



Because it is the most essential human activity, agriculture touches on everything else that people do. That means Farm Bureau must represent California farmers and ranchers on a wide variety of topics, in a great number of venues—from county planning commissions to the state Capitol to the halls of Congress, from the courthouse to the editorial pages to the constant flow of social media.

Few agricultural organizations conduct as broad a range of activities as Farm Bureau does. In this annual summary, we've tried to give you a sense of some—but certainly not all—of the services Farm Bureau performs on your behalf and with your help.

On these pages, you'll see top Farm Bureau achievements and initiatives at the state level. Keep in mind that Farm Bureau also works for you locally through your county Farm Bureau, and nationally through the American Farm Bureau Federation.

All of this becomes possible only because of your membership in Farm Bureau. Thank you for your continued support.

**Paul Wenger**  
President  
California Farm Bureau Federation



## Conserving farmland

### During 2015, Farm Bureau:

- Advocated for reduced impact on farmland during development of a long-term flood-protection plan for the Central Valley.
- Sponsored ongoing state legislation requiring school districts to confer with county agricultural commissioners before voting to locate a school in an agricultural zone.
- Worked to discourage urban sprawl and leapfrog developments in unincorporated areas, through successful amendment of a bill regarding Local Agency Formation Commissions.
- Cooperated with a coalition that worked to identify areas in the San Joaquin Valley where utility-scale solar power facilities could be built while producing the least conflict with existing land uses.
- Supported a court ruling that the government must comply with constitutional requirements—including just compensation—when it takes private property through pre-condemnation investigations.
- Met with agency officials regarding potential inclusion of more than 300,000 acres of land for the Berryessa-Snow Mountain National Monument and expressed concern about impacts to grazing land and other agricultural activities.





## Making our voice heard

### During 2015, Farm Bureau:

- Hosted a two-day Campaign Management Seminar to help Farm Bureau members interested in seeking elected office.
- Issued 13 FARM TEAM Action Alerts that generated a combined total of more than 3,300 emails and letters to elected officials and government agencies.
- Coordinated eight farm tours to show elected officials and legislative staff members what farmers and ranchers do at the ground level.
- Emphasized to Congress the ongoing need for immigration reform that benefits farmers, farm employees and the economy, while enhancing border security.
- Advocated for adequate funding of fire prevention and suppression activities through a change in federal budget rules.
- Worked with a coalition to secure more than \$4.1 million in the state budget for Agricultural Career Technical Education grants.
- Supported federal funding for vital services during large-scale animal-disease outbreaks through the National Animal Health and Laboratory Network.
- Created a coalition of agricultural



representatives and academics to discuss and promote the benefits of grazing.

- Encouraged a state agency to offer guidance to employers trying to comply with a new paid sick-leave mandate.
- Advocated for streamlining of farm labor contractor licensing and testing procedures.
- Worked with the governor's administration and legislators to clarify

rules governing piece-rate compensation.

- Encouraged reforms to the federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program that would broaden the program's benefits.
- Helped put farmers and ranchers in direct contact with elected representatives and government officials by organizing multiple trips to government offices in Washington, D.C., and Sacramento.

## Enhancing water supply and quality

### During 2015, Farm Bureau:

- Sponsored successful legislation to make groundwater adjudications more efficient.
- Asked Congress to create compromise legislation to address both the short- and long-term impacts of drought in California and the West; sought other improvements to federal water and environmental policy to ease drought impacts.
- Took every opportunity, when speaking to elected representatives, government agencies, reporters and others, to emphasize the value of additional water storage as a solution to chronic water shortages worsened by ongoing drought.
- Worked to protect agricultural water rights in implementation of new state groundwater laws; encouraged county Farm Bureaus and individual members to participate actively in local implementation.
- Advocated for clarification that groundwater recharge should be considered a beneficial use of water.
- Pursued efforts to make regional agricultural water-quality regulations less onerous; represented farmers in both legal and administrative challenges to the regional irrigated-lands regulations.



■ Engaged actively with regulators who are developing regulatory programs on nitrates, nutrients and salinity, seeking programs that protect water quality while minimizing burdens on farmers.

■ Worked to be sure the Proposition 1 water bond fulfills its promise of increased storage, by advocating for projects that provide the greatest public benefit during California Water Commission hearings.

■ Advocated for the protection and orderly implementation of the state water rights system during curtailments of water

due to drought; defended the system from attacks describing it as "antiquated."

■ Participated in a legal case that upheld the constitutional validity of different groundwater extraction rates for agricultural and non-agricultural uses in water conservation districts; an appeals court agreed with Farm Bureau that the rate structure should remain intact.

■ Urged that excess surface water flows from El Niño storms be directed to groundwater-recharge projects.

## Standing up against onerous regulation

### During 2015, Farm Bureau:

- Urged Congress to oppose the “waters of the United States” rule that would expand federal jurisdiction over farmland; created an online, interactive map to help Farm Bureau members learn how the rule would affect their land.

- Played a lead role in stopping the development of a statewide regulatory plan that would have affected grazing, by informing state and regional water boards about the impacts of the proposal.

- Renewed a recommendation for water-right holders to pay an annual “fee” under protest while Farm Bureau pursues a court case to have the charge invalidated as an unconstitutional tax.

- Monitored the drafting of a new federal worker protection standard, comparing it to existing state rules to avoid overlapping or conflicting requirements.

- Supported efforts to have the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rethink its proposed regulations regarding pesticide use and bee populations.

- Challenged the legal authority of the state Agricultural Labor Relations Board to issue a regulation allowing ALRB agents to trespass on worksites in order to inform employees about state labor laws.

- Advocated for farm employers regarding proposed regulations on nighttime work that could impose burdensome and costly requirements that would be difficult to satisfy.



- Supported proposed rules to clarify and strengthen requirements for petitioning to protect species under the federal Endangered Species Act.

- Partnered with other organizations in a project to boost populations of the tricolored blackbird in a manner that encourages the birds to nest in areas away from dairy farms; welcomed a decision not to add the bird as a candidate for state protection.

- Opposed federal threatened-species protection for the Pacific fisher and provided comments on proposed designation of more than 150,000 acres of land as critical habitat for the yellow-billed cuckoo.

- Urged state pesticide regulators to use scientific data during analysis of standards to apply to all agricultural fumigant uses.

- Encouraged members to attend

workshops on proposed changes to rules regarding pesticide use around schools, to tell regulators how schools and farms can coexist.

- Negotiated language to assure maintenance of animal health and welfare during passage of new state law on agricultural antibiotics; succeeded in removing language that would have imposed burdensome reporting requirements and fees.

- Supported successful legislation to improve administration of a state fire prevention “fee,” while continuing to support litigation that would overturn the “fee” as an illegally imposed tax.

- Joined litigation to defend existing safe-harbor levels for lead under state Proposition 65 regulations, to avoid unnecessary, expanded warnings of potential lead exposure.

## Helping you grow and market your products

### During 2015, Farm Bureau:

- Monitored the ongoing implementation of the federal Food Safety Modernization Act, with the goal of assuring food safety through practical, effective on-farm rules.

- Led a coalition of California agricultural organizations that successfully supported trade-promotion authority for the president, which enhances ability to negotiate agreements that improve agricultural trade.

- Encouraged the California congressional delegation to support the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which would reduce barriers to agricultural trade among the U.S. and 11 other Pacific Rim nations.

- Informed congressional representatives, government agencies and media of the negative effects of a West Coast port slowdown; joined a coalition to reform labor laws in ways that would reduce the likelihood of future slowdowns.

- Supported creation of a national standard for labeling of genetically engineered foods, to avoid a patchwork of varying state laws.



- Sought revisions to federal dietary guidelines on dairy and beef consumption that had included “sustainability” considerations.

- Participated in state and federal working groups to assure use of the most effective practices to combat any new pests and to enhance disease detections.

- Successfully advocated for Congress to assure continued rail movement of

goods by extending the unrealistic deadline for installation of “positive train control” technology.

- Helped assure movement of agricultural products by working with other groups and the California Highway Patrol to extend rules for securing farm goods on trucks while new federal regulations are finalized; successfully sought an exemption for hours-of-service rules for drivers moving bee colonies.



## Managing production costs

### During 2015, Farm Bureau:

- Helped farmers avoid millions of dollars in higher energy costs by advocating for farmers in electrical rate cases involving Southern California Edison Co. and San Diego Gas & Electric Co.

- Worked to assure continued viability of on-farm renewable-energy generation by participating in state Public Utilities Commission proceedings on net energy metering.

- Crafted a model agreement with the Western Area Power Administration to allow farmers to grow crops successfully under electrical transmission lines.

- Sponsored successful state legislation to reduce costs of transferring family dairies and cattle ranches to the next generation, by allowing owners of cattle to add a business partner owning a minority share without having the herd inspected.

- Worked with other organizations to secure the governor's veto of several pieces of state legislation that would have imposed unnecessary and costly new requirements on agricultural employers.

- Advocated successfully for legislation allowing employers to correct minor mistakes on paystubs that in the past had led to frivolous lawsuits.

- Welcomed an appeals-court ruling



declaring unconstitutional the mandatory mediation and conciliation rules in the state Agricultural Labor Relations Act; CFBF and other groups had filed a "friend of the court" brief in support of that position.

- Joined a coalition to stop legislation that would have increased the state minimum wage to \$13 an hour while the economy is still absorbing the most recent minimum-wage increase.

- Helped to stall a proposed state sales and use tax on services that would have increased taxes by more than \$10 billion annually.

- Led efforts to unify support for federal tax reforms to benefit farmers and ranchers; supported extension of important tax provisions that help farmers and ranchers remain competitive.

- Called for the completion of a state management plan for the gray wolf, after evidence of the predator's return to Northern California.

- Advocated for continuation of the Wildlife Services program that addresses wildlife damage to farms and ranches; challenged litigation aimed at blocking county participation in the program.

- Supported a federal initiative that stressed cooperative work between ranchers and government agencies to benefit the greater sage grouse.

- Sought state investment in roads and bridges through reordering of existing budget priorities; opposed a plan to impose new transportation taxes and fees.

- Successfully opposed a federal budget provision that would have removed stepped-up basis for the estate tax and further complicated the passing down of family farms and ranches.

## Reaching out

### During 2015, Farm Bureau:

- Responded to approximately 600 inquiries from reporters from California, throughout the nation and news outlets in Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Australia and elsewhere; distributed 19 news releases describing CFBF positions and activities.

- Helped lead and finance a coalition of agricultural organizations and cooperatives in an outreach campaign to enhance public support for on-farm water use.

- Published op-ed commentaries in California daily newspapers on the importance of agricultural water use, water rights and the need to maintain safe use of herbicides.

- For the eighth straight year, purchased Spanish-language radio advertisements in key areas, with information about how to work safely on hot days, as part of extensive outreach about heat safety that also included articles in Ag Alert® and information on the CFBF website.

- Reached more than 925,000 viewers in the state's largest media markets via broadcasts of the California Bountiful® television program.

- Collected more than 12.7 million pounds of food for the Harvest for All program, gathered at gleanings events, food drives and through business donations organized by the Young Farmers and Ranchers program.

- Earned six American Farm Bureau Federation Awards for Excellence for outreach, policy and leadership development, member services and initiatives, and communications; earned national communications awards from AFBF for Best Video Program and Best Video Feature Story.

- Provided scholarships totaling \$160,000 to more than 35 students interested in pursuing agricultural careers, through the California Farm Bureau Scholarship Foundation.

- Announced a new member discount providing up to \$2,000 in purchase incentives on Caterpillar farm equipment.

- Promoted Farm Bureau and California



agriculture at events including the Red Bluff Bull and Gelding Sale, Colusa Farm Show, World Ag Expo and Ag Day at the Capitol.

- Provided county Farm Bureaus with new materials to encourage new and renewing agricultural memberships.

- Kept Farm Bureau members, public officials, news media and the public informed by publishing 46 issues of Ag Alert, six issues of California Bountiful magazine, 50 weekly airings of the California Bountiful television program, 50 editions of the weekly Food and Farm News service and 34 editions of Friday Review.