

The official publication of Riverside County Farm Bureau, Inc.

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

Our 79th Year of Publication: Volume LXXIX, Number 11, November 2025.



108TH ANNUAL DINNER NOVEMBER 16, 2025



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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING AND BECOMING PART OF THE FARM BUREAU FAMILY.

California's Thanksgiving dinner costs higher than national average



Californians preparing traditional Thanksgiving dinners are expected to spend more than families in most other parts of the country, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation's 40th annual Thanksgiving dinner survey. The classic Thanksgiving dinner for 10 guests in California will cost \$72.61—well above the national average of \$55.18 and significantly higher than the Western regional average of \$61.75.

The shopping list for Farm Bureau's informal survey includes frozen turkey, pumpkin pie mix, whole milk, veggie tray, dinner rolls, frozen pie shells, frozen green peas, fresh cranberries, whipping cream, sweet potatoes, cubed stuffing and miscellaneous ingredients, all in quantities sufficient to serve a gathering of 10. California costs reflect higher prices across most Thanksgiving staples, including frozen turkey, whipping cream, whole milk and sweet potatoes.

Shoppers will pay:

- Frozen turkey, 16 lbs. (California \$29.72; U.S. \$21.50)
- Pumpkin pie mix, 30 oz. (California \$4.90; U.S. \$4.16)
- Whole milk, 1 gallon (California \$5.57; U.S. \$3.73)
- Veggie tray (½ pound carrots and ½ pound celery) (California \$1.56; U.S. \$1.36)
- Miscellaneous ingredients (California \$4.75; U.S. \$3.61)
- Dinner rolls, 12 (California \$4.18; U.S. \$3.56)
- Frozen pie shells, 2 (California \$4.47; U.S. \$3.37)
- Frozen green peas, 1 lb. (California \$3.16; U.S. \$2.03)
- Fresh cranberries, 12 oz. (California \$2.69; U.S. \$2.28)
- Whipping cream, ½ pint (California \$2.66; U.S. \$1.87)
- Sweet potatoes, 3 lbs. (California \$5.33; U.S. \$4.00)
- Cubed stuffing, 14 oz. (California \$3.64; U.S. \$3.71)

Although grocery bills continue to climb, farmers see only a small portion of each dollar spent on food. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, the national farm share in 2023 was 15.9 cents of every dollar spent on domestically produced food, a slight decrease from 16 cents in 2022.

At the same time, the cost of producing crops and raising livestock has surged. Rising costs are especially apparent in California, according to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, with the state accounting for 10.5% of U.S. total production expenses in 2024—the highest share in the nation.

"California farmers and ranchers continue to provide high-quality food for families across the nation," said Shannon Douglass, president of the California Farm Bureau, which represents more than 23,000 farmers and ranchers statewide. "Despite rising costs and slim margins, our farmers remain committed to ensuring a bountiful supply of fresh, nutritious food. California Farm Bureau is proud to support the agricultural community that makes that possible."

The Thanksgiving dinner cost survey is part of the American Farm Bureau marketbasket series, which also includes the popular Fourth of July cookout survey. AFBF analysis indicates the national cost of cooking a Thanksgiving dinner for 10 in 2025 decreased by 5% compared to last year.

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Riverside County Farm Bureau Celebrates 108 Years of Service and Strength

The Riverside County Farm Bureau (RCFB) marked a remarkable milestone this year as members, partners, and local leaders gathered for the 108th Annual Meeting, an evening dedicated to honoring agriculture, community, and the resilience of our farming families.

Farm Bureau President Ellen Way opened the evening by welcoming guests and reflecting on the significance of the moment. “Wow, 108 years, that is quite an achievement,” she began, noting that even the night’s welcome rainfall felt fitting. “Farmers may have a love-hate relationship with rain, but rain is a blessing, and it is such a nice complement to this celebration of agriculture.”

Despite the challenges farmers continue to face across California, Ellen encouraged guests to set aside the stresses of the year and enjoy a night of fellowship. She thanked her RCFB Board Members, a group of dedicated individuals who generously give their time, talent, and expertise to guide the organization, many of them for decades. The evening also included the presentation of a special leadership award, delicious food, and time spent reconnecting with friends, neighbors, and industry partners.

After the blessing was delivered by Dan Hollingsworth and the board was officially announced, Ellen expressed her gratitude for being reelected to a second term as president. “The past year has passed at a rapid pace,” she shared. “I genuinely love being part of this organization because Farm Bureau is a name people trust. Our board of directors are people I can trust, and our two devoted employees work tirelessly to help us achieve our goals.”

A Year of Growth, Outreach, and Connection

Throughout the past years, Riverside County Farm Bureau has worked diligently to expand its presence and strengthen relationships throughout the region. Key achievements included:

- Establishing a new and active social media presence, with special thanks to Manny Gaitan @rivcofarmbureau.
- Working on an upgraded website and creating a shareable QR code for easy membership outreach.
- Addressing the Riverside County Board of Supervisors and meeting with three of the five supervisors, with two more meetings planned.
- Engaging with several state and local officials on issues impacting agriculture.
- Participating in important regional conversations, including the Grow Riverside Conference, the State of District 4 Economic Summit, the Dust Summit, and the City of Coachella AgVision Summit.
- RCFB is supporting growers in Coachella by managing their irrigated lands program.
- The organization is looking into submitting an application for various CDFA grants.

“Agriculture is not just the work of farmers. It is the heartbeat of our communities, the foundation of our economy, and the promise of our very survival.”

Ellen also highlighted one of her favorite parts of the year, visiting board members’ farming operations. “I plan to continue these visits so I can get to know you better and the challenges you face,” she said.

Ellen also acknowledged the critical statewide work of California Farm Bureau. “State Farm Bureau has been working hard for us, mostly to defend us from bad legislation and overreaching regulation,” she said. She noted the recent statewide special election (Prop 50 a \$300 million, one-question ballot measure) and the concerning implications it poses for agricultural representation.

But even amid political headwinds, Ellen emphasized agriculture’s universal importance. “People of all political persuasions have to eat,” she said. “America asks farmers to operate with values, pay people a fair wage, conserve resources, and grow safe, healthy food. Our customers have to be willing to support these values at the grocery store cash register.”

Her call to action was clear: California agriculture must continue telling its story, showing the public what farmers do, why it matters, and how essential it is to protect the ability to farm profitably for generations to come.

In closing, Ellen expressed her deep appreciation for the support she receives as president. “Thank you for supporting me, our board, and Rachael and Stephanie. We are here for you if a problem arises, and we will always be there to speak up for you.” She left the audience with a powerful reminder: “Agriculture is not just the work of farmers. It is the heartbeat of our communities, the foundation of our economy, and the promise of our very survival.”

As Riverside County Farm Bureau looks ahead to its 109th year, the path forward is clear... standing together, supporting one another, and ensuring the story of agriculture remains one of growth, hope, and abundance for generations to come.



Top Row: RCFB Directors; Andy Domenigoni, Andy Wilson, Richard Zapfen, Richard Schmid, Vice President Paul Cramer, and CAFB 1st Vice President Shaun Crook. Middle Row: RCFB Directors; Cindy Domenigoni, Vice President Alex Sanchez, Dalton Abrams, Stephen J. Corona, Marlene Salazar-Pongs, Celeste Alonzo, RCFB Executive Director Rachael Johnson, and President Ellen Way. Front Row Center: Dan Hollingsworth.
Photo by Manuel Gaitan Photography

“We Weren’t Doing What We Said We Were Doing”

Keynote Speaker Sheriff Bianco discussion from the 108th Riverside County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting



Photo by Manuel Galtan Photography

In his keynote address, Sheriff Chad Bianco offered a candid reflection on the state of agricultural public safety when he first took office, and the transformative changes that followed.

“When I ran for Sheriff, we were telling people we were doing things that, in reality, we weren’t,” Bianco said. “I ran to make Riverside County safer, to provide better service to all of you, to stop overspending, and to get government back to doing what it is supposed to do.”

Bianco recalled attending his very first Riverside County Farm Bureau (RCFB) Annual Meeting six years ago, seated next to longtime director Andy Domenigoni. The evening’s speaker was outlining the burdens farmers were facing; policy hurdles, regulatory pressures, and, overwhelmingly, crime. As the newly elected Sheriff, Bianco turned to Domenigoni and asked why these issues weren’t being shared with the Sheriff’s Agricultural Team. Domenigoni’s response stunned him: “We don’t have an Ag team.”

“I was absolutely shocked,” Bianco said. “I had always believed we had one. The Sheriff’s Department had always said we had one. But in reality, there was one person on the east end of Riverside County. That was it, and our ag community was getting crushed.” Before that banquet was even over, Bianco called the captain of the Temecula station and gave a directive: “By tomorrow morning, I want two people assigned to form an Ag Team for the West End... call the East End, find out what they do, and make it happen.”

What started as a late-night phone call has since become a countywide success story. “Six years later, we have two full tables of Ag Team deputies here tonight,” he said, recognizing the officers in attendance. “They don’t just do this because I told them to. They love this work. They love helping all of you. They love the relationships they’ve built in the farming and ranching community.”

Bianco emphasized that the program’s success reflects the strong bond between law enforcement and Riverside County’s agricultural families. “It’s a little bit of a microcosm of where I am today,” he said. “Not only did I get into this position because you put me here, thank you, truly, it is the greatest role I could ever imagine.”

Why Sheriff Bianco is running for Governor; Public Safety, Water, and the Future of California Agriculture

Following his remarks on the growth of the Ag Team, Sheriff Bianco addressed broader statewide challenges facing farmers and rural communities. He expressed concern that despite local efforts, major improvements are limited by what he characterized as failed state policies affecting regulation, taxes, crime enforcement, and the high cost of doing business; issues that he said are pushing family farms and small businesses to the brink.

Bianco emphasized that California agriculture remains the largest in the nation and vital to feeding the world, yet growers across the state continue to struggle with rising costs for fuel, fertilizer, compliance, labor, and transportation. Many of these pressures, he noted, are compounded by inconsistent water access, burdensome regulations, and increasing rural crime.

Public safety, he reiterated, must remain the top priority. Bianco discussed the passage of Proposition 36 and stated that its theft-related provisions have not been implemented due to a lack of state funding for courts, judges, and enforcement. He said that fully implementing accountability measures for theft and repeat offenders would be essential to restoring confidence for rural communities.

Water infrastructure was another major theme. He argued that California’s water challenges stem from mismanagement rather than scarcity, and that regulatory barriers have prevented the construction of new reservoirs and other storage projects approved by voters years ago. He voiced support for expanding desalination capacity and reducing environmental and permitting delays that he said have hindered progress on critical water infrastructure.

Bianco also expressed support for reducing regulatory burdens across energy, environmental compliance, and agricultural operations. He suggested that simplifying or removing certain rules could help stabilize fuel costs, improve operational flexibility, and make it easier for farms to remain viable in California.

On education, he spoke passionately about restoring vocational pathways, expanding FFA presence in every school, and increasing parent and student choice through statewide flexibility in school enrollment.

Sheriff Bianco closed by thanking the agricultural community for its partnership and urging growers to continue reporting all crimes; no matter how small.

“We can’t identify trends or go after the right people if we don’t know what’s happening,” he said. “Help them help you.”

He expressed gratitude for the strong relationships built between deputies and the farming community and reaffirmed his commitment to supporting agriculture both in his current role and in any future capacity. “Thank you for doing what you do,” he said. “You feed and sustain this county, and we’re proud to stand with you.”

Ari-Tech Unleashed: Smart Solutions for Global Food Challenges

From coast to coast, U.S. farmers are finding it increasingly difficult to find reliable labor sources. Our nation's specialty crop growers are especially challenged to find the right people at critical times for planting, weeding and harvesting fresh fruits, vegetables and nuts.

In a new four-part video series, "Agri-Tech Unleashed: Smart Solutions for Global Food Challenges," Agri-Pulse explores how entrepreneurs and ag tech companies are developing new ways to overcome some of these challenges, while also providing opportunities to upskill their existing workers into even better jobs. Part one of the series is being distributed today.

"This is a chance to see how automation and innovation can provide precision solutions, making U.S. growers more sustainable, cost-effective and competitive," said Agri-Pulse Founder and Publisher Sara Wyant. "Our team interviewed farmers, industry leaders and the innovators who are developing these important new tools so viewers can get a first-hand look."

John Deere and Ecorobotix are presenting sponsors of the video series in cooperation with Agtonomy.



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2025 Howie Award Recipient

William "Bill" Cramer Jr.

A Pillar of California's Agricultural Sector

Early Life and Education

William Cramer Jr., affectionately known as Bill, is a name synonymous with leadership and innovation in California's agricultural landscape. He began his journey in agriculture with a solid educational foundation. After graduating from Villa Park High School in 1971, Bill pursued higher education at Claremont McKenna College, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Economics in 1975. These formative years laid the groundwork for his future endeavors in the agricultural industry.

A Legacy in Agriculture

Bill's career in agriculture started in earnest when he managed Orchard Egg Farms, a family-owned egg processing facility, from 1975 to 1977. This experience provided him with invaluable insights into the poultry industry. From 1977 to 1995, he owned and operated Anza Ranch and Winchester Egg Farms, specializing in egg, pullet, and turkey production. His commitment to the industry continued with the formation of Shadow Mountain Pullets, LLC in 2011, where he remains an owner-operator, producing replacement pullets for Southern California egg producers.

Leadership at Star Milling Co.

Bill joined Star Milling Co. in 1986 as an Ingredient Buyer, marking the beginning of a remarkable journey with the company. He served as Vice President and General Manager from 1989 to 1999, and later as President from 1999 to 2024. Since 2024, he has held the role of Chairman and CEO. Under his leadership, Star Milling, originally acquired by the Cramer family in 1970 to supply their layer operations, has expanded its reach and diversified its product lines to meet evolving consumer demands. Today, the company is a trusted retail feed and pet food manufacturer and private label manufacturer, with distribution across the Western United States and exports to Mexico, the Pacific Rim, and Hawaii.

Contributions to the Agricultural Community

Beyond his work with Star Milling, Bill has been a pivotal figure in the agricultural community. He served as a Director (1986–1995) and Chairman (1994–1995) of Farm Credit Services of Southern California, overseeing a farmer cooperative lending bank with assets exceeding \$420 million at the time. His industry leadership extended to roles as Director of the Riverside County Farm Bureau (1982–1991), Director of the American Feed Industry Association (1996–1999), and President of Inland Empire Poultrymen, Inc. (1997–2003).

Commitment to Sustainability and Animal Welfare

As an egg rancher, Bill has championed sustainable practices and animal welfare. He has been a staunch advocate for family farmers, navigating the challenges posed by shifting markets and regulatory changes. His dedication to sustainable manufacturing has ensured that small and mid-sized farmers, as well as companion animal owners in Southern California, have access to affordable, high-quality animal nutrition.

Community Engagement and Mentorship

Bill's dedication to community and mentorship is equally notable. As a participant in the California Agricultural Leadership Program (Class XVII, 1986–1988), he has supported educational outreach through FFA programs and youth initiatives. Since 2010, he has served as a Director at Calicinto Ranch in San Jacinto, a Christian non-profit providing camping experiences for children of incarcerated parents. Additionally, Bill contributed to the Riverside County Integrated Plan's General Plan Committee (2000–2002) and has been a Member of the Board of Governors at the Lowe Institute of Political Economy at Claremont McKenna College since 2018.

A Legacy of Innovation and Service

Bill Cramer Jr.'s leadership reflects a harmonious blend of innovation, family legacy, and service. His work has not only bolstered Star Milling's reputation but also ensured that California's agricultural community remains vibrant, sustainable, and connected to its roots. Through his tireless efforts, Bill has left an indelible mark on the industry, inspiring future generations to pursue excellence in agriculture earning Riverside County Farm Bureau's prestige Howie Award for 2025.



RCFB President Ellen Way, Director Richard Schmid, Honoree William "Bill" Cramer, Jr., Director Andy Domenigoni, and Vice President Paul Cramer. Photos by Manuel Gaitan Photography



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108th Annual Dinner Meeting

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The Riverside County Farm Bureau wishes to thank all those who supported this year's Annual Dinner Meeting.

Riverside County AGRICULTURE

The official publication of Riverside County Farm Bureau, Inc.



UC CE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Agriculture and Natural Resources Cooperative Extension

36th Annual Fall Desert Crops Workshop

December 3, 2025

AgWest Farm Credit

485 Business Pkwy, Imperial, CA 92251



Registration link: <https://surveys.ucanr.edu/survey.cfm?surveynumber=47121>

Program (8:00 am – 12:05 pm)	
7:30	Registration
8:00	Overview and Introduction – Oli Bachie, Agronomy Advisor, UCCE Imperial County
8:05	Opening remarks – John Hawk, Imperial County Chairman of Board of Supervisors
8:15	Self-introduction from new UCCE Area Director – Chandra Richards
8:20	Transforming desert irrigation: Leveraging soil sensors and Open ET for water-wise farming
8:35	– Ali Montazar, Irrigation and Water Management Advisor, UCCE Imperial County
8:50	Simplified soil salinity mapping and monitoring – Elia Scudiero, Associate Research Agronomist, UC Riverside & USDA-ARS Salinity Laboratory
9:08	Lettuce downy mildew: disease challenges, resistance-breaking strains, and management strategies – Ana M. Pastrana, Plant Pathology Advisor, UCCE Imperial County
9:26	Exploiting the Strategic Weaknesses of Nutsedge – Milt McGiffen, Vice Chair for Extension, Vegetable Crops Research, UCR
9:44	Impacts of organic and conventional nematicides on plant-parasitic and beneficial nematodes on cantaloupe – Philip Waisen, Vegetable Crops Advisor, UCCE Riverside County
	Regulation updates for neonicotinoid pesticides and spray days- Sandra Ramirez, Agricultural Biologist, Imperial County Ag Commissioner's Office
Break (10:02 - 10:17)	
10:17	Closure of the Spreckels Sugar, Impacts and Potential Alternatives – Oli Bachie, Agronomy Advisor, UCCE Imperial, Riverside, and San Diego Counties
10:32	IVC Agricultural Education, Ag Technology, and Benefits to the Local Farms – Efrain Silva, Dean, Economic and Workforce Development Division, Imperial Valley College.
10:47	Influence of Agricultural burning on Bermudagrass mite damage and seed yield – Arun Babu, Entomology Advisor, UCCE Imperial County
11:05	Benefits and drawbacks to integrating livestock into cropping systems – Brooke Latack, Livestock Advisor, UCCE Imperial, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties
11:20	From Policy to Practice: FSMA Produce Safety Rule Enforcement and the Latest LGMA Metrics Revisions – Jimmy Nguyen, Food Safety and Organic Production Advisor, UCCE Imperial and Riverside County
11:35	Industry update – Victor Lopez, Rockwood Ag. Services Company; Jose Cabrera-Davila; BASF; Brian Guess, Lallemand Plant Care & Sean Fuchs, Valent U.S.A.
Lunch - 12:05 (Courtesy of the Industry Sponsors)	

For additional information on the workshop, please contact organizers Arun Babu ababu@ucanr.edu, Ali Montazar amontazar@ucanr.edu, Oli Bachie obachie@ucanr.edu, Jimmy Nguyen cnguyen@ucanr.edu, Ana M. Pastrana Leon ampastranaleon@ucanr.edu, or Philip Waisen pwaisen@ucanr.edu, or call us at (442) 265-7700

Continuing Education Units Requested with CA DPR, Arizona Dept. of Ag and Certified Crop Advisor: Pending

If you require any accommodations in order to participate in this event, please submit your request to emails listed above.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 14, 2026 ~ 5:30 PM, Riverside County Farm Bureau Board of Directors meeting. Location will be announced at a later date. Please call our office at (951) 684-6732 for more information.

Food and Farm News

Courtesy of CFBF

Sweeter Brussels sprouts are winning over new fans

While decades-old baggage may deter some diners from delighting in Brussels sprouts, newer varieties of the cruciferous vegetable have won over consumers and found a home in California restaurants. About 30 years ago, a Dutch scientist first identified the chemicals, called glucosinolates, that made Brussels sprouts bitter, and breeders began working to produce sweeter varieties. Those are the varieties commonly grown today.

State targets Southern California to prevent parasitic fly entry

With detection of New World screwworm less than 70 miles from the U.S.-Mexico border, California animal health officials are urging ranchers, dairy farmers, feedlot operators and other livestock handlers to stay vigilant for signs of the parasitic fly, which can inflict great harm to animals—and economic damage to the livestock sector. The California Department of Food and Agriculture has been doing screwworm outreach to inform producers and veterinarians in Southern California, with emphasis on San Diego and Imperial counties because they both touch the U.S.-Mexico border. An incursion of screwworm into the U.S. would have immediate and severe trade impacts. Due to detections in Mexico, U.S. ports remain closed to livestock imports from the North American trading partner.

Jeff Gonzalez shares insights on state policymaking

California Assemblymember Jeff Gonzalez, R-Indio, spoke with Ag Alert® this month about his observations following his first year in the Assembly. "There is a lot of talk about protecting our farmers and ranchers here in California, but there's very little action," said Gonzalez, whose district encompasses Imperial County and parts of Riverside and San Bernardino counties. "California needs to be competitive in farming and ranching, and we need to make a significant change in the way we look at the people who feed us." The first-term lawmaker, who is a Marine Corps veteran and a former pastor, said he has sought opportunities to implement "pragmatic" policies that make a difference for Californians. He is part of the Problem Solvers Caucus, a bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators—13 Democrats, 13 Republicans—that pursues policy solutions across party lines.