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UC Davis Uncorks Second Annual Wine Sale

Both Student-Made and UC Davis-Labeled Wine Available to Public



UC Davis-labeled releases this year will include a Napa Valley 2022 cabernet sauvignon, a Napa Valley 2025 sauvignon blanc and a Yolo County 2025 albariño. (UC Davis)

by Amy Quinton

The University of California, Davis, Department of Viticulture and Enology began this year's wine sales in June. The wines are made by students, faculty and staff from grapes they grow on campus and at the Oakville research station in Napa Valley. Six new student-made wines will be released as well as three new UC Davis wines.

Last year the department launched Hilgard631, a non-profit that handles the sales. The move was more than a decade in the making, enabled by a change in state law. Prior to that, wine made by students in a 10-week winemaking course had to be hauled away. Wine sales allow the campus's LEED Platinum winery to be even more sustainable by turning wine that was once discarded into a revenue stream for student scholarships.

All of the student-made wine released last year sold out — no small feat considering the challenges the wine industry faces.

"Consumption has decreased and some wineries have closed," said UC Davis winemaker and winery manager Leticia Chacón Rodríguez. "But we were able to sell out of everything we produced, so I consider that a success."

Last year's sales brought in \$100,000, which will go to student scholarships.

"Beyond the scholarship and program support that comes from the sale of the wines, students are seeing people buy and enjoy the wines they've invested their passion and energy in, often the first wine they have ever produced and that's been a true value," said Ben Montpetit, professor and chair of the Department of Viticulture and Enology.

Their own personality

Chacón Rodríguez says all this year's student wines have their own personalities. They include a sauvignon blanc, petite sirah, cabernet sauvignon, albariño, a red blend and a white blend. Like last year, students also bottled and designed their own labels as part of the winemak-

ing course. The course added another component this year: Students had to provide a detailed cost analysis of the product to understand its business viability.

"Wine is a business — and a lot of our alumni have wanted our students to have a better understanding of the business side of things and so being able to incorporate that in class is great, especially as a new wine business and science minor is expected to be offered in the fall," said Professor David Block, who created the winemaking course.

UC Davis releases will include a Napa Valley 2022 cabernet sauvignon, a Napa Valley 2025 sauvignon blanc and a Yolo County 2025 albariño.

UC Davis cannot provide wine tastings on campus as part of sales activities, so tasting notes are provided for each of the wines online.

Wines will range in price from \$30 to \$40 a bottle for student labels and from \$40 to \$125 for UC Davis labels. All wines are available exclusively for local pickup at the UC Davis Teaching and Research Winery at 631 Hilgard Lane.



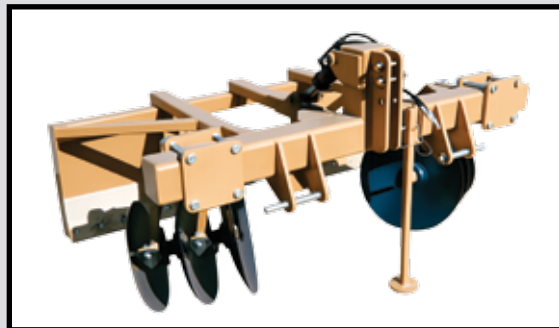
Students bottled and designed their own labels, as shown here for Flight Home, a 2024 Oakville Napa Valley red wine. (UC Davis)

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CDFA and CDRF Announce \$34 Million Available for California Dairy Projects through the Dairy Plus Program

California dairy facilities are now invited to apply for the Dairy Plus Program (DPP) to implement advanced manure management solutions on farms across the state - reducing methane emissions, improving water quality, and addressing nitrogen and salt surpluses through innovative, sustainable projects.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) Office of Agricultural Resilience and Sustainability (OARS), in partnership with the California Dairy Research Foundation (CDRF), is opening the third grant solicitation of the Dairy Plus Program.

Funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Advancing Markets for Producers initiative, DPP has approximately \$34 million available to invest in projects that support advanced manure management practices with several environmental benefits. The program is designed to bring emerging technologies aimed at reducing methane emissions and improving groundwater protection to California dairies of all sizes.

Since 2023, DPP has funded 34 projects across California. These projects are expected to reduce more than 1.5 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent from manure management – equal to removing approximately 355,000 gasoline-powered cars from the road- and provide significant improvements in nitrogen management and water quality.

"California's dairy producers continue to lead with innovation, and Dairy Plus reflects our commitment to supporting solutions that deliver real climate and water quality benefits," said CDFA Secretary Karen Ross. "By investing in advanced manure management practices, we are helping dairies reduce emissions, create compost for healthier soils, and continue building a more resilient future for agriculture."

Advancing sustainability efforts through initiatives such as DPP improves the long-term viability of an

industry that is essential to California's economy. Milk is the #1 agricultural commodity in the state. California is the leading producer of milk and dairy products in the U.S., contributing 18% of the nation's milk. According to a UC Davis study, California's dairy industry generates tens of billions in economic activity and supports over 150,000 jobs across the state.

Eligible DPP projects include advanced approaches such as vermifiltration, advanced solid-liquid separation assisted by flocculants or beads, and mechanical and non-mechanical separation of manure solids from water. By supporting these next-generation manure management practices now, DPP can help accelerate practical solutions to strengthen environmental stewardship and long-term dairy sustainability in California and beyond.

"California dairies have already made significant progress, and this program helps build on that momentum," said Denise Mullinax, executive director of the California Dairy Research Foundation. "It supports practical, on-farm solutions that help producers manage nutrients, protect water quality and plan for the future. The program is an important opportunity for dairy producers who have been considering next steps for their operations, and we encourage producers of all sizes to take a close look at this funding while it is available."

Eligible recipients for this third funding round include prior AMMP and DDRDP awardees, as well as dairy producers who were not previously funded through these programs but have implemented, or are in the process of implementing, approved AMMP or DDRDP practices with private or alternative funding sources. Applications are due Monday, September 14, 2026, at 5 p.m. PT.

For more information on eligibility, application materials, awarded projects, and eligible practices, visit CDFA's Dairy Plus Program webpage.

ADVERTISER INDEX

Case IH Tractor Company	
Linder Equipment Co	30
N&S Tractor	30
Sonsray Machinery	30
Wilkenson International	30
Crop Disaster Recovery	7
Gould Auction & Appraisal Co	5
Kiotti Tractor Company	
American Loan Masters	19
Exeter Mercantile	19
San Joaquin Tractor Co.....	19
Trailer Superstore	19
Kubota Tractor Corporation	
Dolk Tractor Co.....	23
Garton Tractor, Inc.....	23
Linder Equipment Co.....	23
Pioneer Equipment Co	23
Lasco Lighting Weeder	8-9
Linder Equipment Co.....	15
LS Tractor Company	
Lane Tractor Sales Inc	13
Simply Country	13
Tractor City Inc	13
Valley Forklift Inc	13
Mulrooney Auction Co	10-11
National Equipment	6
New Holland Tractor Company	
Coastal Tractor Co	26
Dolk Tractor Co.....	26
Garton Tractor, Inc.....	26
N&S Tractor	26
N&S Tractor	2
Precision Air Systems, Inc	32
Smith Welding & Machine Shop	3
Sonsray Machinery	24
Synthetic Grass Solutions.....	21

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Nominations Now Open for Farmers and Ranchers to Serve on USDA Farm Service Agency County Committees

Nominations are now being accepted for farmers and ranchers to serve on local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees. These committees make important decisions about how federal farm programs are administered locally. All nomination forms for the 2026 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 3, 2026.

“Local voices matter, and agricultural producers play an important role in shaping how federal farm programs serve their communities,” said FSA Administrator Bill Beam. “With nominations now open for FSA county committees, producers have an opportunity to put Farmers First by ensuring local farmers and ranchers have a voice in program delivery.”

Elections for committee members will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA). LAAs are FSA committee elective areas in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction and may in-

clude LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area.

Producers interested in serving on the FSA county committee can locate their LAA at fsa.usda.gov/coc and determine if their LAA is up for election by contacting their local FSA office.

Agricultural producers may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee if they:

- Participate or cooperate in a USDA program.
- Reside in the LAA that is up for election this year.

A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation to FSA, even if they have not applied or received program benefits.

Individuals may nominate themselves or others and qualifying organizations may also nominate candidates. USDA encourages all eligible producers to nominate, vote and hold office.

Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedi-

cated members of the agriculture community serve on FSA county committees. The committees are made up of three to 11 members who serve three-year terms. Committee members play a key role in how FSA delivers disaster recovery, conservation, commodity and price support programs, as well as making decisions on county office employment and other agricultural issues.

More Information

Producers should contact their local FSA office today to learn more about their county’s election. To be considered, a producer must sign an FSA-669A nomination form. This form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at fsa.usda.gov/coc.

All nomination forms for the 2026 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by the Aug. 3, 2026, deadline. Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters in November 2026

California Farmers Invited to Explore New Weed Management Options Through July LASCO Lightning Weeder™ Demonstrations



Cutting Costs, Cutting Weeds: Managing Resistant Weeds Without Increasing Inputs

California growers are being invited to explore electric weed control firsthand during a series of LASCO Lightning Weeder™ field demonstrations and grower meetups planned in July. As herbicide-resistant weeds become more common and input costs continue to rise, many farmers are looking beyond traditional chemical programs and exploring additional tools that can help improve long-term weed management.

One technology attracting increased interest is electric weed control. The LASCO Lightning Weeder™ uses targeted electrical discharge to travel through a weed's natural water pathways and into its root system, disrupting the plant without chemical application or soil disturbance. Because

the system relies on electrical energy rather than chemistry, it does not contribute to herbicide resistance and can be integrated

into existing weed management programs.

Rather than replacing current practices, electric weed control offers growers another tool to help address weed pressure while reducing dependence on repeated herbicide applications. Many farmers are beginning to view integrated weed management as a combination of approaches, utilizing both traditional and emerging technologies to achieve more sustainable results.

While electric weed control has primarily been used in broad-acre row crop operations, interest is growing among specialty crop producers where equipment size, maneuverability, and precision are critical. Crops such as vineyards, blueberries, orchards, and vegetable operations often require solutions that can navigate tighter spaces and operate efficiently with smaller tractors.

To support this growing interest, LASCO plans to conduct Lightning Weeder™ demonstrations and



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host grower meetups throughout California in July. These field events will provide growers with an opportunity to see the technology operating in real-world conditions, ask questions, and discuss how electric weed control may fit within their current farming practices.

For demonstration dates, locations, or to schedule a grower meetup, contact Kevin Olson, CEO of LASCO at lasco@arvig.net.

Interest in alternative weed management strategies continues to expand due to resistance concerns, increasing production costs, evolving regulations, and the need for more diversified integrated weed management programs. At the same time, agriculture is experiencing a broader movement toward electrification, with new technologies exploring how energy-based systems can

complement conventional farming practices.

For specialty crop growers, the ability to adopt innovative tools without significantly changing existing operations remains a key consideration. Through continued field demonstrations and collaboration with growers, compact electric weed control systems may become a practical addition to the expanding range of weed management options available to modern agriculture.

About LASCO

LASCO develops electric-based weed control systems designed to provide growers with an alternative to chemical herbicides. Its Lightning Weeder™ utilizes an electric discharge system (EDS) to target weeds through applied electrical energy, supporting integrated weed management strategies while minimizing impact on surrounding crops. The compa-

ny focuses on delivering practical, farm-scale solutions that can be integrated into existing agricultural operations, helping growers address weed resistance and evolving field management challenges. For more information about LASCO Lightning Weeder, visit: www.lightningweeder.com.

To support adoption during the growing season, LASCO is offering free setup and delivery for new systems through July 15.



How LASCO's Lightning Weeder™ Is Helping Farmers Regain Control of Resistant Weeds

James P. Mulrooney: A Life Built on Work, Honor, and the American Auction Tradition

Born the youngest of nine children to hardworking Irish immigrants, James “Jim” Mulrooney grew up in an environment where faith, discipline, and generosity weren’t just values — they were survival tools. His childhood on a sheep ranch in Byron, California, where the family managed 5,000 ewes without a single hired hand, shaped the foundation of the man he would become. Every child had a job, every job mattered, and every day demanded effort. It was on that ranch that Jim learned one of the guiding principles of his life: “Nothing worth having will ever be handed to you — you have to earn it.”

His father’s entrepreneurial spirit left an equally lasting impression. With nine children to keep busy, Jim’s father often attended auctions, purchasing equipment that the family would repair and resell at the next sale. The process fascinated young Jim — the energy of the auctioneer, the rhythm of the chant, the excitement of the crowd, and the sense of possibility that came with every bid. Without realizing it, he was absorbing the earliest lessons of the profession that would define his life.

After graduating from St. Mary’s High School, Jim received a life-changing gift: a scholarship from a family friend to attend the Western College of Auctioneering in Billings, Montana. For a shy 18-year-old who had never traveled outside California, the journey was daunting. But it was also transformative. In Montana, Jim immersed himself in the craft — learning bid calling, ring work, clerking, marketing, and the business mechanics behind a successful auction. He practiced relentlessly, refining the cadence and clarity of his chant until it became second nature.

Upon returning home, Jim worked for his brother in farming while seeking opportunities to call bids. He took every job he could find — livestock auctions, charity events, farm sales — each one sharpening his skills and building his confidence. His big break came in 1981 when he joined Howard Leech Auctions in Clovis, California. Under the mentor-



ship of Howard Leech, Jim learned the full scope of the auction business: client relations, accounting, advertising, contract negotiation, and personnel management. He spent five years selling everything from furniture to county surplus, gaining the experience and insight that would later fuel his success.

By 1986, Jim was ready to return to his agricultural roots. With little more than determination, a shoestring budget, and the support of family and friends, he launched Mulrooney Auction Company. The early years were lean, but Jim’s reputation for honesty, fairness, and professionalism quickly set him apart. In 1992, he conducted his first million-dollar farm auction in Genoa, Nevada — a milestone that marked the beginning of a new era for the company.

Today, Mulrooney Auction Company conducts approximately 20 to 30 farm, construction, and municipal auctions annually, generating more than \$20 million in gross revenue. Jim’s expertise and commanding presence on the auction block have also made him a sought-after auctioneer in the automotive industry. He serves as lead auctioneer for Adesa Auto Auction in Rio Linda and Manheim Auto Auction in Fresno, and previously held long-standing roles with Insurance Auto Auctions and Copart Auto Auction across Northern California. Over the course of his career, he has called more than 200 wholesale auto auctions annually, making him one

of the most experienced auctioneers in the region.

In addition to his auction work, Jim is a respected farm and construction equipment appraiser, completing more than 25 appraisals each year for banks, attorneys, private businesses, and the court system. His client list includes American Ag Credit, Bank of Stockton, California Farm Link, Farmers & Merchants Bank, Mission Bank, United Business Bank, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency, and multiple bankruptcy courts throughout California. His valuations are trusted for their accuracy, integrity, and deep industry knowledge.

Jim’s achievements reflect a lifetime of dedication to his craft. He earned the title of California State Champion Auctioneer in 1988, received a Lifetime Member Award from Future Farmers of America, and in 2024 was inducted into the San Joaquin County Ag Hall of Fame — one of the highest honors in the region’s agricultural community. He is an active member of the National Auctioneers Association, California State Auctioneers Association, American Society of Appraisers, and the San Joaquin County Farm Bureau.

Despite his demanding schedule, Jim remains deeply committed to giving back. Each year, he donates his time and talent to more than 15 nonprofit organizations, including St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital, Hospice of San Joaquin County, Ducks Unlimited, CSU Fresno Ag Alumni Association, Lodi Christian School, and many others. His ability to energize a room and inspire generosity has helped raise countless dollars for causes close to his heart.

Through every chapter of his life — from the sheep ranch in Byron to the auction blocks of California and beyond — Jim has remained grounded in the values he learned as a boy: work hard, treat people right, and always honor your word. His story is not just one of professional success, but of character, resilience, and the enduring power of the American work ethic



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SATURDAY, JULY 25TH, 9:15 AM SHARP!
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SATURDAY, OCT. 24TH, 9:00 AM SHARP!
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USDA moves to reopen grazing on National Forest lands and boost support for ranchers



The U.S. Department of Agriculture has taken new action to restore grazing access on National Forest lands and strengthen support for America's ranching families. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins announced that Forest Service employees across the country have received updated direction aimed at expanding grazing opportunities, reducing delays, and reaffirming the long-standing role of ranchers in managing public lands.

Secretary Rollins emphasized that ranchers remain a cornerstone of rural economies and a vital part of the nation's food supply. She noted that years of regulatory hurdles and activist-driven lawsuits have limited the multiple-use purpose of National Forests and Grasslands. The new directive gives field leaders clearer expectations and reinforces grazing as an essential tool for maintaining healthy landscapes, reducing fuel loads, and supporting working lands.

The updated guidance builds on recent USDA efforts, including the 2025 Plan to Fortify the American Beef Industry and the 2026 grazing agreement with the Department of the Interior. Together, these actions are designed to strengthen the beef supply chain, support producers facing rising costs, and ensure that federal land management agencies are aligned in their approach to grazing.

Key elements of the directive include reopening and prioritizing vacant or closed allotments, increasing flexibility for permittees during drought or challenging seasons, and streamlining the permitting process to eliminate unnecessary delays. USDA is also directing Forest Service staff to improve communication with ranchers, elevate local input, and provide more consistent service at the field level.

According to USDA, these steps will help protect the roughly 23,000 permittees and lessees who rely on federal rangelands for their operations. By restoring access and reducing red tape, the agency says it is supporting both the long-term health of public lands and the continued availability of affordable, American-raised beef for consumers.

The directive signals a renewed focus on multiple-use management and a commitment to ensuring that ranching remains a strong and viable part of the rural West. For many producers, the changes represent a meaningful shift toward practical, on-the-ground solutions that keep working lands working.

UC Davis Opens Resnick Center for Agricultural Innovation. Facility Will Advance Scalable Agricultural Solutions Through Cutting-edge Technology and Research.



by Courtney Tompkins

The University of California, Davis, celebrated the grand opening of the Resnick Center for Agricultural Innovation, a state-of-the-art facility designed to transform agricultural research, teaching and outreach while accelerating solutions to the world's most pressing challenges in food systems and sustainability. Made possible by philanthropic support, including a lead transformative gift from Lynda and Stewart Resnick through their foundation in 2022, the new center is housed within the UC Davis College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, ranked No. 1 in the nation and No. 2 in the world in agriculture and forestry. The center builds on the university's longstanding global leadership in agriculture with a focus on translating research into real-world impact.

"This center represents the best of UC Davis, uniting our strengths in agriculture, engineering and environmental sciences to address challenges facing communities across California and around the world," said Chancellor Gary S. May. "We are deeply grateful to Lynda and Stewart for their partnership and support, which expand research opportunities and drive solutions that will shape the future of agriculture." Stu-

dents, faculty, staff, donors and industry partners joined university leaders to celebrate the opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, open house and tours. Named after the Resnicks, co-owners of The Wonderful Company, home to Wonderful Pistachios, POM Wonderful and FIJI Water, the center reflects a shared commitment to advancing sustainable agriculture, innovation and food security.

The Resnicks are among the world's most impactful philanthropists, having committed more than \$2.5 billion across health and wellness, education and community development. "Lynda and I have always believed that growing more food with fewer resources is one of the most important things we can do," said Stewart Resnick. "UC Davis is the leading ag university in the country, and we all have a stake in giving them everything they need to continue leading on this important work."

The Resnick Center reflects a broader commitment from the couple and their foundation, whose \$50 million gift to UC Davis in 2022 included \$40 million for the facility and \$10 million for the Resnick Agricultural Innovation Research Fund. The 34,000-square-foot facility revolutionizes hands-on learning in an immersive environment that con-

nects education to research and discovery. Experts across disciplines will work in labs equipped with robotics, sensors, data science and artificial intelligence. Research efforts will focus on resilient agricultural systems, advanced technologies, sustainability through water and energy efficiencies, and expanding access to nutritious food.

"The new Resnick Center strengthens our ability to integrate research, teaching and extension in ways that directly serve California and beyond," said Ashley M. Stokes, dean of the college. The center incorporates specialized labs and equipment that bolster efforts to transform agricultural byproducts into high-value materials. Over the past three years, UC Davis researchers have explored how agricultural waste — including hulls and shells from almonds, pistachios and pomegranates — can be repurposed as soil amendments, sustainable food products and low-cost industrial materials.

For students, the center offers a direct pathway from classroom learning to real-world application. The facility also houses The Wonderful Scholar Center, a student success hub supporting more than 50 Wonderful Scholars at UC Davis. The Resnicks, their foundations and The Wonderful Company have awarded over 3,500 scholarships of up to \$40,000, providing mentorship and tutoring support.

"As a first-generation college student who grew up around agriculture, I came to UC Davis with a deep appreciation of what farming families are up against," said Jose Gomez, Wonderful Scholar. "What the Resnicks have built isn't just a building. It's a bridge across disciplines — driving research, innovation and people forward."

"Today marks the beginning of a new era," Chancellor May said. "The discoveries made inside this building will extend into farms, fields and communities around the globe, shaping a more resilient and sustainable future for agriculture."



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The Role of Communication in Agricultural Innovation

By Gillian Christie

Agriculture has never lacked innovation. From advanced equipment and precision technologies to new approaches in weed control, water management, and sustainability, farmers today have access to more tools than ever before. Yet innovation alone does not guarantee adoption. For many growers, the challenge is not finding new ideas—it is determining which solutions are worth their time, investment, and trust. In an industry where margins can be tight and every decision carries risk, farmers naturally approach new technologies with caution. This is where communication and education play an important role.

Trust Comes Before Adoption

Farmers have always relied on trusted sources of information. Whether it comes from neighboring growers, university extension programs, trade publications, equipment dealers, or industry events, trust remains one of the most valuable currencies in agriculture. A new technology may offer impressive capabilities, but growers often want to see proof before making a commitment. They want to hear real-world experiences, understand practical applications, and evaluate potential benefits under conditions like their own operations. Building trust takes time, transparency, and a willingness to educate rather than simply promote.

Why Demonstrations Matter

One of the most effective ways to introduce agricultural innovation is through field demonstrations. Seeing equipment operate under real farming conditions provides a level of understanding that brochures, websites, and product specifications cannot fully deliver. Demonstrations allow growers

to ask questions, compare results, and determine whether a solution fits their needs. Field events also create opportunities for meaningful conversations among farmers, researchers, dealers, manufacturers, and agricultural professionals. These interactions often provide valuable insights that contribute to better decision-making across the industry.

Navigating Information Overload

Today's growers are exposed to more information than ever before. Industry publications, social media, podcasts, webinars, trade shows, research reports, and digital marketing campaigns all compete for attention. While access to information is valuable, it can also make it difficult to separate meaningful innovations from marketing noise. Clear communication helps growers focus on what matters most: performance, practicality, economics, and long-term value. Companies that communicate openly about both the opportunities and limitations of their products often build stronger credibility than those that rely solely on promotional messaging.

Branding in Agriculture Is About Reputation

When people hear the word branding, they often think of logos, advertising, or marketing campaigns. In agriculture, branding is something much deeper. A strong agricultural brand is built on reputation, reliability, and relationships. It reflects how a company serves its customers, supports its products, and contributes to the industry over time. For equipment manufacturers and agricultural innovators, branding is ultimately about trust. Growers remember companies that consistently deliver on their promises

and provide value beyond the sale. The strongest agricultural brands are often those that educate first, communicate clearly, and focus on solving real-world challenges faced by growers.

Moving Innovation Forward

Agriculture continues to evolve at an extraordinary pace. New technologies will play an important role in helping farmers address challenges related to labor, sustainability, efficiency, and productivity. However, innovation reaches its full potential only when growers understand how it works, why it matters, and how it can benefit their operations. The future of agriculture depends not only on innovation itself, but also on our collective ability to share knowledge, foster trust, and create meaningful conversations that help growers make informed decisions. By combining innovation with education and clear communication, the agricultural industry can accelerate adoption, strengthen partnerships, and support the continued success of farming communities for generations to come.

About Christie & Co

Christie & Co is a full-service branding, public relations, marketing, and advertising agency headquartered in Santa Barbara, California. For 33 years, the agency has worked exclusively with ethical brands, helping mission-driven companies achieve mainstream success through authentic storytelling and research-driven strategy. Serving clients across lifestyle, green industries, ag-tech, food and beverage, and social innovation sectors, Christie & Co is guided by its philosophy, "From Dream to Mainstream," and its proprietary Organic Marketing Technology™ approach. Visit: christieand.co

California charts smarter path to support farmers and ranchers while maintaining food safety and clean water

California has released final recommendations from a multi-year study aimed at making food safety and water quality regulations clearer, more coordinated and easier for farmers and ranchers to navigate. The effort, led by CDFR, CalEPA and the State Water Resources Control Board, was shaped with input from growers and local leaders to streamline processes and improve how regulatory information is collected.

Governor Gavin Newsom said the roadmap is designed to make the regulatory system work better for the people growing the state's food while maintaining strong standards for safety and clean water. CDFR Secretary Karen Ross thanked contributors and emphasized the need for smarter regulation that keeps pace with today's challenges. State Water Board Chair Joaquin Esquivel highlighted the importance of strengthening data systems to support decision-making while reducing compliance costs for growers.

The study evaluated California's food safety and water quality requirements and identifies 18 recommendations to improve agency coordination, expand technical assistance, modernize reporting systems and enhance regulatory efficiency. The work was supported by funding in the 2021-22 state budget.

View the full study and recommendations on the CDFR Regulatory Alignment Study website.

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THE AMERICAN FIELD

250 Years of Grit, Growth & the Spirit of Freedom

By Joe L. Neyer III

California Farm Equipment Magazine

From hand-hewn furrows to GPS-guided combines, the story of American farming is the story of the nation.



A modern American farm - the spirit of Independence effected in every acre.

The New Nation Begins in the Soil

When the United States declared its independence in 1776, the nation's backbone wasn't steel, industry, or technology — it was the soil. More than 90 percent of early Americans farmed, carving out a living with hand tools, animal power, and sheer determination. Farming wasn't just an occupation; it was a declaration of self-reliance, a tangible expression of the freedom the new nation fought to secure.

From the tobacco fields of Virginia to the grain farms of Pennsylvania, agriculture shaped the earliest American identity. The farm was the first classroom, the first business, the first community center — and the first symbol of what it meant to build something of your own.

Westward Expansion and the Machinery Revolution

As the young nation pushed westward, farming pushed with it. The Homestead Act of 1862 opened millions of acres to settlers willing to work the land, and with that expansion came innovation. American inventors — McCormick, Deere, and others — transformed agriculture from muscle-driven labor to machine-powered progress.

The steel plow cut through the Midwest's stubborn prairie sod. Mechanical reapers multiplied harvest capacity. Steam engines and early tractors replaced horses and oxen, allowing farmers to cultivate more acres than ever before.

Agriculture wasn't just feeding the nation — it was fueling its growth.



"Long before machines and modern comforts, freedom was cultivated by those who rose with the sun, trusted the soil, and built the backbone of America."



"Across these open fields, generations built the strength that carried America forward."

Feeding a Nation Through War, Drought and Change

The 20th century tested American agriculture in ways no one could have predicted. The Dust Bowl scarred the land and reshaped farming practices. Two world wars demanded unprecedented food production. The post-war boom brought new technologies — hybrid seeds, irrigation systems, fertilizers, and eventually GPS-guided equipment.

Through every hardship, American farmers adapted. They rebuilt soil, embraced conservation, and learned to grow more with less. Their resilience became a national symbol of endurance and unity.

The Modern Era: Precision, Sustainability, and Global Leadership

Today, American agriculture stands at the intersection of tradition and technology. Drones map fields from above. Autonomous tractors steer with centimeter accuracy. Data analytics guide planting, irrigation, and harvest decisions. What once took a team of workers can now be done by a single operator with a touchscreen. Yet despite all the innovation, the heart of American farming hasn't changed. It remains a family-driven, communi-

ty-rooted, fiercely independent way of life. The same values that shaped the first farms — hard work, stewardship, and freedom — still guide the men and women who feed the nation.

250 Years of Freedom - Carried by the American Farmer

As the United States celebrates 250 years of independence, it's impossible to tell the story of American freedom without honoring the people who have worked the land since the beginning. Farmers have fed soldiers, fueled industries, supported communities, and sustained generations.

They have weathered storms — literal and economic — and emerged stronger every time. They have embraced innovation without abandoning heritage. They have kept the nation grounded, even as the world changed around them.

The American farm is more than a place. It is a legacy. A promise. A living symbol of the freedom this country was built upon.

And as we look toward the next 250 years, one thing remains certain: America's future will always grow from its fields.

★ MILESTONES ★ in AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

1776 - A nation of farmers

1862 - Homestead Act
opens the frontier

1930s - Dust Bowl reshapes
conservation

1940s - Feeding the world
through WWII

1990s - GPS enters the field

THE EVOLUTION OF AMERICAN FARM EQUIPMENT

How Ingenuity, Iron, and Innovation Built the Backbone of U.S. Agriculture



American agriculture didn't just grow from the soil — it grew from the tools farmers forged, adapted, and reinvented over nearly three centuries. The story of U.S. farm equipment is a story of grit, engineering, and the relentless pursuit of efficiency. From hand tools to horsepower to high-tech autonomy, each era reshaped how America feeds itself and the world.

From Hand Labor to Horsepower (1700s–1800s)

Early American farming relied on muscle — human and animal. Wooden plows, sickles, and crude harrows dominated the landscape. Productivity was painfully slow until **Jethro Wood's cast-iron plow (1819)** and **John Deere's polished steel plow (1837)** transformed soil preparation. Deere's design sliced through tough Midwestern sod, opening millions of acres to cultivation and accelerating westward expansion.

By the mid-1800s, **Cyrus McCormick's mechanical reaper** revolutionized harvesting. What once took a crew of men could now be done by a single operator. The era marked the first major leap in American farm efficiency.

The Rise of Mechanization (1900–1950)

The early 20th century ushered in the machine age. Steam traction engines gave way to gasoline tractors, and companies like **International Harvester, Ford, Case, and Allis-Chalmers** competed to modernize the American farm.

Henry Ford's **Fordson Model F (1917)** made tractors affordable for the average farmer, while the 1930s brought rubber tires, power take-off (PTO), and hydraulics — innovations that defined the modern tractor.

By World War II, mechanization had replaced millions of farm laborers, enabling the U.S. to increase food production even as manpower shifted to the war effort.

The Age of Power, Precision, and Productivity (1950–2000)

Post-war America saw rapid expansion in equipment capability:

- **Self-propelled combines** replaced pull-types
- **Diesel engines** delivered more power and reliability
- **Four-wheel drive tractors** conquered larger acreage
- **Air seeders, sprayers, and balers** became specialized and highly efficient

By the 1980s and 1990s, onboard electronics, GPS guidance, and early precision-ag tools began shaping the future. Farmers could now plant straighter rows, reduce overlap, and manage inputs with unprecedented accuracy.

The Digital & Autonomous Era (2000–Today)

Today's farm equipment is as much software as steel. Modern tractors and combines integrate:

- **Autosteer and RTK GPS**
- **Telematics and remote diagnostics**
- **Variable-rate application**
- **Yield mapping and data analytics**
- **Semi-autonomous and fully autonomous platforms**

Manufacturers like **Case IH, John Deere, New Holland, Kubota, and AGCO** are pushing toward fleets that communicate, self-adjust, and eventually operate without a driver.

What began with a wooden plow has evolved into a connected ecosystem of machines capable of feeding a nation with fewer inputs, less labor, and greater sustainability.

Why It Matters

The history of farm equipment is more than a timeline — it's the backbone of American progress. Every innovation has helped farmers do more with less, adapt to changing climates, and meet the demands of a growing population. As autonomy and electrification advance, the next chapter promises even greater transformation.



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Helpful Garden Tips for June/July 2026

By Peyton Ellas, Tulare/Kings Counties Master Gardener

Are we ready for summer? We've had roller coaster spring weather, which is typical for this part of California. Also typical is a dry, hot summer with very little or no precipitation. We may still get rain this month, especially over the mountains, but in June, we generally start limiting our outdoor work hours to mornings. Some of our plants might also be showing a willingness to slow down towards the second half of the month. This is especially true of plant species adapted to dry summers with little water. It makes sense that they would not want to expend resources in summer. It's good to remember this when evaluating the health and appearance of some of our woody Mediterranean-climate and California-native species.

PLANTING: Your ornamental planting should be mostly finished by the middle of the month. If you must plant ornamentals in summer, choose water-tolerant plants. In low water-use gardens, this can be the many sage (*Salvia*), among them California native sage, most ornamental grasses, California fuchsia (*Epilobium*), sage hybrids and cultivars like 'Hot Lips,' and 'Flame,' plus Yarrow (*Achillea*), Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia*), Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia*), Bougainvillea, rosemary, Hesperaloe, and high desert plants like Apricot Mallow (*Sphaeralcea*) and the popular bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*.) Avoid planting Ceanothus, manzanita, silver bush lupin (*Lupinus albifrons*), or coffeeberry (*Frangula* or *Rhamnus* sp.) in summer.

In the edible garden, plant melon, winter squash and pumpkin, basil, corn, and okra. Edible gardening is a high maintenance project and is not low-water. But as long as we don't waste or over-use water and we maximize our harvest by controlling pests and diseases, a vegetable garden and orchard are a good use of space and water. Growing your own food, even a few herbs, is so satisfying that I encourage everyone to try at least a small garden, in the ground or in containers. The key is to choose an edible garden size you can easily manage. Who needs another excuse to stress out about unfinished tasks? It's fine to hire help to manage routine chores like weeding and water management, but try to spend a little time each week in your own garden for maximum benefits to you and the plants. Ideally, you should visit your edible garden at least once every day. You can take care of issues before they become real problems and harvest food at its prime. It's also good for your well-being to spend time in a garden.

MAINTAINING: Lawns, like the rest of the landscape, should be watered deeply and as infrequently as possible. Keep your grass at least three inches tall to help the crowns stay cool and not dry out between watering. A summer job can be to remove some part (or all) of your lawn in preparation for fall planting. It might be as simple as turning off the lawn sprinklers or preparing to solarize the area. Or, while temperatures are still relatively cool, digging it all out.

Monitor your garden, both edible and ornamental, for pest insects like scale, aphid, whitefly, stink bug, spider mite, and earwigs. Edible gardens with flowers and hedgerows can be a great habitat for garden allies like lacewing, ladybug, birds, spiders, native wasps, butterflies, and moths. Monitor populations of pest insects and see if the beneficials, including birds, can keep the numbers manageable. If some help is needed, follow the "least toxic first" method of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practice before you

reach for the kills everything insecticide.

Other tasks this month are:

- Deep-water ground covers, shrubs, and trees, including fruit trees.
- Divide bearded iris once they finish blooming. First, carefully dig up plants and discard old rhizomes and any diseased or rotted sections. Replant the healthy rhizomes, making sure to plant shallowly. Just barely cover the rhizome with soil before watering.
- Prune azalea, camellia, and hydrangea after bloom.
- After harvest, clean up berry vines. Cut this year's fruiting canes to the ground and tie up the new green canes in their place. Spread compost or fertilizer in the bed, then deep water.
- Prune apricot trees in the summer. You can also do a light summer pruning of other stone fruit trees. Beware of pruning too much, since bark that has previously been in the shade can be extra-sensitive to sunburn.
- Pinch asters, chrysanthemums, and sedum 'Autumn Joy' to encourage branching and more blooms in the fall. My chrysanthemums often start blooming in the summer, so I usually wait until this first flush, pinch back old flowers, and get another bloom in the fall.
- Lightly cut back any perennials that are becoming too leggy.
- Snip spent flowers from summer-blooming annuals and perennials.
- Wisteria can be pruned aggressively now. Cut back to two nodes on the new branches, as this will keep the plant from unrestrained growth, while giving it time to put on a spectacular display of blooms next year.
- Manage mosquitoes by limiting standing water and using dunks containing *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (BTI). Plant trays and pet water dishes are a good breeding ground for the daytime biting *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, commonly called the "ankle biter," or Zika mosquito. No mosquito-carrying virus has been transmitted in California, but the mosquitoes are still a nuisance because they bite multiple times.

WEED CONTROL:

- Crabgrass thrives in an overwatered, over-mowed lawn. Change the lawn care and reduce this weed. IF you use an herbicide, be sure to follow the directions carefully; don't just throw it on by handful.
- Nutsedge also loves overwatered lawns and planting beds. It's tough to get rid of. Be diligent with hand pulling, hoeing, and spraying to remove it before it takes control of your garden or lawn.
- Spurge is often a sign that you also have an Argentine ant problem and, in lawns, that you are mowing too short. This flat creeping weed with a red spot on the leaves must be hand-pulled or hoed before plants set seeds. Also, control the ants with baits, changing the active ingredient every few months.

CONSERVING: Follow good practices by avoiding overwatering. If you do only one thing, repair leaks in your irrigation system and water faucets. Try to tolerate benign insects in the garden. If you don't know what it is, identify it first before killing it. Keep in mind, insects feed bats, birds, lizards and toads. I could tell you about ground squirrels at my place eating Jerusalem crickets, but I'll save that for another time. Have a safe, healthy, full-of-garden-wonder month!

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UPCOMING EVENTS

JULY 2026

4: Independence Day: The U.S. Forest Service Recreation fee-free day. For more information visit www.fs.usda.gov/visit/passes-permits.

15-26: "The Biggest Little Fair Anywhere!" The Fair opened in 1946 and was first known as the San Luis Obispo County Fair. The California Mid-State Fair, held annually in Paso Robles, is a vibrant celebration of the region's rich agricultural heritage and a beloved community tradition. Spanning twelve days in July, the fairgrounds come alive with an array of activities and attractions that cater to all ages. From thrilling carnival rides to captivating live entertainment, the fair offers a diverse line-up of events that showcase the best of local culture, talent, and craftsmanship. For more info: www.midstatefair.com/fair/

17-August 2: California State Fair - Rides, live concerts, strolling performing acts, yep, it's all back for another year of good times! Sacramento, CA. For more information: <https://castatefair.com/>

SEPTEMBER 2026

17: Constitution Day: The U.S. Forest Service Recreation fee-free day. For more information visit www.fs.usda.gov/visit/passes-permits.

26: National Public Lands Day: The U.S. Forest Service Recreation fee-free day. For more information visit www.fs.usda.gov/visit/passes-permits.

OCTOBER 2026

3: Cow Palace Annual Women of Rodeo performance, and enjoy an action-packed night of the fastest growing women's sport in the Nation! Daly City.

9-10: Cow Palace Grand National Rodeo & Livestock Show-Daly City. Annual Grand National Rodeo. Come see these high-energy rodeo competitions complemented by comedy, music and jaw-dropping performances, including trick riding.

27: Theodore Roosevelt's Birthday: The U.S. Forest Service Recreation fee-free day. For more information visit www.fs.usda.gov/visit/passes-permits.

NOVEMBER 2026

11: Veterans Day: The U.S. Forest Service Recreation fee-free day. For more information visit www.fs.usda.gov/visit/passes-permits.

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USDA Launches \$125 Million Annual Investment to Modernize Ag Research Facilities

Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins announced a major new investment to modernize agricultural research facilities across the United States. Joined by Secretary of Education Linda McMahon, she opened the FY 2026 funding opportunity for the Research Facilities Act Program, supported by \$125 million in annual funding made possible through President Trump's Working Families Tax Cuts. The goal is to address decades of deferred maintenance at Land-grant Universities and ensure researchers have the modern tools and spaces needed to support American agriculture.

Rollins said that a nation must be able to feed itself to remain secure, and many universities have been working in outdated buildings that limit their ability to conduct world-class research. She emphasized that this investment will help protect the strength of U.S. agriculture and support the farmers and ranchers who rely on innovation to stay competitive.

Secretary McMahon highlighted the long history of Land-grant Universities in driving agricultural progress. She noted that these institutions have shaped the nation's food and farming systems through scientific breakthroughs, new technologies, and generations of trained professionals. She said the new funding ensures these universities can continue leading in research and competitiveness.

USDA Chief Scientist Dr. Scott Hutchins said the program will help ensure future research is conducted in modern, well-equipped facilities capable of addressing emerging challenges. He described the program as a win for both American agriculture and the next generation of scientists and producers.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture will administer the competitive funding process. Projects may include

renovations, expansions, or new construction that strengthen research capacity. Applicants must provide a dollar-for-dollar non-federal cash match, and each eligible institution may receive funding for only one project at a time. Funding is available at four levels, ranging from planning grants to large-scale research complexes.

NIFA Director Dr. Jaye L. Hamby said the investment reaffirms USDA's long-standing partnership with Land-grant Universities and will help move research from the lab to the marketplace and the field. She said the improvements will support farmers, ranchers, and producers by accelerating innovation and strengthening the nation's food supply.

This funding marks one of the largest federal commitments to agricultural research facilities in decades. Many universities say the investment comes at a critical time as research demands continue to grow. Updated facilities will help scientists respond more quickly to issues like drought, pests, and shifting markets. University leaders noted that modern labs are essential for training future experts and attracting top research talent.

The program also encourages collaboration with local industry to maximize the impact of each project. USDA officials said the upgrades will support rural communities that rely on research partnerships and help create new opportunities for students pursuing agricultural careers. The matching requirement ensures that states and local partners remain invested in long-term success.

With the application window now open, universities across the country are preparing proposals. The deadline for submissions is July 17, 2026, and additional information is available on the Research Facilities Act Program page on the NIFA website.

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.....www.worldagexpo.com/

Federal Government

- Army Corps of Engineers**
.....www.nwpl.sec.usace.army.mil
- Bureau of Land Management**
.....www.blm.gov
- Farm Service Agency**
.....www.fsa.usda.gov
- National Weather Service**
.....www.weather.gov/

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.....www.almonds.com
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.....www.cawg.org
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.....www.calcattlemen.org
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.....www.cdprf.org
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Registration open for 2026 California Agritourism Summit Sept. 23-25



Last year's summit brought attendees to San Diego County. Now, attendees will get to visit San Luis Obispo. Photo courtesy of Rachael Callahan

By Caroline D Champlin

Paso Robles, known for its wine, olive oils and oak-studded landscapes, is a natural fit to host the 2026 California Agritourism Summit, organized by the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program. From Sept. 23–25, San Luis Obispo County will become a statewide hub for agritourism learning and collaboration.

Keynotes, panels and breakout sessions will offer tools to strengthen agritourism in California, while farm tours will give attendees direct insight from operators. Event organizer Rachael Callahan said the tours highlight the region's diversity, from an urban farm to a large cattle ranch to an indoor mushroom facility.

The program serves agritourism operators, policymakers, regulators and tourism professionals. Growers can explore sessions on emergency preparedness and accessing capital, while tourism leaders can learn strategies for attracting agritourism to their regions. Networking sessions hosted by California Grown will bring all stakeholders together to enjoy the state's agri-

cultural bounty.

A recent state law streamlining permits for low-impact camping has energized the industry, especially for growers interested in hosting visitors. Callahan hopes the legislation sparks new ideas and opportunities for agritourism growth.

Karen Ross, Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, emphasized agritourism's role in strengthening farming communities and helping visitors connect with the people who grow their food.

Lynette Sonne, founder of FARMstead ED and a summit partner, welcomed the event to her home county, noting the chance to explore urban farms, family ranches and hand-crafted goods shaped by "seasons, sweat and tradition."

Growers interested in adding agritourism to their operations can visit the California Agritourism website for resources and workshop information. The summit is organized by UC SAREP with support from California Grown, FARMstead ED/SLO County Farm Trail, GO-Biz and Siskiyou Economic Develop-

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