



## **Federal Farm Bill talks began this week**

*California's issues are being heard*

As Congress began debate this week on crafting the next federal Farm Bill, California lawmakers made sure the number one farm state's issues were included.

CA Representative Dennis Cardoza, with the support and approval of the specialty crops alliance, has agreed to a package that includes \$1.6 billion in mandatory funding per year for specialty crops (plus an additional \$225 million in annual market access/trade development funds).

This funding will come in the form of block grants, an expanded pest exclusion program, a large research initiative, air quality compliance assistance, added government fruit and vegetable purchases and an expanded school lunch and snack program. It also includes funding for additional organic certification. While there has been an agreement, it must still be approved by the House Agriculture Committee and pass all the subsequent hurdles in the full House and Senate.

Historically, California's specialty crops have been overlooked in Farm Bill discussions. To help ensure that doesn't happen this time, members of the California Farm Bureau staff are in Washington to advocate for programs that benefit the state's farmers, ranchers and consumers. For California, parts of the Farm Bill that help farmers open new markets are particularly important. So are research and conservation programs, and nutritional programs that give consumers greater access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

The agreement was reached between Representative Dennis Cardoza and Ag Committee Chairman Rep. Collin Peterson (MN), but must still be affirmed by full committee action. Critical to Rep. Peterson and farm program interests, the money did not come at the expense of crop support payments, but rather from savings achieved in crop insurance payment practices, new monies from outside the farm bill baseline and some savings by tightening farm program payments.

Agreement also was reached on reforming payment limits, an issue that's received a lot of

attention, and undoubtedly will receive even more notice in the coming weeks.

The farm bill covers 11 titles including: the commodity title and its various farm support programs, conservation, research, trade/market development, energy, nutrition and a miscellaneous section which includes country of origin labeling. Nutrition and related food stamp programs constitute roughly 70 percent of the total farm bill spending total, but that part of the bill attracts far less attention or discussion.

The House is expected to arrive at a final bill before it breaks for summer recess starting Aug. 6. The current 2002 Farm Bill expires in September.

## **Join us next Thursday at FCFB's Media Appreciation Night**

It's not too late to plan on attending the popular Fresno County Farm Bureau Media Appreciation Night, which will be held next Thursday, July 26 from 5:30 to 9 p.m. at the Clovis Rodeo Grounds, Clovis Ave. and Rodeo Lane, Clovis. The event is co-hosted by the Clovis Rodeo Association.

FCFB's Media Appreciation Night is an opportunity to acknowledge the working relationship between Farm Bureau and the local and regional media for its help in reporting about agricultural issues. Local reporters, editors, producers, photographers and news team members from print and electronic media are invited to attend the event. Likewise, FCFB will announce the winners in the annual Journalism Awards. The presentation of the awards will be at 6:45 p.m.

One of the attractions of Media Night is the trailer full of fresh produce donated by Farm Bureau members for the media guests to take home. Tickets for non-media guests are \$10 per person. To make a donation of produce or to make a reservation for the event, call the Farm Bureau office at (559) 237-0263 or email Liz Hudson at [lzh@fcfb.org](mailto:lzh@fcfb.org).

Sponsors for the event include:

Ag One Foundation  
California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association  
California Dairies Inc./ Challenge Food Products  
Clovis Rodeo Association  
Crown Jewels Marketing  
Fresno Cooperative Raisin Growers, Inc.  
Fresno Equipment Company  
Ganduglia Trucking

Gar Tootelian, Inc.  
 H & L Auto Body - Sanger  
 Hedrick's Chevrolet  
 High Desert Ag, Inc.  
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 Keith Nilmeier Trucking  
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 Martin Mazorra - Private Wealth Advisors  
 Michelsen Packaging Co.-SUN-DRY Raisin Trays & Jumbo  
 Rolls  
 Microdot Security Solutions LLC  
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 PR Farms/Bella Frutta  
 Proteus Inc  
 Rain for Rent/Westside Pump Company  
 Rick Hutchinson – SmithBarney  
 Sawyers & Holland, LLP  
 The Big Fresno Fair  
 The Burchell Nursery, Inc  
 The Business Journal  
 The Clarksfield Company, Inc.- Ben Ewell, President  
 Wawona Frozen Foods

### **Williamson Act applications are available – face conditional acceptance**

The County of Fresno has initiated – albeit conditionally—an application period for landowners who want to enroll their acreage under the Williamson Act and Farmland Security Zone Agreements. The application packets are being conditionally accepted for processing, pending outcome of the state budget.

All applications must be completed and accepted for processing with all required documentation by Friday, Aug 31. Application packets are available at the FCFB office.

The Act provides landowners with a reduced property tax obligation in return for keeping it under a Williamson Act Contract to remain in agriculture and open spaces and not be sold for other uses. Counties are reimbursed by the state for participation in the act. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has indicated he may line-item veto reimbursement funds to participating counties in the proposed state budget. The reimbursement – or subventions -- funds help replace the foregone property tax revenue due to county participation in the Act. If the subventions are not funded, there is no doubt that counties will be forced to discontinue their participation in the Act.

Although Fresno County Board of Supervisors voted recently to put farmers on notice that Fresno

County cannot sustain the program if the Governor vetoes the subvention funding, the County is making applications available should funding for the program be maintained. Last year, Fresno County received \$5.3 million in subvention funds reimbursements. Fresno County has 1.5 million acres under the Act. For an application, contact FCFB at (559) 237-0263; direct questions to the county's Development Services Division at (559) 262-4022.

### **Legislative Update: Help is needed on SB 180**

Senate Bill 180, which strips farm employees of their rights to a secret-ballot union election, is on the Governor's desk, awaiting action. After clearing both the Senate and Assembly floors, the bill now waits for action by the Governor, who has just 12 days to sign or veto it.

Farm Bureau is urging the Governor to veto SB 180 to ensure farm employees keep their democratic right to secret-ballot elections when voting on the issue of union representation. This bill takes away farm employees' rights by replacing a secret-ballot election with an unprotected process called "majority sign-up election."

Not only does this process undermine the right of employees to cast their ballot in a secure, private election booth free from coercion, but also deprives them the opportunity to hear and consider other viewpoints on unionization.

Contact the Governor's office to urge a veto on SB 180: Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814; Fax: (916) 445-4633. A sample letter can be obtained from FCFB, (559) 237-0263.

### **Water Update: Governor visits San Luis Reservoir to push for more storage**

With a dramatically low San Luis Reservoir in the background, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger came to the Valley on Monday to make a pitch for a comprehensive water infrastructure package that includes conveyance across the Delta, additional surface storage, groundwater storage, expanded water use efficiency and environmental restoration. He is urging the Legislature to pass a package this year.

"Over the last 20 years we have not built a single major reservoir that connects to this great system here, even though we have a population growth from 20 million to 37 million people over the same period," Gov. Schwarzenegger said of the joint

federal-state water storage facility, which now is only at 21 percent of capacity.

"Whether it is a natural disaster that destroys aging levees, contamination from rising sea levels, or our decision to turn off the pumps, we can no longer ignore the threats to California's fragile water system. So we face an enormous challenge here in California to make sure that California has safe and reliable water, not only for now but also 20, 30 years from now," added the Governor.

Dry conditions this winter and Delta pumping restrictions this summer have placed undue burdens on an already over-taxed water infrastructure. Dialogue urging action finally is occurring, albeit taking different approaches.

Senate leader Don Perata, of Oakland, recently outlined a proposed water bond plan that would give the state's different regions authority to select which projects to pursue. The measure would dovetail with legislation already authored by Perata, SB 1002, which would appropriate money from recently approved bonds to take steps to protect the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and boost groundwater supplies.

As dry conditions persist throughout the remainder of the summer, rest assured talk will continue to focus on long-term water security for California.

### **Delta Vision workshop set for July 27**

Farmers, water users, rural communities and others will have a chance to provide input on fixing the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta at a Delta Vision Workshop on July 27 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Fresno Convention Center, Exhibit Halls II and III, 848 M St., downtown. The workshop is cosponsored by the Water Education Foundation and California Resources Agency. For details, visit: <http://www.water-ed.org> or phone: (916) 444-6240.

### **Corn is up, cotton is down**

Corn planted for all purposes is at an all-time high of 670,000 acres, up 29 percent from 2006, reports the California Field Crop Review. The largest California corn acreage prior to this year was 600,000 acres planted in 1998.

California farmers expect to harvest 190,000 acres of corn for grain in 2007, up 73 percent from last year. This is the largest corn grain acreage since the year 2000. High corn grain prices – say ethanol -- as well as strong demand for corn used for dairy silage, encouraged the record high plantings. In the U.S.,

corn planted acreage is estimated at 92.9 million, 19 percent above last year.

On the other hand, cotton acreage is down considerably with Upland varieties at the lowest level on record. California's cotton growers planted 185,000 acres of Upland cotton and 265,000 acres of American Pima cotton this year. Upland acreage is down 35 percent, and Pima acreage is down four percent from 2006. Additionally, 2007 marks the first time Pima acres have exceeded Upland acres in California. Pima cotton typically commands a higher price than upland varieties.

### **Have some garlic with that cheese?**

According to *Dairy Herd Management* magazine, researchers in Wales are investigating two different options for reducing methane emissions from cows.

In one project, cows are fed garlic. In the second project, cows are fed a grazing mix of Birdsfoot trefoil, white clover and perennial ryegrass. Initial results from both projects have yielded a substantial reduction in methane emissions. Read more at: [www.dairyherd.com](http://www.dairyherd.com).

### **Did you know...**

As you bite into that sweet red onion this summer, ponder this...

By the Middle Ages, the three main vegetables of European cuisine were beans, cabbage and onions. In addition to serving as a food for both the poor and the wealthy, onions were prescribed to alleviate headaches, snakebites and hair loss. They were also used as rent payments and wedding gifts.

Fresno County had 26,400 acres of fresh and processed onions in 2006 worth more than \$233 million, making it the number eight crop in the County.

### **Next Week's Calendar**

**July 26** FCFB Media Appreciation Night, 5:30 p.m., Clovis Rodeo Grounds

**July 27** Fresno Ag Roundtable, 7 a.m., Marie Calendar's Restaurant, Cedar and Shaw Ave.; Fig Garden Rotary Presentation, noon; *The Simpson Movie* is released in local theatres

### **This Week's Calendar**

**July 17** FCFB Executive Committee meeting

Fresno County  
**Farm Bureau**

1274 W. Hedges Ave.; Fresno, CA 93728; (559) 237-0263