



AGRICULTURE

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 10, October 2025.

108TH ANNUAL DINNER

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(USPS 466-900) Published monthly by Riverside County Farm Bureau, Inc., a non-profit organization serving farmers and ranchers at 21160 Box Springs Road, #102, Moreno Valley, California 92557, Telephone 951/684-6732. Subscriptions: \$1 per year of membership dues. Periodicals postage paid at Riverside, California 92507, under act of March 3, 1887. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to RIVERSIDE COUNTY FARM BUREAU, 21160 Box Springs Rd., #102, Moreno Valley, CA 92557. For advertising information, Telephone (951)684-6732 ~ Printed by Layton Printing, La Verne, California.

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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

Celebrating California Date Month: Local Grower Mark Tadros Showcased the Valley's Signature Crop

October is National California Date Month, and the Coachella Valley once again takes center stage in celebrating one of California's most distinctive and healthful crops, The California Date! The California Date Commission and Visit Greater Palm Springs hosted an immersive Forum, Farm Tour, and Culinary Experience on Wednesday, October 8, 2025, highlighting the rich heritage, nutrition, and culinary versatility of locally grown dates.



The morning began at The Café at Shields Date Garden in Indio and continued with a farm tour and outdoor lunch at Aziz Farms in Thermal, led by local grower and California Date Commission Chair, Mark Tadros. Tadros, whose family has been farming dates in the Coachella Valley for generations, continues to elevate the fruit's reputation through innovative growing practices, creative culinary uses, and community partnerships that celebrate the sustainability and flavor of this desert-grown superfruit.

Attendees heard from Dr. Sonali Ruder, widely known as The Foodie Physician (thefoodiephysician.com), and celebrity chef Jamie Gwen (chefjamie.com), who shared insights on the nutritional benefits and kitchen versatility of California Dates. Following their presentations, guests enjoyed an on-farm culinary experience curated by Chef Jamie, featuring a seasonal menu inspired by local date varieties.



California Dates proved to be more than a regional delicacy, they are a heart-healthy, diabetes-friendly super fruit packed with fiber, essential vitamins, and minerals. As Tadros reminded guests, dates are a naturally sweet, nutrient-rich alternative to refined sugars and artificial sweeteners, making them a smart addition to a balanced diet.



The event offered local media, health, nutrition, food writers and community leaders a firsthand look at the Coachella Valley's agricultural heritage while celebrating the growers who sustain it. "Our goal is to share not just the flavor of dates, but the story and stewardship behind them," Tadros said.

For more information about California Date Month or to request media materials, contact Kristy at the California Date Commission.

Did You Know? California Date Facts

- The Coachella Valley produces over 85% of all dates grown in the United States.
- A single date palm tree can produce up to 200 pounds of fruit each year.
- Dates are naturally fat-free, cholesterol-free, and contain more potassium per ounce than a banana.
- Common varieties include Medjool, Deglet Noor, and Barhi, each with its own unique flavor and texture.
- California's date industry began in the early 1900s, when USDA scientists introduced date palms from the Middle East to the desert's ideal growing conditions.

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VOTE NO on PROP 50

Dear Riverside County Farm Bureau Members,

We are reaching out to you regarding Proposition 50, which will be on the ballot this coming November 4. It is crucial for us to understand the implications of this proposition for our community. If passed, Prop 50 will alter the way congressional districts are drawn, significantly diminishing the representation of rural California, including our own Riverside County.

This issue transcends political affiliations—it is not about Republicans or Democrats. Instead, it focuses on ensuring that agriculture and rural communities continue to have strong advocates in Congress who understand and prioritize our unique needs.

Under Prop 50, the boundaries of our communities will be redrawn in ways that could disenfranchise rural and agricultural voters. This change threatens to dilute our influence on critical issues that directly impact us, such as water rights, land use, and regulatory policies. Our farmers and ranchers, who rely on these resources and fair regulations to thrive, could find themselves with less representation and fewer allies in Congress.

The Riverside County Farm Bureau stands in solidarity with the California Farm Bureau in opposition to Prop 50. We share the concern that this measure would undermine the effectiveness of the Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission. This commission was established by voters to eliminate partisan gerrymandering and ensure that communities like ours have a fair voice in the legislative process.

It is imperative that we, as a community, take a stand against Prop 50. By voting against it, we protect our right to fair representation and preserve the integrity of a system designed to reflect the needs and priorities of all Californians, not just those in urban areas.

We urge you to discuss this issue with your neighbors, friends, and family. Every vote counts, and together we can ensure that our voices continue to be heard in Congress.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for your ongoing commitment to supporting our agricultural community.



With gratitude,
Ellen Way
Your President

Stop the Attack on California's Landmark Election Reforms

NO^{on} 50
STOP SACRAMENTO'S
POWER GRAB

PROP 50 IS A BRAZEN POWER GRAB. Californians created the independent Citizens Redistricting Commission to stop politicians from drawing districts for themselves — and voters already rejected an attempt to dismantle it once before.

Now, Sacramento politicians are trying again — secretly drawing new congressional maps behind closed doors with no hearings, no reports, and no public input. Then they slipped them on the ballot, forcing a \$200 million special election on November 4.

Rather than address the real challenges facing our communities — from skyrocketing housing costs to soaring utility prices — these politicians are manipulating elections to protect themselves and their friends.

Vote NO on Prop 50

- Changes the constitution and eliminates voter protections that ban maps designed to **favor incumbents or political parties** — putting politicians back in charge of drawing their own districts
- Weakens fair representation by **shutting the public out** and bringing gerrymandering back to California
- Sets a **dangerous precedent** and opens the door for Sacramento to keep drawing election maps beyond 2031 — **giving politicians permanent power** to shield themselves from accountability
- Divides communities to **benefit politicians** — splitting counties 114 times and cities 141 times

“Californians should demand that Newsom and legislative leaders respect the will of the people and not sacrifice the independent redistricting commission, nor the state's limited financial resources, for short-term political gain.”

~ Jeanne Raya

chair of California's first Citizens Redistricting Commission and registered Democrat
(Source: CalMatters, 8/13/25)

Join our Coalition to Defeat Prop 50



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VoteNoProp50.org

ISSUE WATCH

CA Ag Land “Equity” Task Force Seeks to Redistribute Prime Farmland

Formed by the California Budget Act of 2022 (AB-179), the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force (Task Force) is an independent body charged with developing recommendations to equitably increase access to agricultural land for food production and traditional tribal agricultural uses.

This is according to a draft document released this summer by the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force. According to the report, 82% of private farmland in California is owned by white producers; a fact authors blame on “inequities in resource distribution.” Their draft plan lists reparation-style recommendations to disrupt this status quo, restoring “stolen wealth” to the committee’s preferred groups.

California lost 1.6 million acres of farming and grazing land between 1984 and 2018—more than 47,000 acres per year or one square mile every five days. To address this crisis, the task force suggests removing prime farmland from the market altogether.

“In order to protect California’s Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance, the Legislature **should** move to safeguard them in the public domain,” the report states.

By stripping owners of their right to freely sell or transfer farmland, the California government would be able to “halt the problem at the root,” the report claims. A state-funded entity could then buy up available farmland and redistribute it to “priority producers or land stewards”—defined as socially disadvantaged or historically excluded farmers.

The report predicts much of this available farmland will come courtesy of a 2014 California law that regulates water use. The controversial Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) shifted control from landowners to local agencies, giving government the power to dictate water use on private property and to impose fees for groundwater pumping. SGMA forces farmers to stop farming near “overdrafted basins,” in some cases calling for pumping reductions of 20-50% or more.

The report says considerable California farmland will be “fallowed or repurposed” to reduce water demand as “required” by SGMA, opening it up for redistribution.

“Estimates vary on how much land will need to be taken out of production; for example, in the San Joaquin Valley, recent estimates range from around 500,000 acres to 1 million acres,” the report states.

Other recommendations in the report: California should gift large swathes of state-owned land to Native Americans “without restrictions or encumbrances,” give tribal nations “right of first refusal” when public agencies sell land, offer various forms of financial assistance exclusively to minority farmers, and establish a state monitoring system to track land ownership trends.

For the last two years, the task force has worked to develop this set of policy recommendations, reimagining agricultural land access along “equity” lines. By the end of this year, the group will bring their final recommendations to the governor and state legislature. This draft report gives voters a first taste of what is to come.

California Farm Bureau has submitted a comprehensive response to these policy recommendations and are watching the actions of this task force closely. The task force met on October 15th and 16th in Ventura with the Riverside County Farm Bureau attending remotely via zoom conference.

STATUS OF THE AG PASS PROGRAM AND MANDATORY TRAINING

Fire season in California can happen in any season and it's 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>.

Currently, 50 applicants are approved for the AG Pass program and only 18 are registered for the training course. If we are not able to get 40 registered for the class, the county will cancel the class. 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.

If you are one of the applicants and have not registered, please do so by registering.

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://regionaltainingprogram.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.

The RCRCD and the Future of Farming

The Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District (RCRCD) was formed in 1953 under Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code to help assist local farmers and landowners with soil erosion and sedimentation as well as farm plans, resource inventories, helping to design drainage features, irrigation systems and provide technical assistance. Conservation Districts, or Soil and Water Conservation Districts, came out of the dust bowl days to help farmers with severe erosion and crop loss due to poor farming practices and are now in all lower 48 as well as Alaska and Hawaii. California has about 97 districts throughout the state. While the federal government had programs available, local farmers were dubious of the government coming to help. Hence, the conservation districts were created by local citizens to help local farmers as a “moderator” between the government and local landowners. While the farming community of the 1950’s and 60’s has changed, becoming smaller and more specialized, those services and technical assistance programs are still available today along with a larger suite of programs and projects that cover the change in land use in Riverside County over the last 70 years. Citrus was the main crop grown in the RCRCD service area, with over 15,000 acres grown between Riverside and Corona along with some avocados, kiwi, grapes and a small number of row crops. The 200,000-acre RCRCD service area now has a population of over 600,000, but farming can still be found in the greenbelt area of Riverside as well as smaller parcels in Corona, Lake Mathews and the Temescal Valley. The RCRCD provides programs for farmers and operators in the communities of Colton, Grand Terrace, Riverside, Corona, Norco, Temescal Valley, Lake Mathews, Woodcrest and Canyon Lake.

Some of the agricultural programs available are:

- Developing programs for preserving local agriculture and quality soils.
- Helping promote the use of conservation easements and fee-title donations to preserve agricultural lands.
- Providing information to farmers and growers about soils, soil quality, best management practices and assistance funding through USDA, NRCS and CDEA.
- Technical assistance to farmers and landowners with erosion control and drainage.
- Conducting irrigation audits or evaluations on any type of irrigation system.
- Low-cost soil testing for N,P,K, pH, salinity and soil texture (free with an irrigation evaluation).
- Developing an agricultural property resource inventory.
- Updating farmland and important farming area maps.
- Supporting new farmer training and Grow Riverside and the Inland Empire Food Systems Alliance.
- Public education and workshops about farming, benefits of farming, crops and soil management.

The impact on smaller agricultural lands continues in the area as some of the remaining agricultural land is converted to residential and commercial uses. As a result, the high cost of energy, water and property has also made it difficult to farm large tracts of land as in the past. The land that remains is smaller acreages and estates that are hobby farms and specialty crops. Many nurseries have been established and provide both landscape and native plants for the area and out of state. There is also a trend in organic farming in the District, and interest is growing for more locally grown and available produce at farmers markets and restaurants. While each RCD is unique, other Conservation Districts in the county can offer similar services such as San Jacinto Basin RCD in the Hemet/San Jacinto area, TEAM RCD in the Temecula and Murrieta area and the Coachella Valley RCD in the Coachella Valley. Each has different services and staff depending on area needs and district budget, but the benefits to local farming from conservation districts cannot be understated as well as how local farming has numerous benefits to the economy, providing local farming open space carbon sequestration through the farming of plants and soil management and locally grown produce. While RCRCD also has programs for urban cooperators and helps to conserve natural open space, agriculture remains the cornerstone of the Districts efforts to provide support for those engaged in feeding and supporting Riverside County agriculture.

The RCRCD is available to support farmers and operators in its service area and to keep and improve local farming and its community benefits into the future. For more information go to RCRCD.ORG.



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For reservations, please call the Riverside County Farm Bureau at (951) 684-6732 or return the bottom portion along with a check to us by November 1, 2025.

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PS Form 3526 **Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation**
(All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)

1. Publication Title RIVERSIDE COUNTY FARM BUREAU/ RIVERSIDE COUNTY AGRICULTURE	2. Publication Number 466900	ISSN	3. Filing Date 09/30/2025
4. Issue Frequency MONTHLY	5. Number of Issues Published Annually 12	6. Annual Subscription Price \$ 1.00	
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication 21160 BOX SPRINGS RD STE 102 MORENO VALLEY, RIVERSIDE, CA 92557-8706		Contact Person STEPHANIE BELL Telephone (951) 684-6732	
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher 21160 BOX SPRINGS ROAD STE 102 MORENO VALLEY, CA 92557-8706			
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor			
Publisher (Name and complete mailing address) RIVERSIDE COUNTY FARM BUREAU 21160 BOX SPRINGS ROAD STE 102 MORENO VALLEY, CA 92557-8706			
Editor (Name and complete mailing address) RIVERSIDE COUNTY FARM BUREAU 21160 BOX SPRINGS ROAD STE 102 MORENO VALLEY, CA 92557-8706			
Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address) RIVERSIDE COUNTY FARM BUREAU 21160 BOX SPRINGS ROAD STE 102 MORENO VALLEY, CA 92557-8706			
10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)			
Full Name RIVERSIDE COUNTY FARM BUREAU	Complete Mailing Address A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION, 21160 BOX SPRINGS ROAD STE 102, MORENO VALLEY, CA 92557-8706		
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box ☒ None			
Full Name	Complete Mailing Address		
12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes: ☒ Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months ☐ Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)			

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FREE CONSERVATION SERVICES FOR FARMERS

The Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District wants to empower you to feed our community more sustainably.

RCRCD has been helping local farmers conserve natural resources since 1953.

Agricultural Conservation Advisor Adriana Murguia assists farmers in our service area with:

- **Technical assistance:** Healthy soils management, irrigation efficiency, cover crops, native plant hedgerows, agricultural easements, and more
- **Survey of needs:** To best provide these services, we need to know what community members need from us. Fill out a survey in English or Spanish using these QR codes
- **Inclusion in "Fresh and Local":** The free, award-winning guide raises public awareness about the benefits of local foods, where to buy them and how to grow them. It includes directories of farm stands, resources for farmers and more

These services are made possible by funding from the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Urban Agriculture grant.

For a link to the survey, or to read the "Fresh and Local" guide, go to www.rcrccd.org/agricultural-support.

RCRCD
Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District
4500 Glenwood Dr., Riverside, 92501
For more information, please contact us at
(951) 683-7691 or Adriana.Murguia@rcrccd.org.



13. Publication Title RIVERSIDE COUNTY FARM BUREAU/RIVERSIDE COUNTY AGRICULTURE	14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below 09/30/2025	
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Numbers of Copies (Net press run)	510	500
b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail)		
(1) Mailed Outside County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	0	0
(2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	481	468
(3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS	0	0
(4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail)	0	0
c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), (4))	481	468
d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)		
(1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside County Copies included on PS Form 3541	0	0
(2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies included on PS Form 3541	0	0
(3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail)	0	0
(4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)	0	0
e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3), (4))	0	0
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)	481	468
g. Copies not Distributed	0	0
h. Total (Sum of 15f and 15g)	481	468
i. Percent Paid ((15c / 15f) times 100)	100.00 %	100.00 %
16. If total circulation includes electronic copies, report that circulation on lines below.		
a. Paid Electronic Copies	0	0
b. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15C) + Paid Electronic Copies	0	0
c. Total Print Distribution (Line 15F) + Paid Electronic Copies	0	0
d. Percent Paid (Both Print and Electronic Copies)	0.00 %	0.00 %
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17. Publication of Statement of Ownership ☒ If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the 10/01/2025 issue of this publication. ☐ Publication not required.		
18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner	Title	Date
STEPHANIE BELL	OFFICE MANAGER	09/30/2025 14:58:56 PM
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Riverside County AGRICULTURE

The official publication of Riverside County Farm Bureau, Inc.



DAVID G. KELLEY

(October 11, 1928 - September 24, 2025)



David G. Kelley, a respected Inland Empire lawmaker, Korean War veteran, and lifelong citrus farmer, passed away at age 96. A Riverside native and 1947 graduate of the Army and Navy Academy in Carlsbad, Kelley earned a degree in citrus fruit production from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo after serving as an Air Force pilot during the Korean War.

Over five decades, Kelley farmed citrus in Hemet while dedicating much of his life to public service. He represented parts of Riverside, Imperial, and San Diego counties in the California Legislature, serving in the Assembly (1979–1992, 2000–2001) and the State Senate (1993–2000).

Renowned for his expertise in water policy, Kelley authored numerous bills promoting water conservation, quality, and reclamation, including legislation that expanded the use of recycled water statewide. He also helped establish a state office for water reclamation within the Department of Water Resources.

Beyond politics, Kelley was deeply involved in agricultural leadership, serving as president and vice president of the Riverside County Farm Bureau and on the board of the California Farm Bureau Federation. He was remembered as one of California's most knowledgeable and influential water leaders and as only the second Hemet resident to serve in the state Legislature.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

🗓 November 16, 2025 ~ 4:00 - 7:00 PM, Riverside County Farm Bureau's 108th Annual Dinner at Monteleone Meadows in Murrieta with Guest Speaker Sheriff Chad Bianco. Please call our office at (951) 684-6732 for reservations..

Food and Farm News

Courtesy of CFBF

Organic seal helps boost 'phenomenal' date market

Fresh California dates hit grocery store shelves last month after harvest for Medjool dates, the state's top variety, began in the Coachella Valley in early September. Growers and marketers say demand is high for the fruit, especially among health-conscious consumers. "Dates are on fire," said Amanda Sains, vice president of marketing at Joolies, a date company based in the Coachella Valley. "They are doing phenomenal right now." An added selling point for many California dates is that they're grown using organic farming methods. About 78% of dates grown in Riverside County, which dominates U.S. date production, are certified organic. Growers say multiple factors, including market forces and the nature of date production, encouraged them to grow the fruit organically. "It's not a fad," Riverside County farmer Albert Keck said. "It's a major part of the industry now."

Government shutdown impacts agriculture

With Congress unable to broker an agreement to keep the government funded, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has furloughed 42,000 of its employees, or about 50%. USDA will continue operations relating to some farm loan and conservation programs, core nutrition safety net programs, essential food safety operations, preparing and responding to wildland fires, and animal and plant health emergency programs such as New World screwworm. Operations most likely to cease include payment processing, disaster assistance, technical assistance, regulatory-related travel and training, trade negotiations, timber sales and long-term research studies. Many state and local offices across multiple agencies have closed, including most Farm Service Agency offices and several congressional district offices.

California farm leadership class travels out of state to widen perspective

Leadership Farm Bureau, a cohort of eight agricultural professionals developing leadership skills through a program run by the California Farm Bureau, traveled to Arkansas and Tennessee to learn from farmers and ranchers in a different part of the country. The tour included visits to fish, cotton and peanut farms, a cattle ranch and a cotton gin, and the Port of Memphis, which is one of the largest inland ports in the U.S.