” said McMillan. “If we go into a third year of the drought, where the first two years have already been drier than the last drought, that puts us in a really tough spot to help our farmers.”

The curtailment could also have an effect on the area’s groundwater resources, which is the only source of drinking water for Ceres, Hughson, Keyes and Turlock residents.

“TID is the biggest recharger for groundwater in the area, McMillan said. “Even bigger than rain is irrigation, so when farmers flood irrigated fields, that flood irrigation soaks down the aquifer and recharges it. If we can’t use that to recharge the sub basin and recharge the groundwater, then that could be a really big issue.”

Ceres and Turlock are jointly building a surface water plant to use comingled ground water and treated Tuolumne River water.

California Recall Election Voting Guide



How to Vote

All eligible voters will receive a ballot in the mail. County officials will begin mailing ballots by Aug. 16. Ballots returned by mail do not need postage and must be postmarked by Sept. 14 or returned to a voting location by 8 p.m. on Sept. 14.

If you do not receive a ballot in the mail, please contact your County Registrar’s office. You may also register to vote, receive a replacement ballot and receive language assistance at your local voting centers. Please check with your County Registrar to locate voting centers and in-person voting locations.

How it Works

The recall ballot will ask two questions:

Continued onto next page

1) Do you want to recall the Governor?

2) Who do you want to replace him?

Gov. Newsom will not appear as a replacement candidate on Question 2. In other words, he can't be simultaneously recalled and re-elected.

You may vote no to recall and still vote for a replacement candidate on Question 2. Your vote not to recall does not cancel out your replacement candidate vote.

Who Are the Candidates

Please consult the ballot guide you receive in the mail to read statements from the candidates. You can also visit the Secretary of State's website to read the statements online.

How is the Winner Determined?

A simple majority (50% + 1) is needed to recall the Governor.

If Question 1 passes, the candidate who receives the most votes on Question 2 wins.

White House blasts meatpackers for 'profiteering' on groceries

By Josh Wingrove and Mike Dorning,
Bloomberg

The Biden administration is taking aim at major meatpackers, charging that their "pandemic profiteering" is squeezing consumers and farmers alike, with a few companies that dominate the industry raking in record profits.

White House National Economic Council Director Brian Deese said Wednesday that increases in the prices of beef, pork and poultry are responsible for half the jump in food prices since late 2020, yet farmers have seen little gain in what they are paid by giant meat companies.

"It raises a concern about pandemic profiteering, about companies that are driving price increases in a way that hurts consumers who are going to the grocery store," Deese said. What's happened "isn't benefiting the actual producers, the farmers and the ranchers that are growing the product," he said.

The comments, at a press briefing at the White House, and similar criticism in an earlier blog post by three senior Biden administration economic aides, sent shares in major meat companies

down. Sanderson Farms Inc. dropped as much as 1.7%, JBS SA was down 3.5% at its low for the session, while Tyson Foods Inc. slumped 1.6% at one point.

With mid-term elections looming next year, the Biden administration has been showing concern about rising consumer prices as the economy rebounds from Covid-19. Republicans have repeatedly faulted President Joe Biden and Democrats, saying their economic policies have caused prices to rise. The White House says price pressures are temporary and the result of the rebound.

The White House blamed corporate consolidation in recent decades for the price increases. Four companies control 82% of U.S. beef capacity while the pork and poultry sectors have similar levels of concentration, according to U.S. Agriculture Department data compiled by the administration.

"Absent this corporate consolidation, prices would be lower for consumers and fairer for farmers and ranchers," Deese and two other economic advisers said in the blog post.

The briefing focused on measures that have already been announced, including Justice Department antitrust investigations that were initiated before

Biden took office, new regulations the Biden administration is working on to give livestock producers more protection in their dealings with meat companies and congressional legislation to boost transparency on cattle markets.

The briefing by senior White House officials and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack signaled a political focus on the meatpacking industry, which suffered sustained public criticism after plants became early epicenters of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Major meatpacking companies didn't immediately respond to requests for comment. But Mark Dopp, chief operating officer for the North American Meat Institute, an industry trade group, criticized the statements as "inflammatory" and blamed rising meat prices largely on "a persistent and widespread labor shortage."

"Meat and poultry markets are competitive and dynamic with no one sector of the industry consistently dominating the market at the expense of another," Dopp said.

The Justice Department is investigating big beef meatpacking companies to determine whether they are violating antitrust laws. The probe started in the last year of the

Trump administration, and Biden's administration is pushing forward, with plans to issue additional civil investigative demands, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Asked if the administration is weighing options to break up the companies, Vilsack said the focus is on supporting competitors to ease the impact of consolidation.

Meantime, the Justice Department is conducting a criminal investigation of price-fixing by chicken producers. That effort has led to criminal charges against companies and executives, including Pilgrim's Pride Corp. and its former chief executive officer. Tyson Foods has said it's cooperating.

Beefpackers have been earning record profits. Tyson, the largest U.S. meat company by sales, said its beef segment had a record profit margin of 16% during the first nine months of its fiscal year 2021.

More restaurants are reopening and resuming purchases while sales for consumers cooking at home have remained elevated. Meanwhile, U.S. cattle supplies have been relatively abundant and meat plants have struggled to find enough workers to staff slaughterhouses -- a bottleneck that critics say depresses cattle prices.



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Annual Dinner Canceled



from the
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Danette Toso

The Mariposa County Farm Bureau was planning and looking forward to our Annual Fundraiser Dinner next month. This is

the larger of our two fundraisers and it allows us to support the youth in our community. Unfortunately, our local officials cannot guarantee the ability to hold the event at the Fairgrounds. The entire state of California is holding its breath, waiting for the outcome of the recall election September 14th. The outcome of this election will make all the difference in Californians' ability to gather in county/state facilities.

We will continue to focus on our Hornitos Rib Dinner in the spring as these fundraisers are what allow us to contribute to our community. It is vitally important to support our agricultural youth programs, and we do the best we can with what we have. We are committed to the youth in our county and we hope you'll join us in this mission.

Enjoy the last days of summer and as always, I encourage farmers, ranchers and conservators to invite friends, neighbors and family members to join the collective voice of the Farm Bureau. Together, we can make our organization stronger than ever, one member at a time.

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Merced County Young Farmers & Ranchers Update

By: Alexis Rudich, Project Assistant

On August 27th we had our August Social at Vista Ranch. It was a great evening filled with networking and delicious pizza. Pierce and Karyn planned an ice breaker that had everyone eager to introduce themselves for a chance to win a hat.

We invite you to join us on Tuesday, October 12th at 5:30pm for our October Meeting. We will be having tacos and a pumpkin painting contest! To participate in the pumpkin painting contest, please bring 5 canned or non-perishable food items. These items will be donated to the Merced County Food Bank and will count towards the Farm Bureau Harvest for All campaign. Please RSVP to 209-723-3001 or info@mercedfarmbureau.org.

Keep an eye out for information on our Cow

Patty Bingo Fundraiser that we will be hosting in the coming months. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to Farm PAC (CAFB Fund to Protect the Family Farm). If you don't already, follow us on Instagram @merced_county_yfr and on Facebook @MercedYFR for all the current YF&R events.

If you are interested in joining YF&R, email us at mercedcoyfr@mercedfarmbureau.org or call the MCFB office at 209-723-3001. We look forward to seeing you at our next event!



THE MERCED COUNTY
YF&R

October Meeting



**JOIN US FOR TACOS
AND A PUMPKIN PAINTING CONTEST!**

To participate in pumpkin painting contest, please bring 5 canned or non-perishable food items.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12TH

MERCED COUNTY FARM BUREAU
646 S. HWY 59, MERCED
MEETING BEGINS AT 5:30PM
RSVP: 209-723-3001 OR INFO@MERCEDFARMBUREAU.ORG



SAVE THE DATE

2021 Annual Meeting

Sunday-Wednesday, December 5-8

Hyatt Regency Orange County,
Garden Grove

Join us for an in-person, enhanced Annual Meeting experience including:

- Education Workshops on Policy, Advocacy, Legal & More
- CE Sessions on Pesticide Licensing
- Post-Pandemic Reconnecting & Networking
- Annual Awards Recognition
- Product Sourcing in the Trade Show
- CAFB House of Delegates

Registration opens early October

This year the Young Farmers & Ranchers State Conference will be combined with Annual Meeting and will be held December 4-5 in the same venue.



MEMBER REFLECTIONS

