

November 2, 2007



**Friday  
Follow-Up**

## Federal Farm Bill works through Senate

The federal Farm Bill is making its way through the U.S. Senate, having been approved in the Senate Agriculture Committee and now heading to the Senate floor. As of *Follow-Up's* deadline, it appears that the Senate is scheduled to take up debate on the 2007 Farm Bill next week. Of particular interest to San Joaquin Valley farmers, the committee's mark-up includes \$3 billion over five years in mandatory funding for specialty crop priorities.

Some amendments are expected including some additional attempts to reduce farm commodity payment levels. Farm Bureau is watching the amendments, supporting an expected amendment that will authorize the use of USDA EQIP funds for meeting air quality emissions regulations, such as stationary pump retrofitting.

The next step is a conference committee with the House and Senate to sort out the differences. CFBF's Jack King says the conference committee becomes the crucial step where the "final horse-trading" will occur.

AgJOBS may make another appearance this session. The U.S. Senate failed to pass comprehensive immigration reform earlier this year, but Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid promised Sen. Dianne Feinstein he would allow AgJOBS back to the Senate floor for debate and a vote this year. Sen. Feinstein is expected to present AgJOBS as an amendment to the Farm Bill when the legislation is presented to the entire Senate next week. If that's the case, farmers, ranchers and others will need to contact their federal elected officials to urge their support of AgJOBS.

*Domestic Food Programs and Nutrition get the biggest slice of pie*

The Farm Bill's nutrition title accounts for more than half of all spending on programs/activities covered by the bill, the majority of which finances the federal Food Stamp program. The most significant issues in this title are those dealing with administration of, eligibility for, and benefits under the Food Stamp program, fruit and vegetable support policies, and spending for The Emergency Food Assistance Program.

The House-passed version of the bill in the amount of new spending (above that expected under current nutrition program laws) in their nutrition titles. Over the next five years, Congressional Budget Office estimates (preliminary in the case of the Senate committee bill) place the net cost of the House nutrition title at \$4.2 billion vs. the Senate's \$4.3 billion. However, the two measures diverge in where they spend that money.

## SIDEBAR: The 2007 Senate Ag Committee Farm Bill key provisions:

- Creates a permanent agriculture disaster relief trust fund. Currently, Congress must pass legislation each time there is a freeze or disaster.
- Extends and expands the Milk Income Loss Contract payment and increases the payment rate in January, 2009. Also increases the quantity of milk produced that is eligible for participation. (Note: this is significant to CA since in the past only the equivalent of 250 cows was eligible to receive payments).
- The Senate bill offers roughly \$3 billion over five years in assistance to specialty crop producers (roughly double what's included in the House bill when disaster assistance is included); Mandatory funding for specialty crop programs including: \$270 million for block grants (over five years versus \$365 million in House bill), \$120 million in tree assistance (versus no such funding in the House version), \$24 million in new money for technical assistance to address export barriers, more monies for farmers market promotion and organic production.
- Maintains continued funding for current Conservation Reserve Program (39.2 million acres), Wetlands and Grasslands Reserve programs and wildlife habitat incentive programs (WHIP). A newly proposed feature will allow participants to choose between direct payments and tax credits for these programs.
- Creates and expands the Conservation Security Program with a new name of Comprehensive Stewardship Program to

enroll 13.2 million acres every year. (establishes a specific 5-year funding level of \$1.28 billion since the last Farm Bill authorized but did not fund)

- Provides \$1.134 billion to expand the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to every state and targets low income children. (A slightly different approach and over three times the amount of money allocated compared with the House measure).
- Increased spending for the Emergency Food Assistance Program and Seniors Farmers Markets and Community Food Projects. (This will lead to better nutrition and more government food purchases of agricultural commodities including fruits, vegetables and nuts).
- A \$94 million increase in market access trade development spending (over five years, above the current \$200 million per year) and \$22 million in additional Foreign Market Development funds. (These programs are widely used by CA commodity groups.).
- Various incentive programs, grant and research monies to develop biomass crop production (roughly \$1.3 billion over five years).
- Adoption of the House negotiated agreements on mandatory country of origin labeling (COOL) with specific arrangements for livestock, fresh fruits and vegetables.
- \$80 million in new monies directed specifically at research for specialty crops, (versus \$215 million in the House bill) including monies to encourage research in mechanization, plant breeding and food safety, plus a similar amount for organic production research and extension.

*Source: California Farm Bureau Federation*

### **Central American leaders visit to discuss possible guest workers opportunities**

Local agricultural leaders met with the Ambassador from Honduras this week for introductory discussions about utilizing a guest worker program to meet agriculture's seasonal labor needs, while providing much-needed jobs for Hondurans.

The Nisei Farmers League served as the organizing host for Ambassador Roberto Flores-

Bermudez' visit to the Fresno area on Monday and Tuesday. Meetings were held with local agricultural organizations, including Fresno County Farm Bureau, CA Grape and Tree Fruit League and others. Representing FCFB were Ryan Jacobsen, Pat Ricchiuti and Debbie Jacobsen.

The agricultural organizations have formed a consortium which could oversee a pilot program to bring in workers, as well as oversee a more formal temporary worker program as identified in the current AgJOBS legislation. AgJOBS streamlines the present H-2A program to provide a future labor safety net while strengthening worker protections. It also allows existing undocumented workers to change their status by undergoing thorough background checks and continue working in agriculture under a temporary status for a period of three-to-five years before being able to qualify to seek legal residency subject to conditions.

Much of the discussions with the foreign visitors focused on creating win-win opportunities for all the participants – guest workers and employers alike.

### **Quick storm dumps rain/hail on Valley floor**

Causing angst for cotton and strawberry growers, a sudden rain and hail event pelted parts of Fresno County Monday night, leaving as much as an inch of rain and more in western and eastern locations.

Mendota reported more than 2 inches of rain and Reedley saw almost one-inch of precipitation, while the Fresno Airport received only a trace.

Fresno County cotton farmers, who still had fields to pick, are concerned with grade impacts on fiber quality. Also vulnerable to rain was cut alfalfa hay, strawberries and seasonal vegetables. Reports of hail in the Kerman and Sanger areas, likewise, raised concerns. Hail could scar persimmons and Navel oranges, which are being harvested in the Kings Riverbottom area.

If you experienced storm-related losses, please contact the Fresno County Department of Agriculture at (559) 456-7510.

### **Sexual Harassment prevention training offered**

The Fresno County Employer Advisory Council is offering sexual harassment prevention training as part of their Breakfast Seminar Series on Wednesday, Nov. 7 at 8 a.m. at the Ramada Inn, Highway 41 and Shaw Ave. in Fresno.

The seminar, presented by S. Brett Sutton and Susan K. Hatmaker, meets the California AB 1825 mandatory training requirements for supervisors, managers, human resource professionals and business owners. All attendees will receive a certificate of completion.

The \$35 registration is due by Friday, Nov. 2. Space is limited, so reserve early. For details, contact [Sean.Henderson@FresnoCityCollege.edu](mailto:Sean.Henderson@FresnoCityCollege.edu).

### **Southland fires follow-up**

Early reports of monetary damages to farms, ranches and nurseries have begun to come in from the fires in Southern California.

The California Avocado Commission says \$35 million dollars' worth of avocados were lost to last week's fires and windstorms. The San Diego County agricultural commissioner's office reports \$30 million dollars in losses from one wildfire, to ornamental nursery plants, cut flowers, avocados and other crops. It will issue separate loss reports on other fires.

### **Chamber Ag Water Committee to meet tomorrow**

A legislative wrap-up and 2008 forecast session is planned for the Fresno Chamber's Agriculture, Water and Environment Committee meeting, which will be held Friday, Nov. 2 at noon at the Chamber office, downtown.

Scheduled to participate are representatives of Assembly members Arambula and Parra; Congressmen Nunes and Radanovich; and U.S. Senator Boxer. Also invited to participate are representatives from U.S. Senator Feinstein, State Senator Cogdill, Congressman Costa and Assemblymember Villines.

Lunch will be served. RSVP to the Chamber's Amy Huerta at (559) 495-4818.

### **Local FFA Chapters to hold fund-raiser events**

Two Fresno County Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapters are holding separate events on Saturday, Nov. 10 to raise funds to support their vocational agricultural programs.

The Duncan High School FFA Chapter (Fresno Unified) is hosting its annual "Fall Breakfast at the Farm" beginning at 8 a.m. on Nov. 10 at the school farm located at Sierra Vista and Dakota avenues in central Fresno. The menu features pancakes, sausage, bacon, eggs, and juice, milk or coffee. In addition, tours of the school farm will be offered. For details, contact the chapter at (559) 217-7586 or (559) 349-4308.

Later that evening, the Sierra Ag Boosters hosts its 26th Annual Silver 65 Dinner/Dance and Auction to benefit the Sierra High School FFA Chapter. Proceeds from the event support FFA students who raise and show market animals at the Big Fresno and Chowchilla fairs.

The event will be held at the Sportsman's Club in Friant and is hosted each year by community and parent volunteers. Included in the \$175 per couple ticket price are dancing to a live band, door prizes, live and silent auctions, and an elegant meal served by Chapter FFA officers. Word is this event is already sold out! But, sponsorship opportunities are available. For additional details, contact Lauri King at (559) 994-3135.

### **Spring forward; Fall back**

Don't forget to set your clocks BACK one hour on Saturday night before you go to bed to end Daylights Saving Time and return to Standard Time.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 changed the time change dates for Daylight Saving Time in the U.S. It now begins on the second Sunday in March and ends the first Sunday in November as a means to help save energy. Studies done by the U.S. Department of Transportation show that Daylight Saving Time trims the entire country's electricity usage by a small but significant amount, about one percent each day, because less electricity is used for lighting and appliances.

The time change is also a good reminder to change the batteries in your smoke detectors! Enjoy that extra hour of sleep!

### **Check out FCFB Business Support Members on-line**

Fresno County Farm Bureau's newly re-designed Web Site now hosts a list of all of FCFB Business Support members. Check out the site at [www.fcfb.com](http://www.fcfb.com), click on "Member Services" and then "Business Members." The members are listed by category. Please visit them on-line and in-person!

### Reminders: Nov. 7 -- Agribusiness Management Conference/ Awards Luncheon

Remember: Fresno State's Center for Agricultural Business will host the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Agribusiness Management Conference at the Convention Center Valdez Exhibit Hall on Wednesday, Nov. 7, and the Agriculturalists of the Year/Ag Business of the Year awards will be presented at noon.

The Fresno Chamber's Agriculturalists of the Year recipients for 2007 are Nat DiBduo, president of the Fresno-based Allied Grape Growers, and Sarkis Sarabian, a diversified farmer and agricultural consultant in the Lone Star area. The recipient of the Baker, Peterson & Franklin CPA, LLP 2007 Ag Business Award is the Riverdale-based Borba Farms.

For details on the conference, contact CAB at (559) 278-4405 or <http://cati.csufresno.edu/cab>. For information on the luncheon, call the Chamber at (559) 495-4800.

### Nov. 5 -- Water Quality Workshops

Workshops to help growers with best management practices for irrigated lands will be held in Parlier and Riverdale on Monday, Nov. 5,

The Kings River Sub-Watershed Coalition will present the workshops from 9 a.m.-to-noon at the U.C. Kearney Agricultural Center in Parlier, and from 1-to-4 p.m. at the Riverdale Community Center in Riverdale. Updates will be given on the conditional agricultural water discharge waiver program. For details, contact KRCD at (559) 237-5567.

### Quote of the week

*"An acre of lawn is nice to look at, or play a football game on. But what can a farmer do with an acre? She can grow 12,000 heads of lettuce. That is 48,000 servings. She can grow 80,000 pounds of tomatoes on that one acre. She can grow 2,000 pounds of almonds. That is 8,000 four-ounce cans. If you are a good person, you will eat a can a week. That acre can supply you for 150 years. It is amazing*

*what a farmer can do with an acre."* From Jason Peltier, of Westlands Water District, before the Delta Vision Task Force. **Editor's Note:** It's amazing what an acre of land can produce—all we need is water to make it happen!

### Words to live by

*"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."* From Famous Poet Maya Angelou

### Next Week's Calendar

- Nov. 5** Cattle Theft meeting, 1 p.m., Harris Ranch Restaurant
- Nov. 6** FCFB Ag Education Committee, 3 p.m., FCFB Office, 1274 W. Hedges Ave.
- Nov. 7** Fresno County Ag Lands Conservation Committee, 8 a.m., FCFB office; Ag Management Conference/Ag Awards Luncheon, Valdez Exhibit Hall, downtown
- Nov. 9** Business Industry & Government Coalition of the SJV, 11:45 a.m., Tulare; Chamber Ag, Water & Environment Committee meeting, noon, Chamber office

### This Week's Calendar

- Oct. 29** Meeting with Ambassador Roberto Flores-Bermudez of Honduras on ag labor
- Oct. 30** San Joaquin Valley Political Academy
- Oct. 31** Review of One Voice Projects
- Nov. 1** FCFB Board of Directors meeting
- Nov. 2** Farmland Conservation Meeting; Chamber's Valley Legislative Delegation

Visit FCFB's Web site at: [www.fcfb.org](http://www.fcfb.org).

Fresno County  
**Farm Bureau**

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