



December 21, 2007

Please note: Friday Follow-Up will not appear next week and will return on Friday, Jan. 4. Happy Holidays!

U.S. Senate passes \$286 billion farm bill

Last Friday, Dec. 14, the U.S. Senate approved a \$286 billion farm bill; it passed on a 79-14 vote.

Areas such as nutrition, renewable energy and rural development are just a few of the components of the bill. However, the Bush Administration has delivered veto threats for both the House and the Senate versions of the bill based on the lack of major reforms.

Despite the threats, the bill will head into a conference committee, where members from both chambers will meet to discuss differing areas of the bill before sending it to the White House.

Items at issue are:

- The Senate legislation defines farmers as those who earn more than two-thirds of their income from agriculture. There would be no new income-based limits on what a farmer could collect, though, the bill would ban some farmers from collecting payments for multiple farm businesses. This bill also would ban payments to "non-farmers" whose income averages more than \$750,000 a year.
- The House would ban payments to all who earn an average \$1 million a year or more, and also bans some farmers from collecting payments for multiple businesses.
- The Bush administration proposal suggests a reduction of payments to individuals who make more than an average of \$200,000 yearly. The current cap is \$2.5 million.

California Agriculture Secretary A.G.

Kawamura said, "The farm bill recognizes the diversity of California production and special environmental needs. California farmers and ranchers require robust programs to assist them in marketing healthy, abundant and diverse foods on a global basis and in meeting increased domestic environmental standards. The Senate bill supports these objectives while also

protecting working farms and ranches, enhancing wildlife habitat and ensuring clean air and water in our communities."

Kawamura added the Senate's focus on air quality in the legislation will ensure farmers can obtain federal assistance to help reduce air quality impacts within California and the nation that protects the environment and reduce green house emissions. "The 2007 Farm Bill is an investment within our nation's food, fiber and fuel future. I am pleased by the Senate's progress on this vital legislation and look forward to congressional finalization of the bill," he added.

Assemblywoman Nicole Parra meets with FCFB directors/staff

On Wednesday, Assemblywoman Parra visited with FCFB to provide a legislative update, as well as what she anticipates for the upcoming legislative year. Health care, the state budget and the need for an adequate water supply were major discussion areas.

Parra serves as the Assembly Agriculture Committee Chair and represents Kern, Kings, and parts of Fresno and Tulare counties. The meeting was well attended by FCFB board members and demonstrated FCFB's continued outreach to elected officials about Farm Bureau needs and concerns.

Judge issues final order on Delta Smelt ruling

On Friday, Dec. 14, U.S. District Judge Oliver Wanger issued his final written order that essentially carries out his initial decision he made on Aug. 31.

The order creates new operational guidelines for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta pumps and requires new procedures to monitor the endangered Delta Smelt. As a direct result, reductions in state and federal wide water allocations are expected. The order will be in effect until September 2008, at which time the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will have completed its updated biological opinion on management of the Delta Smelt.

The issue clearly illustrates the need to "fix" the Delta, but it further demonstrates the extreme

impacts that can result from enforcement of the federal Endangered Species Act. Under the ESA, social and economic impacts are not considered when it comes to protection of listed species.

Much is at stake. With the court decision, west side federal water contractors may see 10-25 percent surface water allocation based on dry or average conditions. Any significant cutback will have far-reaching consequences for the west side of Fresno County and rural communities – particularly with lost local and regional jobs that depend on the value-added benefit of having crops in the ground. In Westlands Water District alone, the value of food and fiber products currently totals \$1 billion dollars per year – about one-quarter of the County's total farm production.

California Air Resource Board staff meets with agriculture representatives to discuss proposed diesel rules

Representatives from local agricultural organizations, farmers and truck operators met with staff from the California Air Resources Board to discuss how proposed diesel truck rules will impact on-road diesel truck owners and operators. Tougher rules are proposed for all California diesel on-road trucks over 14,000 pounds gross vehicle weight.

The new diesel rules are anticipated to be adopted by CARB in October 2008 and will force diesel operators to retrofit or scrap older model trucks and engines. Specialized diesel trucks, such as cotton module haulers, custom water trucks and cattle feeders, used in agriculture were displayed at the show to help educate the governing board about the types of trucks that agriculture relies upon.

The proposed heavy-duty diesel-fueled truck rule will apply to all trucks and fleets operated within the state of California, except pick-ups and other vehicles for non-commercial use with a gross vehicle weight of less than 14,000 pounds, and off-road vehicles "Low Use" vehicles that operate less than 100 hours and 1,000 miles annually.

More than 35 trucks were on display and operators had the chance to explain to CARB staff about the specialized function and use of each truck. The January issue of *Agriculture Today* will have a thorough review of the proposals and photos from the event.

The event was sponsored by the California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association, California Citrus Mutual, California Grape & Tree Fruit League, Fresno County Farm Bureau, Nisei Farmers League and Western Plant Health Association.

FCFB Holiday office hours

The Fresno County Farm Bureau office will be closed from noon on Christmas Eve Day, Dec. 24 until Jan. 2.

Members of the media can call Liz Hudson's cell at (559) 779-1569 anytime during the Holiday break. Other emergency-type calls can be directed to Executive Director Ryan Jacobsen at (559) 696-0932. Happy Holidays to one and all!

CFBF hires new water resources director

Daniel Merkley, a former agricultural liaison with the State Water Resources Control Board, has joined the California Farm Bureau Federation as legislative director of water resources.

As agricultural liaison with the State Water Resources Control Board, Merkley worked on water quality issues and carried farmers' and ranchers' concerns to the regional and state water boards. Previously, he served as agricultural commissioner liaison with the state Department of Pesticide Regulation. Most recently, he was district director for Rep. Dan Lungren.

Merkley will represent Farm Bureau on the full array of policy issues related to water development and water quality, before the state Legislature and with state government agencies.

Toast the season with CA Champagne

Growth in sales of sparkling wines has remained steady, though sales trends show that American consumers still associate sparkling wines with holidays or special occasions. Market analysts say sales of sparkling wine rise sharply during June, for "wedding season," and at this time of year. California-made sparkling wines account for nearly 60 percent of those sold in the U.S.

'Tis the season—for spiritual well-being

While the majority of Americans will be celebrating Christmas next Tuesday, other Americans will observe diverse religious or cultural holidays during this time of year, as well.

From the first day of the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah on Dec. 4 to the conclusion of the African-American celebration of Kwanzaa on Jan. 1, many San Joaquin Valley residents will recognize this special time of the year for its spiritual focuses and time to reflect on family, fellow man and the important role of faith in one's life.

Giving credit to the Dec. 13 features section of the *Sanger Herald*, here are a few of the diverse holidays recognized this time of year:

Hanukkah: Known as the Festival of Lights, this eight-day celebration, which began Dec. 4, recognized the lighting of the Temple menorah at the time of the Maccabee rebellion with only a one-day supply of oil. The modern day Hanukkah carries on the tradition of lighting the menorah and cultural foods, but also is a time of prayer to offer praise and thanksgiving.

Fiesta of Our Lady of Guadalupe: Dec. 12 is the Festival of Our Day of Guadalupe, who is the patron saint of the Mexican Republic. In Mexico, citizens pilgrimage to a church outside of Mexico City to give thanks for blessings and to pray for cures for illnesses. Many Mexican-American celebrate the holiday with large festive meals and decorate their home in bright and cheerful colors.

Eid ul-Adha: From Dec. 20-24 this year, Muslims will commemorate Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son for Allah on this day called Eid ul-Adha. The holiday takes place on the 10th day of the Muslim month of Dhul Hijja. Throughout the day, Muslims visit with family and friends, enjoy festive meals and give gifts to children.

Christmas: Dec. 25 is the day Christians worldwide celebrate the birth of their savior, God's son Jesus Christ. Christmas festivities commemorate Jesus' birth, including the giving of gifts, songs of praise, and prayers of peace and good will. Christmas traditions often include various secular customs, many of which have been influenced by earlier winter festivals, such as a visit on Christmas Eve from St. Nicholas (Santa Claus).



Boxing Day: Dec. 26 is observed as Boxing Day in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and South Africa. Its origin dates to England during the Middle Ages, when servants who were required to

work on Christmas Day were given the next day off. As the servants prepared to visit with their families, the employers would present them with boxed gifts – hence Boxing Day. Modern day celebrations in those countries now focus mostly on various sporting events.

Kwanzaa: Founded in 1966, Kwanzaa is an African-American celebration from Dec. 26-Jan. 1 and is based upon the seven ancient building principles of the African nation. Celebrations focus on family, community, commerce and self-improvement. Traditional colors of green, red and black are used in decorations.

Hmong New Year: Dec. 26 – Jan. 1 is the Hmong New Year celebration – a time to rest, reflect and celebrate with families and friends. The annual celebration held in Fresno at the Fairgrounds is believed to be the largest and longest cultural event of its kind in the U.S., attracting over 150,000 attendees, according to organizers.

The wonderful diversity of the San Joaquin Valley provides many opportunities to observe, learn and embrace other culture's customs and traditions during this special time of the year. Above all, it's the opportunity to pause from busy day-to-day events and to make a spiritual connection with one's faith. May *your* special Holiday be filled with peace and fellowship and continued blessings in the New Year.

Next Week's Calendar

Dec. 24-Jan. 1 FCFB office closed.

Jan. 2 Fresno County Ag Land Conservation Committee, 8 a.m., FCFB office

Jan. 3 FCFB Board of Directors meeting, 6 p.m., FCFB office, 1274 W. Hedges Ave.

Jan. 4 Chamber Ag, Water and Environment Committee meeting, noon, Chamber office; Sanger Rotary Club presentation, noon

This Week's Calendar

Dec. 17 CA Farm Water Coalition Board of Directors meeting

Dec. 19 Meeting with Assemblymember Parra

Dec. 21 Bee and Mandarin Working Group meeting

Fresno County
Farm Bureau

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