

# Riverside County AGRICULTURE

The official publication of Riverside County Farm Bureau, Inc.  
A private, nonprofit organization serving farmers throughout Riverside County since 1917

Our 77th Year of Publication: Volume LXXVII, Number 5, May 2023.



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**Welcome New Members**

**We would like to "Thank You" for becoming part of the Farm Bureau Family.**

**LEGISLATIVE SPOTLIGHT**

**Agriculture Employment Policy**

Senate and Assembly Budget Committees approved SB-113 /AB-113 , companion budget trailer bills that implement the September 2022 deal between the California Labor Federation, United Farm Workers, and Governor Newsom that led the governor to reverse his prior opposition to AB-2183 (Stone) and sign that bill. SB/AB 113 eliminates the "labor peace" provisions in the original version of AB 2183, leaving card-check as the means for qualifying labor unions seeking to represent an agricultural employer's employees. The trailer bills are expected to be consolidated and sent to the governor for his approval without any consideration by the legislature's policy committees. Farm Bureau opposes because the bills do not restore farm employee's former rights to an Ag Labor Relations Board-supervised secret ballot election, which serves to protect those employees from undue intimidation and coercion.

**Animal Health and Welfare**

The United States Supreme Court upheld an animal-welfare law approved by California voters, ruling that the state's restrictions on the sale of pork that is produced by the cruel confinement of breeding pigs does not violate the Constitution. In 2018, California voters approved Proposition 12, which prohibited the sale of eggs or meat that originates from the extreme confinement of egg-laying hens, breeding pigs or calves raised for veal. The law was due to take effect last year, but The National Pork Producers Council and American Farm Bureau went to court to challenge the provisions affecting their industry. Justice Neil Gorsuch, writing for the court, said the constitution leaves it to the states and their voters to decide on the products that will be sold there. He said these questions should not be decided by a federal court. CA Farm Bureau has been concerned about the effects of this law and submitted comments to the Department of Food and Agriculture during the rulemaking process. Our comments focused on the consolidation of food sources resulting from small farms being forced out of businesses due to increased husbandry costs. These costs will ultimately be borne by the farmer and the consumer; more than likely those in disadvantaged communities who already have limited access to fresh nutritious food. Farm Bureau supports food equity throughout this state and believes every Californian should have access to healthy food sources. Farm Bureau continues to be concerned that Proposition 12 will create barriers and ultimately limit access to these sources.

**Taxes and Fees**

SB-264 , authored by Senator Roger Niello (R-Fair Oaks) and supported by the California Farm Bureau passed from the Senate Committee on Governance and Finance with bipartisan support and without a no vote. The bill is recommended to be placed on the Senate Appropriations Committee Consent Calendar. SB 264 extends the sunset for the Disaster Loss Tax Deduction from January 1, 2024 to January 1, 2029. The Disaster Loss Tax Deduction provides for automatic disaster loss relief for any disaster occurring in any city or county in California that is proclaimed by the Governor to be in a state of emergency.

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# Prevent hay bale fires with year-round vigilance and action

*The following information is provided by Nationwide®, the #1 farm and ranch insurer in the U.S. (1)*

Hundreds of barn fires happen every year in the U.S. And in many of them, hay bales are the fuel source for what's almost always a major property loss that also can endanger livestock and farm workers.

Hay bale fires can happen from the day the bales are made until they're used, regardless of the forage type or quality. In most cases, wet hay is actually more likely to catch fire or spontaneously combust than dry hay. Hay fires are a unique, costly hazard that calls for year-round attention, according to Nationwide Risk Management Consultant, agronomist and Iowa farmer Derek Hommer.

"Hay bale fires are just one type that contributes to fire being the leading cause of farm claims and losses," Hommer said. "That's why it's so important pay close attention to nearby heat sources, hay moisture and bale quality. They all contribute to how hay catches fires and potential spontaneous combustion."

## Why does wet hay catch on fire?

When harvested at a higher moisture level, a forage crop sometimes stays damp and respire well after baling. That continued respiration in the presence of oxygen after it's baled creates conditions that can cause bales to spontaneously combust. Wet hay that continues to respire can generate heat and eventually spontaneously combust.

After hay is baled and stored at higher moisture levels, the fire risk from spontaneous combustion is greatest in the first two to six weeks. And that risk continues if hay bales are stored where moisture can linger, like a barn with a leaky roof or high-humidity area.

Hay placed in storage should have a moisture content under 25%, according to a report from the Pennsylvania State University Agriculture and Biological Engineering Department. Higher levels of moisture require an oxygen limiting storage system. The heat generated by the crop plus the presence of oxygen increases the risk of a fire.

## Key times to think about hay bale fire prevention

Hommer recommends the following best practices throughout the growing season to minimize hay bale fire risk, especially from spontaneous combustion once bales are stored:

- **Harvesting.** Harvest forage within the optimal moisture range and allow adequate drying time in the field before baling.
- **Conditioning.** Mower conditioners, tedders and rakes can speed hay drying but can also harm leaf retention and crop quality.
- **Baling.** Bale hay up to 20% moisture to reduce the potential for hay bales spontaneously combusting or spoiling.
- **Storing.** Since moisture contributes to bale heating and fires, store hay under a roof to keep it as dry as possible. Hay probes and sensors like in the HAYTECH platform helps monitor temperatures in stored hay that can help prevent hay fires or spontaneously combusting bales.



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[1] \*A.M. Best Market Share Report 2021.

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## Farm Bureau needs to hear from you!

California Farm Bureau has released a new survey for California agricultural employers. The survey is intended to get employer feedback on their experience with hiring enough employees to operate their businesses. To the degree they were not able to do that, respondents will be asked what they did to address that problem; increase wages and benefits, automate some tasks or turn to labor-saving technologies, switch to less labor-intensive commodities, turn to the H-2A program, or simply do without.

Survey responses are completely anonymous, but your experience is key to Farm Bureau's efforts to advocate for solutions for California farmers and ranchers. You can find more information about the survey at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/farmlaborsurvey2023](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/farmlaborsurvey2023). Please take the survey today!

# Bad Employment Bills Moving in the CA Legislature:

Both houses of the California Legislature are doing what they usually do -- working on bills that will increase burdens and create new problems for California Ag employers:

- **SB 365 (Scott Wiener)** will forbid a district court judge from staying a civil proceeding if either party appeals the finding as to whether the dispute is subject to arbitration. Staying the underlying litigation while the arbitration applicability decision is pending has been common practice, eliminating the need to litigate a dispute that will likely be found subject to arbitration. Several recent court decisions have upheld federal preemption under the Federal Arbitration Act of attempts by the Legislature to restrict arbitration.
- **SB-399 (Aisha Wahab)** prohibits employers from conducting employee meetings in the context of a unionization campaign to explain the employer's opposition to unionization. Farm Bureau opposes because SB 399 is a clear-cut violation of an employer's First Amendment right to free speech, and will curb employer's right to fully inform employees about unionization activities.
- **SB-497 (Lola Smallwood-Cuevas)**, which creates a rebuttable presumption that any adverse personnel action is retaliatory if occurs within 90 days of the occurrence of activities protected from retaliation under the Labor Code, including reporting a violation of the Labor Code and cooperating with investigations related to violations of the Labor Code. As courts already consider proximity in time between protected activities and adverse personnel actions, SB 497 is redundant and further stacks the deck against employers' defense against accusations of retaliation.
- **SB 553 (Dave Cortese)** writes into the Labor Code and imposes on all California employers the expansive and detailed requirements of Cal/OSHA's healthcare workplace violence regulation, promulgated by the agency in 2017 in response to incidents of violence by patients against healthcare providers in mental institutions. SB 553 will disrupt an ongoing regulatory process in which the agency is seeking to craft a workplace violence regulation more suited to general industry, where employers' physical sites and workforce are much different from healthcare environments.
- **SB 616 (Lena Gonzalez)** will increase the paid sick leave mandate first established by AB 1522 (L. Gonzalez) in 2013 from three days or 24 hours to 7 days 56 hours. No provision is made in SB 616 to allow employer to manage misuse of paid sick leave. The bill was referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee.
- **SB 809 (Lola Smallwood-Cuevas)** will hamstring employers' efforts to protect their employees and customers by avoiding hiring violent felons.
- **AB-524 (Buffy Wicks)** adding "family caregiver status" to the list of protected classes covered by the Fair Employment and Housing Act. "Family member" is not limited to actual family members, but includes any person the employee considers to be like family, vastly broadening the circumstances under which an employee can invoke family leave rights under FEHA. This will expand the circumstances under which employers will experience FEHA-related litigation, which is already extensive.
- **AB-594 (Brian Maienschein)** allowing local prosecutors like district attorneys and city attorneys to enforce the Labor Code, leading to inconsistent enforcement. AB 594 does not protect employers from double recovery under the Labor Code and the Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA).

FELS parent organization, California Farm Bureau is opposing all these bills, and will be working to mobilize grass roots opposition from farm employers in the coming weeks. If you're not a member of Farm Bureau's Farm Team grassroots network, you should be, go to [cbbf.com/ag-advocacy/farm-team](http://cbbf.com/ag-advocacy/farm-team).

## ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS PETITION CA SUPREME COURT TO REVIEW AG's WINS ON THE EAST SAN JOAQUIN WDRs LITIGATION

On March 17, 2023, the Third District Court of Appeal issued an important decision regarding water quality regulations for irrigated lands in the Central Valley. The decision rejected all claims brought in the three cases: *Protectores Del Agua Subterranea v. State Water Board*, *Environmental Law Foundation v. State Water Board*, and *Monterey Coastkeeper, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, et al., v. Central Valley Regional Board and State Water Board*. The environmental groups originally filed three separate lawsuits in 2018 challenging the State Water Board's adoption of the revised East San Joaquin Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs). The revised East San Joaquin Waste Discharge Requirements contain precedential requirements impacting all irrigated lands programs in the state. CAFB and other agricultural groups intervened in the three cases to oppose the challenges raised by the various environmental and environmental justice groups.

On April 26, 2023, two of the three groups, Environmental Law Foundation and Monterey Coastkeeper, filed petitions for review with the CA Supreme Court, asking the court to review and reverse the Court of Appeal's decisions. CAFB and other agricultural groups filed briefs on May 16, 2023 asking the court to deny the petitions.

# Farm Bureau applauds state Senate passage of SB 505

The California Farm Bureau is applauding the state Senate for its passage of Senate Bill 505, which was approved with resounding, bipartisan support and now moves to the state Assembly.

Senate Bill 505 expands the insurance “clearinghouse” program of the California FAIR Plan, the state’s insurer of last resort, to allow commercial insurance policies under the FAIR Plan to move back to the admitted commercial market. California Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara is a co-sponsor of SB 505, along with the California Farm Bureau.

The Farm Bureau previously worked with Commissioner Lara and Sen. Susan Rubio, D-Baldwin Park, to pass SB 11 in 2021. That bill allowed farmers and ranchers who lost or were denied coverage in the competitive insurance market after devastating wildfires to obtain alternative coverage through the California FAIR Plan.

SB 505, also by Sen. Rubio, would provide opportunities for agricultural producers to move back to the competitive market, with affordable commercial policies protecting farming and ranching operations.

“California’s farmers and ranchers need insurance options to safeguard their ability to continue producing the food that America needs,” said California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson. “Senate Bill 505 provides agricultural producers who turned to the California FAIR plan the ability to return to the competitive insurance market to protect farming and ranching operations. SB 505 is widely supported by insurers, brokers and agents. We applaud Sen. Rubio for her leadership on this issue, and we encourage the state Assembly to pass this important legislation so that it may be signed into law to provide affordable coverage options for California’s vital food producers.”

“California businesses do best when they have more choices for insurance coverage,” said Commissioner Lara. “While the California FAIR Plan is an important safety net when businesses cannot find any other insurance, giving them more options must be our top priority. I am proud to sponsor Senator Rubio’s important pro-consumer legislation creating a clearinghouse program for businesses to more quickly exit the FAIR Plan and get back into the competitive insurance market, something we already have for homeowners.”

*The California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of nearly 29,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of 5.3 million Farm Bureau members.*



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# Farm Bureau Foundation Fellows Launch Free Digital Skills and Ag Literacy Lessons



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The 2023 Farm Bureau Foundation Fellows have launched four free Applied Digital Skills lessons dedicated to helping students learn about food, fuel and fiber. The lessons were developed with support from Grow with Google to make digital skills and agricultural literacy more accessible to students across the country, with a focus on rural classrooms.

The lessons are part of the Agriculture and Rural Communities Collection, which is available for free to educators across the U.S. Each of the lessons focuses on a different theme: careers, celebrating local food events, pollinators and regenerative agriculture.

The lessons will give students a strong foundation in digital skills as they learn about these important topics and gain a better understanding of how their food is safely and sustainably grown.

“Our Foundation Fellows have done an outstanding job crafting these unique and engaging lessons,” said Daniel Meloy, executive director of the Foundation for Agriculture. “Whether you’re a teacher in a rural, urban or suburban classroom, these lessons can be used to teach a broad variety of technical skills while fostering understanding of agriculture.”

The lessons were developed over the course of an eight-month fellowship. As part of the program, each Fellow will receive a stipend and Chromebooks for their classroom. The first two lessons became available on National Ag Day, March 21.

For more information on the Foundation Fellows program and to learn more about the four Fellows, visit the Foundation webpage at <https://www.agfoundation.org/projects/fellowship>.

## Why be A Farm Bureau Member?

### Because Numbers do Matter

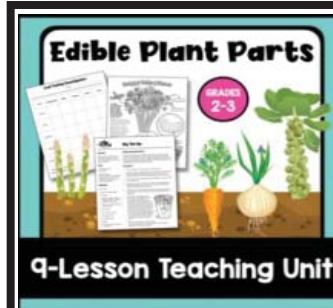
*Jamie Johansson, President of California Farm Bureau*

The concept of unity is often described as a group who thinks the same, acts the same, is the same. Unity, by definition, is one whole, but the whole is made of a variety of separate pieces or groups, each with their own unique circumstances, ideas and perspectives. At its strongest, unity is the result of individuals merged.

Farm Bureau is a model in this approach of solution-based unification of individuals. By our structure, individuals come together to form County Farm Bureaus, and the County Farm Bureaus join to form the California Farm Bureau. A step further, the state Farm Bureaus become the American Farm Bureau Federation. As we come together, we gain strength based on the numbers we represent. At the local level a County Farm Bureau represents a total membership in the hundreds, but as we unify under the umbrella of CAFB, that number swells to 29,000 statewide. When we gather with Farm Bureaus across the nation, we bring over 2,800 County Farm Bureaus to form a collective voice of over 5.8 million Farm Bureau members strong.

As leaders in Farm Bureau, we know these numbers matter, because these numbers are our strength. When we speak on issues on behalf of Farm Bureau, we speak on behalf of you all and through us, you lend your voice to the solutions-based conversations that must take place. This strength of representation allows us to build relationships with legislators, foster connections with agencies and be the first call when those same offices need to know what agriculture thinks or needs as a collective voice.

At all levels of government and in the media, Farm Bureau staff and leaders are diligently working to provide concrete solutions for a very diverse state with a diverse agriculture community. When we come together across geographic and commodity lines, we position ourselves to accomplish what no other group can, and we provide perspective and solutions through a unified voice for our industry. That’s strength in numbers and that’s the peace of mind in knowing that while you fight your individual battle to keep farming and ranching, other farmers and ranchers are fighting alongside you.



Spring is finally here, and it's time to get your hands dirty in the garden!

What's better than learning about the six basic plant parts—roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruits, and seeds—in a hands-on way?

This free resource includes engaging activities that explore the functions of each plant part, the nutritional benefits of fruits and vegetables, and the importance of supporting California agriculture. Students can take ownership of their garden and observe the growth of their plants throughout the unit.

The unit is a fun and exciting way to promote healthy eating habits and inspire the next generation of farmers and gardeners.

Download the resource at <https://cdn.agclassroom.org/ca/resources/lesson/edibleplant.pdf>

Check out other resource materials that are free or can be ordered from the on-line store at <https://learnaboutag.org>, click on Request Resources.



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## In-person Food Safety Training Is Back!

### Produce Safety Training

Who should attend: Produce growers, buyers, and others interested in learning about: produce safety, the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule, Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), and co-management of natural resources and food safety.

The U.S. FDA's Produce Safety rule requires in § 112.22(c) that for each farm, "At least one supervisor or responsible party for your farm must have successfully completed food safety training at least equivalent to that received under standardized curriculum recognized as adequate by the Food and Drug Administration." The PSA Grower Training Course is one way to satisfy this requirement; it is the only course currently recognized by FDA.



June 8, 2023, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS



☞ June 14, 2023 ~ 5:30 PM, Riverside County Farm Bureau Board of Directors meeting. In person at Farm Bureau office and via Zoom Conference. Please call our office at (951) 684-6732 for more information.

## Food and Farm News

Courtesy of CFBF

**New California rule to phase out most diesel trucks in state**  
California is set to phase out nearly all diesel trucks in the state over the next two decades. The California Air Resources Board has voted unanimously to approve a ban on medium- and heavy-duty diesel trucks, including the big rigs that transport fresh agricultural products throughout the state. The state rule will ban the sale of new diesel trucks and buses by 2036 and require that most diesel trucks operating in the state are phased out by 2042. Diesel trucks and buses represent around 3% of vehicles registered in California.

### **Bill introduced to restrict foreign purchases of California farmland**

California's farmland attracts investment from all over the world. But as drought and climate change provoke anxiety over water and natural resources, state legislators are proposing new restrictions. State Sen. Melissa Hurtado has introduced a bill to bar foreign governments and government-controlled enterprises from purchasing agricultural land in California beginning next year.

Hurtado said the bill is needed to keep too many California farms from falling into the hands of foreign governments, which then control the water and energy resources that come with the land.

### **UC Davis develops five new strawberry varieties to combat fungal disease**

Plant breeders at the University of California, Davis, are releasing five new strawberry varieties developed to resist the soilborne disease Fusarium wilt. Researchers said this marks the first release from the UC Davis Strawberry Breeding Program where all cultivars have Fusarium wilt resistance. They also said the new varieties have high yields and improved fruit quality. In California, 1.8 billion pounds of strawberries are harvested each year.

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