Riverside County AGRICULTURE

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A private, nonprofit organization serving farmers throughout Riverside County since 1917
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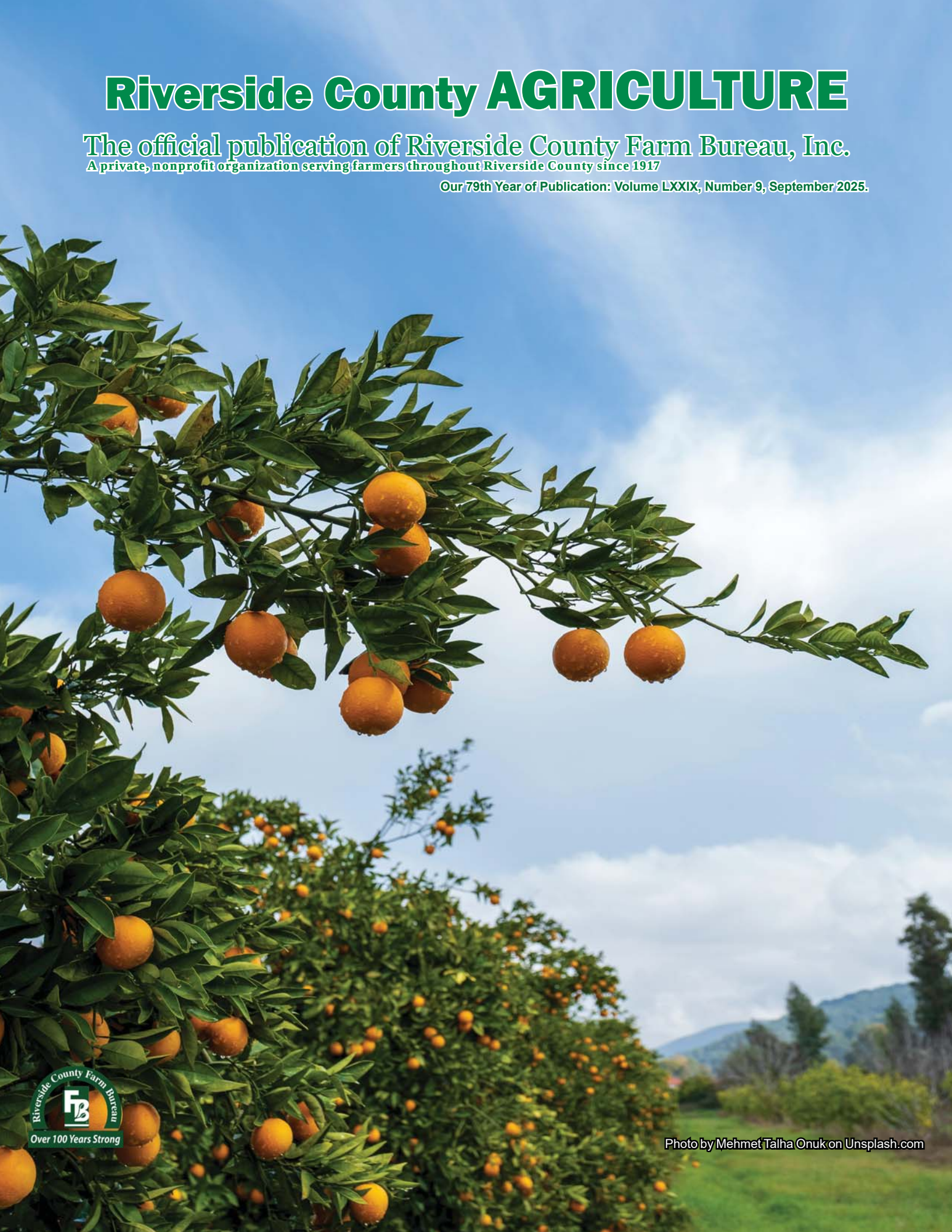

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Welcome New Members

We would like to "Thank You" for becoming part of the Farm Bureau Family.

A Message from the Riverside County Sheriff's Rural Crime Team

Fire Season and the Importance of the AG Pass

Fire season is upon us, and it is crucial to ensure that all agricultural producers in Riverside County are prepared. One key component of this preparation is obtaining the AG Pass. Without this pass, entry through fire checkpoints will not be permitted. Attempting to bypass these checkpoints using side roads not only hinders emergency personnel but also endangers your safety and may result in a citation. For information and to apply online, please visit ***https://www.riversidesheriff.org/798/Agricultural-Pass-Rural-Crime-Team.***

Status of the AG Pass Program and Mandatory Training

Currently, 50 applicants are approved for the AG Pass program and only 16 are registered for the training course. The mandatory Agricultural Pass training is scheduled for Saturday, November 8, 2025, at the Ben Clark Training Center. The training is a requirement for agricultural owners and their agents to obtain an Agricultural Pass, which provides limited access to agricultural properties within an evacuation zone during a disaster.

What: Mandatory Agricultural Pass training for commercial farmers & ranchers.
When: Saturday, November 8, 2025, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Where: Ben Clark Training Center, 16791 Davis Avenue, Riverside, CA 92518.
Cost: $90.00 registration fee
Registration & Contact Information: Registration information can be found at the Regional Training Program website ***https://regionaltrainingprogram.org/index.php/home/advanced-officer-training/aot-courses/agricultural-lands-and-livestock-procedures-11-08-2025*** or by contacting ***Deputy Pedro Vera at pvera@riversidesheriff.org.***

RURAL ENERGY FOR AMERICA PROGRAM VIRTUAL INFORMATION SESSION

Thursday, October 16, 2025
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m. PT

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development RD) and the Office of Partnerships & Public Engagement (OPPE) will host a Virtual Information Session on Thursday, October 16, 2025 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. PT focused on the Rural Energy for America Program.

The virtual session will cover information on the USDA RD Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). The program provides guaranteed loan financing and grant funding to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements.

Agricultural producers may also apply for new energy efficient equipment and new system loans for agricultural production and processing.

Additional information to be covered in this session includes but is not limited to:

• What is an eligible area? • How may funds be used?
• What funding is available? • What are the grant terms?

We look forward to you joining us for this information session. Please feel free to share this invitation with others who may be interested in joining.

For more information on this event, please contact Juan.Alvarez@usda.gov

What Is Keeping Riverside County Farm Bureau Busy?

It has been planting season in much of Riverside County, Date harvest is underway, citrus harvest will be here soon, and the cows get milked everyday (twice)! It is impossible to give an ag update in just one sentence. Every crop is unique, every regulation has different implications, and every weather event causes a different outcome. Bottom line, agriculture is diverse, inherently independent, and extremely complicated. It is a way of life like no other and it is filled with dedicated people who make sure America's food supply is abundant.

Riverside County Farm Bureau (RCFB) is following in your shadow. We are keeping a watchful eye on approaching issues that affect your operation, we maintain relationships with elected officials who need to be reminded that agriculture keeps our economy turning, and we are the epicenter for agricultural communication. Farmers need to connect, and Farm Bureau is the link; **WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER!**

Your RCFB Board of Directors met in late August to review where we are in achieving our goals for 2025. A few highlights include:

Membership Drive campaign will kick-off on November 1st; We now have an easy to use QR Code that makes joining and renewing your membership easy. We are developing some new membership categories and incentives. Watch for more details in our October issue.

Next Generation Board Growth; we are focused on strengthening our board by adding younger members and developing them into future leaders. We are seeking one person from Palo Verde Valley, one from Coachella and one from western Riverside County. Please contact the RCFB office at (951) 684-6732 if you are interested.

RCFB Merchandise Store is Open for Business; if you are interested in some great farm attire that shows your Farm Bureau pride, please visit our store at https://csharpdesigns.chipply.com/RiversideCoFarmBureau, Password: Farmers.

State Legislative Session Ends; we are watching the end of this legislative session closely. The deadline for both houses to move bills to the governor's desk was September 12th. Governor Newsom now has until October 12th to approve or veto hundreds of bills. The CFB policy team has been working hard on bills related to water rights and storage, Williamson Act protection, ag employment regulations and more. Read about a few of these bills below. For a complete report on the bills CFB is advocating for and working to defeat, please use this link ***https://cfbf.com/ag-advocacy/advocacy-updates***.

RCFB knows the weight on your shoulders is heavy, farming in California has never been harder or more costly. We have to grow the highest quality crops, compete in an international marketplace with rules our competitors don't have to follow, and keep prices affordable for our customers. It seems impossible, but yet you keep doing what you do best and somehow overcome the immense obstacles before you. Please know Farm Bureau is your partner and has been since 1917. Thank you for your trust.

With gratitude,
Ellen Way
Your President

Water Plan Enhancement Bill (SB 72) Passes Assembly Floor

Senate Bill 72 (Anna Caballero, D-Merced) passed the Assembly floor Sept. 4. The bill will add new requirements and elements in the California Water Plan, which is updated every five years by the California Department of Water Resources to include long-range water supply storage targets to meet statewide demand. The bill enjoyed broad support from water users and industry, including Farm Bureau.

Williamson Act Solar Cancellations (AB 1156) Passes to the Senate Floor

Assembly Bill 1156 (Buffy Wicks, D-Oakland) has advanced to the Senate floor. It would allow Williamson Act and Farmland Security Zone contracts to be canceled at no cost, clearing the way for large-scale solar projects. Farm Bureau opposes it unless amended.

Foreign Labor Contractor Registration Bill (AB 1362) Clears Suspense

Assembly Bill 1362 (Ash Kalra, D-San Jose) This bill would require California-licensed farm labor contractors to also register with the state Labor Commissioner as a foreign labor contractor, despite the near-identical requirements for such registration and requirements to obtain a California foreign labor contractor license. Farm Bureau opposes due to the undue burden it would place on foreign labor contractors who bring a significant share of employees to farms and ranches.

Meet Your Board of Directors
Grant Chaffin

In our continuing series introducing the Riverside County Farm Bureau's (RCFB) Board of Directors, we are delighted to feature another director who brings a wealth of experience and passion for agriculture. Please meet Grant Chaffin of Chaffin Farms.

A Legacy Rooted in Agriculture

Grant Chaffin was born and raised in Los Angeles, yet agriculture is deeply embedded in his heritage. His grandfather, Dr. Lawrence Chaffin, hailed from a farming background in Farmington, Utah. Although Dr. Chaffin's career was primarily in medicine, he maintained a profound connection to agriculture and began acquiring farmland in the Palo Verde Valley in 1946. These roots laid the foundation for Grant's future in farming.

The Germination of Passion

During his high school and college years, Grant frequently accompanied his grandfather on trips to the farm. These experiences laid the groundwork for his passion for agriculture, which he describes as “the germination of my farming experience.” After graduating from the University of Southern California in 1990, Grant made the pivotal decision to relocate to the family farm, fully immersing himself in the world of agriculture.

Leadership and Advocacy

From 2006 to 2012, Grant served as President of the Riverside County Farm Bureau, passionately advocating for the significance of agriculture. He once stated, “Agriculture is not just an American tradition but a valued asset in our history and our future; we must preserve it.” His leadership during this time underscored his dedication to preserving agricultural traditions while embracing innovation.

Chaffin Farms: A Diverse Enterprise

Chaffin Farms operates as a diversified field and row crop enterprise, cultivating alfalfa, cotton, wheat, onions, garlic, potatoes, and various forage grasses. This diversity reflects Grant’s commitment to sustainable farming practices and his understanding of the importance of adaptability in agriculture.

Personal Life and Values

In addition to his agricultural pursuits, Grant is a licensed private pilot. He is married and has two adult children, and he enjoys spending time with his family, riding horses, and engaging with the outdoors. Grant's commitment to both his family and the land has become a hallmark of Chaffin Farms.

Commitment to Sustainability and Innovation

Over the years, Grant has implemented sustainable farming practices, focusing on soil health and water conservation. These efforts have not only improved crop yields but also ensured the farm's longevity for future generations. His dedication to innovation and stewardship has earned him recognition within the agricultural community.

Educating and Inspiring Future Generations

Beyond his professional life, Grant is actively involved in community outreach, sharing his knowledge and passion for agriculture with local schools and organizations. He believes in educating the next generation about the vital role farming plays in society and encourages young people to consider careers in agriculture.

A Legacy of Resilience and Adaptability

Grant often reflects on the lessons his grandfather imparted to him, emphasizing the importance of resilience and adaptability in farming. These values have guided him through challenges such as fluctuating market conditions and environmental concerns, allowing Chaffin Farms to thrive in an ever-changing landscape.

Through his leadership and vision, Grant continues to build on his family's legacy, ensuring that Chaffin Farms remains a vibrant and essential part of the community, fostering a deep appreciation for the land and the bounty it provides. The Riverside County Farm Bureau is proud to have Grant Chaffin as part of its Board of Directors, bringing invaluable knowledge and a relentless commitment to agriculture.

California Women for Agriculture Celebrates 50 Years of Advocating for Farmers

Founders of CWA (L-R) Beverly Sfingi, Jeri Taylor, Cherry Ishimatsu, and Corkey Larson. Photo taken the day they were installed as the first state officers. Cherry Ishimatsu was the first President. (Jan. 1976)

California Women for Agriculture is celebrating 50 years as an organization promoting, educating, and advocating for agriculture. The founding of California Women for Agriculture (CWA) in 1975 in the Coachella Valley is rooted in both the challenges faced by the agricultural community in California and an opportunity for women to take a stronger role as leaders.

The turmoil in the Coachella Valley during the 1960s, particularly involving the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC), led to heightened tensions between farm workers and growers. The violent tactics and intimidation of the union toward workers left growers feeling isolated and unsupported. Media coverage, often tilted in favor of the union and its leader, Cesar Chavez, further added to the sense that farmers were not being accurately represented.

In response, a group of women, many from non-farming families, felt compelled to speak out on behalf of farmers. These founding members led counter protests, spoke to the media, and even worked in the field harvesting vegetables. Beverly Sfingi, one of CWA's founding members, played a key role in forming the Committee to Relieve Organized Pressure (CROP), which was the precursor to CWA. Their mission was to create a balanced platform for farmworkers, growers, and consumers alike. The news conference they organized gave laborers a chance to share their experiences directly with the media, challenging the existing narrative.

The name," California Women **for** Agriculture" was chosen after a great deal of consideration. The term "in agriculture" would indicate members had to be employed in the industry; therefore, the word, "for" was chosen in an effort to attract a wide range of women from different backgrounds. In fact, the nucleus of the first members were mostly consumers and not farmers.

One of the driving forces behind the founding of CWA was the desire to have a dedicated platform to influence agricultural policies, particularly those that women felt were increasingly hostile to the agribusiness community. They aimed to represent diverse voice; farmers, ranchers, and consumers while promoting education and public awareness about agriculture's importance to California's economy and culture.

The group's early roots in Coachella Valley were a testament to how agricultural communities could unite across different sector; growers, workers, and consumers to advance common interests. Over time, this foundation expanded into a broader mission to ensure agriculture had a strong and informed voice at every level of policy-making and public discourse.

The history of CWA represents a broader shift toward more inclusive and grassroots-driven agricultural advocacy. In the decades that followed, the organization not only helped reshape the narrative around agriculture but also provided women with an influential space to engage with policy, leadership, and education sectors. Their 50-year history reflects both the changing landscape of agriculture in California and the increasing importance of women's voices in telling the story.

AS COOPERATIVE MEMBERS, OUR CUSTOMERS SHARE IN OUR SUCCESS.

We're pleased to return a portion of our profits to our customer owners every year, demonstrating the value of ownership in American AgCredit.

Get to know us at **agloan.com/owners**

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Gerrymandered Maps Silence Voters!

August 22, 2025 - This week, the Legislature approved and the Governor signed a package of bills that set a dangerous precedent by authorizing gerrymandered congressional districts.

- ACA 8 – Places a constitutional amendment on the November ballot to suspend the existing redistricting system and hand power back to politicians.
- AB 604 – Provides the new congressional maps, drawn behind closed doors
- SB 280 – Calls a statewide special election on November 4, 2025, to approve the plan.

This package was rushed forward without public input or transparency. The price of this package being jammed through is high for taxpayers: more than $200 million.

Californians are already living under a supermajority that doesn't reflect the state's diverse values. Now, instead of addressing the challenges families face every day, the Governor and legislative leaders want to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on a special election to redraw maps that sideline Republicans, silence independent voters, and give even more control to progressive Democrats.

The purpose is clear: lock in more safe seats for one party and tilt the balance of power even further. California's representation is already out of balance. Democrats make up about 46% of registered voters but hold 83% of our congressional seats. Republicans account for 26% of voters but hold only 17% of seats.

Nearly a quarter of Californians are independents, and yet they are left with little meaningful representation. This plan only makes things worse.

In fact, independent voters are the ones most harmed by gerrymandering. In competitive districts, independents hold real influence and force candidates to be accountable to all voters. But under these new maps, competitive districts disappear, leaving independents trapped in progressive seats where the outcome is predetermined and their voices carry little weight.

To make matters worse, lawmakers moved this package forward without providing basic fiscal information. Questions were raised about how much redrawing the maps has already cost, how far beyond the $200 million the special election could exceed, and if consideration has been given to the cost of inevitable lawsuits. No clear answers were given. Despite this uncertainty, the bills were advanced.

The timing is especially hard to justify. California faces a multi-billion-dollar budget deficit. Programs for vulnerable populations have been cut, including $75 million from disability services this year. Families are struggling with high costs of living, unsafe streets, and schools that fall short of expectations. Our roads, bridges, water systems, and wildfire defenses are in urgent need of investment. Yet this is what the supermajority chooses to prioritize.

This plan is clearly not about fairness or protecting democracy. It's about consolidating political power, shutting down opposition, and ignoring the real challenges facing our state.

As your Senator, I will continue to hold Sacramento accountable, push back against wasteful spending, and fight for leadership that prioritizes solutions over partisan games.

KELLY SEYARTO
State Senator, 32nd District

USDA REORGANIZATION COMMENT DEADLINE EXTENDED

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently extended the deadline for comments relating to its proposed reorganization plan, which would divert many of its Washington, D.C. based functions to five regional hubs, including Salt Lake City, Utah and Fort Collins, Colorado. **Comments will now be accepted through Sept. 30.** California Farm Bureau previously submitted remarks prior to its original end-of-August deadline, highlighting many concerns with the proposal. Some of the concerns included the shuttering of existing USDA facilities across the state and the potential staffing challenges due to turnover from any move. Members are encouraged to consider submitting their own remarks to help highlight the importance of considering California's importance as the nation's largest agricultural state. Comments should be sent to ***reorganization@usda.gov***

AGRICULTURAL RATE DESIGN SETTLEMENT FILED IN EDISON GRC PHASE 2

On August 19, 2025, a settlement agreement was filed in the Southern California Edison (Edison) General Rate Case (GRC) Phase 2 proceeding regarding agricultural and pumping rate design. CAFB was able to negotiate a favorable outcome on the customer charges which will remain fixed throughout the GRC period and limit demand charges increases with any shortfall being recovered in energy charges. CAFB was also able to secure a new pump testing credit to limit or avoid demand charges in the winter months after receiving feedback from Ventura County Farm Bureau. The program highlights include:

- The program would run from December 1st through February 28th
- Eligibility for the credit program will be limited to TOU-PA-2 customers whose NAICS code begins with 1113 (Fruit and Tree Nut Farming) and operates below a load factor threshold of 2% in any given billing cycle within the December through February test period.
- Eligible testing hours will be limited to a two-hour window between 10:00 AM and Noon (PST).
- Qualifying customers will receive a credit applied to the applicable billing cycle, which will directly offset the demand charges stemming from peak demand that occur within the two-hour test window.
- One "freebie" for a pump test that occurs outside the 10:00 AM and Noon test period.

This works out to roughly 11 hours of usage within that 10:00 AM to Noon test period per billing cycle. Edison has also committed to working with CAFB to review and fine tune the program and look at expansion. The settlement agreement now awaits approval by the Public Utilities Commission.

Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program
Second Statewide Agricultural Expert Panel

In 2021, the Central Coast Regional Water Board adopted R3-2021-0040, General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands (2021 Central Coast Ag Order). The new Central Coast Ag Order went beyond the precedential requirements set forth in Order WQ 2018-0002, In the Matter of Review of Waste Discharge Requirements General Order No. R5-2012-0116 for Growers Within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that are Members of the Third-Party Group (Eastern San Joaquin Water Quality Order), setting regulatory limits on nitrogen discharge, limits on nitrogen application, and allowing growers to factor in discounts to nitrogen applied (A) and additions to nitrogen removed (R). Following petitions seeking State Water Board review the 2021 Central Coast Ag Order, the State Water Board adopted Order WQ 2023-0081, In the Matter of Review of General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands Order No. R3-2021-0040 (Central Coast Ag Water Quality Order). The State Water Board remanded a number of provisions to the Central Coast Regional Board to bring them into compliance with the statewide precedential requirements of the Eastern San Joaquin Water Quality Order, including the 2021 Central Coast Ag Order's enforceable nitrogen discharge and fertilizer application limits, discounts to A, and additions to R.

In both the Eastern San Joaquin Water Quality Order and in the Central Coast Ag Water Quality Order, the State Water Board committed to consider convening a second Agricultural Expert Panel. Although the data analysis noted some limitations, convening a second Agricultural Expert Panel was critical for program development. Staff proposed to move forward with convening the second expert panel to get recommendations as early as feasible while there is still room for flexibility. For more information, including meeting location, and how to participate, please refer to the Notice ***https://waterboards.ca.gov/board_info/calendar/docs/2025/oct/notice_agpanel2_090825.*** If you have any question, please contact DWQ-ILRP@waterboards.ca.gov.

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RCFB Nominating Committee Report

In accordance with the Bylaws of the Riverside County Farm Bureau, election of Officers and Directors will be held by the Agricultural (Voting) members at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, November 16, 2025 at Monteleone Meadows in Murrieta, California.

The Nominating Committee recommends the following Board of Directors for election for the 2025/2026 membership year.

President
Ellen Way

Past President
Richard A. Schmid, Jr.

Vice President
Paul Cramer

Vice President
Rod Chamberlain

Vice President
Alex Sanchez

Directors
Dalton Abrams ~ Linden Anderson ~ Celeste Alonzo
Grant Chaffin ~ Stephen J. Corona
Andy Domenigoni ~ Cindy Domenigoni
Dan Hollingsworth ~ Marlene Salazar Pongs
Brad Scott ~ Andy Wilson ~ Richard Zapien

"Farm Bureau Working for You"

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 8, 2025 ~ 5:30 PM, Riverside County Farm Bureau Board of Directors meeting. In person at the CA Date Commission office, Palm Desert and via Zoom Conference. Please call our office at (951) 684-6732 for more information.

Food and Farm News

Courtesy of CFBF

Summer strawberry plantings hit new record in California

Increased demand for strawberries in the fall and winter has driven summer plantings, which have reached a record high of 11,503 acres this year, according to the California Strawberry Commission. This year's summer acreage represents about a quarter of the state's total strawberry acreage, which stands at 42,885, the commission said. This is an increase of 1.3% from last year. Second-year acres—strawberry plants kept alive for more than one growing season—have increased nearly every year since 2021 due to the rising cost of planting new berries. Since 2018, second-year acres have increased sixfold.

New initiative aims to help California farmers confront challenges

The University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources has been awarded $15 million from the state of California to establish an innovation network—UC ANR Innovate—that aims to help farmers solve problems related to water scarcity, labor shortages and other challenges. The program will help farmers by expanding access to emerging tools and by providing tailored support and upskilling opportunities for employees.

Agricultural education program reaches more than 1 million California students

In 2024, more than 1 million students and 34,000 teachers benefited from the California Farm Bureau's innovative agricultural education program, which is run by the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom. Launched in 1981, the program promotes agricultural literacy and awareness. "Our whole mission is to support teachers and students in incorporating agriculture into their classroom because agriculture affects our daily lives," said Amanda Fletcher, the foundation's executive director. "It's the food we eat; it's the clothes we wear. It affects everything that we do." Agriculture in the Classroom strives to keep growing, Fletcher said, especially in urban and disadvantaged schools that may have fewer opportunities to learn about food and farming.