

Bi-Monthly Newsletter Published by MCFB

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1102 S. Pine Street
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MADERA COUNTY AGRICULTURE TODAY



Celebrating the Future of Agriculture: 2025 Scholarship Recipients Honored at Margaritas

Anne Deniz, MCFB

The Madera County Farm Bureau (MCFB) Scholarship Foundation proudly announces the 2025 recipients of its prestigious scholarships, awarding a total of \$142,000 to seventeen outstanding students pursuing degrees in agriculture and related fields. These deserving individuals were recognized at the Foundation's annual fundraising celebration, Margaritas at the Mahils', held on May 4, 2025—an evening filled with community, celebration, and a shared vision for the future of agriculture.

2025 MCFB Scholarship Awardees

The Richard A. Cosyns Scholarship

(\$2,500 per year for four years – \$10,000 total)

Wade Stretch, Chowchilla High School

Major: Agricultural Systems Management, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

The Tesei Family – Van De Pol Scholarship

(\$2,500 per year for four years – \$10,000 total)

Corinna Martinez, Liberty High School

Major: Animal Science, California State University, Fresno (CSUF)

The Franklin Secara Scholarship

(\$2,500 per year for four years – \$10,000 total)

Nathan Hutchison, Liberty High School

Major: Agricultural Business, CSUF



MCFB Scholarships for Children of Agricultural Farm Laborers

(\$2,000 per year for four years – \$8,000 total)

Jose Aldaz-Reyes, Madera High School – Ag Business, CSUF

Diana Juarez-Ramirez, Madera South High School – Animal Science, UC Davis

Mayrlin Vasquez-Vasquez, Madera South High School – Business, UC Berkeley

MCFB Scholarships

(\$2,000 per year for four years – \$8,000 total)

Taylor Bigelow, Minarets High School – Animal Science Livestock Management, CSUF

Ava Bishel, Fresno Christian High School – Ag Business, CSUF

Emma Elgorriaga, San Joaquin Memorial High School – Ag Business, University of Oklahoma

Ella Fredriks, Stone Ridge Christian High School – Ag Communications, CSUF

Daisy Goncalves, Chowchilla High School – Animal Science, Iowa State

Geena Mahil, Chowchilla High School – Biology, UC Davis

CONTINUED ON PAGE PAGE 3

Upcoming Events

6/11 Fresno Madera YF&R Tour @ Basilwood Farms

6/24 June Gun Draw

6/25 MCFB Board of Directors Meeting

7/17 Tree & Vine Harvest Safety Training



President's Message

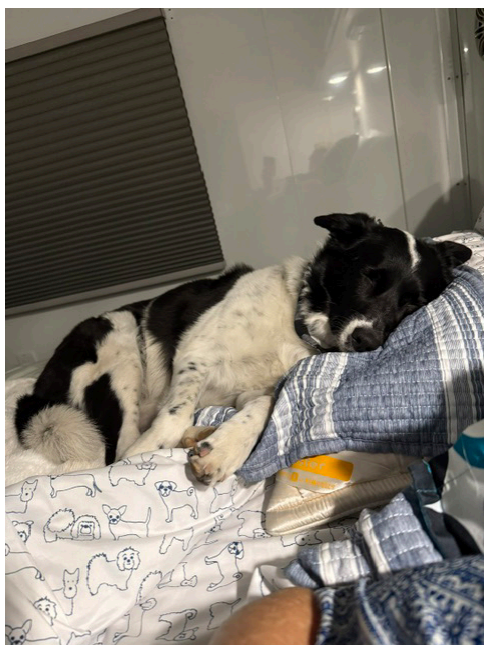
Madera County Farm Bureau

Laura Gutile
President

Phew! Bring on the Summer temps! It's Memorial Day weekend and the unofficial start to Summer. It seemed like overnight the temperatures went from 70s to 90s! Fortunately for me, the hubby and I are at Pacific Raceways near Kent, WA where the temps are predicted to be in the 70s. I get to push off Summer for just a little longer!

I was struggling with what to write about this time. I bounced some ideas off of our Grower Relations Extraordinaire, Anne. She reminded me that she gets feedback from readers that they enjoy my "keeping it real" articles. So, here is what the last month has had me doing:

The cutest little Calico kitten found and followed Ryan home when he did some work in the orchard; a late April trip to Hallet Motor Speedway in Oklahoma for a Hoosier Super Tour race weekend that had a 4 hour delay one of the days due to lightening and a whole lot of rain - Ryan did really well winning 2 races in one of the classes he competes in; My birthday - 53 is going to be a great year; MCFB's Margaritas at the Mahils' benefitting our scholarship program was held on May 4th on a really nice weather day and everyone seemed



to enjoy themselves; Mother's Day was spent in Portland, OR with the last West Coast Hoosier Super Tour races - Ryan was way down on power due to a bad sensor but drove really well; we did a round of fertigation for the orchard followed by more irrigation sets as the weather started heating up; as I mentioned before, we're currently near Kent, WA for what will be the last West Coast SCCA Majors race of the season and next weekend we will head out on our motorcycle with Ryan's motorcycle club for a weekend trip to Minden, NV. Good Heavens!! It's no wonder I'm exhausted! Between all the big events were littler ones like board meetings for the various organizations I'm involved with and the work I do to stay informed and ready to be an active participant at these meetings. My friend and fellow MCFB Director, Chris Wiley recently asked me how my "Spring break-in" was going. My funny

look had him explain that he was asking about my trees waking up, fertilizer, irrigation and such. I was thinking "who has time for Spring Break when there's so much stuff to do?!" Haha!! CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Top Right: The newest member of the Gutile Family, IC (Indy's Cat)

Bottom Left: Indy not minding time on the road

Bottom Right: Indy keeping guard at Hallett Raceways

Scholarship Awardees & Event Cont.

Oswaldo Montes, Madera South High School – Animal Science, CSUF

Jordan Roeseler, Yosemite High School – Ag Education, CSUF

Rylee Schnoor, Stone Ridge Christian High School – Animal Science, Oklahoma State

Liliana Standen, Matilda Torres High School – Ag Education, Simpson University

Madison Turner, Matilda Torres High School – Animal Science, CSUF

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to these students who embody the spirit of agriculture and the promise of leadership for the future.

Margaritas, Music, and a Mission: Fundraising Event Recap

This year's Margaritas at the Mahils' fundraiser was an unforgettable success, bringing together friends, families, and agricultural advocates in support of the next generation. Guests enjoyed a vibrant evening that included a silent auction, an exciting live dessert auction, and a raffle that kept the energy high throughout the afternoon. Attendees were treated to delicious margaritas, tacos, a variety of appetizers, and an array of sweet desserts, all contributing to the festive atmosphere. Adding a lively touch, the Madera Unified School District Honor Mariachi performed for guests, providing a memorable musical backdrop to the event.

All 17 scholarship recipients were present at the event and were proudly recognized for their achievements and promising futures. Special guests included Assemblywoman Esmeralda Soria, who presented each student with a certificate of recognition. Representatives from Assemblyman David Tangipa's office and Congressman Adam Gray's office were also in attendance and presented certificates to the recipients. To mark their place in the MCFB community, each student received an official MCFB hat to wear with pride.

A Message of Gratitude

On behalf of the MCFB Scholarship Trust, we extend our sincere thanks to our sponsors, donors, and attendees who made this record-breaking year of scholarship awards possible. Your generosity is cultivating a future where agriculture thrives through the passion, education, and dedication of our youth.



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Fresno-Madera YF&R Update Column

On May 18th Fresno-Madera YF&R hosted Burgers @ Belmont. A BBQ, Cornhole tournament, and meet & greet fun event for all YF&R members, those interested in the group, and Farm Bureau members.

YF&R's fundraiser this year has focused on T-shirt sponsorships and sales. Proceeds go towards scholarships, donations to local food banks and the next generation of leaders in agriculture. To donate or purchase, scan the QR code below. They will be in stock soon! Thank you to all of the sponsors this year as well!

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On June 11th, we will be meeting at and touring Basilwood Farms in Prather. They are a goat farm and dairy that produces various body, skin, face, and home care products.

Young Farmers & Ranchers is open to any one with a passion or interest in agriculture between the ages of 18-35. If you are interested in being involved with the leadership of YF&R and the Farm Bureau, you can become a member of Madera County Farm Bureau as a Collegiate, Associate, or Agricultural member.



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What is Madera County Farm Bureau?

Farm Bureau is the unified national voice of agriculture, we work to enhance and strengthen the lives of rural Americans and to build strong, prosperous communities.

Madera County Farm Bureau has been working to keep local farmers farming since 1915 supporting family farms & ranches as they raise safe, local food.

What does Madera County Farm Bureau do?

As a grassroots organization, MCFB represents and protects the farming and ranching way of life by influencing policy at all levels of government.

- Communicating the value of farmland
- Connecting consumers with their food
 - Competing for the future
- Ensuring farmers can grow and market their products
- Provide resources for farms and rural communities
 - Attend City Council & Board of Supervisor meetings
- Oversee land use policies and protection of the Williamson Act
 - Contact Elected Officials
- Provides information, resources, and farm safety trainings
- Awarded \$134,000 in scholarships to students pursuing careers within agriculture this year

A day in the life: Load out at the Buchenau Ranch

By Anne Deniz, MCFB

There's something about an early morning on a ranch that just feels different — the quiet before the dust kicks up, the rhythm of hooves, and the kind of focus that only comes when there's a big job to do.

On May 8, I spent the day at Buchenau Ranch in Madera County — right in the thick of spring shipping season. By the time the sun was fully up, the cowboys were already gathering cattle from the pastures, moving them toward the corrals for the day's loadout. By noon, we'd loaded all of the day's trucks full of stocker cattle, all headed to their next stop — a feedlot in Nebraska to be grain finished.

I got to do more than just watch. I was stationed at a gate, given a flag, and a front-row seat to the whole process.

The Action Behind the Scenes

Once cattle were brought up, the cowboys sorted them into groups of about 7–10 head at a time. Each group made its way to the scale, where their weight was called out and I stood ready at the gate. As soon as the weight came through, I'd swing the gate open and call out the head count again to double-check inventory. Every few groups, the scale was reset to ensure accuracy.

It sounds simple, but in a business where every pound and every head matters, precision is everything. These cattle were sold on contract, so every move was carefully tracked.

After weighing, the cattle moved into larger pens. The brand inspector came through, taking note of all the different brands and how many head carried each one. Those notes would become the official paperwork required for the cattle to legally travel across state lines — kind of like livestock passports.

Then Came the Loadout

Truck by truck, drivers backed up to the chute. We flagged out the correct number of head per compartment, funneled them through a gate into the alley, and from there, they headed up into the loading tub. I was up on the catwalk with my flag, crouching behind the tub wall so I didn't spook them too early, then standing to help guide them up the ramp. I cannot tell you how many squats this produced during the timespan of a few hours, but I felt it for the next few days!

There's an art to keeping cattle moving calmly — and it works best when you don't overthink it. The whole system was designed with low-stress handling in mind, using curves, solid walls, and careful spacing inspired by the work of Temple Grandin. I remember learning about her designs back in my animal science classes, and it was pretty amazing to see them in real-world action.

Of course, not everything goes according to plan. Two cattle slipped through a tiny gap near the top of the ramp and bolted — like escape artist cats squeezing through a space you didn't even realize existed. But the crew moved fast to get back on their horses. One was roped, the other cornered, and I sprinted down the alley, hopped a few gates, and opened one up just in time for the horseman to bring him back in. A little chaos, a lot of teamwork.



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A day in the life; continued

Behind the Operation: More Than Just Cattle

This day was the final step in a process that started roughly 6 months earlier. California stocker operations purchase weaned calves which arrive at the start of November and are turned out on pasture during California's rainy season. California has some of the best and most productive grasslands. Over the approximate 180 days, they gain more than 50% of their body weight — going from about 500 lbs to nearly 800 — all on native grass.

Upon arrival the calves are weighed,

given vaccinations and de-wormer, branded, and sorted to their pastures for the winter. This process is often repeated in February, giving the rancher data at the half-way mark on the cattle's growth and ensuring they remain healthy with another dose of de-wormer. During their time grazing the fields the cowboys have a system and pattern established to where each field is ridden through and cattle observed about every three days. Ranch hands are trained to identify illness quickly — especially when calves are new to the ranch and adjusting to weather and may have travel stress.

Come spring, it's shipping season. Ranchers have several outlets for their cattle with some being sold through video auctions or sale barns and others through private sales. The Lasgoitys have worked with their broker for about 18 years. This well-established partnership and relationship is just one key to everything running successfully and smoothly.

Michele Lasgoity shared some insights into how the business has changed over the years. Genetics and breeding are more advanced, producing more efficient animals. But perhaps the biggest shift has come from the consumer — people want to know where their food comes from and how it was raised.



That's why the Lasgoitys prioritize traceability and quality. Each calf is tagged with an EID button that logs its source and age. They participate in USDA-sanctioned programs like Verified Natural (no antibiotics) and NHTC (Non-Hormone Treated Cattle), and they're certified by the Global Animal Partnership at Step 4 — meaning their commitment to humane care is verified by multiple third parties.

If a calf needs to be treated with antibiotics, it gets a separate tag and is sorted out at loadout for another buyer so that it doesn't violate the contract. Everything is documented, tracked, and taken seriously.

Final Thoughts

By the end of the day, I was hot, dirty, and covered in all the things you'd expect after a day working cattle — mostly mud and manure. But I couldn't stop smiling.

There's something incredibly rewarding about being part of a system that works — not just because of efficiency, but because of intention. Every step of the day was grounded in care: for the cattle, for the land, for the people buying the beef, and for the legacy of ranching itself.

So yeah, I'll take the dirt, the sweat, and even the rogue steers — because behind every steak on a plate is a day like this, and people who care enough to do it right.



On the Record: Debra Kawahara talks mental health in agriculture

Ag Alert, California Farm Bureau

Debra Kawahara is president of the American Psychological Association and associate dean of academic affairs at the California School of Professional Psychology, Alliant International University. Her family farms in San Diego County. Kawahara responded to questions during an interview with Ag Alert®.

The below conversation was edited for length and clarity.

How did you become a psychologist? I had decided I wanted to work with underserved communities that were not getting mental health services. My goal was to become an executive director of a community mental health center. My career took a change because I met my husband. He has a farm, and you can't just up and move the farm. So, I pivoted to academics, and I have a small independent practice.

Can you tell me about your family's farm? We live on a 160-acre farm in San Diego County. My husband, Neil Nagata, is a third-generation farmer. He grows strawberries, blueberries, cherimoyas and some assorted vegetables.

How has being part of a farming family affected your outlook on life or your approach to psychology? It has taught me to be flexible and accept that some things are out of my control. In farming, there are lots of factors you can't control. Even if you put all that investment into it and work really hard, it doesn't guarantee a successful outcome. You can plan, but things don't always go according to plan. It's important to be able to cope with and manage that.

What are some of the stressors farmers deal with that can affect mental health? First and foremost, it's finances. Whether it's the market, trade, tariffs, interest rates, minimum wage increases, all of these are things farmers have to contend with, and for a lot of farmers, it's becoming harder and harder to make things pencil out.

It's not only about the finances and the business. Farmers take such pride in what they do. I think about my own husband and him wanting to sustain his family's farming legacy. When you're not able to, it can be heartbreaking. Farming can be a lifelong identity that has been woven into the fabric of who they are. When that falls apart, it's devastating.

That's what the financial part is really about—the stress of not being able to make it. We all know what it's like when things are hard financially, but it carries so much more weight for them. Farmers also think about their workers and how they could be affected if they can't sustain their business.

What role does stigma play in deterring farmers—or people in general—from seeking mental health treatment? Rural communities tend to be close-knit, and farmers tend to pride themselves on being independent and self-sufficient. They want to stand on their own two feet. Oftentimes, mental health concerns are seen as a weakness, so stigma does play a role in the reluctance we sometimes see in seeking mental health treatment.

One of the things we do to try to reduce the stigma is called mental health literacy, which is about educating people about mental health and promoting the mindset that it is part of a person's overall health, which includes their physical and mental health. Another thing is putting mental health services in buildings where other services are offered, such as a county agriculture building, so people can seek out mental health services without everyone knowing where they're going.

There are well documented gaps in health care services in rural areas. Is there a similar lack of rural mental health services? Yes. There are many rural communities that do not have enough mental health care providers. We also know that a lot of rural mental health clinics are closing because they don't have the finances to stay open, and so the distance that people in rural communities have to travel to access care can be an obstacle.

How do you think attitudes around mental health have changed—or not changed—during the past 20 years? I think there's been an acknowledgment in society at large, and also on farms, that mental health issues are important. But there is still much work to be done to overcome the stigma and encourage help-seeking behaviors.

Data consistently show suicide affects farmers at higher rates than the general population. What can be done to help? It is very concerning. I think part of it is the stressors we talked about and the stigma around mental health in rural communities. There's a belief that "you don't hang your dirty laundry out for everyone to see." One thing that can help is educating people to notice behavior changes in friends and family—whether it's withdrawing or seeming like they don't have the energy they used to have or giving away prized possessions. Then, it's about trying to talk to that person, supporting and encouraging them, letting them know they're not alone, and trying to get them help if they need it.

What are some of the mental health benefits that working in agriculture might provide? That's a great question, and it's something that's often not talked about. The close-knit community that exists in agriculture is a big strength. It provides stability and resilience, and creates a community where people come together to help each other. That kind of social connection is really valuable for our mental health. Farming communities also tend to hold on to cultural heritage, values and rituals, and all of that produces a positive identity. Another benefit is having access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Having that in your diet can also improve mental health.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

President's Message Continued

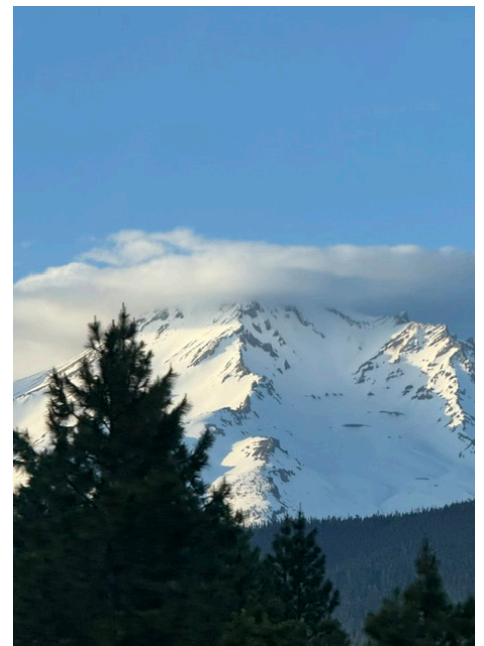
I often tell people that my life is either full throttle or near stop. There's a lyric in the Luke Combs song "Ain't No Love in Oklahoma" that sums up life for me, "I keep running, but I'm standing still. Pray for peace, but I need the thrill." I'm looking forward to the Summer break, but come September I'll be chomping at the bit for my harvest to come and I'll be readying my part of the race car hauler for a trip to Wisconsin for the final championship races. Before I know it, the holiday season will be upon me and I'll be saying that I will be glad to have a short Winter's nap.

I hope you all enjoy the pictures I've had Anne include with this message. And, for goodness sake, rest when you can but also, hang on to those reins of life!



Top: Ryan on the top step at Hallett!, Ryan receiving a "motivational discussion" (it must have worked!), and Birthday flowers from the kids

Bottom: Portland bound, Motorcycle trip, and Mount Shasta on the way to Washington



Gene-Edited Pigs Approved for US Market

From California Ag Network

Pigs produced to be resistant to one of the world's most costly livestock diseases, using technology developed by the Roslin Institute, have been approved for sale to US consumers.

The US Food and Drug Administration has approved the use of a gene-editing technology that makes pigs resistant to Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS) for the US food supply chain.

This landmark approval for animal genetics company Genus, following years of development, helps meet the challenge of a disease that is endemic to most pig-producing regions.

The infection, which causes fever, respiratory distress, and premature births, costs industry approximately \$2.5 billion (£1.75bn) each year in lost revenue in the US and Europe alone.

The approval follows years of close collaboration with the FDA and is a significant step on the pathway to commercialisation of gene-edited pigs in the US, and other international markets.

Technology development

Researchers at the University of Edinburgh's Roslin Institute focused their efforts on the CD163 gene in pigs. This gene produces a receptor on the surface of cells, which the PRRS virus uses to cause infection.

Experts removed a small section of this gene, focusing on the section of the receptor that the virus attaches to, leaving the rest of the molecule intact.

Supported by Edinburgh Innovations (EI), the University of Edinburgh's commercialisation service, the team collaborated with Genus, who also licensed novel technologies from other institutions, to produce pigs with the specific DNA change.

The resulting pigs do not become infected with the virus, and the animals show no signs that the change in their DNA has had any other impact on their health or wellbeing.

Professor Bruce Whitelaw, of the Roslin Institute, said:

"We are delighted to see the PRRS-resistant pig gene-edit approved for use – this is a milestone in the use of gene editing in livestock, and a landmark moment for the livestock industry towards managing a global disease that causes devastating losses."

Jorgen Kokke, CEO of Genus, said:

"FDA approval is a fantastic achievement for Genus PIC and represents a major step towards US commercialisation. We will now continue to pursue regulatory approvals in other international jurisdictions with a focus on key US export markets."

"We have spent years conducting extensive research, validating our findings and working with the FDA to gain approval," added Matt Culbertson, Genus PIC's Chief Operating Officer.

Dr Susan Bodie, EI's head of business development at the University of Edinburgh's College of Medicine and Vet Medicine, said:

"This is a very exciting development in translating cutting-edge research into a major solution for the food production industry.

"Gene editing – making targeted changes to DNA in a lab – allows scientists to rapidly introduce beneficial traits in plants and animals, which can take decades to achieve through traditional breeding programmes.

"EI is proud to support Roslin Institute researchers to work with industry on pioneering world-changing animal bioscience like this."

About Edinburgh Innovations

Edinburgh Innovations is the University of Edinburgh's commercialisation service. We benefit society and the economy by helping researchers, students and industry drive innovation. We seek opportunities, we build partnerships for mutual benefit, we make the journey easy, and we add value at every stage. We make ideas work for a better world.



CA WATER FOR ALL: New Research Shows Billions in Economic Risk from Continued State Inaction on Water Supply

Press Release from CA Water for All, 5/15/25

A new economic analysis by Jay Lund (UC Davis), Josué Medellín-Azuara (UC Merced), and Alvar Escriva-Bou (UC Davis) shows the high cost of inaction on California's perpetual water supply challenges, estimating that the state could lose enough water annually to supply up to 9 million households—with economic losses totaling between \$3.4 and \$14.5 billion per year, depending on the severity of the scenario.

The study, *Inaction's Economic Cost for California's Water Supply Challenges*, builds on prior research showing that California's total water supply is on track to shrink by 12–25% by 2050, a loss of up to 9 million acre-feet per year, equivalent to one or two Lake Shastas. The new report emphasizes that without coordinated state action, these reductions could result in the fallowing of up to 3 million acres of farmland, the loss of 67,000 jobs, and lasting damage to California's agricultural and rural communities.

The research underscores the urgency of Senate Bill 72, authored by Senator Anna Caballero, which would create the first-ever statewide water supply target and direct California to develop 9 million acre-feet of new water supply by 2040. The bill aims to bring federal, state, regional, and local partners together to better plan, invest, and build toward a more secure, reliable, and sustainable water future.

The study identifies four primary factors contributing to California's anticipated water supply decline:

1. Groundwater Management: Implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) limiting groundwater extraction.
2. Climate Change: Diminished snowpack reducing natural water storage.
3. Environmental Needs: Increased water requirements to support ecosystems and combat sea-level rise.
4. Colorado River Reductions: Decreased allocations affecting Southern California.

"We've done the math—and the costs of inaction are high economically and environmentally," said Dr. Jay Lund, Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at UC Davis. "California urgently needs a long-term, statewide strategy to prepare for growing water challenges ahead."

While conservation efforts remain vital, the research indicates they alone are insufficient to address the projected water deficit. New investments in stormwater capture, water recycling, desalination, and storage and conveyance infrastructure are also essential.

"California's water system was designed for a climate that no longer exists," said Senator Caballero. "SB 72 provides a roadmap to adapt our water strategies and tactics to meet the demands of our changing environment, expanding economy, and growing population."

"From the local perspective, a statewide strategy to improve California's water resilience that includes long-term planning and investment will not succeed without measurable outcomes and timelines," said Paul Cook, General Manager of Irvine Ranch Water District. "SB 72 represents a critical step toward aligning regional efforts with a broader, coordinated vision—ensuring that communities across California are better equipped to address ongoing and future water supply challenges."

Last year, Senator Caballero authored a similar bill that enjoyed unanimous support from the Legislature in both houses but was vetoed by Governor Newsom due to budget concerns and a budget deficit. SB 72 includes many of the same provisions and with a better budget year projected and increased pressure from climate driven wildfires, the coalition is optimistic that the bill can generate unanimous legislative support again and get a signature from Governor Newsom.

Co-sponsors of SB 72 include the California Municipal Utilities Association (CMUA), the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), and the California Council for Environmental and Economic Balance (CCEEB).

To learn more about SB 72, visit the state's Legislative Bill Information portal. CA Water For All is a statewide effort seeking to educate policymakers on the urgent need for a legislative solution to address California's ongoing water supply challenges. The effort is focused on bringing together the water community, policymakers, and stakeholders to collaborate on ensuring Californians have a sustainable and reliable water supply for all beneficial uses now and for future generations. To learn more or become a supporter, visit www.CaWaterForAll.com.

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Wildlife Specialist; Madera County
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"This is a county cost share program provided for agricultural producers of Madera county facing wildlife damage or depredation to livestock, crops, or property. Commonly known as a "government trapper" and based in Madera, I specialize in medium to large mammalian wildlife species. Direct control or technical assistance can be provided at producer's request. Contact the cell phone number provided for more information."

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Bankruptcies show stress in farm economy

Ching Lee, California Farm Bureau Ag Alert

Source: American Farm Bureau, Graphic: Shawn Collins

After a four-year downward trend, U.S. farm bankruptcies are on the rise again, and with uncertainties about the impacts of U.S. tariffs on export trade, there's growing concern that the financial health of farms across the country will continue to falter.

A total of 216 U.S. farms filed for Chapter 12 bankruptcy last year, up 55% from 2023. With 17 filings, California led the nation.

Peter Fear, a bankruptcy attorney in Fresno, said he has seen an uptick in farmers seeking consultations on debt relief during the past year and a half.

He cited three major factors pinching California farmers: lower commodity prices, especially for crops such as tree nuts and winegrapes; increased operating costs, including higher wages for employees; and elevated interest rates, which have increased borrowing costs and further strained farmers' cash flow.

But pressures that have forced farmers to seek financial relief have been simmering for some time, he noted, and bankruptcies represent a last resort after they have exhausted all other options.

"This is not new," Fear said. "This is not something that happened in the last 90 days. This is something that has been happening for several years."

Shawn Gill, who farms almonds in Sutter, Placer and Fresno counties, has been trying to reorganize his debts under Chapter 12 after several weather-related bad crop years that were made worse by depressed almond prices and soaring expenses. With interest rates that surged from 2.9% to nearly 9%, his monthly payments shot up from \$6,000 to \$28,000. Before filing for bankruptcy, he had already sold a vineyard in Lodi to try to cover some of his debt.

"It's just the tip of the iceberg," Gill said, noting he has friends who are in a similar situation. "You're going to see a lot more bankruptcies or people going under."

Because Chapter 12 is designed specifically for family farmers with more than 50% of their debts in farming, the filings do not account for all farm bankruptcies. Farms that are over the debt limit—currently at \$11,097,350—may need to file Chapter 11, Fear said, noting a lot of farms have gone this route. Those that have been liquidated typically file Chapter 7. In addition, there are other types of proceedings besides bankruptcy "that demonstrate the distress that farms are going through," he said.

Fear said he has worked with dairy farms that have used Chapter 7 because "there's just no way to make it work financially." Such filings were more prevalent from 2009 to 2012 amid the economic downturn triggered by the subprime mortgage crisis. The period from 2010 to 2012 also saw the most Chapter 12 bankruptcies in California during the past 24 years, with 66, 67 and 66 filings, respectively.

Fear said he's now seeing new Chapter 7 filings by dairies—and more cases involving almonds.

Created in 1986, Chapter 12 bankruptcy allows financially distressed family farmers and fishermen to repay debts in seasonal installments over three to five years while keeping their operation in business. Linda Coco, a law professor at the University of the Pacific McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento, said Chapter 12 is different from other chapters of the Bankruptcy Code because it "addresses the unique experience of the farmer," whose livelihoods are attached to the land they own.

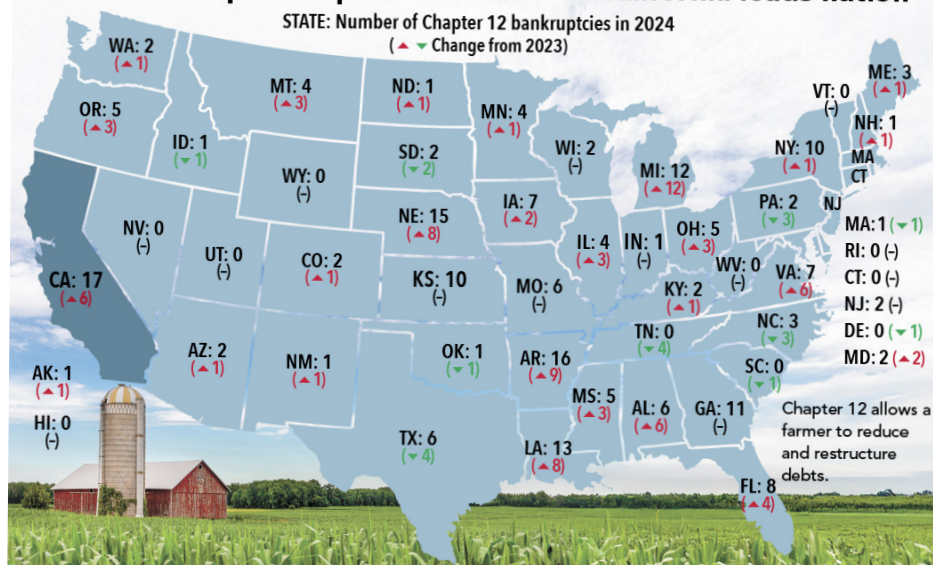
"The whole idea of Chapter 12 is to prevent the creditors from having access to the debtor's land," she said.

Because Chapter 12 is specifically tailored to Coco said, it is less common than other bankruptcies, and upticks in filings usually indicate "something's really, really wrong."

For example, from 2009 to 2018, Chapter 12 accounted for 0.05% of all bankruptcy filings compared to 67% for Chapter 7, 32% for Chapter 13 and 1% for Chapter 11, according to calculations by the American Farm Bureau Federation. During that time, California had the most Chapter 12 filings, with 408.

AFBF economist Samantha Ayoub said it is possible that California and other states with specialty crops, such as Michigan, saw higher levels of bankruptcies because they face rising labor costs and import competition. Others note higher-value crops often require higher input costs. CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

family farmers and fishermen, Farm bankruptcies up 55% from 2023: California leads nation



One reason Chapter 12 is not often used is farmers typically get federal support during crisis moments, Coco said, including crop insurance, loans and programs to address low commodity prices and losses due to natural disasters, pests and diseases.

But Arshdeep Singh, a Fresno County citrus grower and director of the Punjabi American Growers Group, said there is no support for California farmers in the San Joaquin Valley who have been financially pummeled by impacts of the state's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Some have filed for bankruptcy or are on the verge of it as their land value has plummeted and their equity has evaporated, with banks calling on their loans.

"Right now, there's not an option for those growers because once they're down, they're down. They have to file bankruptcy," Singh said.

With commodity prices sliding and grower margins becoming thinner, he said he expects SGMA-related bankruptcies will grow exponentially in the next three to five years.

Beyond bankruptcies, Michael Naito, who grows almonds, pistachios and grapes in Madera and Fresno counties, said he has seen an increasing number of farmers in recent years choosing to sell off their assets and exit the business simply because "they don't want that kind of stress." Some of them are farming families that have farmed for generations, he added.

Whereas others would have swooped in to buy those farms in the past, Naito said people are much more cautious today and less willing to take the risk of expanding, especially with concerns about the Trump administration's tariffs and impacts on export trade and the economy.

"They don't want to extend themselves," Naito said. "They're just waiting it out."

California's oranges seeing demand outpacing supply

Astrid van den Broek, FreshPlaza.com

The demand is exceeding the supply for both Navel and Valencia oranges from California. "We are doing our very best to stretch supplies to keep oranges on the shelf for our partners," says Jesse Silva of Kings River Packing, a family-owned and operated eight-generation grower-packer-shipper. "One challenge is matching the right amount of supply with overall demand as it always changes."

It's a bit of a different picture from last year at this time. This season has better quality fruit but with very high demand—in fact, Navel and other orange varieties have exceeded original demand projections.

All of this also started with an early start to the California citrus crop given there were warmer summer temperatures during the growing season that increased sugar levels and dropped the acid levels in the fruit. "That trend has carried consistently throughout the growing season. We expect the crops to finish earlier than normal or more on time depending on crop yield and quality. Each commodity and variety do vary so we approach them very differently," says Silva.

Right now, King's River is packing and shipping Late Summer Navels, Heirloom Navels, Raspberry Oranges—an exclusive brand of Blood Oranges from Kings River—Lemons, Poppies Mandarins, Gold Nugget Mandarins, Red Grapefruit, Organic Poppies Mandarins, Organic Navels, Organic Lemons, Cara Cara Navels and Valencia juicing Oranges.

Along with California citrus, which Kings River Packing runs year-round supply on some items, it also ships citrus from Morocco from January to April and Chilean, Peruvian, and Argentinian fruit from June to October. "The growing and harvest conditions have been across the board ideal. Much different than last season as the weather impacted many different things," says Silva, adding that South Africa and Australia are starting or close to starting their seasons in a small way. All countries are impacted by U.S. tariffs ranging from 10 percent to 30 percent on imports coming into the country.

With strong, steady demand for California citrus, prices are also stronger than a few months ago although that is typical for this time in the season. "Overall prices this season are a little lower than last season because of the higher crop yield and necessary promotions to move the larger crop," says Silva. "We see strong summer season prices setting up for U.S. citrus programs as retailers are looking to promote summer citrus. Consumers desire high-quality citrus products all year long, citrus in general is a staple item for the produce category."

Looking ahead, strong supply is matching up with good promotions on Valencias, Lemons, Mandarins, and Raspberry Oranges. Navels and some organics will also wind down over the next few months. "Navels pick up when we move into imports in early July," says Silva, noting that while retailers will shift the focus to more seasonal items like berries, stone fruit, and grapes, citrus items will continue to be a staple product for consumers.

He also notes another challenge growers and shippers are dealing with is assessing these seasonal transitional windows with ever-changing weather that may or may not affect fruit quality. "Planning the seasonal roadmap is key to the success of our relationships, so we are focused on being the best at this by adding a lot of resources in this area for our partners. We focus on the year-round picture with the best fruit for our partners, so they don't have to worry about being out of stock or having subpar fruit," says Silva.

How the agriculture community can team up to stop equipment theft

Nicole Wojtkiewicz, special to WaterWrights.net

Agricultural equipment theft is a growing concern for farmers and rural businesses, with losses amounting to millions of dollars each year. From tractors and GPS systems to irrigation pumps and hand tools, high-value machinery is an attractive target for criminals due to its valuable parts that can be stripped for copper wiring and other parts. The vast, often remote nature of farmlands makes surveillance challenging, and with limited law enforcement presence in rural areas, thieves have ample opportunity to strike.

However, while the threat is increasing, so are the solutions – many of which rely on the power of community collaboration. Strong local networks, shared vigilance, and coordinated security efforts can significantly reduce the risk of theft. By fostering a culture of awareness and cooperation, farmers, business owners, and law enforcement can work together to protect valuable assets and deter criminal activity before it happens.

The Growing Problem of Equipment Theft in Agriculture

Equipment theft is a growing threat for the agriculture industry, with criminals targeting high-value machinery, fuel, and tractors, quads, front loaders, side-by-sides, batteries, generators, and irrigation pumps – essential to farming operations – are frequently targeted and damaged, leading to significant financial and operational setbacks. Many rural farm sites lack secured lots, forcing workers to transport tools and equipment daily, which increases logistical challenges and vulnerability to theft.

The remoteness of agricultural sites makes them prime targets, as criminals have realized they can operate unnoticed. With vast land areas, minimal security infrastructure, and law enforcement agencies – often sheriff's departments – spread thin, response times are slow, and thefts frequently go undetected until significant losses occur. For farmers, stolen equipment and materials must be replaced immediately to avoid production delays, sometimes at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

in particular, has become a growing concern, as it is present in nearly all farm equipment. Thieves strip copper wiring from irrigation pumps and harvesting machines, causing damages that range from \$7,000 to \$30,000 per pump. Some tractors cost as much as \$500,000, and when they are vandalized for scrap metal or parts, the repair costs and operational downtime can be devastating. Additionally, stealing copper wiring from live wells poses a dangerous risk – both to the criminals and to the surrounding area – potentially leading to explosions or electrocution.

Beyond the financial loss, vandalism is another major concern. Criminals often leave behind destruction, damaging farm infrastructure, slashing tires, or breaking irrigation systems. The isolated nature of these locations allows them to operate freely, compounding the financial burden on farmers. Each day a piece of equipment is out of operation, farms can lose tens of thousands of dollars in revenue, making equipment theft not just a crime, but an existential threat to agricultural businesses.

The Power of Community Collaboration

In response to these challenges, farmers, local businesses, and law enforcement agencies are increasingly working together to deter equipment theft. Community collaboration is proving to be one of the most effective methods in combating crime, as it creates a network of vigilance and shared information.

For example, the San Joaquin Sheriff's Department and Agricultural Task Force have implemented an email chain that includes relevant agricultural businesses, alerting them to theft trends, recent incidents, and suspicious vehicles in the area. This initiative helps farmers stay informed and proactive in preventing further losses. Since agricultural businesses frequently rely on referrals and word-of-mouth for everything from equipment purchases to best practices, expanding conversations about theft prevention is a natural progression for the industry.

Neighboring farms and county-level agricultural crime task forces are also playing a crucial role. Farmers are beginning to recognize that if theft is happening to a nearby farm, it's only a matter of time before they could be targeted next. Trends that have long plagued areas such as Bakersfield and Kern County are now spreading north into Fresno, Merced, Madera, Lodi, and Salinas. By strengthening communication and working together, farmers can stay ahead of evolving threats.

Practical Strategies for Strengthening Community Security

Strengthening security in rural farming areas requires a combination of communication, technology, and strategic planning. Farmers are implementing neighborhood watch-style programs where local agricultural businesses stay in constant contact about suspicious activity. In every county, law enforcement agencies should establish a dedicated agricultural crime task force to provide a more focused response to farm-related theft.

One area for improvement is the use of digital platforms for real-time theft alerts. While many farms still operate using traditional security measures, adopting modern crime reporting networks, similar to the CargoNet system used in the trucking industry, could significantly improve theft prevention. These platforms would allow farmers to self-report crimes while also integrating with law enforcement databases for more effective tracking.

Coordinating with local law enforcement is also essential — but many farm sites lack power sources and Wi-Fi, making traditional motion cameras and alarm systems impractical. As a result, some farmers resort to hiring staff to patrol large properties, an approach that's often inefficient and costly due to the sheer scale of the land. Investing in advanced security technology offers a smarter, more reliable solution for protecting expansive agricultural sites — and can ultimately pay for itself by preventing theft and reducing long-term expenses.

Leveraging Technology and Security Solutions

Protecting agricultural sites has never been more challenging — or more important. To stay ahead, farmers need smarter, more reliable solutions that combine technology with proven physical security measures.

One industry leader who understands these challenges firsthand is , now managing security for a multi-farm holding company. After hearing about AMAROK from a colleague in the towing industry, he sought help for one of his farms in Lodi, which had been repeatedly hit by thieves. Despite securing a vulnerable pump with a wrought iron cage, criminals persisted — stealing copper wiring and causing between \$7,000 and \$15,000 in damages per incident.

This repeated cycle of theft and financial loss made it clear that traditional security measures weren't enough. Patterson turned to Now an AMAROK customer, he's already spreading the word to others in his industry, highlighting the difference a proactive and personalized solution can make.

Patterson's experiences highlight a growing reality for farmers across the industry: traditional security solutions alone are no longer sufficient. While options like perimeter fencing, lighting, surveillance cameras, and alarm systems play a role, the most effective approach combines deterrence, real-time monitoring, and rapid response. AMAROK's Electric Guard Dog fence delivers exactly that, blending traditional security with advanced technology to provide a proven 99% theft prevention rate after installation. Unlike traditional detection systems that rely on power or Wi-Fi, often unavailable at remote sites, AMAROK's system is fully solar-powered, making reliable security possible anywhere.

The success of AMAROK's solutions is not limited to just one farm. One agricultural customer now protects 15 sites with the system, reporting such remarkable success that they've hosted over 10 site tours for industry partners eager to achieve the same level of protection.

Beyond security, the financial benefits of investing in these types of solutions are significant. By preventing even a single major theft or vandalism event, farmers can save tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of dollars in damages, downtime, and lost productivity. With crime on the rise, taking proactive measures isn't just an option — it's a necessity.

Key Takeaways

Equipment theft and damage in agriculture is an escalating issue that threatens the financial stability and productivity of farms across the country. The rural nature of these operations makes them vulnerable, but community collaboration and innovative security solutions are proving to be effective deterrents. By working together, sharing information, and investing in modern security technologies, the agricultural industry can take proactive steps to safeguard its valuable assets.

As theft trends continue to evolve, so must the strategies used to combat them. Stronger communication networks, real-time theft alerts, and advanced security systems will play a vital role in ensuring that agricultural businesses remain protected and productive for years to come.

Don't leave your farm vulnerable to theft. Strengthen your security strategy with community collaboration and industry-leading protection. Contact AMAROK to see how our solutions can help keep your equipment safe.

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New fig tree plantings could extend California season



Astrid van den Broek, FreshPlaza.com

All signs are pointing towards a good spring Breba fig crop from California. "The first crop of Black Mission figs should start probably in the first week of June and run hopefully throughout June, weather permitting," says Erik Herman of The Specialty Crop Co.

Following that, the main crop of Brown Turkey figs should begin in mid-July with green figs about a week or two after that. Then, the second crop of Black Mission figs will start around July 25. "Everything looks really good. The weather has been good and we've had good rainfall in California," says Herman, adding that while the crop looks similar in size to last year, younger plantings are coming on and could produce fruit later into the season to help extend the crop.

In addition, there is also the Emerald fig which The Specialty Crop planted last year and should see good production for distribution this year. "Customers are excited about this—it's a really big, yellow-green fig, kind of like a Calimyrna fig, but it's self-pollinating," says Herman. "We're excited for the upcoming season of these."

This timing is closer to a historical average start, though it is slightly earlier than last year's start.

As for demand, he anticipates it to be good for the crop with much of it distributed domestically while some is exported to Canada. "People are excited about figs and customers are asking and ready for them," he says. Meanwhile, pricing is expected to be slightly higher than last year thanks to increased input costs on labor, electricity, fertilizers, and potential increases related to tariffs.

For more information:

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USDA forecasts 2.8B lbs of California almonds in 2025

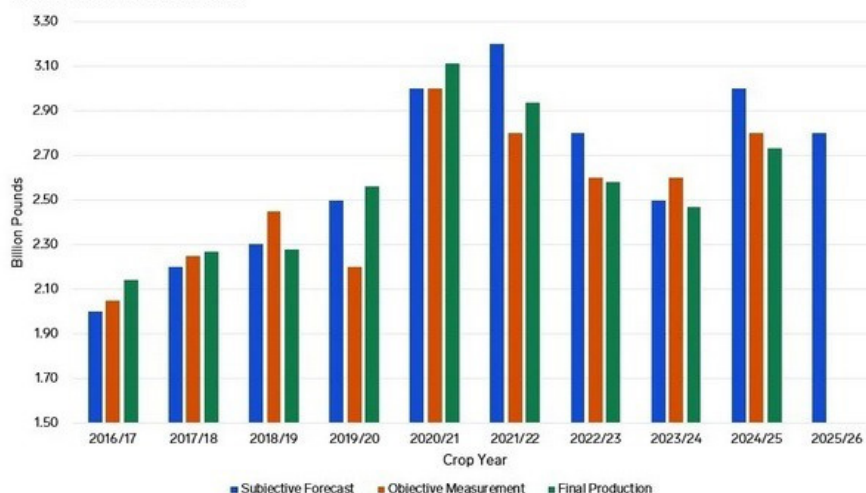
Mintec/Expansa

Each year, the USDA surveys California almond growers to gauge prior yields and current expectations. These findings contribute to the USDA's initial Subjective Forecast. In 2025, the forecast predicts 2,010 pounds per acre across 1.39 million acres, totaling 2.8 billion pounds. The 2024 figures were 1,980 pounds per acre from 1.38 million acres, resulting in 2.73 billion pounds.

The 2024 Subjective Forecast initially estimated 3 billion pounds, but the Objective Measurement in July revised this to 2.8 billion pounds, with the final yield at 2.73 billion pounds. Sellers express caution, with some stating, "The 2024 crop looked to be in better condition at this stage than the 2025 crop does currently."

Buyers, on the other hand, believe supply constraints may ease, expecting prices to drop. Market activity for the 2025/26 crop remains

USDA Almond Production



On the Record; Continued

What kinds of mental health resources are available for farmers? There is free online training from the National Farmers Union, Farm Credit and the American Farm Bureau Federation designed to help family members, friends and neighbors address the farm stress crisis in their own communities, reduce stigma and connect farmers and ranchers with appropriate resources.

The AFBF Farm State of Mind campaign is at www.fb.org/initiative/farm-state-of-mind. The Farm Stress Education training can be found at nfu.org/education/farm-stress-education/.

The American Psychological Association has a list of licensed psychologists and mental health indicators at www.apa.org/workforce/data-tools/mental-health-indicators.

Another resource is the Farm Aid Hotline, which is 1-800-FARM-AID. It operates Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. The Farmer Resource Network is Farm Aid's online directory of more than 750 organizations that work with farmers on a variety of issues.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can be reached by calling 988.

New MCFB Campaign: Mental Health Awareness

Anne Deniz, MCFB

The Madera County Farm Bureau is proud to launch a new mental health awareness campaign aimed at supporting the well-being of our local agricultural workforce. Inspired by a successful initiative shared at the 2025 American Farm Bureau Convention, this project brings vital mental health resources directly to the hands—and workplaces—of farmers, ranchers, and ag workers throughout Madera County.

The campaign will feature informational cards, equipment decals, and yard signs with links to trusted mental health support services. Materials will be available in English, Spanish, and Punjabi to reflect the diversity of our ag community. Resources are accessible by scanning a QR code that links to MCFB's mental health page: maderaafb.com/mental-health-resources.

The cards, decals, and signs will be distributed at local equipment dealerships, ag supply stores, the MCFB office, and beyond. MCFB will also share information through our e-blasts, magazine, social media, and local press to increase visibility and reach.

This campaign is part of a larger effort to reduce stigma around mental health and connect those in agriculture with the help they need—quietly, quickly, and without judgment.

If your business would like to help distribute materials or display a sign, contact Anne at (559) 674-8871 or anne@maderaafb.com.



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