



# California Farm Equipment Magazine

MARCH 2026 Volume 45 • Number 3

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## Salty Water, Shrinking Yields, Rising Food Costs

Across many U.S. agricultural regions, a quiet problem is driving up costs for farmers and families alike: irrigation water that crops cannot use. As heat waves intensify and water supplies tighten, salts dissolved in soil and irrigation water increasingly limit crops' ability to absorb moisture. This condition—known as physiological drought—occurs when water is physically present in the soil but unavailable to plants because of the dissolved salts. The result is hidden water stress that contributes to lower yields, higher input costs, and growing pressure on food prices.

Live Earth Products, a U.S.-based soil health company, is stepping into that gap with a low-salt, humic-based approach designed to help farmers protect water efficiency, improve soil structure, and enhance nutrient use efficiency at a time when agriculture is under growing strain.

According to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates, more than 20% of irrigated farmland in the western United States is already affected by salinity, reducing crop performance even in fields that receive adequate irrigation. As drought and heat stress increase, evaporation-driven salt concentration is expected to intensify, adding pressure to farmers already navigating tariffs, volatile markets, and shrinking margins.

"Water is a plant's number one priority. When crops cannot take up water, farmers lose yield even when they do everything right," said Russell Taylor, CCA, vice president of Live Earth. "That

loss doesn't end at the field edge. It compounds across supply chains, food prices, and weaker rural economies."

Salinity functions like an invisible drought. As salt levels rise, plants must expend more metabolic energy to extract the same amount of water, reducing growth and nutrient uptake. Many conventional soil amendments can unintentionally compound this stress. Products such as gypsum or sulfur are often used to address soil issues, but they are also soluble salts. Without sufficient leaching conditions, repeated applications can increase electrical conductivity in the root zone, stacking osmotic stress during the hottest and most water-limited parts of the growing season.

Live Earth is challenging that cycle with its humate-based product line, a low-salt alternative designed to improve soil aggregate stability, increase nutrient availability, and support water retention without raising salinity. Rather than adding more soluble inputs, the approach focuses on improving how soils manage water and ions—working with water instead of competing against it.

"Farmers are being asked to produce more with less water, less margin, and more risk," Taylor said. "Continuing to add salt to already stressed systems is no longer a sustainable solution.

Live Earth Products are the choice of organic and conventional buyers. Please visit [www.liveearth.com](http://www.liveearth.com) for more information.

# Tell Me Something Good ... About Salmon

## 15 years of Floodplain Fatties Paves Way for Promising New Chapter



*A researcher walks into flooded rice fields during a release of juvenile salmon at Knaggs Ranch in February 2016. Nearly 10 years later, such pilot tests became the proof of concept needed for a large state project that is helping more fish access the Yolo Bypass and critical floodplain habitat. (Gregory Urquiaga/UC Davis).*

by Kat Kerlin

For every bad thing happening in the world, there are good people trying to make things right. Sometimes they even win. That's why I'm starting a new series on this blog called "Tell Me Something Good."

I'm opening it up with Carson Jeffres, a UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences researcher who helped inspire the idea, simply by telling me something good. I needed to hear it. Maybe you do, too.

Almost exactly 15 years ago, researchers at UC Davis, California Trout and other partners started testing a wacky idea: Let's plant salmon in rice fields to see how they grow. Could these winter-flooded fields serve as "nurseries" for struggling Central Valley salmon populations, allowing them a place to rest and feast on bugs before making their way to the ocean? It was called the Nigiri Project, a refreshing blend of rice and fish.

Not only did it work, but salmon raised in rice fields grew two- to five times bigger than those raised in rivers, earning them the nickname "floodplain fatties."

The experimental pilot projects, conducted at Knaggs Ranch, showed that flooded rice fields could act as healthy fish habitats. It was the proof of concept needed for a much bigger project – the Department of Water Resources' Big Notch Project — that launched last fall in Yolo County. That project cut a "notch" in Fremont Weir, installed new gates and carved new channels for salmon to improve flood control and fish passage.

When the Sacramento River overtopped the weir in early January, DWR opened the notch for the first time. Almost immediately, juvenile and adult salmon began passing

through. Sturgeon have also been spotted since its opening.

For UC Davis researcher Carson Jeffres, who was part of the Nigiri Project since its beginning, seeing these projects come together and what they mean for the future of salmon is a "career peak."

"These adult fish trying to get back into the Sacramento River would have been stuck in the bypass," said Jeffres, field and lab director of the Center for Watershed Sciences. Earlier this week, he helped partners at Knaggs Ranch and the Coleman National Fish Hatchery release about 300,000 baby salmon into the rice fields. The fish will soon be heading to the ocean, the opposite direction as the adults.

"Almost 15 years ago to the day, juvenile fish in meaningful numbers go into the fields and adult salmon pass through," said Jeffres. "It's pretty amazing."

With efforts like these afoot, Jeffres said he can't help but feel what has been an elusive emotion for many fish ecologists: hope. He's not alone; a colleague recently told him, "I almost think salmon won't go extinct."

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Media Resources

So, tell me something good! Are you a researcher with good news to share about your field or something that inspires you? Is there a bright spot in the worlds of energy, sustainable food, transportation, environmental justice, biodiversity, etc., that will benefit society? I know there is, and I'm here for it. There just needs to be a UC Davis connection. Reach out at [kekerlin@ucdavis.edu](mailto:kekerlin@ucdavis.edu).



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# 330 Million-Pound Forecast For California Avocado Harvest

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*"Photo courtesy of the California Avocado Commission".*

The California Avocado Commission announced its annual early-season crop forecast, projecting 330 million pounds of California avocados. This estimate includes 310 million pounds of Hass and 20 million pounds of GEM, Lamb Hass and other avocado varieties. With continual investment in new plantings and nearly 51,000 acres now producing California avocados, 2026 is expected to be the third consecutive year with volume in excess of 300 million pounds. While some harvesting already has occurred, the peak of promotable volume is expected from April into August.

"Recent rain in California generally was welcomed by growers due to its help with soil and tree health," said Terry Splane, Commission vice president of marketing. "Now there is hope for these sunny days to continue into spring to ensure fruit sizing."

CAC also announced that Terry Splane will retire on February 28.

"Leading the Commission's award-winning marketing program for the past several years has been one of the highlights of my 40-year career," said Splane. "I'm especially grateful to the dedicated CAC marketing staff, agency partners and inspirational group of avocado growers and industry leaders who made the work so impactful. My wife retired last year and now it is time for us to pursue our post-career journey together."

The California avocado consumer marketing program,

including its advertising and social media campaign, already has been developed and is ready to launch when the harvest reaches promotable volume levels. This year's campaign evolution incorporates actual California avocado growers who share what makes their fruit so special.

Customized retail and foodservice support programs are being built out for the upcoming season.

These programs can include traditional trade marketing activities such as retail displays, demos, signage, and foodservice limited time offers, as well as media support targeted to specific customers' patrons.

"Terry's leadership and vision played a critical role in strengthening the California avocados brand and advancing the Commission's goals, said Ken Melban, CAC president. We are deeply grateful for his many contributions and wish Terry a well-earned and rewarding retirement."

About the California Avocado Commission

Created in 1978, the California Avocado Commission strives to enhance the premium positioning of California avocados through advertising, promotion and public relations, and engages in related industry activities. Ethically sourced California avocados are sustainably farmed and locally grown for exceptional quality and freshness, by about 3,000 growers in the Golden State. The California Avocado Commission serves as the official information source for the California avocado industry. Visit [CaliforniaAvocado.com](http://CaliforniaAvocado.com).

# California Farm Equipment

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Publisher Joe L. Neyer III  
Associate Publisher Mona L. Neyer

Subscription Rate: Anywhere in the U.S. is \$18 for one year and \$36 for three years, payable in advance.

Website: [californiafarmequipment.com](http://californiafarmequipment.com)  
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Postmaster: Please send "Address Service Requested" corrections to California Farm Equipment, Post Office Box 1128, Visalia, CA 93279

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# Turn Up the Voltage on Spring Weed Control

LASCO's Lightning Weeder helps farmers respond with precision electrical weed control



Innovation at LASCO begins in the field, working alongside farmers who know their land, their timing, and the economic consequences of weed escapes. Lightning Weeder is more than a machine. It is a tool built on farmer insight and agronomic expertise to support both the science of crop growth and the realities of modern farming. Using LASCO's Electric Discharge System, the Lightning Weeder delivers precise electrical pulses directly to weeds, disrupting plant tissue from root to shoot while leaving surrounding crops and soil structure intact. This targeted approach reduces waste, minimizes chemical exposure risks, and preserves the living soil biology that underpins long-term productivity and resilience. Its high-performance

**A**s Spring planting approaches, farmers across the U.S. are facing one of the most consequential periods of the growing season under mounting pressure. Warmer spring soil temperatures, compressed planting windows, and increasingly unpredictable weather patterns are driving early-season weed emergence, forcing farmers to act quickly or risk yield loss before crops can fully develop. At the same time, rising input costs and the declining reliability of herbicide programs are reshaping weed management decisions at the field level. When early weed pressure erodes crop performance and drives up production costs, the impact does not stop at the farm gate, contributing to higher food prices for American consumers already navigating persistent inflation.<sup>1</sup>

LASCO is addressing these Spring farming realities with its Lightning Weeder™, a proven electrical weed control system designed to give farmers a dependable, non-chemical option when early-season weed pressure threatens productivity. As Spring fieldwork ramps up, Lightning Weeder provides farmers with a practical way to control aggressive weeds without adding chemical inputs, disrupting soil structure, or damaging crops, helping stabilize production costs while protecting yield potential when timing matters most.

Weeds compete aggressively with young crops for moisture, nutrients, and sunlight during the earliest growth stages, when crop potential is most vulnerable. Missed timing in Spring weed control can translate into irreversible losses later in the season, even when follow-up treatments are applied. As herbicide-resistant weeds continue to spread across major row-crop regions, many farmers are being pushed toward more complex and costly chemical programs or additional passes across the field. The result is higher fuel use, increased labor demands, and rising per-acre costs at a time when margins remain tight and operational efficiency is critical.

design is especially effective in row crops and diverse farming systems where herbicides are steadily losing their edge.

"The Spring season sets the trajectory for the entire year, and farmers don't have the luxury of waiting when weeds get ahead," said Kevin Olson, Head of LASCO. "When early weed pressure goes unmanaged, it drives up costs, erodes yield potential, and ultimately affects the price and availability of food. Lightning Weeder was built to give farmers control at the moment it matters most, with a tool that works alongside existing practices and reduces dependence on chemistry that is becoming less effective and more expensive."

Across farming regions, electrical weed control is gaining momentum as farmers search for tools that deliver consistent results under real-world field conditions. What was once viewed as experimental is now being recognized as a practical complement to integrated weed management programs, particularly as herbicide resistance expands and regulatory scrutiny around chemical use increases. Farmers are increasingly prioritizing solutions that protect crop performance, support soil health, and fit within tight Spring operating windows without adding unnecessary complexity or cost.

Driven by its brand promise, "Inspired by farmers. Grounded in performance.", LASCO developed the Lightning Weeder and its full product line with durability, longevity, and operational simplicity in mind. Designed to withstand demanding Spring conditions, the system delivers repeatable performance when early weed pressure can determine the success of the entire growing season.

LASCO invites farmers, agronomists, equipment dealers, and agricultural media to learn how electrical weed control can support more productive, efficient, and economically resilient Spring farming systems. With planting season fast approaching and weed pressure already emerging across many regions, the time to act is now.

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## Secretary Rollins Announces \$263 Million Food Purchase to Support U.S. Producers and Strengthen America's Food Supply

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) intent to purchase up to \$263 million in dairy and agricultural products from American farmers and producers to distribute to food banks and nutrition assistance programs across the country. These purchases are being made through USDA's authority under Section 32 of the Agriculture Act of 1935 and will assist producers and communities in need. With this action, the Trump Administration is bolstering American prosperity by supporting American agriculture, rural communities, and those in need of nutrition assistance.

"From milk and dairy to fruits, legumes, and tree nuts, these staples are essential for feeding families and sustaining America's agricultural economy," said Secretary Brooke Rollins. "Through these Section 32 purchases, USDA is delivering wholesome, real food to Americans while injecting critical dollars into local economies. By turning harvests into meals, we are not only stabilizing farm income and protecting rural jobs—we are nourishing our nation and supporting the farmers who feed America. Under President Trump's leadership, these investments strengthen the food supply, sustain rural communities, and reinforce agriculture as a cornerstone of

economic resilience."

Agricultural Marketing Service Section 32 Purchases AMS continuously purchases a variety of domestically produced and processed agricultural products. These "USDA Foods" are provided to USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) nutrition assistance programs, including food banks that operate The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and are a vital component of the nation's food safety net. USDA AMS will purchase up to \$263 million of the following commodities:

- Butter: \$75 million
- Cheddar Cheese and Cheese Products: \$32.5 million
- Swiss Cheese: \$10 million
- Fresh Fluid Milk: \$20.5 million
- Ultra-High Temperature Milk: \$10 million
- Chickpeas: \$12 million
- Dried Beans (Black and Pinto): \$25 million
- Fresh Pears: \$15 million
- Lentils: \$14 million
- Pecans: \$10 million
- Split Peas: \$24 million
- Walnuts: \$15 million

# New Tractors Shaping the Future of the Farm

## Case IH Launches Farmall 35A and 40A Compact Tractors for Enhanced Operator Comfort and Versatility



Case IH has introduced the latest additions to the Farmall® family: the Farmall 35A and 40A compact tractors. Built for versatility, engineered for comfort and designed to keep operations moving forward, the new Farmall compact series tractors deliver comfort-built power from sunup to sundown. Their adaptable design helps operators save both time and money.

Created for maximum operator comfort and safety, the Farmall 35A and 40A feature a wide platform and a spacious step-through design that make it easy to enter and exit the tractor. A premium cushioned seat and ergonomic controls ensure all-day comfort, while clear sightlines enhance safety and a strategically placed loader joystick allows for intuitive operation.

“The new Farmall 35A and 40A tractors are not only more comfortable, they make work easier and more efficient,” said Leo Bose, livestock customer segment leader at Case IH. “From operator station comforts to powerful capabilities, these compact tractors are designed with the operator in mind, simplifying tasks and maximizing control and productivity.”

Operators can choose between a 3-range hydrostatic transmission or a 12x12 gear transmission to best meet their needs. To maximize runtime by reducing fuel stops and maintenance, the Farmall 35A and 40A come standard with an easy-fill 12.6-gallon tank and a common-rail diesel injection system.

Powering implements is simple with an optional live third-function loader control, higher 3-point lift capacity and optional stackable hydraulic remotes. The new Farmall tractors also feature a dual pedal design for quick forward-to-reverse changes and also offer a factory-matched loader and improved backhoe with a quick-mount system for faster setup and better ground clearance.

The Farmall 35A and 40A come ready for an entry-level telematics modem to be installed. This enables easy and simple integration into Case IH FieldOps™ for 5 years of connectivity, where customers can monitor their machines in real-time and view GPS location through the app.

## New Holland Introduces Its Next-Generation Compact Tractors: WORKMASTER™ 35C and 40C



New Holland has expanded its compact tractor lineup with the launch of the WORKMASTER™ 35C and WORKMASTER™ 40C, two next-generation models designed to deliver comfort, capability and strong value. These tractors blend operator-focused ergonomics, improved performance, versatile new attachments and New Holland’s modern Connective Flow styling to create a more intuitive and productive operating experience.

“The WORKMASTER 35C and 40C represent the next step in elevating our compact tractor lineup,” says Mike Sevick, compact tractor business manager, New Holland North America. “These affordable, yet highly capable tractors are built with thoughtful design enhancements that keep operators comfortable, confident and productive.”

**Comfort and Control** - Operator comfort guided every stage of development. Using advanced modeling software and North American operator data, New Holland engineered a platform that is natural to navigate, with large grab handles, a left-hand step and a wide entry threshold. A semi-flat deck, low transmission hump and rubber floor mat enhance comfort and safety. An adjustable vinyl seat, ergonomic steering wheel and clear dash display help operators stay comfortable during long workdays, while color-coded controls streamline operation. Updated styling—including a sculpted hood, sleek decals and Dynamic Blue paint—aligns these models with New Holland’s flagship tractors.

**Purpose-Built Versatility** - The new 250LC front loader and 270BC backhoe expand capability. The 250LC loader offers smooth joystick control, simultaneous lift and curl and a skid-steer quick-attach faceplate. The 270BC backhoe delivers digging depths up to 87 inches and features a redesigned mounting system for quick attachment and removal without removing the three-point hitch arms.

**Power and Productivity** - Both models feature a 3-cylinder 1.9L engine, multiple transmission options, a heavy-duty three-point hitch with 2,067-lb lift capacity and dual-pump hydraulics for fast loader response. A comprehensive warranty provides added peace of mind.



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# Almond Board of California Announces 2026 Almond Leadership Program Class



The Almond Board of California (ABC) announced the 2026 class of its Almond Leadership Program (ALP), welcoming 18 new professionals in the cohort. These industry professionals are committed to strengthening California almond farming and advancing the future of the industry through collaboration, leadership development and innovation.

The ALP program brings together emerging leaders from across the almond value chain. From growers and agronomists to marketers, processors, field representatives and allied partners, this immersive experience is focused on building leadership skills, industry insight and solving real-world challenges facing California agriculture. Participants will be provided with in-depth exposure to the social, economic, environmental and regulatory forces shaping the future of the California almond industry. Each class member will complete a yearlong, self-directed capstone project focused on addressing a real-world challenge or opportunity for the industry.

"This program is about preparing the next generation of leaders to navigate complexity, lead with integrity and represent the almond community with confidence," said Rebecca Bailey, senior specialist overseeing ALP for ABC. "The 2026 class reflects the diversity of perspectives and expertise that will be essential for the long-term success of our industry, and we're proud to invest in their growth and leadership."

Members of the 17th class will not only be working at their full-time jobs but will be involved in every aspect of the industry, including ABC activities in global marketing, production, nutrition research, food safety and more. The program is intended to sharpen their communications skills and build relationships with industry leaders, ABC staff and each other.

"I joined the Almond Leadership Program because the future of California agriculture depends on thoughtful, engaged leaders who understand both on-the-ground realities and the policy landscape," said Daniel Frea, class member and farmer/attorney at Wanger Jones Helsley PC. "ALP offers a unique opportunity to deepen my industry knowledge, build mean-

ingful relationships and better serve the almond community."

Class members also have mentors, many who are ALP graduates, helping them to strengthen their industry knowledge, perspective and skill development.

"I came into the almond industry without much of an agricultural background. In my first role, I was fortunate enough to work alongside some seasoned almond professionals. I enjoy being a resource to those that are new to or growing in the almond industry," said Jereme Fromm, mentor and vice president of business development at California Nut Co. "The Almond Leadership Program gives participants an in-depth look into the many facets of the almond industry. Participants are exposed to everything from nutrition research, regulation and trade to market development and

on-farm innovation. They also build some great relationships along the way."

Continuing a long-standing tradition of service, class members will also raise funds to support California Future Farmers of America (FFA), with a collective goal of raising more than \$25,000 in scholarships for high school students pursuing agricultural studies in college. Since the program's inception, ALP participants have raised more than \$320,000 for FFA to help support the next generation of agricultural leaders.

#### 2026 Almond Leadership Program Participants

- *Rebekah Burrows, Customer Care Specialist | Grower – Owner/Operator, Advancing Eco Agriculture | GGI Farms*
- *Grace Fales, Sales Manager, Baugher Ranch Organics*
- *Daniel Frea, Attorney / Farmer, Wanger Jones Helsley PC / Frea Farms*
- *Austin Jackson, Regional Manager – Member Relations, Blue Diamond Growers*
- *Andrew Jensen, CEO / Agronomist, Crop Syndicate*
- *Julian Jimenez, Production / Ranch Manager, Pomona Farming LLC*
- *Natalie Kidd, Grower, Kidd Farms*
- *Catherine Machado, Operational Support Manager, Manulife Farmland Management Services*
- *Madison Martella, Grower Relations, Monte Vista*
- *Prabh Monder, General Manager, Monder Farms*
- *Connor Pate, Manager of Precision Agriculture, Belcorp Ag, LLC*
- *Alexus Powell-Crow, Marketing & Communications Manager, Grow West*
- *Noah Riley, Western Territory Sales Representative, Kula Bio*
- *Hyeong Shin, Broker, HS Ventures*
- *Orlando Tapia, Agronomy Specialist, Corteva Agriscience*
- *John Unzueta, Procurement Manager, Cache Creek Foods LLC*
- *Alyssa Valdez, Grower Relations, RPAC LLC*
- *James Williamson, Investment Associate, PGIM Real Estate*

For more information about the Almond Leadership Program and the Almond Board of California, visit [almonds.org](http://almonds.org).

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# New Product Shaping the Future of Agriculture

## Faster Burndown and Longer Residual: Satchur8™ Launched to Boost On-farm Profitability

*Planet Earth Agronomy has developed and deployed cancer-fighting technology to increase the efficacy of every gallon of crop protection farmers use in the war on weeds.*

After years of plot tests and full-field, on-farm research, Planet Earth Agronomy officially launched Satchur8™. With its origin in human healthcare, the product is poised to help farmers make the most of every drop of chemistry they apply.

"This will assure that more farmers across the country can benefit from the unique properties of this product and make the most of every pass through the field and every gallon of liquid herbicide, insecticide and fungicide they apply," said Larry Fiene, Planet Earth Agronomy Founder and CEO at the announcement. He said wide testing of the product has brought a better understanding of SATCHUR8's full potential for a profitable impact for farmers.

"We know farmers are being very careful with their crop input dollars these days and we wanted to be sure it was going to work as consistently as it did in our early trials," Fiene says. "We had great weed control right off the bat in our burndown applications and as we studied it, we saw other advantages."

Originally developed as an aid for fighting cancer in human healthcare, the formula has the exceptional characteristic of keeping active ingredients in place to increase their efficacy. In the case of fighting cancer, it assisted in holding chemotherapy agents at the site of the malignancy. For herbicides, fungicides and insecticides needing contact to do their work, this unique property means keeping the chemistry intact longer on the plant, assuring full impact.

"The power of SATCHUR8 is in its trillions of little microfibers that stick to the leaf service like Velcro when applied and hold the herbicide it's mixed with on the leaf surface," Fiene explains. "It won't wash off and won't dry up and blow off the surface. Residual weed control is lasting longer because the active ingredient is being retained in the soil upper profile longer."

Fiene lists three big benefits from Satchur8 he's seen across years of field research:

- Extends the residual weed control of pre-emerge herbicides applications, by keeping the active ingredient in the soil upper profile longer. "The SATCHUR8 tank mix application lasted four to six weeks longer than the standard herbicide application."
- Improves burndown applications by adhering the active ingredient intact on the leaf for a longer period of time for greater efficacy. "Those little microfibers stick to the leaf service so well that Cornell University research showed that SATCHUR8 held 40 to 50 percent more active ingredient on the leaf surface after repeated rainfall events."
- Boosts fungicide efficacy by allowing the leaf to breathe and continue normal metabolism, when compared to surfactants that impede the uptake of the active ingredient. "Many products act more like a varnish on the leaf, and the active is stuck on and unable to move freely. Allowing the leaf to breath means better translocation and protection for the crop."

Planet Earth is choosing to launch SATCHUR8 nationally only after positive results in pilot partner programs with Conserv FS, with grower-customers in Illinois, and Willard Agri-Service LLC, serving Mid-Atlantic growers across six eastern states. Fiene says on-farm performance went far beyond expectations for effective burndown applications. "As our partners used it more widely, what was really impressive for us is how it made every product in every tank mix work better," he says.

Dave Geils of Geils Farms, who raises corn, soybeans and wheat near Harvard, Ill., was among those who experienced the benefit early and has gone "all-in" on SATCHUR8, using it for pre-emerge, post-emerge and in-season fungicide applications.

"We have been 100 percent since we started using it," says Geils. He's convinced the product is earning its keep on his acres. "It's part of the mix because it increases the efficacy and longevity of the products we apply. It's a very inexpensive product that makes all the other things work the way they need to."

Mike Twining of Willard Agri-Service, LLC, Lynch, Md. is offering SATCHUR8 to their customers only after several years of testing in their Farm Performance System (FPS), a comprehensive portfolio of tools, products, and services backed by their local expertise as a three-generation crop input provider.

Mike Twining, Willard Vice President of Innovation, says SATCHUR8 is a great example of Willard's FPS can mean to farmers. "When we avoid re-sprays, that's real money," he flatly states. "And it's real money going back into the pockets of our farmer customers. I can tell you without reservation what we experienced last year was that where we used SATCHUR8 in historically tough weed control scenarios, our number of spray passes dropped by over 50 percent."

For more information visit [www.Satchur8makeseverydropcount.com](http://www.Satchur8makeseverydropcount.com).



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# Coffee Industry Leaders Give Major Collections to UC Davis Library

*Baldwin, Kramer, Specialty Coffee Association Help Shape Understanding of Drink*



Flanking the Starbucks manifesto at the UC Davis Library are, left to right, William Ristenpart, director of the UC Davis Coffee Center; Jane Baldwin and husband Gerald "Jerry" Baldwin, co-founder of Starbucks; and Audrey Russek and William Garrity of the UC Davis Library. (UC Davis photo)

by Sarah Colwell

The University of California, Davis has received three landmark collections of coffee-related materials that together provide an unprecedented look at the history, science and cultural evolution of specialty coffee. Donated by Gerald "Jerry" Baldwin, co-founder of Starbucks and former president of Peet's Coffee; Russ Kramer, president of Hacienda La Minita; and the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA), the collections significantly expand the UC Davis Library's world-class holdings in food, wine and beverage scholarship.

The materials — including rare books, photographs, business records, correspondence and organizational archives — document coffee's transformation from a basic agricultural commodity into a global specialty product with deep cultural, economic and scientific significance. They will directly support the UC Davis Coffee Center, the first academic research and teaching facility in the United States dedicated entirely to the study of coffee. The center's interdisciplinary work spans engineering, sensory science, agriculture, chemistry and cultural analysis, making these collections a natural fit for its mission.

"These three collections complement and support the research leadership of the UC Davis Coffee Center, while expanding the library's world-class collections on food and drink," said Audrey Russek, who leads the library's strategic initiatives around distinctive collections in food, wine and other beverages.

Baldwin's donation offers a rare, firsthand record of the early years of Starbucks following its 1971 founding and the emergence of specialty coffee in the United States. His materials in-

clude the handwritten manifesto displayed outside the original store, the company's first guest book, early scrapbooks and photographs, financial records from the company's formative years, and original tasting score sheets. These primary sources reveal how early entrepreneurs approached sourcing, roasting and customer experience at a time when specialty coffee was still an emerging concept. "My hope is people who are interested can turn to these documents as a reference and understand what it was truly like at the beginning," Baldwin said.

Kramer's contribution reflects decades of leadership in coffee production, sourcing and global trade. His extensive collection includes rare books, correspondence and records related to agricultural practices, international

markets, product development and the cultural dimensions of coffee. Among the highlights is a 1687 text by French physician Nicolas de Blégné, now the fourth-oldest coffee-related book in the library's holdings. Kramer emphasized that the materials represent a lifetime of accumulated knowledge that can now be shared with researchers worldwide, noting that many experts hold valuable information that often remains inaccessible.

The SCA's donation — more than 100 boxes of organizational records, early publications and industry documents — chronicles the development of professional standards, shared terminology and research priorities that helped shape the modern specialty coffee movement. Co-founder Ted Lingle noted that the association's culture of openness and education is central to its identity, adding that the archives will demonstrate "the power of cooperative, collective action as a fundamental driving force for the industry."

The library is currently processing the collections to make them accessible for research, teaching and interdisciplinary study. As the materials become available, they will support a wide range of scholarship, from agricultural science and engineering to cultural studies and global trade analysis. William Garrity, university librarian and vice provost of digital scholarship, emphasized that coffee naturally fosters connection — both socially and academically — and that these collections reinforce UC Davis' leadership across multiple fields.

As Kramer observed, the growing body of resources positions UC Davis to become a global hub for coffee scholarship, bringing together generations of knowledge in one objective, accessible place.

# World Ag Expo® and Coast Counties Peterbilt Name 2026 “We Believe in Growing” Scholarship Winners

World Ag Expo® and Coast Counties Peterbilt, formerly E.M. Tharp, Inc., are proud to announce the recipients of the 2026 “We Believe in Growing” scholarship. The scholarship program recognizes outstanding students who are pursuing careers in agriculture. This year’s winners, Kaedyn Plann and Tanner Verhoeven, will each receive \$2,500 scholarships to be renewed up to four years, totaling \$10,000 per student.

Kaedyn Plann, of Fresno, CA is a dedicated student at Central High School. Kaedyn is involved in FFA, participating in market goat projects, the school’s goat breeding team, citrus judging, live-stock judging, and prepared public speaking. She oversees much of the daily care and management of the goat herd, demonstrating responsibility beyond the classroom. Academically, she has earned placement on the Principal’s Honor Roll for maintaining a 4.0 GPA or higher for the past three years. Her teachers describe her as a mature, resilient student with high moral character and a well-rounded skill set.

Kaedyn is actively involved in numerous community service organizations, including Blue Star Moms, where she helps assemble care packages for deployed service members. She is also involved in Valentine’s for Veterans, Make-A-Wish Foundation, and the Special Olympics Best Buddies program. She is a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, where she engages in Bible study. Kaedyn plans to attend California State University, Fresno, and return to the classroom as an educator, where she hopes to create an environment in which every student feels a sense of belonging.

Tanner Verhoeven, of Visalia, CA, is a student at Central Valley Christian High School. He is actively involved in FFA through his agricultural mechanics Career Development Event (CDE) team, which won the California State Championship this past year and went on to compete at the national level, earning fourth place. In addition, he has competed in the California Youth Ag Expo Agricultural Mechanics competition and shows projects at the fair.

Tanner is involved in his community and is known for his strong work ethic. He is involved with Tulare Community Church, where he participates in high school Bible study and youth group. He also volunteers during Thanksgiving to serve meals to individuals and families in need. Tanner has worked at Rock Farms for the past four years, is employed through his family’s small business, assisting with mill operations, and operates his own automotive detailing business. Balancing three jobs while remaining active in FFA and community service reflects his discipline and drive. His teachers describe him as hardworking, organized, and highly motivated. He plans to attend either California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, or California State University, Fresno, where he intends to major in plant science or agricultural systems management.

“We are thankful for the partnership with Coast Counties Peterbilt,” said Jerry Siniift, International Agri-Center, CEO. “Through this scholarship program, we are proud to help students pursue their education and prepare for meaningful careers that will strengthen agriculture and our communities.”

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# Agriculture, natural resources sectors support California's rank as world's fourth-largest economy

*Report: California working landscapes – farms, ranches, mines, forests, renewable energy installations and fisheries – generate \$404 billion in sales annually*



*A new report published by UC ANR summarizes contributions made by all of the people working California's diverse landscapes, from farmworkers to park rangers.*

By Caroline D Champlin

Last year, California surpassed Japan to become the world's fourth-largest economy. Contributing to that achievement are over a million farm laborers, winemakers, park rangers, agricultural truckers, renewable energy technicians and many other workers who generate value from the state's natural landscapes.

Academics from University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources have done the math on the economic scope of these working lands, compiling their findings in the publication "California's Working Landscape: Evolving Contributions to National, State, and Regional Economies." This new report includes the latest data on state employment, earnings, sales and businesses, providing an update to the first edition of this report, released in 2019.

Working landscapes encompass land areas actively managed for economic purposes, primarily agricultural lands, forests and rangelands, as well as the land and water areas that create economic value, like those used for fishing, renewable energy production, mining and outdoor recreation. In total, those working landscapes support nearly 1.5 million jobs and 75,500 businesses while generating \$404 billion in sales and providing \$103 billion in worker earnings.

When it comes to the farming sector, the report demonstrates a simple fact: the Golden State is an agricultural behemoth. Business establishments across the state's four agricultural sectors – agricultural production, support, processing and distribution – generated \$310.8 billion in sales and contributed more than 1.2 million jobs in 2024.

Those numbers affirm California's rank as the nation's most agriculturally productive state.

"This report once again shows how our working landscapes are critical as a foundation of the California economy," said Glenda Humiston, UC vice president for agriculture

and natural resources. "It also underscores the importance of continuing to invest in agriculture, natural resources and related industries to maintain California's position as one of the world's economic powerhouses."

According to the report, the most common jobs affiliated with California's working lands help produce our food supply, including positions in agricultural support, production, processing and distribution. The agricultural supply chain is linked across California's geography, with hubs of activity in the Central Coast, San Joaquin Valley, Bay Area and Los Angeles regions.

The report proves the benefit of keeping a close eye on the economy over time, according to co-author Alexandra Hill, an agricultural economist and UC Berkeley professor of Cooperative Extension.

"It's pretty crucial to analyze data over multiple years," Hill said.

For instance, this report picked up on a recent surge of agricultural support jobs, positions that provide speciality support to farmers, like fertilizer retailers or business consultants. In Hill's interpretation, this uptick in agricultural support roles could be related to anecdotal evidence of more farmers securing labor through contracting businesses, rather than directly recruiting farmworkers themselves.

Hill hopes the report will reach stakeholders – including the diverse cross-section of experts employed by UC ANR – who can lend their own experience to tease out new research questions based on the data.

"There are just many different ways that you can divide this report. There are many possible avenues we can take this work in," Hill said.

Besides demonstrating the impact of California agriculture, the report encompasses other natural resource sectors, including mining, outdoor recreation, fishing and renewable energy. The report provides national context by ranking the valuation of these sectors in multiple states. The results place California in the top five of every category included, and in most cases, first place. The state leads in the four agricultural sectors, outdoor recreation and renewable energy.

"That was useful to see California emerge as one of the top contributors across most sectors," Hill said.

Notably, the report highlights California's huge growth in the renewable energy sector, which includes solar, wind and geothermal. The state's latest accolades: ranking first nationwide in renewable energy business, sales and earnings. The renewable energy sector is the fastest-growing working landscape included in the report.

In addition to Hill, the report was co-authored by Alec Dompka and Aaron Wilcher, UC Cooperative Extension advisors on the Community Economic Development team.



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# Helping Beekeepers Fight Mites Through More Effective Treatments

*Research Lays Foundation to Target Varroa Mites Without Harming Bees*



UC Davis Assistant Professor Sascha Nicklisch, left, and USDA-ARS research entomologist Julia Fine stand with bee hives. The duo partnered to investigate a treatment that targets varroa mites without harming honey bees. (Courtesy Sascha Nicklisch/UC Davis)

by USDA/UC Davis News

**R**esearchers from the USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and the University of California, Davis, are helping beekeepers protect their colonies from destructive varroa mites. In a new study, the researchers investigate the effectiveness of combining a widely used mite-killing pesticide with an agent that inhibits the mites' ability to tolerate the pesticide.

Honeybees play a crucial role in U.S. agriculture, with the value of crops that require pollination estimated at more than \$20 billion annually in the United States. Varroa mites, also known as Varroa destructor, are a force to be reckoned with in the honeybee world. The parasitic mite causes bodily harm and spreads deadly viruses that have led to major colony losses across the country.

The pesticide amitraz is a preferred method to control varroa mite populations. It is highly toxic to varroa mites but safe for honeybees when used as instructed. However, a previous ARS study found that varroa mites are becoming increasingly resistant to amitraz due to a genetic mutation, so beekeepers now seek more effective methods for controlling mite populations.

In their new study, published Feb. 16 in the *Journal of Apicultural Research*, the authors found that combining an inhibiting compound with amitraz increases the pesticide's toxicity

and was effective against even amitraz-resistant mites.

"This compound inhibits a naturally occurring process that prevents certain chemicals, like pesticides, from accumulating inside cells," said co-leading author Julia Fine, a research entomologist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Pollinator Health Research Laboratory in Davis, Calif. "If a chemical toxicant can't reach a high enough concentration in a cell, it won't have a toxic effect in the organism. Previously, we didn't know if this process was part of how varroa tolerate amitraz exposure."

These findings open a promising new line of research that may lead to the development of novel synergists that can be used to control varroa mites in combination with amitraz or other miticides.

"Our study shows that we can increase amitraz's killing power by 50% when used in combination with another compound — a synergist — that weakens the mite but doesn't cause harm to bees," said co-leading author

Sascha Nicklisch, an assistant professor in the UC Davis Environmental Toxicology department. "This research aims to provide beekeepers with practical tools and strategies that they can implement to effectively control varroa mites, especially since these mites become increasingly resistant to our limited arsenal of bee-safe pesticides like amitraz."

Increasing the efficacy of amitraz treatments, especially the initial application, may help beekeepers save time and money.

"Better amitraz formulations can decrease the need for additional treatments, lower the selection pressure on the mite population, and decrease the economic burden on beekeepers as they protect their colonies," said Fine.

Fine noted that the inhibitor used in the research is not specific to varroa. It can also diminish the ability of honeybees to tolerate pesticide exposures.

"Now that we know this process is important to amitraz tolerance in varroa, the next step is to develop synergists that specifically inhibit this process in varroa without affecting honeybees," said Fine.

The research was conducted in collaboration with the ARS Bee Research Laboratory in Beltsville, Md., and ARS Honey Bee Breeding, Genetics, and Physiology Research Laboratory in Baton Rouge, La. This research was supported by a Honey Bee Health Grant through the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign and the Pollinator Partnership to Nicklisch.

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# USDA Announces Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers Impacted by Unfair Market Disruptions

## Specialty Crops Acreage Reporting Deadline for 2025 is March 13

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is providing \$1 billion in Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF) Program assistance for specialty crops and sugar, commodities not covered through the previously announced Farmer Bridge Assistance (FBA) program. These one-time bridge payments will help address market disruptions, elevated input costs, persistent inflation, and market losses from foreign competitors engaging in unfair trade practices that impede exports. Specialty crop producers have until March 13, 2026, to report 2025 acres to USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

"President Trump has the backs of our farmers, and today we are building on our Farmer Bridge Assistance program with the Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF) Program. Our specialty crop producers continue to feel the negative effects of four years under the Biden Administration, suffering from record inflation, a depleted farm safety net, and delayed disaster assistance," said Secretary Rollins. "President Trump and the entire cabinet are working every day to fight bidenflation and lower prices for consumers. If our specialty crop producers are not

economically able to continue their operations, American families will see a decrease in the food they rely on, wholesome and nutritious fruits and vegetables. Putting Farmers First is essential to the Make America Healthy Again movement and we are doing both at USDA by expanding market opportunities and improving the farm economy for all producers. Today's specialty crop announcement builds on our efforts to improve markets for real food into American schools, institutions, and family dinner tables."

The Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers Program is authorized under the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act and will be administered by FSA.

### Eligible Specialty Crops

ASCF-eligible specialty crops include: (A) Almond, Apple, Apricot, Aronia berry, Artichoke, Asparagus, Avocado (B) Banana, Bean (Snap or green; Lima; Dry edible), Beet (Table), Blackberry, Blueberry, Breadfruit, Broccoli (including Broccoli Raab), Brussels Sprouts (C) Cabbage (including Chinese), Cacao, Carrot, Cashew, Cauliflower, Celery, Celery, Cherimoya, Cherry, Chestnut (for Nuts), Chive, Citrus, Coconut, Coffee, Collards (including Kale), Cranberry, Cucumber, Currant (D) Date, Dry Edible Beans and Peas\* (E) Edamame, Eggplant, Endive (F) Feijou, Fig, Filbert (Hazelnut) (G) Garlic, Gooseberry, Grape (including Raisin), Guava (H) Horseradish (K) Kiwi, Kohlrabi (L) Leek, Lettuce, Litchi (M) Macadamia, Mango, Melon (All Types), Mushroom (Cultivated), Mustard and Other Greens (N) Nectarine (O) Okra, Olive, Onion, Opuntia (P) Papaya, Parsley, Parsnip, Passion Fruit, Pea (Garden; English or Edible Pod; Dry edible), Peach, Pear, Pecan, Pepper, Persimmon, Pineapple, Pistachio, Plum (including Prune), Pomegranate, Potato, Pumpkin (Q) Quince (R) Radish (All Types), Raspberry, Rhubarb, Rutabaga (S) Salsify, Spinach, Squash (Summer and Winter), Strawberry, Suriname Cherry, Sweet Corn, Sweet Potato, Swiss Chard (T) Taro, Tomato (including Tomatillo), Turnip (W) Walnut, Watermelon

\*Dry edible beans and peas covered by FBA will not be eligible for ASCF.

ASCF payments are based on reported 2025 planted acres.

Eligible farmers should ensure their 2025 acreage reporting is factual and accurate by 5 p.m. ET on March 13, 2026. Commodity-specific payment rates will be released by the end of March. Crop insurance linkage will not be required for the ASCF Program. However, USDA strongly urges producers to take advantage of the new One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) risk management tools to best protect against price risk and volatility in the future.

More information on ASCF is available online at [www.fsa.usda.gov/fba](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/fba) or producers can contact their local FSA county office.

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## Voluntary Accelerated Vehicle Retirement Carbon Monoxide Emission Reductions Tables

This announcement provides updated carbon monoxide (CO) emission reduction data for the Voluntary Accelerated Vehicle Retirement (VAVR) program. The VAVR program is implemented in accordance with the VAVR regulations and under the Carl Moyer Memorial Air Quality Standards Attainment Program (Carl Moyer Program) as part of the Light-Duty Vehicle chapter. The Carl Moyer Program funds the early retirement of gasoline and diesel-powered passenger cars and light-duty trucks such as pick-up trucks and utility vehicles. This announcement has a link to a document is published on the VAVR webpage: Voluntary Accelerated Vehicle Retirement Program (VAVR).

Both the Carl Moyer Program and the VAVR regulation allow for credit from Nitrogen Oxides (NOx), Reactive Organic Gases (ROG), and Particulate Matter (PM) emission reductions. However, CO emission reductions are allowed in the VAVR regulation, but not the Carl Moyer Program. The document provides updated CO emission reductions for stakeholders to calculate CO emission benefits from light-duty projects. Vehicle emission reductions are calculated based on updated emission factors from the on-road Emission FACTor (EMFAC) 2021 model, version 1.0.2. Moving forward, when the Carl Moyer Program Guidelines are updated, CARB will update the NOx, ROG, PM and CO emission reductions data for both gasoline and diesel-powered light-duty vehicles for future calendar years.

More Information Contact: If you have questions regarding the new emission reductions tables, please contact Mr. James Qu, Air Resources Engineer of the Incentives and Technology Advancement Branch.

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## New Herbicide Shows Promise for Controlling Tough Weeds in Almond Orchards



By Mandeep Riar, Restoration Ecology and Weed Science Advisor, UCCE Kern, Tulare, Kings. Jorge Angeles, Weed management Advisor, UCCE Tulare, Kings, Fresno.

Keeping orchards clean has become more challenging for California almond growers in recent years, especially as tough weeds like horseweed and hairy fleabane continue to spread. A recent field study done by the University of California Cooperative Extension advisors offers some encouraging results for growers looking for new and reliable weed control options.

We evaluated the performance of a newer herbicide, florypyrauxifen-benzyl, sold under the trade name Hulk® for controlling difficult weeds in almond orchards. Hulk® belongs to a group of herbicides known as synthetic auxins, which work by disrupting normal plant growth. Susceptible weeds show abnormal growth, epinasty, ruptured stems, leaf malformations and eventually die overtime. One key advantage of Hulk® is that it is non-volatile and does not readily move off target. It can also be applied at any time of the year, giving growers more flexibility compared to some older products that have seasonal or regional restrictions.

The study focused on two of the most troublesome weeds in almond orchards: horseweed and hairy fleabane. The trial was conducted during

May-August 2025 at the UC Shafter Research Farm in an almond orchard where horseweed and hairy fleabane were already well established, averaging about 10 to 11 inches tall. The herbicide treatments were applied during the last week of May and weed control observations were recorded for up to 8 weeks after treatment. The treatments included Hulk at 16 oz/acre and 21 oz/acre rates. Tank-mix combinations of Hulk + Rely 280 (glufosinate), Hulk + Roundup PM3 (glyphosate), Rely 280 + Roundup PM3, and Treevix + Roundup PM3 were included in the study. All treatments that included Hulk® provided excellent control of horseweed, with complete control observed by eight weeks after treatment. Hairy fleabane proved slightly more difficult to manage, but all Hulk® treatments still achieved at least 90% control. The combination of Hulk® plus glufosinate consistently provided the strongest and fastest results. In some areas where Hulk® was used alone, hairy fleabane plants stayed green longer. However, these plants showed clear injury symptoms and did not regrow. Although the Roundup PM3 + Rely 280 treatment at high rates fully controlled both weed species, it is possible to achieve comparable results with standalone Hulk or with tank-mix combinations with Roundup PM3 or Rely 280 at lower rates.

Overall, the study shows that Hulk® is a valuable new option for almond growers dealing with herbicide-resistant weeds. It can be used alone or in tank mixes to improve control, reduce reliance on older chemistries, and support resistance management strategies. With its flexible application timing and strong performance on difficult weeds, florypyrauxifen-benzyl adds an important tool to the almond weed management toolbox. For specific recommendations, check with your local UC Cooperative Extension advisor or Mandeep Riar at [mriar@ucanr.edu](mailto:mriar@ucanr.edu). Always follow the product label and state regulations when using herbicides. Product names are mentioned for information and do not represent endorsement.

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