



# Farm Bureau at work

California Farm Bureau's government affairs team is at the Capitol, advocating for farmers, ranchers and agriculture's future. Here are some key issues Farm Bureau is focused on this week.

August 25, 2023

## Agricultural Employment Policy

[SB-799](#), Unemployment Benefits for Strikers (Portantino) is a late-session gut-and-amend to recycle a 2019 bill permitting employees participating in a "trade dispute" (i.e. a strike) to collect unemployment insurance benefits. Then known as AB 1066 (Gonzalez), it failed in the Senate.

The federal law creating the federal-state partnership funding and administering UI benefits and providing for the operations of state job service agencies like California's Employment Development Department (EDD) specifies that individuals may not collect unemployment insurance benefits if they are not available for work and ready and willing to accept offered work, which is clearly not the case with strikers who have elected to withhold their labor to gain economic leverage over their employer during a strike.

This proposal raises several risks, including exacerbating the already huge \$18 billion deficit in California's state unemployment trust fund account, along with the risk that the federal government could decertify California's unemployment insurance program, meaning California would be forced to pay unemployment insurance benefits from the state's General Fund. *Staff: Bryant Little, [blittle@cfbf.com](mailto:blittle@cfbf.com)*

## Animal Health and Welfare

CA Department of Food and Agriculture has posted the following guidance documents to the Animal Care Program's website:

NEW: [Chicken Egg Producer Enclosure Guidance](#)

NEW: [Duck Egg Producer Enclosure Guidance](#)

NEW: Pork Producer webinar hosted by CloverLeaf Animal Welfare Systems with Dr. Liz Cox. Available in English and Spanish. Link to view webinar at the bottom of the [Animal Care Program Stakeholder Resources page](#).

Reminder: **Producers are required to be third-party certified by January 1, 2024.** Refer to [Animal Confinement Important Dates](#) guidance document. For more information please visit the Animal Care Program's website: <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/AHFSS/AnimalCare/>, or email questions to [AnimalCare@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:AnimalCare@cdfa.ca.gov). *Staff: Katie Little, [klittle@cfbf.com](mailto:klittle@cfbf.com)*

**VSV update as of August 22<sup>nd</sup> 2023: there is one newly confirmed premises in Santa Barbara County.** This is the third bovine premises that has been confirmed during this outbreak thus far. The VSV incident and situation in California remains active and ongoing, and continues to require vigilance throughout the state. Ongoing and active outreach to encourage prompt reporting of suspect lesions in horses and susceptible livestock and an **immediate stop movement** of any suspect animals will continue to assist with preventing virus spread by infected animals.

### **VSV Case Sampling, Lab Submissions, and Reporting:**

- ✓ Online [VSV case reporting](#) and [VSV sampling guidance](#) is posted on the [CDFA VSV website](#), in addition to a [focal map](#) of current VSV-affected areas in California that is updated at least weekly.

- ✓ **Any non-equid VSV suspect species must be reported to CDFA or USDA immediately and sampled by a regulatory veterinarian** given the concern for clinical similarities to Foreign Animal Diseases (FADs) such as Foot and Mouth Disease.

### **VSV Surveillance and Monitoring:**

- ✓ Continue to be highly vigilant and promote VSV awareness in ALL areas of the state, including previously affected areas that have not recently confirmed new cases, as well as currently naïve areas. The fly vectors remain active and present in California, and migration patterns continue to be challenging to predict given our unprecedented weather patterns.
- ✓ **PREVENTION IS CRITICAL.** Please talk to your clients/colleagues/employees/agents frequently during this outbreak period and ensure they are taking the risk of infection and exposure seriously, and implementing enhanced fly control in addition to routine biosecurity best practices to the best of their abilities. While many of our cattle premises do do some level of fly control; prevention of exposure via vectors is critical.
- ✓ **Infection with or exposure to VSV does NOT produce protective antibodies or immunity in any susceptible species.** This also contributes to the lack of a currently effective vaccine. Previously infected animals CAN be reinfected if the flies carrying the virus remain present in the area. VSV-exposed animals may have antibodies for many years following exposure or infection, but positive antibody levels does not confer protection.
- ✓ **Reminder:** Mandatory VSV quarantines for any susceptible species will be in place for a minimum of fourteen (14) days from the date of ONSET of last known vesicular lesions. Quarantine release is dependent on verification of no additional clinical or compatible signs of any susceptible animal on a quarantined premises, and criteria for release will be evaluated no less than 14 days from onset of last clinical lesions.

There are currently nine affected counties in California (Fresno, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties). All confirmed cases have been vesicular stomatitis New Jersey virus (VSNJV) serotype. Updates are as follows:

Since the start of the outbreak (5/17/2023), **196 VSV-affected premises have been identified (68 confirmed positive, 128 suspect) in 3 states, California, Nevada, and Texas.** One hundred ninety-two (192) of these premises have had only equine species clinically affected, three (3) premises have had clinically affected cattle (San Diego County and Santa Barbara County, California), and one (1) premises has had clinically affected rhinoceros (San Diego County, California).

California has identified 193 affected premises (65 confirmed positive, 128 suspect) in 9 counties (Fresno, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties). Texas identified 2 affected premises (2 confirmed positive) in 2 counties (Maverick and Shackelford Counties). Nevada identified 1 affected premises (1 confirmed positive) in 1 county (White Pine County, Nevada).

Additional information and maps of the affected area are contained in the attached situation report. The situation report is posted publicly on the APHIS website and accessible at the following link: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/equine/vsv/vesicular-stomatitis>

**Please contact CDFA immediately if you have suspicion of a VS case.** As a reminder, clinical signs of VS include excessive salivation, vesicles (blister-like lesions), erosions or ulcerations around the mouth, tongue, nostrils, teats, feet and coronary bands. As VS is **highly contagious** among susceptible species (primarily equids and cattle, but also camelids and small ruminants, and occasionally swine) as well as potentially **zoonotic**, we also want to ensure proper personal protective equipment and biosecurity measures are in place on your facilities. Please notify your CDFA district office immediately if you or your personnel identify animals with consistent lesions.

**There is no effective vaccine for VS. Vector mitigation (specifically black fly and sand fly control) is critical in containing a potential VS outbreak.** As has been mentioned through this outbreak, please ensure adequate fly protective measures are in place on your facilities; such as insecticide use on animals and around facilities, manure management and reduction of fly breeding areas. Any suspect lesioned animals should be immediately isolated upon detection. As VS can also be transmitted via contaminated surfaces; please ensure extra precautions are in place on dairies especially, to avoid transmission of VS to other animals or personnel during milking.

Please reach out to your CDFA district office for additional information on vector mitigation strategies, biosecurity recommendations and movement requirements. Staff: Katie Little, [klittle@cxfb.com](mailto:klittle@cxfb.com)

## Forestry

### CALFIRE DEFENSIBLE SPACE SURVEY

CalFIRE is working with the UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE) on creating a creative campaign for Zone 0 imagery and slogans and have created the following survey to collect feedback.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSch\\_lshH8-y\\_yqsAoMiC5liI6nb-5XKEssByBnFEoJ84fj4Lg/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSch_lshH8-y_yqsAoMiC5liI6nb-5XKEssByBnFEoJ84fj4Lg/viewform)

Big changes are coming in how we landscape our property to help protect homes and people from wildfire. These changes are a part of California's adapting defensible space standards and are in reaction to the severity of recent wildfires and new scientific understandings.

- 1) We need your help to craft the best language to inform the general public about these important fire mitigations.
- 2) Embers cause the majority of wildfire home ignitions by igniting vegetation or materials on or near a home resulting in flames touching the house.
- 3) California's defensible space zones are changing to address embers. In 2025, a new defensible space zone will be added, referred to as **Zone 0**, which extends from **0 to 5 feet** of the perimeter of buildings, including the footprint of attached decks and stairs. Zone 0 will complement the existing Zone 1 (5 to 30 feet) and Zone 2 (30 to 100 feet or the property line) in making up California's defensible space standards.
- 4) These regulations will apply to most **unincorporated areas in California** and will likely include very high and high fire hazard zones in cities. It will apply to new construction first, and a year later, it will apply to existing structures, meaning the landscaping on existing homes will need to meet these new fuel reduction standards.

**Background:** California's Mediterranean landscapes are adapted to frequent fire, but its people and homes are not. The good news is that the odds of a home surviving a wildfire can be substantially improved through attention to three things: careful design and maintenance of **landscaping**; awareness and management of combustible materials on the property such as **leaf litter, woodpiles, and wood fences**; and incorporation of fire- and ember-resistant construction materials with appropriate installation and maintenance. **Standards for Zone 0:** Note: The regulation is still in development, and some changes are expected as the regulation works through the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection's rulemaking process.

The big ideas are:

- Surrounding the structure, use hardscape like gravel, pavers, concrete, or other rock mulch.
- No combustible bark or mulch will be allowed in this zone.

- Where there are attached wooden fences, replace the 5 feet that touch the structure with a non-combustible panel or gate, to break the pathway for fire to wick to the structure.
- Remove all dead and dying weeds, grass, plants, shrubs, trees, branches, and vegetative debris (leaves, needles, cones, bark, etc.)
- Where trees exist in Zone 0, limb branches above the height of the structure and providing at least 10 feet separation from all portions of the roof, including the chimney or stovepipe.

Complete the survey below: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSch\\_lshH8-y\\_yqsAoMiC5liI6nb-5XKEssByBnFEoJ84fj4Lg/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSch_lshH8-y_yqsAoMiC5liI6nb-5XKEssByBnFEoJ84fj4Lg/viewform)

### **JDSF FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The public is invited to comment on the proposed scope of work to review the JDSF forest management plan. Comments can be submitted to [JDSF@fire.ca.gov](mailto:JDSF@fire.ca.gov) through 5 PM on Friday, September 8, for consideration and discussion at the next Jackson Advisory Group meeting. The public is also welcome to attend this and any upcoming Jackson Advisory Group meeting to be a part of the discussion in person at the First Presbyterian Church in Fort Bragg starting at 9 AM. An agenda will be distributed no less than 10 days in advance. If you do not receive these notices and would like to, please contact [JDSF@fire.ca.gov](mailto:JDSF@fire.ca.gov) to be added to the distribution list.

Sharing the [draft scope of work](#) with the Jackson Advisory Group and public is the first of many opportunities for public engagement. Once the final scope of work is developed, a Request for Proposal will be released to engage qualified consultants who will lead the process of developing a new plan. The scope of work envisions 15 public meetings to solicit community and stakeholder input along with 3 meetings focused on tribal engagement. Each will focus on various important resources (e.g. wildlife, carbon, etc.) or activities (sustainable forestry, recreation, etc.). Proposed meeting locations include Fort Bragg, Ukiah, and Sacramento to reach diverse audiences and viewpoints. The final plan will be presented to the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection for consideration through an additional public process. *Staff: Peter Ansel [pansel@cfbf.com](mailto:pansel@cfbf.com)*

## **Insurance**

[SB-505](#), authored by Senator Susan Rubio (D Baldwin Park) and sponsored by the California Farm Bureau and the California Department of Insurance passed from the Assembly Floor on the Consent Calendar. This means the bill did not require presentation on the Assembly Floor as it was voted out without a no vote and passed from the chamber. The next stop after engrossing and enrolling is to send the bill to the Governor's desk for signature. *Staff: Peter Ansel [pansel@cfbf.com](mailto:pansel@cfbf.com)*

## **Rural Health**

As many members may recall, earlier this year the Madera Community Hospital closed due to a lack of funding. Thanks to a coordinated statewide effort led by state legislators, the hospital will receive immediate, multimillion-dollar financial assistance from the state. On Thursday, Governor Gavin Newsom's office announced zero-interest loans for 17 state hospitals, including up to \$50 million to Madera Community Hospital. As part of the Distressed Hospital Loan Program, the state allocated a total of \$300 million to help California hospitals most in need.

Assemblymember Soria (D – Fresno) authored legislation to launch the loan program in response to the closure of Madera Community Hospital. It was quickly signed into law by the governor earlier this year. For more information regarding the loan program, visit [here](#). *Staff: Katie Little, [klittle@cfbf.com](mailto:klittle@cfbf.com)*

## **Transportation**

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) has posted [Guidance on Upcoming Requirements in Clean Truck Check](#) on CARB's webpages. These guidance documents provide further information on the

expected start date of Clean Truck Check periodic compliance testing in 2024 and projected compliance deadlines for vehicles subject to semiannual (twice per year) testing.

Please note that California registered motorhomes and **heavy-duty vehicles used exclusively in agricultural operations** (California registered and non-California registered) are required to undergo periodic compliance **testing annually**, rather than *semiannually*.

CARB will continue to release additional information and conduct training sessions to support vehicle owners and other regulated entities with meeting their upcoming compliance requirements. If you have any questions regarding the program, please send an email to [hdim@arb.ca.gov](mailto:hdim@arb.ca.gov). Staff: *Katie Little*, [klittle@cbf.com](mailto:klittle@cbf.com)

## ✦ ANNOUNCEMENTS

### LANDFLEX GRANT PROGRAM

Moving to help preserve groundwater supplies for Central Valley communities, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) has awarded nearly \$17 million to three groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) through the [LandFlex Program](#). The awarded funding will be available to local growers to transition to sustainable groundwater use and protect drinking water supplies for vulnerable communities.

LandFlex was [launched earlier this year](#) with a total of \$25 million in grants awarded to GSAs to work directly with interested growers to temporarily idle agricultural lands to provide immediate benefits for vulnerable domestic wells. The funding also can be used to help permanently eliminate groundwater overpumping on each enrolled acre of land. GSAs that received grant awards earlier this year were unable to utilize all the funding, so DWR is now awarding a second phase of grants with the unused funds. Due to the significant rainfall this year, all growers enrolled in LandFlex will also have the opportunity to use their lands for groundwater recharge in lieu of planting crops that cover the soil.

The LandFlex Program incentivizes participation of small- and mid-sized farms in areas where reduction in agricultural pumping would help keep household and small community water system wells from going dry and simultaneously transition to sustainable groundwater use. To ensure the program is accessed by small- and mid-sized farms, a \$2.5 million annual gross income cap was placed for growers to be eligible.

“As California continues its efforts to adapt to a changing climate and prepare for a hotter, drier future, programs like LandFlex will help small farms and disadvantaged communities that are vulnerable to drought and dependent on groundwater supplies become more resilient,” said DWR Director Karla Nemeth.

Below are the GSAs that received a grant in the second phase and their awarded funding:

- Lower Tule River Irrigation District Groundwater Sustainability Agency - \$7.7 million
- Pixley Irrigation District Groundwater Sustainability Agency - \$5 million
- Westside Water District Groundwater Sustainability Agency - \$4 million

The program requires growers to fallow for one year and to accelerate implementation of the [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act](#) (SGMA) by permanently eliminating unsustainable overdraft pumping on enrolled acres. Enacted in 2014, SGMA addresses the issues of over-pumping and provides a framework for local agencies to better manage and protect groundwater supplies for long-term sustainability. DWR, in coordination with the Department of Food and Agriculture, is also working directly with partners in non-governmental organizations and the agriculture industry to spread the word about this program.

## **CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE LEADS THE NATION IN FUNDING FOR SPECIALTY CROPS**

*State receives \$23.8 million in federal grant funds*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced funding for the 2023 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP). California received \$23.8 million out of approximately \$72.9 million awarded nationwide. The SCBGP provides grants to state departments of agriculture to fund projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) will fund 46 projects, including the following:

### **Climate – Processing Tomatoes**

The University of California, Davis, was awarded \$396,176 to identify drivers of drought resilience and quantify their relevance to water-shortage scenarios in field experiments on California processing tomatoes. Note – California grows more than 95 percent of all processing tomatoes in the US.

### **Nutrition and Education**

1. 18 Reasons, a non-profit organization, was awarded \$450,000 to focus on providing hands-on, cooking-based education utilizing specialty crops to low-income families who are disproportionately affected by food insecurity and diet-related nutrition disparities in the San Francisco Bay area.
2. The non-profit organization Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles was awarded \$499,982 to provide sixth through twelfth grade students, adults, and caregivers with culturally relevant specialty crop education which showcases California’s seasonal variety and specialty crop growers, especially targeting underserved communities and Title I schools.

### **Equity**

A project focused on equity was awarded to the California Bountiful Foundation -- \$435,867 to support a farmer-to-farmer specialty crop mentoring and education program for beginning specialty crop farmers throughout California, with an emphasis on reaching underserved farmers to enhance their competitiveness and opportunities for success.

### **Marketing**

The Buy California Marketing Agreement was awarded \$2.5 million to implement a multi-platform digital campaign, which will include retail and foodservice promotions, to enhance support from the retail and food service trade and increase consumer demand for California’s specialty crop products throughout California.

Other projects focus on increasing sales of specialty crops by leveraging the unique qualities of specialty crops grown in California; increasing consumption by expanding the specialty crop consumer market; providing nutritional education for consumers; training growers to equip them for current and future challenges; investing in training for growers, producers, and operators to address current and future challenges; and conducting research on organic and sustainable production practices, conservation and environmental outcomes, and pest control and disease. In addition, CDFA is continuing its partnership with the Center for Produce Safety in the evaluation and recommendation of food safety related projects. These projects represent an ongoing effort to address food safety practices and minimize outbreaks of foodborne illness with proactive research. The 2023 SCBGP project abstracts are available online: [2023 SCBGP Project Abstracts](#).

## **✦ ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS**

### **CDFA ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR URBAN AGRICULTURE GRANT PROGRAM**

CDFA’s Office of Farm to Fork is announcing that applications are being accepted from today through October 23 for a total of \$12 million in grants from the 2023 Urban Agriculture Grant Program. “The growth of urban agriculture is a means for expanding access to fresh produce, building community,

providing workforce development, improving urban ecosystems, and increasing agricultural literacy,” said CDFA Secretary Karen Ross. “Consumers want to know where their food comes from, and they’re looking for ways to engage in meaningful work in their local community. This grant program serves these overlapping purposes and helps build healthier, more resilient neighborhoods.”

The Urban Agriculture Grant Program is a competitive grant program that funds projects enhancing the viability of urban agriculture across California. The funding for this program was made possible through the 2021-2022 California General Fund budget. CDFA is setting aside up to 10 percent of awards for tribal governments and tribal-based non-profit organizations. Applicants may apply for one of two tracks based on eligibility and project type.

*Track 1: The Systems Builder Community-Based Block Grant* – This is intended to increase capacity for community-based organizations with involvement in urban and regional food systems to provide pass-through funding that supports urban agriculture activities.

*Track 2: The Urban Agriculture Practitioner Grant* -- This directly funds urban agriculture projects by supporting costs associated with items like infrastructure, equipment, operations, workforce development, community engagement, and technical assistance.

Visit <https://cafarmtofork.cdfa.ca.gov/urbanag.html> to view the Urban Agriculture Grant Program request for applications (RFA) and get information about a webinar about the application process scheduled for August 29.

## ✦ ACCEPTING PROPOSALS

### **CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE NOW ACCEPTING PROPOSALS FOR 2023 AG PLATE GRANTS**

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is accepting proposals for the 2023 California Agriculture Special Interest License Plate (CalAgPlate) grant program.

This program will provide an estimated \$250,000 in grant to promote agricultural education and leadership activities for students at the K-12, post-secondary, and adult-education levels, with the objectives of increased knowledge of agriculture and nutrition, the introduction of young people to potential careers in agriculture, and public engagement to enhance understanding of agriculture and food production.

CDFA’s Ag Vision plan, which centers on growing opportunity for all Californians via agriculture, recognizes the importance of ag education and ag literacy to the contribution of informed citizens in the development of policies that support healthy and competitive agriculture and food systems. Grants from the CalAG Plate Program help advance these objectives. Proceeds for the grant program are generated through the sales of specialized, agriculture-themed license plates offered by the California Department of Motor Vehicles.

Funding is available on a competitive basis for state-adopted Agricultural Education Programs (Education Code Section 52450-52454), government agencies, and non-profit organizations that administer agricultural education programs. The application deadline is Wednesday, September 20, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. PT. Prospective applicants are encouraged to visit the program website: [www.cdfa.ca.gov/calagplate](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/calagplate). The CalAgPlate program has funded more than \$2.1million in youth educational activities since the program’s inception. You can help support agricultural education by purchasing a special interest license plate at your local DMV office or [online](#).