



Fresno County Farm Bureau

1274 W. Hedges Ave.

Fresno, CA 93728

(559) 237-0263

Fax: (559) 237-3396

www.fcfb.org

info@fcfb.org

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Local meetings held this week look at model farmland protection program

A series of meetings were held throughout Fresno County this week to get input from farmers, ranchers and those persons interested in protecting farmland in the county. More than 100 people were estimated to attend the eight meetings held Wednesday through Friday.

The meetings were hosted by Fresno County Farm Bureau and the Council of Fresno County Governments (COG). In response to the continuing loss of local farmland to development and other uses, the COG is looking into new strategies for conserving the County's fertile farmland. With a grant from the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, COG has engaged American Farmland Trust, the nation's farmland conservation leader, to help design a farmland conservation program that can be a model for the County and the Valley.

The grower meetings held in various communities in the County provided a small forum for farmers and ranchers to freely discuss their perspectives on farmland protections. Other areas discussed included the size of workable buffers between land in production and new development, the location of spheres of influence and right-to-farm type concerns.

"Although we held to meeting with a focus on long-term land use planning, an overwhelming issue that continued to surface is concern over having an adequate water supply and regulatory issues facing agriculture," said FCFB Executive Director Ryan Jacobsen.

At a public meeting held in Parlier on Wednesday, those persons in attendance strongly urged creation of a program that preserves the most fertile soil for agricultural production, yet provides for the estimated growth for this area. Challenges expressed included having the political will now and in the future to adhere to a farmland conservation plan. Also discussed was the challenges farmers face in staying economically viable given low commodity prices for major crops, such as fresh tree fruit, and increasing regulatory pressures.

To address this growth and plan for the future of the County's farms and farmland, the Fresno County COG is designing a Model Farmland Conservation Program. The purpose of the Model Program is to design and implement a coordinated set of local policies that will effectively conserve the land and water resources

necessary for Fresno County agriculture to remain economically viable. The project target completion date is August 2008.

The Model Farmland Conservation Program includes three basic tasks:

- Identify and map characteristics that make farm and ranch lands strategic resources for agriculture. This will result in a gradation of values, not hard and fast lines.
- Document and analyze current trends affecting agricultural lands, as well as public policies, market forces and other factors that contribute to them.
- Select a coordinated set of policies and techniques that will effectively conserve the most strategic farmland for agricultural use. To the extent possible, this effort will build upon the strategies outlined in the *Landscape of Choice*, which had received broad local support including FCFB.

It's not too late to sign-up for the Ag Haz Mat Transportation Class for Monday

An Agricultural Hazardous Materials Transportation Program class will be held on Monday, Jan. 21, at the Fresno County Farm Bureau office, 1274 W. Hedges Ave., Fresno. Two classes will be offered: in English from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.; and in Spanish from 1 to 4 p.m.

The classes are sponsored by the Fresno County Farm Bureau and California Safety Training Corporation, and are for persons 21 years and older, who have a current class C driver's license. Participants will receive a DL-267 certificate that will enable them to legally transport hazardous agricultural materials on public roadways, (within a 50 mile radius) without a commercial driver's license.

The cost of the class is \$20 for Farm Bureau members; payable at the door to: Fresno County Farm Bureau. To register, call (559) 237-0263 or email: info@fcfb.org.

Employers must notify employees about the Earned Income Tax Credit

By Carl Borden, Associate Counsel, California Farm Bureau Federation

A new law requires employers in California to notify their employees about the federal earned income tax credit (EITC), also known as the earned income credit. It also requires employers to process, upon an employee's request and in accordance with federal law, Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form W-5 for advance payments of the EITC.

Enacted under Assembly Bill 650 (Lieu), the law covers every employer required to provide unemployment insurance (UI) to its employees. A covered employer must give the notice to all of its employees who are covered by UI; even employees whose earnings are far above the EITC eligibility limit must get the notice.

A saving grace is that there is no enforcement mechanism or penalty for failing to give the notice. Despite that, it is still the law, so employers need to comply with it. Plus, given our litigious society, prudence dictates compliance so as to avoid or defend against claims by current or former employees that they were injured (i.e., they did not claim and therefore did not get the EITC refund) because their employer had failed to give them the notice.

An employer must notify an employee that the employee may be eligible for the EITC within one week before or after, or at the same time, that the employer gives the employee an annual wage summary, such as an IRS Form W-2 or Form 1099.

The employer must either hand the notice to the employee or mail it to the employee's last-known address. Posting a notice on an employee bulletin board or sending it through office mail does not suffice.

For a copy of a sample notice in both English and Spanish, contact FCFB at info@fcfb.org or call: (559) 237-0263.

Workshops scheduled to explain new respirator regulations

Three workshops to explain the new respirator regulations are scheduled for late-February in Fresno, Reedley and Kerman.

A workshop will be held on Wednesday, Feb. 20 from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Fresno County Farm Bureau, 1274 W. Hedges, Fresno. The speakers Chuck Perry, of 3M, and Karen Francone and Louie Guerra, of the Fresno County Department of Agriculture, will focus on what records, documents, and training are necessary to comply and the filling out of the medical questionnaire. 3M Representative Chuck Perry will cover qualitative and a quantitative fit testing/ demonstration of respirators; and proper selection of respirators as per various labels..

Two additional workshops will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 26 from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Reedley Community Center, 100 N. East Ave., Reedley; and from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Kerman Community Center, 15101 W. Kearney Blvd Kerman. Frank Schneider, an industrial hygienist with the Worker Health and Safety Branch of CA Department of Pesticide Regulations, will discuss the new respirator regulations and Ed Hosoda, of Cardinal Professional Products, will conduct a qualitative and a quantitative fit testing/ demonstration of respirators; Medical Questionnaire completion; and proper selection of respirators as per various labels. These sessions are sponsored by Gar Tootelian Inc.

The new CA DPR-adopted Respiratory Protection Regulations took affect Jan. 1. The new regulations involve: the components of a written respiratory protection program; voluntary respirator provisions; medical evaluation; annual fit-testing; training; program evaluation; and recordkeeping.

One of the biggest transformations is that the employer shall identify a physician or other licensed health care professional to conduct medical evaluations to determine an employee's ability to safely wear a respirator. The health care professional shall perform the medical evaluation using a *medical questionnaire* or by an *initial medical examination*. The employer shall then obtain a written medical recommendation from the health care provider regarding the employee's ability to safely use a respirator before being required to use one.

The new regulations have been patterned after Cal/OSHA's respiratory regulations that other industries have been required to follow for many years.

Help with complying with the new respiratory protection regulations (Section 6739, Title 3, California Code of Regulations) can be found at the DPR's website: <http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/> .

Continuing education hours for the workshops have been requested. For details, contact the Fresno County Ag Department at (559) 456-7373.

FCFB Executive Director recognized on Thursday

FCFB Executive Director Ryan Jacobsen was one of 40 young community leaders and business professionals recognized at the *Business Street's* "40-Under-40" awards program on Thursday.

The evening reception recognized the top business professionals in the private and public sectors in Central California who are leaders in the community, and have experienced great success before the age of 40. For a complete list of honorees and details, visit www.4OU40.com.

News from our neighboring Farm Bureaus

Congratulations to Tulare County Farm Bureau for being recognized this week as one of the American Farm Bureau Federation's 15 "Counties of Excellence" for its innovative Youth Leadership Program. The Program has trained more than 350 young adults over the past 23 years. President Keith Watkins and Executive Director Patricia Stever accepted the County of Excellence Award in New Orleans last weekend and to cheer on Josh Pitigliano and Chris Giannini as they competed for national honors in the AFBF Young Farmers and Ranchers awards competition, and Discussion Meet competitor Shannon Douglas.

The Madera Farm Bureau is hosting a Ski Day on Sunday, Jan. 27 at Sierra Summit Ski Resort, on Highway 168 near Huntington Lake. The morning meeting time is 8:30 a.m., with lunch meet-up time at 12:30 p.m. at Mainstream Station (Orange Dome).

The full-day ticket price is adult \$54; youth (13-17) \$36; and child (6-12) \$15. In case of bad weather or scheduling conflicts, Sunday, Feb. 10 is the alternate date.

Skiing and/or snowboarding are not required, and anyone may join us on the mountain, says MCFB Executive Director Julia Berry. RSVP to MCFB at (559) 674-8871.

Farm Bureau-sponsored initiative will be on June ballot

Voters will cast ballots this June on a measure to add a new property right initiative to the California Constitution. The Secretary of State's office said Wednesday that the California Property Owners and Farmland Protection Act qualified for the ballot. The measure is sponsored by the California Farm Bureau and taxpayer groups. It would reform government power to seize private property while allowing use of eminent domain for legitimate public purposes.

"Cowgirl U" to raise money for Blood Bank on Saturday

The Clovis Rodeo Association and Central California Blood Center are teaming-up on a unique event held this Saturday, Jan. 19 to raise funds to support the Center's new bloodmobile fund.

Called "Cowgirl U," the lunch event features an entertaining way for women to become educated about rodeo and Western way of life. The luncheon will be held on Saturday at noon at the Clovis Rodeo Association Hall, 748 Rodeo Drive, Clovis.

Participants will be able to meet champion cowboys, rodeo royalty, hear live country music, and learn about the various rodeo events. In addition, a silent and live auction and "western wear/city slicker" fashion show is planned. The cost is \$100 per person. For details, call (559) 224-2900, ext. 3005.

Clovis paper looking for picture-perfect pets

Farm critters, four-legged members of the family and your basic pets are all eligible for earning their five-minutes of fame by being featured in the Clovis Independent's Great ExPETations Photo Contest.

The weekly newspaper asked for help in getting the word out about its contest and is looking for photos of great pets, including farm animals. If you have a photo you'd like to share, or know someone who does, follow the link below for an entry form and more information. 4-H and FFA members, how about sharing photos of your animal projects? For details, visit:

<http://www.fresnobee.com/static/clovisindependent/pets/pets.html>.

Smile for the week – We want your ideas!

Many thanks go to the Napa County Farm Bureau for providing other county farm bureaus with the challenging task to top NCFB's latest fund-raising activity! Like most county farm bureaus, FCFB has received numerous comments and suggestions to create an equally head-turning calendar for a fund raising activity. In case you missed it, the Napa Farm Bureau produced a 2008 calendar featuring 12 of its members in colorful photos throughout Napa's beautiful agricultural scenery. The kicker is... the members appear au naturel.

To no surprise, the calendar garnered much attention, including *Parade Magazine*, which prompted our Texas Farm Bureau colleague Si Cook to send an email asking us when we were going to produce a similar calendar featuring Fresno County farmers. Even *Fresno Bee* business reporter Dennis Pollock called to inquire, generating an item for his Saturday column (a must-read each week, I might add.)

Well, it has been fun to hear the comments and suggestions made in jest. Yet seriously, FCFB production of a calendar might just make a good fundraiser for our agricultural education efforts. (Napa raised \$20,000!) Some ideas: the cutest farm animals in the county; the most appealing (or ugliest) crops; or how about the sexiest tractor, ala Kenny Chesney's hit about his sexy tractor?

You get the idea. Now, it's your turn. Email us your ideas for an intriguing calendar that FCFB can produce in 2009. Send your suggestions to: lizh@fcfb.org. We'll share them with you next week!

Next Week's Calendar

Jan. 21 Martin Luther King Holiday; office will be open. Ag Haz-Mat Transportation Program seminar, 9 a.m. FCFB office, 1274 W. Hedges Ave., Fresno

Jan. 22 CFBF Cotton Advisory Committee meeting, 8 a.m., FCFB office; Fresno Fair Board of Directors, 4 p.m., Fairgrounds

Jan. 23 Fresno COG Blueprint meeting, 9:30 a.m.

Jan. 24 CA Commission on Agricultural Worker Health & Housing, 10 a.m., Sequoia Community Health Foundation

Jan. 25 Fresno Ag Roundtable, 7 a.m., Marie Calendar's Restaurant, Cedar and Shaw avenues

This Week's Calendar

Jan. 14 FACT Class session on air quality; Planning meeting on ag education forum; meeting with KFSN-ABC 30 news staff.

Jan. 15 FCFB Executive Committee meeting; Joint Legislative Ag Committee pre-planning meeting; FCFB Agricultural Education Committee meeting to plan Farm & Nutrition Day

Jan. 16 Model Farmland Conservation Program grower and public meetings

Jan. 17 Model Farmland Conservation Program grower and public meetings; San Joaquin Valley Air District meeting; meeting with Southeast Asian farmer; "40 Under 40 Awards" Reception

Jan. 18 Model Farmland Conservation Program meetings