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Then and Now: The Power of Agriculture

NRCS is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year. We'd like to hear your stories and see photos of your operation – Then and Now. Do you have photos of your operation from its beginnings to the present day? If so, we want to hear from you!



By Nancy McNiff

USDA Farm Production and Conservation Business Center

NRCS is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year. We began our celebration by posting a blog and an interactive timeline about NRCS history and a video about how we've helped farmers over the years. We've also been sharing some historical photos on social media that show how our mission has changed and stayed the same over the years.

Now, we'd like for you to join us in our celebration. We'd like to hear your stories and see photos of your operation – Then and Now.

Does your agricultural operation have a fascinating history you'd like to share? Are there interesting stories about how your operation came to be or how it's evolved? Do you have photos of your operation from its beginnings to the present day? If so, we want to hear from you!

Agriculture and conservation practices have changed a lot over the years. Advanced equipment and new technologies have made agriculture and conservation practices more precise and efficient. We've progressed from mule or horse-drawn plows to tractors, combines, and other high-tech machines reducing manual labor and increasing productivity.

Farm employment and farms have also changed over time. Many years ago, farming used to be the dominant occupation in the United States. Now, it makes up less than 2% of the





nation's workforce. Farms have also become much larger and more specialized than they used to be.

Even with all these changes over the years, America remains a nation sustained by agriculture and family farms. Family farms make up 86% of all farms that feed, fuel, and clothe us and keep our small towns and rural communities alive.

This summer, we want to highlight how things have changed on your operation over the years in our #ThenAnd-Now campaign on NRCS and FarmersGov social media.

Here's how to participate:

Find a few historical photos of your operation from when it began - Then.

Using your smartphone or digital camera, take photos of your operation - Now.

In a few sentences, tell us: how has your operation changed over the years? How has it expanded, modernized equipment and practices, or transformed with conservation?

Include your name, the location of your operation, and links to any social media accounts you manage to promote your operation.

Submit the above to SM.FPAC.NRCS.Facebook@usda.gov by Friday, August 1, 2025.

Please note that by submitting your photo/video, you are granting USDA permission to use these materials for outreach and education purposes.

Drone Camps to help teens' interest in science take off

This July and August, teens ages 13 to 18 are invited to attend a free Youth Drone Camp at locations across the Bay Area and Northern California. The camp is organized by California 4-H, a youth development program of the University of California and delivered through UC Cooperative Extension.

The camps will be held July 7-11 in San Jose, July 21-25 in Napa and Aug. 4-8 in Redding. Registration is required. Details can be found at https://qrco.de/dronecamp.

During the camp, participants will safely fly drones, capture aerial images, process data and use GIS mapping software. Through hands-on activities and teamwork, the young people will be developing stronger STEM skills that can prepare them for future careers in agriculture, technology and environmental science. They will explore topics like crop health, livestock monitoring and food justice.

"As a leading agricultural state, California offers incredible opportunities for youth to explore careers in agriculture,"said Steven Worker, 4-H youth development advisor for Marin County and an organizer of the camp. "We aim to inspire young people to see agriculture as an innovative field – one that integrates cutting-edge technology and environmental science."

The camp is free for all participants, with space for up to 24 teens at each camp. Spots will be available on a first-come basis. Each camp will be held Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily.

The Drone Camps are part of AFA2, a three-year, \$750,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture-National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The grant is aimed at sparking interest in food and agriculture among teenagers by using cutting-edge drone and mapping technologies.

By blending hands-on activities with real-world applications, AFA2 empowers young people to explore the science behind agriculture in fun and meaningful ways. AFA2 demonstrates that technology can make a real difference in communities and ensures that the next generation of agricultural scientists and leaders is diverse, skilled and ready to take on the challenges of the future.

California 4-H is the youth development program of the University of California and delivered through UC Cooperative Extension in every county in California. 4-H grows true leaders, youth who are empowered for life today and prepared for a career tomorrow. The hands-on approach in 4-H gives young people guidance, tools and encouragement, and then puts them in the driver's seat to make great things happen.

Independent research confirms the unparalleled impact of the 4-H experience, demonstrating that young people are four times more likely to contribute to their communities; two times more likely to make healthier choices; two times more likely to be civically active; and two times more likely to participate in STEM programs. Learn more at 4h.ucanr.edu.

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Hedgerow buzz is not just for the bees!



Mandeep Riar, PhD Restoration Ecology and Weed Science Advisor

"Hedgerows" may sound like a new buzz word for regenerative agriculture, but it has been a part of farming systems for thousands of years. In Europe, especially in Great Britain, hedgerows began as early as the Bronze Age and became widespread by the medieval period. Those hedgerows primarily served to mark property lines, keep livestock in, and as windbreaks. However, in the early United States, Hedgerow plantings were not very common. One of the biggest examples of utilizing hedgerows can be traced back to 1930s when the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Shelterbelt Program promoted shelterbelts and windbreaks to prevent soil erosion in the Midwest. Though hedgerows were never as popular in the US compared to Europe, they have made a comeback in the recent decade as a useful tool for conservation agriculture. In the context of Southern California's intensively managed agricultural landscapes, hedgerows are not a common practice and are often perceived as inefficient land uses, economically non-productive strips that compete for water and complicate mechanized operations. However, emerging research and field trials suggest that hedgerows provide critical ecosystem services that may offset, or even exceed, the opportunity costs of the land they occupy.

One of the primary benefits of hedgerows is pollinator support. Hedgerows enhance the native bee

richness and abundance, leading to improved pollination services in adjacent fields. For Southern California growers of pollination-dependent crops such as almonds, strawberries, melons, and avocados, the presence of hedgerows with sequentially blooming native species can significantly enhance pollinator presence during critical flowering windows. Hedgerows also act as natural pest control by attracting and harboring natural enemies of agricultural pests, including predatory beetles, syrphid flies, parasitic wasps, and spiders, which prey on aphids and mites. This reduces the need for chemical sprays, saving money and decreasing the harmful impacts on the environment.

But the benefits of hedgerows are not limited to bees and beneficial insects. Established hedgerows improve soil and water management by reducing water runoff after rain, reducing wind erosion and dust, and stabilizing soil on slopes. Woody perennial hedgerows also act as carbon sinks, storing biomass both above and below ground. Their shading and windbreak functions contribute to microclimate regulation, buffering crops from heat extremes and desiccating winds. Additionally, recent studies published by University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (Long and Valliere, 2025) have shown that hedgerows can reduce weed pressure along field borders and adjacent interiors of the field. Detailed findings of this study can be found at "Long RF, Valliere JM. Established native hedgerows on field borders suppress weeds on farms. Weed Science. 2025;73: e33. doi:10.1017/ wsc.2025.2. or by emailing at mriar@ ucanr.edu.

For Southern California, hedgerows should be designed with native, drought-tolerant plants like California lilac, toyon, yarrow, buckwheat, and milkweed. These species require little irrigation once established and provide year-round value to wildlife. As California farmers try to adapt to changing weather, stricter regulations, and tighter margins, hedgerows can boost resilience without sacrificing productivity.

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Regulators Gain First-Hand Insight at ABC's Environmental Stewardship Tour



Participants listened to grower Matt Bowman during the Environmental Stewardship Tour took that took place Friday, May 9 in the San Joaquin Valley.

More than 50 representatives from key regulatory agencies attended the Almond Board of California's annual Environmental Stewardship Tour on May 9, an initiative created over 20 years ago to provide policymakers with practical insights into almond farming and industry stewardship practices. This year's tour took place at orchards owned by the Bowman family in Modesto, where attendees gained a direct view of daily farming decisions and innovative stewardship research.

Garret Bowman, a fourth-generation almond grower, along with his sons, welcomed attendees and explained his approach to orchard management through the growing season. He covered essential practices for irrigation and nutrient management, pest control, varieties and rootstocks. Bowman's Pest Control Advisor demonstrated equipment used for monitoring navel orangeworm flights. This demonstration illustrated the complexity and deliberate nature of pest management practices, highlighting the thoughtful decision-making process growers undertake to optimize both crop yield and environmental health.

Environmental Stewardship Tour

Abhijeet Kulkarni, ABC's principal of technical and trade issues, described the significance of directly engaging regulators in orchard settings. "Fundamentally, it's about outreach to various regulatory agencies that impact our industry," Kulkarni explained. "Many of these decision-makers don't have extensive backgrounds in agriculture, so this tour provides them with the context needed to fully appreciate what growers deal with on a day-to-day basis."

A key feature of the tour was a longer-term nitrogen research project led by UC Davis's Dr. Thomas Harter, exam-

ining the impact of moving to high-frequency, low dose nitrogen applications on the potential for off-site movement of nitrogen. With 21 groundwater monitoring wells and sophisticated analysis of nitrogen movement, this multi-disciplinary research provides unique data on agricultural practices' influence on groundwater quality and greenhouse gas emissions. And it is one of the few locations where current models of leaching are being fact-checked.

Environmental Stewardship Tour

Early findings indicate significant reductions in nitrogen leaching below the root zone, demonstrating the practice change not only im-

proves nitrogen use efficiency, but can lessen environmental impacts. "This research allows regulators to see firsthand the industry's proactive efforts to minimize environmental impact through scientifically informed practices," Kulkarni noted.

Following the orchard tour, participants gathered for lunch at Marlin Flory's barn, where ABC staff, led by ABC's Director of Environmental Policy Gabriele Ludwig, presented additional updates on current stewardship research and outreach efforts. This session sparked active dialogue, with regulatory staff posing thoughtful questions about irrigation practices, almond byproduct utilization, and other aspects of almond production.

Environmental Stewardship Tour

"Regulators asked insightful questions on everything from how growers choose almond varieties to irrigation technology and sustainability practices," Kulkarni said. "For many, this was their first time in an almond orchard, and the experience clearly opened their eyes to the intricate realities growers navigate daily."

Attendees included senior staff from agencies such as the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, California Air Resources Board, California Department of Food and Agriculture, the head of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for California, and the head of Region 9 of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). By the following Monday, EPA officials in Washington D.C. had already heard about the value of the tour.

"We can't directly influence regulatory decisions," Kulkarni concluded, "but through education and open dialogue, we can ensure decision-makers understand our industry's proactive role in environmental stewardship."





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Understanding and Predicting Early Season Almond Yields

Every year, around April, experts within the almond industry come together to analyze the crop's condition and determine an early-season yield estimate. The estimate is used as a tool for precise farm management and gives growers insight into how they can optimize their orchard operations.

While variability is bound to exist, these estimates provide the industry with necessary information to prepare for the coming harvest and help improve efficiencies, particularly with water usage and nitrogen application.

"One of the key variables that we usually have a hard time measuring at a high resolution and understanding the variability that may happen early in the season, is yield," said Sebastian Saa, associate director of agricultural research at the Almond Board of California (ABC). "You cannot improve what you don't measure."

Current Early Season Survey Methods - Terra Nova Trading has been providing an early-season crop estimate for the almond industry for 27 years. The idea transpired over three decades ago because there was a clear void of information between bloom time to USDA's subjective estimate in May.

While Terra Nova Trading's estimates are based on predictions, a lot goes into creating the seven-page report, said Jerry [JJ] Magdaleno, partner at Terra Nova Trading.

In a matter of days, over 500 orchards are assessed throughout the valley, and the estimators are walking anywhere from eight to ten miles each day. Even though there are only a few months in between the early estimate to harvest, changes like the first and second drop, and weather conditions can drastically impact Terra Nova's numbers.

Human bias, another inevitable factor, can impact the estimate as well. "No matter how much you try and take away your own belief before you go out [to estimate], you have some kind of bias in your mind," Magdaleno explained.

Even the market can dictate the accessor's views on the crop size. "For instance, on a very bullish market, people's views of the crop get smaller; on a bearish market, people's views on the crop actually get larger," Magdaleno said.

Brian Ezzell of Setton Farms also volunteers on a team of 16-20 participants who carry out early season estimates. To mitigate bias and develop the most accurate analysis, their group is equipped with over 24 years of historical data which includes acreage and yield by county. The accessors can compare peak areas, regions and varieties.

One of the partners involved in this process even counts the number of nuts on over 100 trees so they can determine a baseline. It's especially useful because nut size and canopy can be deceiving, making some orchards look more productive than they actually are.

"By using this chart and knowing the footprint of the orchard, the spacing and the nut size, we can determine what the yield is and how many pounds per acre," he explained.

Instead of comparing averages, the team also looks at standard deviations. It helps the industry develop budgets for the next year, create a sales strategy and helps processors prepare supplies and equipment especially if large yields are predicted.

Exploring the Drivers of Variability - Although early season estimates are subject to change, for the past several years, they have provided the almond industry with a glimpse of what could

"There's the marketing, the planning, the logistics and orchard optimization," said Patrick Brown, professor of plant sciences at UC Davis. "[It helps growers decide] how will you choose to manage your orchard if you have a good vision of what the vield of that orchard will be in the coming year."

That said, figuring out what drives variation from year to year, county to county, and even orchard to orchard, is a topic ABC has been actively researching.

Despite how most growers manage their operation, Brown said measuring variability on a per tree basis is actually most beneficial. The reasoning is because that data provides information that can "help us understand what is causing variability, and it can also be used to feed information into our whole block, farm, or county level estimations," he said.

To gather those insights, ABC funded a two-part project to assess yield variability by county based on the knowledge of weather, crop canopy, last year's yield and several other variables. The second half of the project examined within-field variability to explain what is causing variation among orchards and county-wide. "When you put those two pieces together, they enrich each other and give you a better and stronger algorithm," Brown stated.

The project used a yield monitor system installed on a TOL harvester to gather single-tree resolution yield data at field harvest speeds. The findings showed factors influencing largescale variation include age, canopy volume, long-term spring temperature, previous year summer temperature and March precipitation.

On the other hand, a few factors that influence small-scale variability are things such as trunk circumference and growth, canopy volume, fruit set, nutrition, soil type, carbohydrate utilization by winter twig samples, and historical damage. "Knowledge of those variables will help inform the other surveys [that JJ and the others are doing] to attempt to explain when their estimations aren't accurate enough," Brown said.

Forecasting with Remote Sensing - While human estimations paired with historical data and research are a good starting point, the Almond Board saw an opportunity to utilize new artificial intelligence technology to provide more yield details beyond what meets the eye.

"The question is, how can we predict the almond yield at each individual block level in a more quantitative, objective and also cost-effective way?" said Yufang Jin, professor of remote sensing and ecosystem change at UC Davis.

Jin and her team at UC Davis worked with ABC to answer this question. Their initial hypothesis predicted that for any orchard within a given year, the production is likely governed by the history of the orchard growth, most likely to be determined by either long-term climate or the soil properties and regulated by short-term weather conditions, like March precipitation or hot summers.

The team took a deeper dive into this hypothesis using remote sensing technology and machine learning models. They learned that its monitoring capabilities can look at what's happening at the individual tree and orchard level.

This technology can also assess things that we might not be able to see with the human eye, like color and the tree's stress conditions. Most importantly, these sensors are constantly collecting imagery, which allows for repeated observation in a more efficient way.

Jin explained that with ongoing research, the goal is to take advantage of all this imagery and "integrate them with all the (continued on next page)

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(continued from previous page) climate data, weather information, and orchard level characteristics such as cultivar and age to predict yield early in the season."

Based on their first round of modeling work for individual blocks, the team identified the key predictors to be age; cultivar composition; weather and climate; fractional canopy cover and vegetation

Their framework at the individual tree-level is still in the works, though Jin is confident that with machine-learning capabilities, historical data, and funding

to analyze more orchards, more robust models will be developed to forecast vields.

Harnessing The Power of Data Whether it be through early-season estimates from industry professionals, variability insights gathered from in-field monitors, or remote sensing imagery, there is great opportunity to equip growers with information to optimize their orchards. The use of technology will continue to make this process easier, and the Almond Board is proactive in making sure there is well-funded research and data to support this.

Researchers Race Against the Clock to Uncover **Preventive Strategies for Liver Abscesses in Cattle**



Cattle with liver abscesses don't show clinical signs and are generally identified too late -at harvest. The economic losses associated with this condition in cattle is in the millions.

By Maribel Alonso

Scientists at the USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) are leading a groundbreaking initiative to reduce liver abscesses in cattle—an issue costing the U.S. beef and dairy industries millions each year.

While liver abscesses are a silent threat—often undetected until harvest—their impact is deeply felt by producers and processors alike. Particularly at risk are dairy-beef crossbred cattle, a growing segment of the national beef population, with nearly 50% showing signs of liver abscesses compared to only 20% in traditionally raised beef cattle.

"Cattle don't typically show symptoms, which makes early intervention nearly impossible," said Dr. Rand Broadway, research microbiologist at ARS' Livestock Issues Research Unit (LIRU). "Our goal is to move the timeline forward—detect it earlier, stop it sooner."

Broadway and colleagues from Texas Tech University, Kansas State University, and West Texas A&M University have spent the past five years examining how diet, stress, and gut bacteria influence liver abscess development in dairy-beef crossbreds. Their latest findings challenge long-held industry assumptions.

"We confirmed that acidosis and aggressive grain

feeding aren't the only culprits," explained Broadway. "Our research shows that the mere presence of certain pathogens can independently trigger liver abscesses."

The team identified bacteria from the Fusobacterium and Salmonella genera in abscess samples, suggesting that these microbes, common in cattle environments. might reach the liver through injuries or inflammation in the digestive tract. Stress events—such as weaning, transportation, or extreme temperatures—may exacerbate this risk.

The implications are far-reaching. By shifting focus from feed-based interventions to microbial control and environmental management, researchers hope to empower producers with new tools that go

beyond traditional diet adjustments.

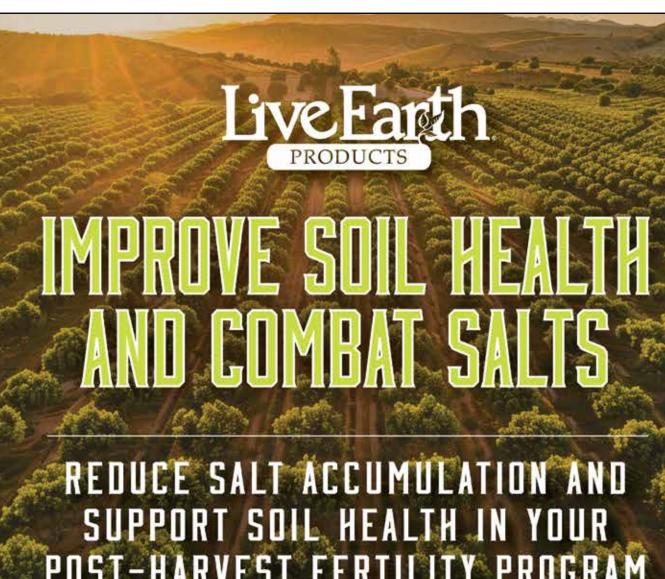
"Understanding the microbial pathway is key," Broadway emphasized. "If we can block it, we can solve it."

As the ARS team continues to identify specific bacterial sources and modes of transmission, their work marks a new chapter in livestock health—one where time, science, and innovation converge to protect herds and preserve industry sustainability.

For more information, visit www.ars.usda.gov or contact Maribel.Alonso@usda.gov.

The Agricultural Research Service is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's chief scientific in-house research agency. Daily, ARS focuses on solutions to agricultural problems affecting America. Each dollar invested in U.S. agricultural research results in \$20 of economic impact.

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The models' heavier base ensures enhanced stability and minimizes the risk of tipping, providing superior control on challenging terrain. Powered by a potent KIOTI four-cylinder water-cooled diesel engine, delivering up to 140 horsepower and 120 PTO horsepower, the HX1302 and HX1402 are engineered to handle the toughest jobs. The power shift transmission offers infinite speed control for precision and efficiency, while the high-capacity hydraulic system effortlessly powers demanding implements.

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UC Davis Launches Small-Batch Wine Label Hilgard631 Wine Sales Will Benefit Student Scholarship



Three wines that are part of the Hilgard631 collection, including two UC Davis cabernet sauvignons and a sauvignon blanc. The wines are on a table and feature multi-colored labels that show the UC Davis water tower and buildings.(Jael Mackendorf / UC Davis)

By Emily C. Dooley

For the first time in its storied history, the University of California, Davis, is selling wines to the public made by students, staff and faculty from grapes they grow in the Napa Valley and around campus in Yolo County.

Hilgard631 has been in the works for more than 10 years and was made possible by a 2021 state law that allows the transfer of as much as 20,000 gallons of Department of Viticulture and Enology wines to a nonprofit that will handle public sales. With this release, the department bottled roughly 500 gallons of wine to sell.

Money from the sales will support student scholarships. By using the grapes and wines produced through teaching, the department is enhancing sustainability. Prior to these sales, wines made by students, including in a 10-week winemaking course, had to be discarded.

"These wines represent our students, their knowledge, creativity and learning," said Ben Montpetit, chair of the Department of Viticulture and Enology. "From vine to bottle, our students are involved in every step."

In 2018, a team of MBA students from the UC Davis Graduate School of Management partnered with the department to create a comprehensive business plan to guide the wine sales initiative. It outlined the formation of a nonprofit and recommended lobbying for a legislative fix.

The wine label name pays homage to Eugene Hilgard, founding director of the university's Agricultural Experiment Station, and 631, which is the address of the Teaching and Research Winery on campus.

The wines sold under Hilgard631 include a 2020 cabernet sauvignon and 2024 sauvignon blanc made from grapes at

Oakville Station, a research and teaching vineyard in the heart of Napa County.

Twelve other wines made by students in the product development class, known as VEN 127L, also will be for sale. including albariño, chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon and petite sirah.

VEN 127L has traditionally been focused on blending, wine stabilization, bottling and the design of labels, and this launch broadens the class to include the consideration of selling, said Professor David Block, who created the course in 2017 when he was chair of the department.

"The wines are made by students who are still learning and getting to try out things they may not have done before," Block said. "It's a new aspect of

the program. It's more sustainable than pouring it down the drain."

In VEN 127L, student winemakers are divided into three groups and charged with developing a red and white wine. Each group also gets help from a professional consultant and department alum who offers advice throughout the class.

"It's absolutely fascinating," said Leticia Chacón-Rodríguez, the winemaker and winery manager. "The students get to connect everything that they learn — all the chemistry, regulations, marketing and blending. The blending piece is where you really put your senses into play."

Students also design their own labels. Master's student Bainian Chen designed the Oakville Station labels, which are a mix of vibrant colors and some familiar campus sights such as the water tower and a bike.

"I usually love my pictures to be very colorful, full of imagination," said Chen, who is known to give artwork to friends and professors. "I wanted to leave something for the viticulture and enology department."

The student winemakers also helped label and bottle the wines, working a commercial mobile bottling line in a trailer behind the winery.

"To see it being bottled is coming full circle for all of us," master's student Megan Hill said.

Block feels the same way. "I want to buy the first bottle of wine," he said.

Wines will range in price from \$30 to \$40 per bottle for student labels and from \$50 to \$125 per bottle for the Oakville wines. The winery is bonded and meets federal regulations for commercial wine sales. More information can be found at the Hilgard631 website.







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Marketing Support For California Avocados

Promotable Volume Expected Well Into August



"Photo courtesy of the California Avocado Commission."

Marketing efforts for California avocados are running at full steam in support for California Avocados. The California Avocado Commission's marketing campaign includes consumer advertising, social media, public relations and influencer activities as well as customized programs for participating retailers and foodservice operators. The Commission reports that advertising impressions through April alone exceeded 31 million, and its social media performance is surpassing both CAC's goals and industry benchmarks.

"California avocado social media is hitting way out of the park this season," said Terry Splane, CAC vice president of marketing. "For example, our 'Now In Season' video skyrocketed on TikTok with more than 1 million views. The platform currently ranks that video in the top 25% in impressions, clicks and click-through rate meaning it outranks 75% of all videos in the industry."

CAC's public relations and influencer efforts this spring are creating excitement about the fruit's availability and have included the distribution of a season opener pre-written story for placement in key regional media outlets, an influencer event at Bristol Farms in Santa Barbara, a California avocado grove tour for media, influencers and customers as well as partnerships with influencers to create branded content to share on their social platforms. Collectively, these PR and influencer activities have resulted in coverage of California

avocados with a reach of more than 170 million impressions.

To promote the fruit's peak season timeframe, CAC supported California Avocado Month in June through the distribution of a press release to key regional consumer media, and two broadcast segments were secured in the local California markets of Fresno and Sacramento. The Commission also partnered with influencers who developed California Avocado Month themed content that was running across their platforms and have worked with retailers and foodservice operators to help them

develop and promote California Avocado content on their social channels. Other spring and summer customer programs include advertising and social media support, sales and display contests and more.

"Commission marketing has really been coming on strong in spring" said Splane. "The California avocado crop was about 40% harvested by the end of May, and CAC has a robust program of advertising and promotion to support the remaining volume continuing into this summer."

Spring through summer means peak availability of California avocados. The Commission's crop forecast calls for very strong volume in most of July, ranging from 11 to nearly 17 million pounds per week. The harvest is expected to wind down gradually from August into September.

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World Ag Expo® Donates Over \$91,000 to Valley Children's **Healthcare from Toyota Tundra Giveaway**

■he International Agri-Center®, World Ag Expo®, and the Central Valley Toyota Dealers proudly presented a check for \$91,442.32 to Valley Children's Healthcare during the All Guild Picnic held on May 28 in Madera, California. This generous donation marks another milestone in an ongoing partnership that has, since 2015, raised over \$875,000 to support Valley Children's Healthcare.

The funds were raised through the Guilds of Valley Children's Healthcare, whose dedicated members sold tickets for the World Ag Expo Toyota Tundra Giveaway. Every ticket purchased offered a chance to win a new 2025 Toyota Tundra, with proceeds directly benefiting Valley Children's Healthcare and the families it serves.

"The Guilds of Valley Children's are grateful for 11 years of partnership with World Ag Expo and Central Valley Toyota Dealers to help fulfill our mission," said Marla McClaskey, Chair of the Guild Coordinating Council. "These partnerships, along with the amazing generosity of our community, make possible the continued success of the Toyota Tundra Giveaway, benefitting Valley Children's and the patients and families it cares for."

The 2025 Toyota Tundra, donated by the Central Valley

Toyota Dealers—the Official Truck of World Ag Expo—was won by Jayson Wertenberger of Fresno, CA on the final day of World Ag Expo.

"The Toyota Tundra Giveaway is more than just a tradition at World Ag Expo; it's a meaningful way we give back to the community," said Jerry Sinift, Chief Executive Officer of the International Agri-Center. "We're incredibly proud to present this donation to Valley Children's Healthcare, an organization that makes a real difference in the lives of families across the region. We're honored to be part of it."

About Valley Children's Healthcare

Valley Children's Healthcare has provided high-quality, comprehensive healthcare to children in Central California for nearly seven decades. With a commitment to excellence, compassion, and innovation, the organization continues to serve thousands of families each year.

About World Ag Expo®

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Fire Ants Found to Carry Virus **Linked to Honey Bee Decline**



The top half of this wheat head is infected with Fusarium Head Blight, a costly fungal disease that can diminish the grain yield and quality of wheat, barley and certain other cereal crops.

(Photo Credit: Mathew Helm, ARS)

USDA Research Reveals Unexpected Host in Ongoing Study of Pollinator Threats

Scientists with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (ARS), working alongside Mississippi State University, have made a surprising discovery that could reshape how we approach two persistent agricultural challenges: fire ants and honey bee health.

New research reveals that Deformed Wing Virus (DWV)—a major contributor to honey bee colony loss—is replicating in both red and black imported fire ants, long known for their invasive impact on ecosystems, crops, and wildlife. Until now, fire ants weren't considered a player in the spread of honey bee diseases.

"This is the first time we've demonstrated DWV replication in fire ants." said Dr. Jian Chen, research entomologist at the ARS Biological Control of Pests Research Unit in Stoneville, Mississippi. "It raises important questions about whether ants could play a role in transmitting the virus among insect populations."

DWV is a serious RNA virus widely spread by Varroa mites, causing wing deformities, shortened abdomens,

and neurological issues in honey bees. Affected colonies experience reduced productivity and often collapse entirely. With honey bees responsible for pollinating many of the crops that sustain the American food supply, any threat to their health has widespread implica-

Researchers collected samples from fire ant colonies in Mississippi and found both DWV variant A—the original strain—and variant B, which is currently spreading rapidly across bee populations worldwide. Genomic sequencing confirmed the virus was actively replicating inside the ants, a sign they may serve as potential viral hosts rather than passive carriers.

Even more concerning, infected fire ants exhibited symptoms eerily similar to those seen in bees: misshapen wings, impaired movement, and abnormal behavior. While it's still unclear whether DWV is the direct cause of these symptoms in ants, the parallels are drawing serious attention.

The connection between bees and fire ants may be closer than previously believed. Both species forage for sugary food sources like nectar and honevdew, and fire ants have been observed scavenging on dead bees—sometimes within apiaries.

"Fire ants are a common presence in bee yards, especially in regions where they're well established," Chen noted. "Their frequent interaction with bees and bee products makes this an important area of study moving forward."

Fire ants infest more than 367 million acres across the United States and contribute to over \$6 billion in annual damages. Understanding how they interact with pathogens like DWV could open the door to innovative pest control strategies—while also aiding efforts to safeguard honey bee popu-

Further research is underway to determine whether fire ants can transmit DWV to honey bees or other insects, and how this newly discovered relationship may influence disease dynamics in the wild.

Source: Jessica Ryan

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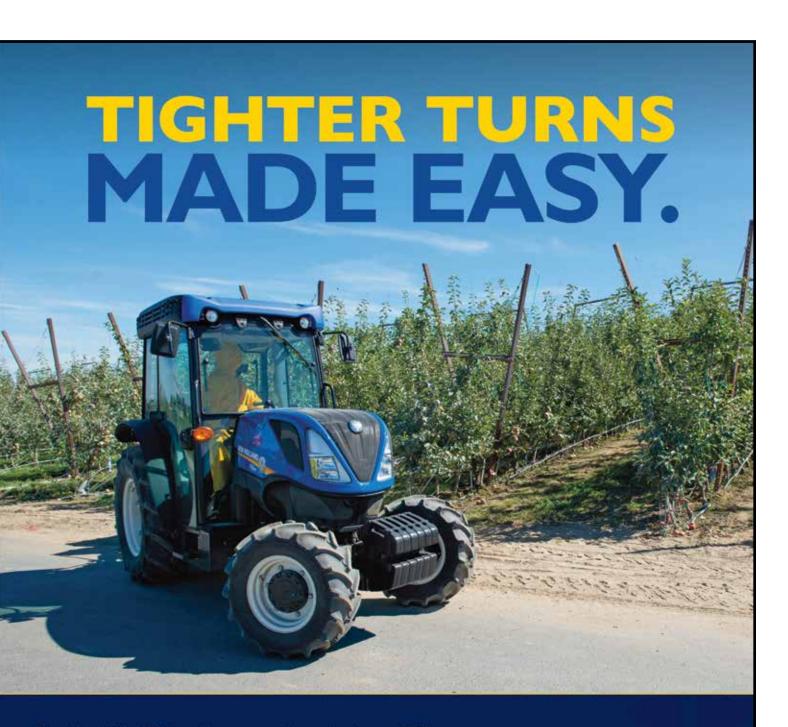
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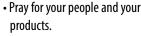
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24: Crisis Management Webinar | English. Crisis management starts with having a plan. The work does not end there. Too many times, safety plans, including crisis management plans, are developed and shelved. Implementation includes identification of roles, identification of methods of communication, evaluation of potential liabilities, information management, and training of all of those who are part of the plan. https://web.agsafe.org/atlas/events/4167/details

AUGUST 2025

14-15: Midyear Meeting and Cattle-PAC Auction + Dinner Dance. The meeting AND the Cattle PAC fundraiser will be held at the Paso Robles Event Center (California Mid-State Fairgrounds). For more information call (916) 444-0845 or visit: https://calcattlemen.org/event/2025-midyear-meeting-and-cattle-pac-auction-dinner-dance/

SEPTEMBER 2025

11-12: California Poultry Federation Annual Conference and Meeting, Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa Monterey, CA. The Board Meeting is Friday, September 12th. For questions about the conference, please contact the CPF office at (209) 576-6355.

DECEMBER 2025

3-5: 109th Annual CCA/CCW Convention. The 2025 California Cattlemen's Association and California Cattlewomen's Convention and California Cattle Industry Tradeshow. For the first time, our largest gathering of the year will be held at the Atlantis Casino Resort Spa in Reno, Nevada. For information call (916) 444-0845 or visit: https://calcattlemen.org/event/109th-annual-cca-ccw-convention/

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CDFA and Partner Agencies Urge Summer Travelers: Don't Pack a Pest

As families gear up for July 4th holiday and summer getaways, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is teaming up with federal and local partners to share an important message: leave fresh fruits, vegetables, and meat products out of your luggage. While these items may seem harmless, they can carry dangerous pests and diseases that threaten California's agriculture and environment.

The "Don't Pack a Pest" campaign—launched in collaboration with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS), and county agricultural commissioners—aims to raise awareness about how invasive species travel. These pests often hide inside seemingly innocent produce or plant materials, hitching rides across borders and state lines.

"Invasive pests and plant diseases can wreak havoc—not just on farms, but in our own backyards and communities," said CDFA Secretary Karen Ross. "Whether you're flying home from abroad or taking a summer road trip, we're asking everyone to do their part and avoid bringing agricultural products that could cause harm."

Travelers arriving in California are reminded to leave behind fruits, vegetables, and meats. If carrying plant material, they're encouraged to declare it for proper inspection to ensure it poses no threat.

CBP Port Director at LAX, Andrew H. Douglas, noted that agriculture specialists are stationed at major ports of entry to spot and stop harmful pests. "You may even meet our 'Beagle Brigade'—specially trained dogs who sniff out contraband items in luggage. They're a friendly but vital part of our frontline defense."

The warning comes on the heels of a record-setting year for pest outbreaks. In 2023, California faced its most widespread invasive fruit fly infestation in over a century. Quarantines were set up across the state to limit damage, impacting both commercial growers and residents' home gardens.

Currently, two fruit fly quarantine areas remain active: one in Alameda and Santa Clara counties for the Mediterranean Fruit Fly, and another in Orange County for the Oriental Fruit Fly. These efforts are key to protecting California's \$50 billion agriculture sector and the diverse ecosystems it supports.

The message from officials is simple: think twice before you pack that mango or homemade sausage. Invasive pests can be more than an inconvenience—they can devastate farms, raise food prices, and limit what we can grow in our own yards.

To learn more about what not to pack and why it matters, visit DontPackaPest.com. By staying informed and making smart choices, travelers can help protect California's farms, neighborhoods, and natural beauty for generations to come.

USDA Research Links Honey Bee Colony Collapses to Viruses Spread by Miticide-Resistant Parasitic Mites

Scientists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) have traced a sharp rise in U.S. honey bee colony collapses to high levels of deformed wing virus A and B and acute bee paralysis viruspathogens spread by parasitic Varroa destructor mites that have developed resistance to a commonly used miticide.

These findings, submitted for peer review, come amid reports from commercial beekeepers of staggering colony losses beginning in January 2025. Over 60% of commercially managed hives—representing 1.7 million colonies—were lost since the previous summer, with estimated damages totaling \$600 million.

"Our nation's food supply thrives, and is sustained, by the work of our pollinators," said Acting ARS Administrator Joon Park. "USDA scientists continue to research major stressors and new parasite treatment strategies, which will help reduce the agricultural challenge presented by the Varroa mites in honey bee colonies."

ARS researchers sampled hives in California and across the western United States before the 2025 almond pollination season. Lab analysis at the ARS Bee Research Laboratory in Beltsville, Maryland, detected viral infections in both colony-wide samples and individual bees showing pre-death behavioral symptoms. Crucially, Varroa mites collected from these hives showed widespread resistance to amitraz, one of the few miticides available to beekeepers.

"While viruses are a likely end-stage cause of colony death, these results do not rule out the importance of other long-known challenges to honey bees," noted Dr. Judy Chen, ARS Research Leader.

With pollination services from Apis mellifera—the western honey bee—supporting more than one-third of the U.S. food supply and over \$20 billion in crops annually, the implications of these findings are far-reaching. Globally, bee-dependent agriculture is valued at nearly \$387 billion.

USDA-ARS will continue monitoring colonies for additional stressors and evaluate strategies to combat parasite resistance and viral spread to safeguard pollinator health and food production.



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Gould Auctionwww.gouldauction.com	Pacific Ag Rentals	Federal Government		
Mulrooney Auction	www.pacificagrentals.com	Army Corps of Engineers		
www.mulrooneyauction.com	Peltzer Enterprises Inc	www.nwpl.sec.usace.army.mil		
Taylor Ag Equipment Appraisals	www.peltzerenterprises.com	Bureau of Land Managementwww.blm.gov		
www.linkedin.com/in/david-g-taylor- b4226a19	Pioneer Equipmentwww.pioneerequipment.com	Farm Service Agency		
Equipment	Plantel Nurseries	www.fsa.usda.gov		
Agco Corporation	www.plantelnurseries.com	National Weather Service www.weather.gov/		
American Loan Masters	Powerland Equipmentwww.powerlandequipment.com	Organizations		
	Presision Air Systems Inc	Almond Board of California		
www. pjtrailers.com/stores/ american-loan-masters/	www.precisionairsystems.com	www.almonds.com		
Bobcat Central	Quality Machinery	California Assn. of Winegrape Growerswww.cawg.org		
www.bobcatcentral.com	Quinn Company	California Cattlemen's Association		
Case Corporationwww.caseih.com	www.quinncompany.com	www.calcattlemen.org		
Coastal Tractor Companywww.coastaltractor.com	Rubicon Equipmentwww.rubiconequipment.com	California Dairy Research Foundationwww.cdrf.org		
Dolk Tractor Company	San Joaquin Tractor	California Poulty Federation		
www.dolktractorcompany.com	www.sanjoaquintractor.com	California Raisins		
Donahue Corporationwww.donahuetrailers.com	Sonsray Machinerywww.sonsraymachinery.com	www.calraisins.org		
Empire Agriculture	South Kern Machinery	California Rangeland Trust		
www.empireag.com	www.kernmachinery.com	www.rangelandtrust.org		
Exeter Mercantile	Tractor City Incwww.tractorcityinc.com	California Strawberrieswww.californiastrawberries.com		
www.exetermercantile.com	Trailer Superstore	Associated Equipment Distributors		
Farmers Tractor www.farmerstractorandequipment.com	www.pjtrailers.com/stores/	www.aednet.org/		
Garton Tractor Inc	trailer-super-store/	Real Estate		
www.gartontractor.com	Valley Forklift Incwww.valleyforklift.com	Valley Real Estate		
Grasshopper	Valley Tractor	www.valleyre.net		
www.grasshoppermower.com	www.valleytractor.com	State Government		
Hanford Equipment Companywww.hanfordequipmentco.com	Wilkinson International	Department of Agriculturewww.usda.gov		
Kubota Corporation	www.wilkinsoninternational.com	Department of Conservation		
www.kubotausa.com	Manufacturers McIlroy Equipment	www.consrv.ca.gov		
LAFORGE Systems Incwww.laforgegroup.com	McIlroy Equipmentwww.mcilroyequipment.com	Department of Food and Agriculturewww.cdfa.ca.gov		
Lane Tractor Sales Inc	Nikkel Iron Workswww.nikkelironworks.com	Department of Pesticide Regulationwww.cdpr.ca.gov		
Linder Equipmentwww.linderequipment.com	Smith Welding & Machine Shopwww.smithweldingshop.com	Department of Water Resourceswww.dwr.water.ca.gov		
Live Earth	Farm Shows	Syntentic Grass		
www.livearth.com	Antique Farm Showwww.antiquefarmshow.org	Synthetic Grass Solutions		
Massey Fergusonwww.masseyferguson.com/en_us	Colusa Farm Show	www.SGSfresno.com		
N & S Tractor	www.colusafairgrounds.com/	Weather		
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Justin Vineyards & Winery Awards \$350,000 To Nonprofits and Classrooms

Annual Community Grants Program Has Funded More Than \$2 Million in Vital Nonprofit Services and Education Across Paso Robles



USTIN Vineyards & Winery has awarded \$350,000 to support nonprofit organizations and educators in North San Luis Obispo County through its 2025 Community Grants program. This year, \$300,000 has been distributed to local nonprofits to strengthen services in healthcare, education, youth development, senior support, and environmental stewardship, with an additional \$50,000 going to classroom grants, helping teachers fund classroom supplies, field trips, and other enrichment activities that foster student-centered learning. Since its inception in 2013, the JUSTIN Community Grants Program has provided more than \$2.1 million in funding to local nonprofits and classrooms.

"Paso Robles is more than just the place we work. It's home to our employees, their families, and so many who make this region special," said Molly Scott, senior director of grower and community relations at JUSTIN Vineyards & Winery. "We're proud to invest in local organizations that uplift and strengthen our community. Their work ensures Paso Robles continues to be a vibrant and supportive place for all."

Some of this year's funding will directly support:

- Community Health Centers of the Central Coast (CHCCC) – Expanding access to healthcare through mobile medical units serving low-income patients.
- Tolosa Children's Dental Upgrading IT systems at two pediatric clinics to continue providing critical dental care to underserved children.
- One Cool Earth Supporting garden-based education for 4,500 students at Title I Elementary and Middle schools.
 - Senior Volunteer Services Enhancing safety and

accessibility for over 3,000 seniors and visitors annually at the Paso Robles Senior Center.

 Paso Robles Youth Art Center – Equipping the new JUSTIN Culinary Teaching Kitchen to provide culinary education to 640 low-income youth each year.

"Thanks to the support of JUSTIN, we can continue bringing essential health services directly into the communities that need them most," said Ronald Castle, chief executive officer, Community Health Centers of the Central Coast, Inc. "This funding allows us to expand access and improve outcomes for individuals and families across the region."

The full list of 2025 JUSTIN Community Grants recipients includes: Central Coast State Parks Association; Community Health Centers of the Central Coast; Creston Activities Town Center (CATCH); El Paso de Robles Pioneer Museum Foundation; Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo; One Cool Earth; Paso Robles Joint Unified School District; Paso Robles Library Foundation; Paso Robles Youth Arts Center; Senior Citizens United; Senior Volunteer Services; Studios on the Park; Templeton Community Library Association; Templeton Instrumental Music Boosters Association; Templeton Performing Arts Center Foundation; and Tolosa Children's Dental.

Grant recipients are selected by a committee of JUSTIN employees who review applications for local projects that provide tangible benefits to the greater Paso Robles community. Applications open annually in January. For more information and updates about the Community Grants program, visit www.justinwinegrants. com. To learn more about The Wonderful Company's broader corporate social responsibility efforts, visit csr. wonderful.com.



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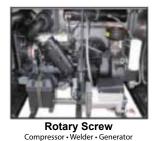
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