Large Crop Year Makes for a Busy Hulling Season

By: Denelle Flake, Merced County Farm News Editor

In 1969, Northern Merced Hulling Association (NMHA) was a cooperative founded by 5 almond growers and that quickly grew to 33 growers by the end of that season. Present day, the cooperative is owned by 190 growers and it recently celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2019. Hullers & shellers are the first point of processing when the almonds leave the farm. I sat down with Tim Lohman, the NMHA General Manager, to get some insight on this year’s large crop, improvements to their facility and how they are handling the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

With the USDA’s prediction of a 3-billion-pound crop this year, Tim shared with me his predictions and their recent improvements that will be beneficial to handling the large crop. “Typically, the huller runs to the 1st week of November, but this year we suspect we will be running until Thanksgiving.” Tim stated, “We predict we will process approximately 39-million-pounds of meat weights this year.” The huller is able to process 450,000 pounds of meat weight every 24 hours. The huller recently purchased a 4-acre parcel where they have added additional hull and shell auger lines that will help with storage. The remaining area will be used for additional stockpiling. More stockpiling will be taking place on growers’ farms this year as well. Tim said, “The goal is to get all of the crop out of the fields and run or in stockpiles before the winter rains.”

Another recent improvement NMHA has adopted is Almond Logic. Almond Logic is an industry reporting software that provides easy access information to the grower and huller.

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August 07, 2020 -

Animal Health and Welfare

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has issued an updated version the draft regulations for Proposition 12 (2018). These updated draft regulations include all five articles (eggs, veal, pork, exceptions, certification) and outline a proposed structure for the implementation and enforcement of the initiative. Farm Bureau has submitted comments during throughout the development of the regulations and is currently reviewing the recent documents. Those members impacted by the implementation of Proposition 12 are encouraged to contact Farm Bureau staff with any questions, concerns or suggestions related to the recent language.

Cannabis

The Department of Pesticide Regulation has issued a revision to the Cannabis-Legal to Use” guidance related to pesticide use on cannabis. Specifically, the revisions include the following:

• An explanation of the terms “exempt from residue tolerance,” “use in conflict with the label,” and provides a better understanding of “broad use.

• Examples of active ingredients that may be found in such products have been removed to avoid confusion.

• Clarifies that cannabis and hemp are separate crops in California. Products labeled for hemp cannot be used on cannabis unless other specified criteria are met.

Citrus

An Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) sample – confirmed positive for CLas, a bacterium that causes Huanglongbing (HLB) – was collected from a commercial citrus grove in the

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See ’Hulling’, Page 4

See ’Legislative’ Page 5
Greetings from the President's Corner

Eric Harcksen

Merced County Farm Bureau. Hope this article finds you well. I imagine everyone is gearing up or in full swing of harvest by now. I know we have started almond harvest ourselves. I see several challenges this harvest with the continued presence of Novel Coronavirus (COVID). First and foremost, will be the labor force. Their availability and ability to feel safe at work. Second if there was to be an outbreak of COVID it could shut down an entire harvest crew and possibly delay the harvest. Lastly is the availability of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) which could become even more difficult to obtain.

A few topics that we at Merced County Farm Bureau (MCFB) have been working on are high speed rail and Prop 15 (the repeal of Prop 13 of 1978). For the high-speed rail, we continue to keep an eye on the Central Valley WYE and Merced-San Jose Sections. For Prop 15 there are a few good informational sites that will help you understand more which are www.noonprop15.org and www.cafarmersagainstprop15.com. Prop 15 will put further burden on our farmers and ranchers as well as our businesses. If this passes, businesses will continue to make their mass exit out of California to a more business friendly state. As you may well know this would be much harder if not impossible for our farmers and ranchers, leaving them with a greater tax burden. We need to vote no on Prop 15.

Our office and staff are here to help in any way they can so please do not hesitate to call or stop by. I hope everyone has a safe, profitable, and quick harvest this year.

The edition of our April paper was the first to be published following the shelter-in mandate by Governor Newsom. At that time we were about five weeks into the order and while I expected we’d be in this weird place for a while, I never expected to be coming to you in August updating you on much of the same issues. The level we are experiencing these issues is at an elevated height due to the complications brought on by the season and general nature of the pandemic that has upended all of our lives.

I sincerely hoped to have new subjects to update you on however there is nothing exciting here, as sadly it is still more updates on COVID-19 related efforts and responses to better ensure safety at your operations. Below is a number of updates from the Farm Employers Labor Service (FELS), a California Farm Bureau company, of things that have happened the past month:

• The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has issued guidance on reporting of wages paid to employees as required for emergency paid sick leave or family leave required by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA). Those wages must be reported on an employee's Form W-2 for 2020, and must be distinguished as having been paid as emergency paid sick leave for the employee's own illness, emergency paid sick leave because the employee was caring for someone else who was ill, or expanded family leave because the employee was providing care for a child who's school or daycare was unavailable due to COVID-19.
• U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has released updated SARS-CoV-2 Testing Strategy: Considerations for Non-Healthcare Workplaces providing employers with advice as to when it might be appropriate to administer COVID-19 testing in an employment context for individuals who may have been exposed but are asymptomatic, determining when it may be safe to allow someone recuperating or who has tested positive but may not have experienced illness, or even testing employees with no known exposure.
• CDC has also substantially changed its guidance as to whether testing is required to permit an employee to discontinue home isolation, instead shifting to a symptom-based criteria allowing discontinuation after at least 24 hours have passed since the last fever without use of fever-reducing medication and allowing discontinuation of home isolation 10 days after a positive test for people who test positive but never suffer symptoms.
• Governor Gavin Newsom on July 24 announced “New Supports for California Workers,” including “a new program, Housing for the Harvest, provides safe, temporary isolation spaces for agricultural and farmworkers who test positive or were exposed to the virus, which limits the risk of spreading COVID-19 to their coworkers or households. This program will operate in partnership with counties and local partners in the Central Valley, Central Coast, and Imperial Valley – the regions with the highest number of agricultural workers,” a “public awareness… campaign (that) will expand its reach to employers, to workers and to their families to inform them of ways they can break the cycle of spread and reduce their risk for COVID-19 at work, at home, and in their community;” “…work with the Legislature to build on previous executive action and advance worker protections. Expanded paid sick leave will provide workers financial security so they are able to stay home.

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

busy distribution days the Merced County Food Bank provides up to 1,000 boxes of food to Merced County households.

The Young Farmers and Ranchers Program is a committee of the Merced County Farm Bureau that organizes programs and activities directed towards young adults between the ages of 18-35. YF&R is a group that facilitates professional development and social networking opportunities among young farmers, ranchers and people who work in agriculture related jobs. YF&R is an opportunity for passionate agriculturalists to connect with individuals who share interests. If you are interested in joining please email mcfbyfr@gmail.com. To stay up to date on upcoming events and meetings, follow us on Instagram @merced_county_yfr!

Calendar of Events

August

Literacy for Life Grant application period opens

August 18

FELS Webinar – “You Have an Employee with COVID-19: Now What?”

August 27

SCFB CE Webinar

September 3

SCFB CE Webinar

September 11

Deadline to apply for CFAP

September 12

Merced River Ag Boosters’ Assn. Deep Pit Beef Dinner Drive Thru

September 17

SCFB CE Webinar

Merced County Farm News

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Merced River Ag Boosters’ Assn. Deep Pit Beef Dinner Drive Thru
Hulling
continued from page 1

sheller. Tim shared, “On the grower side they are able to access all the information related to their crop once it arrives to the huller. They are able to see weights as soon as the truck crosses the scale. They are also able to view the assignment of that truckload, whether it is going to stockpiling or being prepped for hulling & shelling.” Tim said, “It is also great for the huller, especially on the management side, because it provides knowledge of what is being processed throughout the day. If a grower calls up and wants information on where their crop is in the process, that information is readily available.” With adoption of the program, it has saved the growers and huller a lot of time that was previously spent on phone calls to share the same information.

The huller runs 85 sets of trailers during the season. When I visited, most of the trailers where in the yard, but Tim stated “Once things ramp up, all the trailers will be out picking up loads.” In the yard, there is also a large open area designated to stockpiling, as seen in the picture below. “Shortly”, Tim said, “the whole area will be filled with piles of almonds.” Each year, the area is sprayed with Dust Off to oil down the main driveways to minimize dust in the atmosphere.

During this time of year, the huller hires on their seasonal labor. Tim stated, “I was worried about the labor this year due to the current circumstances, but I was very pleased with the return of employees.” Every year, they have approximately 75 percent of their seasonal employees return. They recently hosted their employee orientation, which included training on COVID-19 prevention. Tim also hired two sanitizers on to ensure the employee breakroom and high touch areas are clean. Tim said, “We are doing all we can to be preventative, because it would be detrimental if we had to shut down.”

Tim’s favorite fact to share about hulling operations is that they are 100% sustainable. NMHA works with local dairymen and brokers to directly sell their hulls and shells. Almond hulls are a nutritious byproduct that can be used as dairy feed and shells can be used as dairy bedding in the winter. Tim highlighted that, “the Almond Board and Almond Alliance continue to do research on alternative uses for hulls and shells, so it will be interesting to see their findings within the next 3 or 4 years.” During the hulling and shelling process sticks, dirt and gravel are removed. The sticks are used for compost, the dirt is put back in orchards and the gravel is used for roads. The huller also has environmentally friendly features, including their 3-acres of solar panels that provide a large amount of energy to their facilities and air vacs that filter out debris from entering the atmosphere.

As we approach mid-August, harvest will be in full swing and hullers will be working around the clock as the first off-field step to deliver the wholesome product to its consumers.
Woodcrest area of Riverside County. While a positive ACP detection in a commercial grove is cause for serious concern, as of today, HLB has not been detected in any California commercial groves. Staff from the Department of Food and Agriculture is conducting surveys and collecting samples from the perimeter of commercial groves and host material within 250 meters. While treatment isn’t mandatory, growers within 250 meters will be notified of materials used within the designated area. An expansion of the HLB quarantine zone will not be established. Growers in Riverside County may contact the County Agricultural Commissioner's office or the CDA Pest Hotline at 800-491-1899 for additional information.

Effective July 31, 2020, bulk citrus fruit may be shipped directly to a packhouse or processor located within a Huanglongbing (HLB) quarantine area without meeting the Asian citrus psyllid (ACP)-free performance standard, provided that the shipment originates from the immediately adjacent, surrounding ACP bulk citrus regional quarantine zone. The fruit may not originate within an HLB quarantine area. All shipments of citrus fruit must continue to be fully safeguarded with a tarp or enclosed vehicle while in transit. The ACP Grower Information webpage has been updated to reflect this new shipping ability. Please refer to Table 2 on this web page to determine if you qualify to ship fruit without meeting the ACP-free performance standard. Please contact your local county agricultural commissioner's office for questions about this notice.

Climate Change
AB 1071 (Monique Limon, D) has passed the Senate Natural Resources Committee and will next be heard in Appropriations Committee. The bill would require the Department of Food and Agriculture to administer a new grant program, known as the Agricultural Climate Adaptation Tools Program. Under the program, $2 million in grant funding would be made available to groups that develop planning tools to help growers adapt to climate change. The Department would conduct pilot projects in the central valley, central coast, and desert regions of the state, and hold trainings for technical assistance providers on how to use the planning tools. Farm Bureau has no position on the bill.

Commodities
AB 2028 (Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, D) would require that any notice for a public meeting and all written materials provided to a state agency, board or commission be available online at least 48 hours before the meeting or the by the 1st business day after they’re provided to the members of the meeting. These materials would also have to be posted in a manner that is ADA compliant. While this may have value to farmers on regulatory issues, the state’s various commodity boards and commissions would also be subject to these requirements which would be incredibly expensive to enact. For these reasons, the Farm Bureau is opposed. The bill is set to be heard in the Senate Governmental Organization Committee on Friday, the 14th.

Pest Management
The California Department of Food and Agriculture has announced it has awarded funding for one project within its Proactive Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Solutions grant program. The research, which will be completed over three years, will develop research for biological controls for the Tuta absoluta (also known as the tomato leafminer, pinworm or South American moth), a pest to commercial tomato production. The project will also evaluate climate change impacts on new invasive pests with increased temperatures. Detailed information on this program is available on Department’s webpage.

Land Use
AB 345 (Al Muratsuchi, D) failed passage in Senate Natural Resources Committee this week. The bill, which Farm Bureau opposed, would have required the State to establish a 2,500 ft setback from oil and gas extraction facilities to sensitive receptor sites. The bill had over 350 public members and representatives to testify in support and opposition. The author was granted reconsideration, but given the extreme opposition, it is unlikely that any subsequent efforts will be successful.

Rural Crime
SB 903 (Shannon Grove, R) is a bill that corrects discrepancies from last year’s Farm Bureau supported bill on agricultural theft. SB 903 would provide a distribution schedule on how fines and penalties collected for agricultural thefts are distributed to the various Rural Crime Prevention Task Forces. Farm Bureau is in support and the bill will be heard in the Assembly Appropriations committee on Tuesday the 11th.

Taxation
AB 1253 , (Miquel Santiago-D) would have retroactively increase California income taxes. The legislation, retroactive to January 1, 2020, would impose an additional surcharge on income tax rates as follows:

- 1% on taxable income over $1 million but under $2 million;
- 3% on taxable income over $2 million but under $5 million;
- 3.5% on taxable income over $5 million.

Farm Bureau joined with a larger coalition of agricultural, businesses and taxpayer associations to oppose the legislation. AB 1253 was heard in the Senate Governance and Finance Committee on Monday for testimony only – no vote has yet been taken on the legislation.

Farm Bureau supported ACA 11, (Kevin Mullin-D) and SCA 2, (Cathleen Galgiani-D); nearly identical legislation that provides California farmers and ranchers with new, expanded property tax exemptions. ACA 11 replaced a ballot measure entitled “Changes Requirements for Transferring Property Tax Base to Replacement Property. Expands Business Property Reassessment. Initiative Constitutional Amendment,” which became eligible for the November 2020 General Election ballot. Under existing California law, older generations can transfer their principal residence and up to $1 million in other property to their lineal descendants without a reassessment, passing along the savings that have accrued under California’s Proposition 13 method for property taxation. Essentially, for a family farm, this means that property will be reassessed on all value above $1 million. Unfortunately, the ballot measure repeals the current $1 million tax exemption for other property, meaning that farms and other commercial and residential properties unrelated to a principal residence would be reassessed at fair-market value, per existing law. This provision is indeed problematic for multi-generation family farms as the death of a parent(s), or grandparent(s) would mean that the family farm would no longer benefit from $1 million property tax exemption on the transfer of the property and instead the entire farm would be reassessed at fair-market value.

As provided by ACA 11, however, farms will only be reassessed on all value above the current base year value plus $1 million. Any reassessment would only occur on the portion of valuation that exceeds the combined cap. Simply put, ACA 11 keeps the current $1 million property tax exemption for only family farms and allows for an additional credit for base year valuation, which depending on the length of ownership of a property can be a few thousand dollars or potentially tens of thousands of dollars in existing property tax savings. ACA 11 passed both houses of the Legislature and will appear as Proposition 19 on the November 2020 General Election ballot. While Farm Bureau was supportive of ACA 11 during the legislative process, the organization does not have an official position on Proposition 19 at this time.

Waste
Farm Bureau members will likely remember AB 2959 (Ian Calderon, D) a bill that would potentially remove source food byproducts for animal production from the definition of waste. As provided by ACA 11, however, farms will only be reassessed on all value above the current base year value plus $1 million. Any reassessment would only occur on the portion of valuation that exceeds the combined cap. Simply put, ACA 11 keeps the current $1 million property tax exemption for only family farms and allows for an additional credit for base year valuation, which depending on the length of ownership of a property can be a few thousand dollars or potentially tens of thousands of dollars in existing property tax savings. ACA 11 passed both houses of the Legislature and will appear as Proposition 19 on the November 2020 General Election ballot. While Farm Bureau was supportive of ACA 11 during the legislative process, the organization does not have an official position on Proposition 19 at this time.

See 'Legislative', Page 9
Local FFA Chapter Highlights
A Glance into FFA and the 2020-2021 School Year

By: Jenna Bates, Livingston FFA Reporter

Livingston FFA, along with every other chapter, will look very different this school year. With the coronavirus pandemic, the 2020-2021 school year is set to begin online in most places. Over the past few months, many FFA competitions, conventions, meetings, etc., have been canceled. Fairs were forced to cancel, leaving many FFA students with their animals and nowhere to go or nothing to do with them. Fortunately, many fairs had online auctions to support these students. Now, with Covid-19 continuing to spread, we still don’t know what the future of FFA will hold. Will chapter meetings and activities be held online this year? Will state competitions and events be virtual?

I spoke with a few of my FFA advisors on the matter at hand; what will FFA at Livingston High School look like? “We are working to make this semester as normal as possible for our students, even with all the unknown,” Grace Reeder, Livingston FFA Advisor. Chapter officers and advisors are working to create positive and fun opportunities for chapter members and the community. We will work to keep the members of our chapter engaged this school year through social media and online activities. Anthony Drumonde, Head Livingston FFA Advisor, has said, “I am imagining all chapter meetings, LDE practices, and CDE practices will have to be done via Zoom. Regardless of the situation, Livingston High School FFA will make a positive difference in the lives of our members by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success.”

Learning to do, Doing to learn, Earning to live, Living to Serve. FFA brings so many great opportunities to so many students. Even through these hard times, FFA members and advisors, everywhere, will continue to grow. We will continue to learn and continue to serve, as FFA leaders. This pandemic will not stop all the amazing FFA opportunities. It will not stop us from becoming better leaders. It will not stop us from learning about the great industry of agriculture. Breanna Holbert, 2017-2018 National FFA President and the first African American woman to lead the FFA Organization once said, “We are all here under one roof, all united under one mission - wearing the same jacket.” These words reminisce with each FFA member and chapter as we unite to overcome these difficult times. Livingston FFA is ready for another successful year. To learn more about the Livingston FFA chapter please visit our website, Livingstonffa.org.

Atwater FFA Member Earns National Scholarship

By: Atwater FFA

Colby Flatt, a recent graduate of Atwater High School, (Class of 2020), has recently been recognized as a scholarship recipient for the Mike Rowe’s WORKS Foundation scholarship. This scholarship is designed for students who are going to a vocational or trade school. This scholarship was established by Mike Rowe, in 2008. You may have heard of Mike Rowe, as he has traveled around the United States to find and experience the “dirtiest” jobs and even made a TV show about them, “Dirty Jobs.” In 2008, Mike Rowe launched this scholarship foundation as a platform to create more knowledge about skilled labor and jobs that are needed. “The Work Ethic Scholarship Program is about recognizing the people who understand the importance of personal responsibility, delayed gratification, a positive attitude, and, of course, work ethic. The hardworking men and women who keep the lights on, water running, and air flowing—the next generation of skilled workers who will work smart and hard.” - Mike Rowe.

Colby has been involved with the Atwater FFA program since his freshman year, in a variety of ways. Colby has immersed himself in all that agriculture education has to offer, from a variety of classes, but he found his passion in the welding and fabrication shop. Colby has been an instrumental part of the shop programs on campus, where he spent the majority of his time, even taking at least four shop classes his senior year. “Each year I have 1 student that stands out above all the rest, for the past two years its been the same student, Colby. Of all my past 200 plus students, he is the top 1%,” said Sam Meredith, Colby’s Welding and Fabrication instructor. Colby helps with all of the BBQ fundraisers, trains younger FFA members on how to use the BBQ, attends FFA meetings, and his senior year, he joined the Farm Power judging team, that was unfortunately cut short because of COVID-19; Colby would have been incredibly successful if the season had continued as planned. There is no job that Colby cannot do, and he was commonly referred to as the “11th Ag Teacher” by the department.

This year, over 1000 students applied for this scholarship, and Colby Flatt was one of the only 240 students selected. In order to earn this scholarship, Colby had to complete an application, respond to short answer questions, and complete a video submission, high lighting his work ethic. “I have had the privilege of knowing and working with Colby over the past four years, specifically with FFA events and in the dairy barn. You will not find a harder worker than Colby. I know that I can always count on him to get the job done.”

See 'Atwater FFA', Page 7
Golden Valley FFA Students Earn California’s Top Star Awards

For the first time in Golden Valley FFA history, 2 students received the top 2 State Star Project awards given out annually at California State FFA Leadership Conference in June.

Peter Bliss, a 2020 Golden Valley High School graduate was named the California State Star Farmer, the top award an FFA member in California can receive. The Star Farmer award is awarded to the student with the best SAE project overall.

Peter Bliss, along with his family, have a diversified farming operation in which they farm cotton, wheat, and almonds. Peter currently owns and operates 220 acres of cotton and wheat in which he takes great pride in. Peter oversees all aspects of his project including ground preparation, planting, irrigating, and harvesting.

In addition, Peter was named the California State Proficiency Winner in Fiber/Oil Production, was a member of the California State Champion Farm Power Team in 2019, and was a member of the Golden Valley Agriculture Leadership program.

With Peter’s Star Farmer Award announcement, he was awarded a $10,000 scholarship to help assist him in future educational and farming endeavors. Peter is the son of Michael and Jeannie Bliss. This was the second year in a row for a Golden Valley FFA student to earn the State’s top award as Josh Heupel was the 2019 winner.

Our second State Star Winner was 2019 Graduate, Irelyn Bese. Irelyn was recognized as the California State Star Winner in Agricultural Placement in which she takes on an integral role within the family diversified vegetable and fruit operation, El Hullana Farms. Irelyn is responsible for all marketing of the fruits and vegetables at multiple farmers markets in the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition to the marketing side of her project, she also assists daily with the planting and harvesting of the commodities.

Irelyn was an active member of the Golden Valley FFA program in which she served as a Chapter Officer for 2 years, was a member of the 2019 Golden Valley FFA Livestock judging team which was named the 4th High Team overall in the United States, and she was the 9th high individual overall. In addition, she was a 2018 California State FFA Proficiency Winner in the Diversified Crop Production area.

As the State Star Placement Winner, Irelyn earned a $10,000 scholarship. Irelyn will be a Sophomore at Modesto Junior College in which she is majoring in Crop Production with hopes of one day becoming a Pest Control Advisor. Irelyn is the daughter of Randy and Jennifer Bese.

To learn more about the Golden Valley FFA program and stay up to date with upcoming events, visit us at www.goldenvalleyffa.com or by visiting us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
Maria Elena Giampaoli
August 5, 1940 – July 10, 2020

Published in Merced Sun Star on July 15, 2020

Maria Elena Giampaoli passed away at her home surrounded by loved ones on Friday, July 10, 2020 in Le Grand. She was born August 5, 1940 in Merced, CA to her Italian immigrant parents, Carlo and Elena Bianchi. Maria attended Le Grand area schools and graduated Valedictorian of Le Grand High School in 1958. In 1960, she married Raymond Giampaoli and together they raised three children.

Maria's life was grounded in her love of family, her Italian heritage, a deep sense of community, her faith and a love of agriculture. She was the quintessential "Soccer Mom" supporting her children's multitude of activities. She was a Le Grand 4-H Club leader and taught Our Lady of Lourdes' youth religious classes for many years. In addition, she was a member of the Le Grand Community Garden Club and the Le Grand Municipal Advisory Council where she proudly served in a variety of offices. All this while remaining a supportive farmer's wife of her husband's professional pursuits and the growth of their LeGrand-based farming company, Live Oak Farms.

Beyond the borders of Le Grand, "Momma Maria's" nurturing disposition lead her to a lifespan of community service. She was active in California Women for Agriculture and the Merced County Farm Bureau and was awarded California State University, Fresno's Common Thread's "Women of Distinction" award for her agricultural stewardship. She proudly served on the Merced County Community Foundation and Hinds Hospice Boards and treasured the preservation of her Italian heritage by participating in Merced County's Italian Catholic Federation and its Italian American Women's Lodge.

And, amid all these, she remained an active and devoted parishioner of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Le Grand.

She is preceded in death by her parents, her Husband, Raymond, and her brother, Natalino. She is survived by her children Bob (Jeanne), Donna Vaughan (Scott) and Sandy Del Real (Steve), six grandchildren Dominic, Briana, Carlo (Carolina), Natalie, Ethan and Aidan as well as several nieces and nephews and other treasured family members and friends. Finally, Maria's family would like to extend its sincere thanks to the many compassionate caregivers who took care of Maria over the last 5 years. Maria will be laid to rest privately at Evergreen Memorial Park, Merced.

Donations may be made in Maria's memory to Merced Catholic Charities, 336 W. Main, Merced, CA 95340 or to Hinds Hospice of Merced, 410 W. Main St., #A, Merced, CA 95340-4822.

USDA Announces More Eligible Commodities for CFAP

Application Deadline Extended to Sept. 11, and Producers Who Have Approved Applications to Receive Final Payments.

By: The USDA

USDA announced today that additional commodities are covered by the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) in response to public comments and data. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is extending the deadline to apply for the program to September 11th, and producers with approved applications will receive their final payment. After reviewing over 1,700 responses, even more farmers and ranchers will have the opportunity for assistance to help keep operations afloat during these tough times.

Background:

USDA collected comments and supporting data for consideration of additional commodities through June 22, 2020. The following additional commodities are now eligible for CFAP:

- Specialty Crops - aloe leaves, bananas, batatas, bas choy, carambola (star fruit), cherimoya, chervil (french parsley), citron, curry leaves, daikon, dates, dill, donqua (winter melon), dragon fruit (red pitaya), endive, escarole, filberts, frisee, horseradish, kohlrabi, kumquats, leeks, mamey sapote, maple sap (for maple syrup), mesulin mix, microgreens, nectarines, parsley, persimmons, plantains, pomegranates, pummelos, pumpkins, rutabagas, shallots, tangelos, turnips/celeriac, turmeric, upland/winter cress, water cress, yautia/malanga, and yuca/cassava.

- Non-Specialty Crops and Livestock - liquid eggs, frozen eggs and all sheep. Only lambs and yearlings (sheep less than two years old) were previously eligible.

- Aquaculture - catfish, crawfish, largemouth bass and carp sold live as foodfish, hybrid striped bass, red drum, salmon, sturgeon, tilapia, trout, ornamental/tropical fish, and recreational sportfish.

- Nursery Crops and Flowers - nursery crops and cut flowers.

Other changes to CFAP include:

- Seven commodities – onions (green), pistachios, peppermint, spearmint, walnuts and watermelons – are now eligible for Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Stability (CARES) Act funding for sales losses.

Originally, these commodities were only eligible for payments on marketing adjustments.

- Correcting payment rates for onions (green), pistachios, peppermint, walnuts, and watermelons.

Additional details can be found in the Federal Register in the Notice of Funding Availability and Final Rule Correction and at www.farmers.gov/cfap.

Producers Who Have Applied:

To ensure availability of funding, producers with approved applications initially received 80 percent of their payments. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) will automatically issue the remaining 20 percent of the calculated payment to eligible producers. Going forward, producers who apply for CFAP will receive 100 percent of their total payment, not to exceed the payment limit, when their applications are approved.

Applying for CFAP:

Producers, especially those who have not worked with FSA previously,
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feed from restaurants, grocery stores, other retail establishments, and commercial establishments. It is unclear what constitutes a “commercial establishment,” but if inferred to mean any entity where commercial transactions take place, this would include traditional sources of byproducts like food processors and manufacturers. Farm Bureau is leading a large coalition in opposition citing that these byproducts are important feedstocks for California dairies and ranches and without it, environmental and economic consequences will be significant. Farm Bureau is also opposing the lack of specificity around what would constitute a “commercial establishment.” The bill, which is slated to be heard in Senate Environmental Quality Committee, did not make the agenda for the first hearing on the 11th but may be agendized for the 14th. Farm Bureau is encouraging the committee to not hear the item.

Water

The State Water Resources Control Board held Water Quality and Water Rights Fees Stakeholder meetings this week to give fee payers an overview of budget cost drivers for the 2020-21 Waste Discharge Permit Fund (WDPF) and Water Rights Fund. The WDPF houses funds for eight programs which include the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System, Storm Water, Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR, or General Orders), Land Disposal, 401 Certification, Confined Animal Facilities (CAF), the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP, or Ag Lands) and in recent years Cannabis. Cannabis continues to be kept structurally separate in the WDPF so that other programs are not subsidizing the Cannabis program. Additionally, the water boards are looking at cost reductions and efficiencies, including furloughs and a 5 percent redirection of staff to the Department of Public Health to assist with contact tracing for COVID-19, if the state, through federal support, provides funds to cover redirected staff cost. As previously reported the Water Board staff was planning to recommend no water quality or water right fee increases to the Board, however due to the signed state budget they brought three options to this week’s workshops to increase fees. The three options discussed in the WDPF are as follows for Waste Discharge Requirements, ILRP and CAF are:

A. WDR increase 5.6% in FY 20-21; 5.9% in FY 21-22; 7.3% in FY 22-23
B. WDR increase 1.4% in FY 20-21; 2.2% in FY 21-22; 3.5% in FY 22-23
C. WDR increase 8.5% in FY 20-21; 2.9% in FY 21-22; 7.3% in FY 22-23

The three options discussed in the Water Rights Fund are as follows:

A. No increase in FY 2020-21 and a 9.6% increase in the following two budget years.
B. 3.0% increase in FY 2020-21 and a 7.5% increase in the following two budget years.
C. 5.7% increase in FY 2020-21 and a 5.7% increase in the following two budget years.

Comments on these options are due due this Wednesday, August 12th. The Water Board is expected to adopt the 2020-21 fee schedule September 15th.

As previously reported the State Water Resources Control Board released the proposed General Waste Discharge Requirements for winery process water treatment systems. The Board adoption hearing is scheduled for November 17th, with written comments due earlier this week. Farm Bureau submitted written comments along with the Wine Institute. Water Board staff is proposing to hold a workshop to discuss fee schedules for the new order after it is adopted by the Board. Farm Bureau has been actively meeting with Water Board members and staff, expressing concerns and offering solutions throughout the five-year process.

The current draft of the proposed order is available online.

Wildfire – Defensible Space – Home Hardening

SB 1348, (Henry Stern-D) was recently amended to address numerous issues related to building codes and defensible space in fire hazard areas of California. Farm Bureau and the Forest Landowners of California are currently Oppose, Unless Amended on the legislation. We’re seeking amendments that include private property protections, safeguarding the privacy of collected data related to private property, and would provide necessary structure to a program that is designed to augment the defensible space inspection and education resources of CALFIRE. We have worked on eliminating language that could have established a new regulatory management program for all unimproved private lands, or parcels, and language that may have decertified the California Vegetation Treatment Program EIR. Farm Bureau continues to work with the author and respective staff on further modifications to SB 1348. We appreciate the collaboration on the legislation and do anticipate further amendments that may remove our opposition. SB 1348 passed the Assembly Natural Committee and awaits further action in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Editor’s Note: Air Resources section omitted.
Working through COVID-19

from the Farm Advisor
Scott Stoddard
UC Cooperative Extension, Merced County

Merced County Cooperative Extension has been impacted by COVID-19 just like everyone else, but while the world seems consumed with the daily update on how bad it is, or how terrible the U.S. is handling the situation, or what vitriolic Twitter comments are being thrown about from various celebrities, constructive things have been happening.

The Merced County Agriculture building, which includes the Agriculture Commissioner, has undergone significant renovations in the past year, including a new parking lot, new gutters, HVAC system upgrade, and a remodeled classroom. Cooperative Extension has also installed new front counter and floors in the lobby. We have retained our full county staff for the 2020/2021 fiscal year, which includes support for two student interns. While we still cannot have meetings or field days, the office is open during business hours for walk-ins and publication sales. I continue to make farm calls, or samples can be dropped off to send to the UC Davis pathology lab.

The fall Pest Management classes are scheduled to start again in mid-September. Depending on the current situation in the County at that time, the classes may be open to limited in-person attendance, but we are also planning on offering them via Zoom video conferencing as well. The goal is to offer 20 units of continuing education at very reasonable cost. Almost all of the regular Extension winter meetings have already been cancelled this year, and as a result, PCAs, QALs/QACs, and even growers will find it challenging to earn enough units this year to meet DPR minimums. We will post regular updates at our website: http://cemerced.ucanr.edu/index.cfm. Plan ahead and don’t wait until December to get your hours.

After losing both our almond farm advisor (Dave Doll) and agronomy advisor (Lynn Sosnoskie) last year to resignations, we are in the process of hiring a new agronomy farm advisor who will start this fall. Interviews took place in July at the Farm Bureau office, because the HVAC system at the agriculture complex was being replaced and the inside of our building was a cool 90 degrees Fahrenheit. I cannot thank Bre and Denelle enough for all their help and the use of the building during this time.

I have acquired two new pieces of cultivation equipment this year, a Steketee finger weeder and a Robovator automatic weeder for evaluation in both tomatoes and peppers. Both are designed to perform weeding within the plant row. The Steketee uses long flexible rubber “fingers” to unroot small weeds between plants, while the Robovator uses cameras to “see” weeds between plants, then removes them by quickly moving a sweep by hydraulic actuators. The Steketee costs less than $10,000, the Robovator more than $100,000. Both have been tested and used in Salinas on various crops such as lettuce, spinach, peppers, and broccoli for many years. In general, they do not eliminate hand hoeing, but they can reduce the time needed by 30 – 70% for a hoeing crew to walk a field.

I evaluated these systems on processing and fresh market tomatoes compared to a post-plant application of Matrix (rimsulfuron) herbicide. The result: the Steketee reduced hand hoeing time by about 90%, slightly better than two applications of Matrix. The Robovator reduced time by about 40% but caused unacceptable levels of crop injury. In peppers, however, the Robovator did extremely well, with less than 2% crop damage and excellent weed control.

These results are very encouraging, especially considering the few herbicides available to vegetable crops and the lack of new materials being developed. I plan to conduct more weed control trials next season with these pieces of equipment in tomatoes, peppers, melons, and sweetpotatoes.

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CFAP
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are recommended to call 877-508-8364 to begin the application process. An FSA staff member can help producers start their application during the phone call.

On farmers.gov/cfap, producers can:
- Download the AD-3114 application form and manually complete the form to submit to their local USDA Service Center by mail, electronically or by hand delivery to their local office or office drop box.
- Complete the application form using the CFAP Application Generator and Payment Calculator. This Excel workbook allows customers to input information specific to their operation to determine estimated payments and populate the application form, which can be printed, then signed and submitted to their local USDA Service Center.
- If producers have login credentials known as eAuthentication, they can use the online CFAP Application Portal to certify eligible commodities online, digitally sign applications and submit directly to the local USDA Service Center. All other eligibility forms, such as those related to adjusted gross income and payment information, can be downloaded from farmers.gov/cfap. For existing FSA customers, these documents are likely already on file.
- All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including some that are open to visitors to conduct business in person by appointment only. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency should call ahead and schedule an appointment. Service Centers that are open for appointments will pre-screen visitors based on health concerns or recent travel, and visitors must adhere to social distancing guidelines. Visitors are also required to wear a face covering during their appointment. Our program delivery staff will be in the office, and they will be working with our producers in the office, by phone and using online tools. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Online update: Author pulls bill that could have cut use of recycled food waste for livestock feed

By: Kevin Hecteman, AgAlert

A bill that threatened livestock and dairy producers' access to recycled and upcycled food waste for animal feed has been shelved, in the face of opposition from the California Farm Bureau Federation and others in the agricultural community.

Assembly Bill 2959, from Assemblyman Ian Calderon, D-Whittier, cleared the Assembly in June and was to have been heard this week in the Senate Environmental Quality Committee before being pulled Tuesday.

"We are pleased to see that restrictions on livestock feed, through AB 2959, will no longer be pursued this year," said Taylor Roschen, a CFBF policy advocate. "As the state works toward managing its organic waste, our farms, dairies and ranches provide an invaluable service. We look forward to continuing to highlight that work."

Under the bill, livestock producers would no longer have been able to receive food byproducts from retail and commercial establishments, including grocers, restaurants and others, if the local jurisdiction has a contract with a franchise waste hauler. These byproducts include fruit and vegetable rinds, tomato and grape pomace, nut hulls, milk byproducts and bakery waste, Roschen said.

CFBF led a coalition of agricultural, livestock and food-processing organizations that opposed the bill. Restaurant and grocery coalitions also worked against it, Roschen said.

The bill did not sit well with Frank Konyn of Escondido, who operates one of two remaining dairies in San Diego County. He also runs a hauling business, picking up byproducts from breweries, bakeries, and fruit and vegetable juice makers. He uses much of the feed at his own operation and sends the rest to another local dairy farmer.

"If there wasn't operations like myself, that is material that would be ending up in the landfill," Konyn said.

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Feed

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"It all gets upcycled... It gets fed to cows. The cows produce milk. That milk gets shipped out into various dairy products—butter, cheese, ice cream, yogurt, chocolate milk, etc. That's how that waste product gets transformed back into human, edible food."

Such waste that ends up in the dump poses its own environmental hazards, said Frank Mitloehner, a professor and air-quality specialist at the University of California, Davis.

"Every time you put organic waste in a landfill, it will be stored under anaerobic conditions," which means no oxygen, Mitloehner said. "That means it will produce methane."

Landfills, he added, are among the top three methane producers in the country.

"By taking this material and feeding it to animals directly, we make use of a very unique digestive tract these animals have," Mitloehner said, noting that livestock can eat and digest feed humans can't, "and make it into highly valuable and nutritious animal source food."

If the bill would have cut off access to byproducts, replacement feed would have to be grown in the state, using resources that could be put to other uses, or brought in from out of state, Roschen said.

In Konyn's case, transportation would be the main issue. Trainloads of corn go to the Central Valley and are largely distributed regionally, he said. His corn, however, would then have to be trucked nearly 300 miles from Goshen.

He figures corn would be about $22 per ton more expensive for him than for his Central Valley peers. Picking up byproducts in his neighborhood has been a lifeline for him, he said.

"By creating this niche market over here of picking up these animal feeds, that's how I was able to find a way to reinvent myself and survive down here," Konyn said.

The measure could have posed particular problems for organic dairy farmers, Roschen said.

"Organic dairies have another stressor, in that they have to source organic byproduct for their feed," she said. "They really depend on having those local connections with organic bakery waste, or almonds that are grown organically."

Simply having the trash haulers bring byproducts to the farm wouldn't work, Konyn said. To the trash hauler, he said, "animal feed is animal feed."

But there's a balancing act. Bakery products act essentially as corn substitutes, he said, whereas grain is higher in moisture but still high in protein. These would be fed to a skinny cow, whereas vegetable and fruit waste—mostly fibrous, with no protein—would go to a fatter cow.

"I can't mix all that stuff together," he said. "Each of those has different nutritional properties, and they're going to go to different segments of animals."

Roschen said there's also a food-safety issue with trash haulers carrying food waste.

"When a hauler goes to pick up the waste, they're not separating the byproducts that would be available for animal feed from all other organic waste materials that they're picking up. So it's all going in the same truck"—and farmers wouldn't accept that product, she said.

"It's not safe. It's not healthy. It needs to be separated by the generator of the byproduct in the first place. That's why we have haulers who are unique and distinct for the agricultural community," Roschen said.

Mitloehner said a conservative estimate is that 2.5 million tons of food waste from grocery stores and restaurants is hauled away by nonfranchise haulers to become animal feed.

"What we don't want happening is that this amount of organic waste is going to landfills, or goes into a system where it needs to be composted or digested with facilities that have not yet been built," he said. "In my opinion, if you have a system that works, why change it?"
Groundwater Sustainability Moves from Planning to Implementation

By: Lori Pottinger, PPIC

The recent completion of groundwater sustainability plans for California’s most over-pumped basins was a major step toward bringing basins into long-term balance, as mandated by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). As these plans move through the state approval process, the next stage is implementation. We talked to Trevor Joseph—the first SGMA employee at the Department of Water Resources (DWR), and now a member of a groundwater sustainability agency in the Sacramento Valley—about next steps and possible pitfalls.

PPIC: You’ve been involved with SGMA since its inception. What has surprised you the most about how it has unfolded?

TREVOR JOSEPH: I’m pleasantly surprised that SGMA has gone relatively well to date. To be honest, I didn’t think that groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) would do so well at establishing governance structures and preparing initial plans. And while these plans aren’t perfect, essentially all the GSAs in critically overdrafted basins met their deadlines. That said, the challenging work of implementing plans remains. I’m really interested in what happens over the next couple of years, as DWR reviews the plans and implementation gets underway. Much will depend on how DWR approaches its review of the plans, how it supports agencies that will need to make modifications to their plans, and how the various parties react to DWR’s review.

PPIC: Where do we go from here on SGMA implementation?

TJ: This is a critical time, and local agencies can’t let up on the gas pedal. Over the next few years we’ll learn how well we did in meeting the preparatory requirements—for instance, did we develop governance structures that are strong enough to address critical issues. But SGMA is not a panacea, and local agencies simply can’t address all of the state’s big water issues with this act. For example, water quality is incorporated into SGMA, but GSAs actually have limited ability to address this issue. A multitude of other state and local programs and laws address water quality and are better vehicles for fixing groundwater quality problems.

PPIC: Groundwater planning is still underway in the Sacramento Valley. How does it differ from planning in the San Joaquin Valley?

TJ: There is an incredible amount of variability among the state’s more than 500 basins, which is why SGMA recognizes that sustainability must be defined at the local level. For example, portions of the San Joaquin Valley continue to have relatively high rates of land sinking, or subsidence, which we really don’t have in our region. Many basins in the Sacramento Valley have had very stable groundwater levels for the past 30 years. One important focus of plans in this region will be balancing the effects of groundwater pumping on streams to protect the environment while also allowing the continued use of groundwater.

PPIC: See 'Groundwater' Page 20
for numbers and began keeping books for her father and uncle at the young age of nine. After graduating from Los Banos High, she attended Fresno City College. She returned to the Delta as the head bookkeeper until her retirement in her 60’s. Although they had made eyes at each other long before, Virginia was 15 years old when she began dating Aldo Sansoni, the son of close family friends from Merced. Their love blossomed during their high school years while performing in their respective high school bands in the May Day Parade. Virginia was a majorette and the first female drum major for Los Banos High where she nimbly twirled a baton between her fingers and marched in her white boots leading the band. In the following years, she wrote Aldo enough letters to fill a trunk back and forth from around the world as he completed his military service, and they were finally married in 1955.

Through her 65-year marriage, Virginia was the epitome of a model wife exhibiting style, moxie, grace and fiery boldness as she and Aldo built their family and multiple businesses. She was a brilliant entertainer and incomparable event planner and hostess, deftly creating meals and large gatherings. Her fried chicken and pasta sauce are legendary. She took from her mother Louisa was from Mexico. Her sprawling gardens were full of beauty and creating beautiful things. Virginia delighted in cooking for and visiting with them and was filled with a deep sorrow when she realized that she would not return to the country again.

While Virginia lived what seemed like a fairytale life, she was the daughter of immigrants. Her influential uncle, Pasquale Bisignani, and father, John, were from Italy and her mother Louisa was from Mexico. She was fiercely proud of her heritage and even more so of her family’s humble beginning and what they had accomplished in building the Delta.

She and Aldo never thought what they inherited, or the people who worked for them and helped them continue their legacy for granted. She was adamant that she would never ask anyone to do anything that she was not willing to do herself. Virginia had great respect for her employees who became her family and worked side-by-side with them as long as her health allowed.

Our family extends our unending gratitude to Pat Gallicchio and Linda Sanchez, who have repeatedly shown their infinite devotion and loyalty for 46 years. Much appreciation to Kim Martinez who since joining the Delta family has become a dear friend and shown great care and thoughtfulness over the past two years. Luz Armenta, who was more of a companion than employee has helped care for Virginia and her home for the past 15 years. Our heartfelt thanks to Moffaie Queales, whose outstanding care offered us peace of mind in keeping our promise to allow Virginia to live out her life at home on the Delta. Finally, our thanks to the doctors, nurses and staff at Emanuel Medical Center where she completed her final week of life.

Virginia is preceded in death by her parents, John and Louisa Bisignani, her uncle, Pasquale Bisignani, and brother-in-law, Fred Petroni. She is survived by her adoring husband, Aldo, sister, Mary Petroni, brother, Frank Armenta, her three daughters Claudia, Lisa and Sandra, son-in-law, Bruce Ekmanian, grandchildren Nina and Michael Ferretti, and Nisa and Matthew Dufur who are currently expecting Virginia's first great-grandchild as well as many nieces, nephews and great-nieces and nephews.

A private family service will be held with a celebration of life taking place at a later date, when we can all join in fellowship to honor the amazing woman that Virginia was and will always be. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to EMC Health Foundation, 2881 Geer Rd. Ste. A, Turlock, CA.

Message from
Tony Toso
1st Vice President, California Cattlemen's Association
California Cattlemen Publication

Those of you that know me, know that I love a great sports story. I am especially drawn to those that show successful results when wills are tested under pressure to perform in tough situations. Two of my favorite stories are about two quarterbacks that influenced me in my younger years.

The first is about Ken Stabler. “Snake”, as they called him played quarterback for the Oakland Raiders in the 1970’s. Stabler and his head coach with the Raiders, John Madden, were opposites when it came to being calm under pressure. In reading some of Madden’s comments about Stabler when he passed back in 2015, Madden spoke of the Raiders first super bowl victory over the Minnesota Vikings in 1977. “In the Super Bowl against Minnesota, the first couple of drives we got stopped and had to kick field goals. I was all upset about not being able to finish and score. Kenny put his hand on my shoulder and said, ’don’t worry about that, John, there's plenty more where that came from.’ I thought, when he said that, he's right. That's what he gave to the team. He would throw a
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Unwired Broadband ................. (559) 336-4157
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bad pass and it didn't bother him. He would forget it and go on to the next play. He didn't let things affect him. He was always positive”.

The second, is about Joe Montana to offensive tackle Harris Barton in Super Bowl XXIII in 1989. With less than a minute to go, they are behind 16-13 against the Cincinnati Bengals. During their 92-yard drive to secure a fourth Super Bowl victory, the team is standing in the huddle during a TV timeout, and Montana, in his typical loose and unfazed fashion points out Candy to an unnerved Barton. His calm settles Barton and the rest of the Forty-Niner offense and the rest is super bowl history.

Great stories, but what does this have to do with the cattle business? Well, here is how I see it having something to do with the cattle business. These two guys, Montana and Stabler, kept their cool amid intense pressure and overcame tough odds to win when it mattered the most. How did they do it? Well there is the intense pressure and overcame tough and Stabler, kept their cool amid

The producer segment of the beef industry has been through some tough times in the last 12 months. Black Swan events like the Tyson fire in Kansas and the whole COVID-19 thing has been a nightmare for fellow producers. There are many issues related to the dilemmas we have experienced, but none more than the packer/producer feud. It’s Hatfield’s and McCoy’s kinda stuff. For more than a hundred years now, the tenuous relationship cattle producers have had with the packing and retail sectors of the beef business have been well documented and everyone has their opinion. If you do your homework, you will find many reasons why cattle producers distrust the packing segment and many times the distrust is well deserved.

The COVID crisis has only exacerbated these frustrations, and patience is wearing thin. Producers want and deserve answers, and you should know that CCA has been working hard to support investigations into the packing segment and to promote and support market based solutions as to how we price live cattle which ultimately finds its way back to our ranches. I don’t blame anyone for being frustrated, but today my message is one of calm, patience, and perseverance. I did not say to not have a sense of urgency. What I am saying, is clear headed preparation is our friend. We have new technology and opportunities now to analyze how the packing segment works. We should be well researched and have a vision or goal of what success looks like. I am concerned with looking to government mandates for what should be market-based solutions. I am not convinced that regulatory intervention to mandate how we find price discovery is a good idea in the long term. Government’s role should be more of a referee as opposed to the notion that “they” can somehow legislate prosperity. We have a Packers and Stockyard’s Act full of regulation based upon the original sins of collusion and anti-trust. I would argue that the time may well be right to pursue holding the USDA accountable for enforcement of existing P&S law.

Furthermore, we should be reviewing price reporting and taking a hard look at confidentiality loopholes to reporting in conjunction with finding ways to set a negotiable/reportable base price on all fed cattle, with the ability to add quality incentives to pricing so we don’t compromise thirty years of genetic progress producing value added, higher quality beef. It’s hard enough to beat price fixing, and we should be very careful about possibly creating an even deeper "commodity" pricing environment with mandates that could hurt the very producers that we are trying to help, by limiting their marketing and negotiating options.

My point is, when bad times come and go, as they always do, I believe it is better to be prepared by doing our homework and understanding our circumstances, rather than letting our emotions guide our policy decisions that may come back to haunt us in the future. I’m not saying we should never push for added regulation, but it should be developed judiciously and with clear thought and less emotion. When times got tough, Stabler and Montana won super bowls keeping their poise and doing their opposition research. We should think long and hard about that as we work our way through these trying times.

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Mariposa County Business Member Directory

Businesses Supporting the Farm Bureau

To be included in the directory, join Mariposa County Farm Bureau as a business member by calling 742-5875.

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Email Denelle at dflake@mercedfarmbureau.org if interested
Groundwater
continued from page 14

...economies and livelihoods?
I believe success also depends on continued support for the key premise of SGMA: that groundwater is best managed at the local level. It may not be possible in all cases—the state may need to step up in some instances, hopefully for a limited time. The state has already done a tremendous amount of really great work aiding GSAs with technical, planning, and financial assistance programs. But now that initial plans are done, additional planning assistance at the regional level is needed to help GSAs coordinate on things like water available for recharge and shared infrastructure needs.

SGMA gives local agencies 20 years to attain sustainability—and while that sounds like a long time, a lot of progress has to be made quickly, and that could be a challenge. The types of storage and recharge projects that will be needed can take many years to establish. The SGMA timeline may be inadequate for that. I’m hoping that GSAs and the state can come together in new ways to develop regional solutions, such as developing additional groundwater recharge, so the SGMA process doesn’t end up focusing solely on demand reduction.

Director
continued from page 2

...when sick. Similarly, workers’ compensation access helps ensure that front-line workers can quarantine and stay home from work when ill;” “...a new Employer Playbook released today will guide them on how to provide a clean environment for workers and customers to reduce risk;” and “...expedited enforcement authority and advanced reporting of health and safety hazards at work will improve enforcement outcomes. Requiring employers to report outbreaks to their local health departments will help track county transmission. Governor Newsom will work with the Legislature to establish this authority.”

The above information can be found at www.fels.net and is a wonderful resource. I would encourage you to reach out to them if you have questions involving employees as they are up to date and have a team that can get into the weeds with you on the various issues.

Due to the increase in COVID-19 numbers, the county has requested that Central Valley Opportunity Center (CVOC) do farmworker outreach in the coming weeks to better educate our communities. In addition, the county has also had meetings with Governor Newsom’s strike team that was in Imperial County a number of weeks ago. They also visited Fresno County the week prior to us. I do not know the discussions that were had, however I do know it was focused in bringing down our numbers as we are still on the list for high COVID-19 cases. As you ramp up for harvest, I would encourage you to ensure your documentation for trainings are up to date as well as having all necessary protective equipment on hand in case on-farm visits from regulatory agencies begin to pick up again.

As always, please reach out at your convenience and we wish you all a great harvest!