Farm Bill extended until April 25

By Teresa Plascencia
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On Wednesday, Congress extended the current 2002 Farm Bill for another week, until April 25, so the 60-member conference committee can further discussions and move forward on developing a new Farm Bill. The 2002 Farm Bill originally expired Sept. 30, 2007 and has been repeatedly extended, while efforts continue to develop new federal farm policy via a 2008 Farm Bill.

At issue is how lawmakers plan on paying for the five-year, $286 billion legislation passed by both chambers last year. Before a formalized agreement can be reached, decision-makers are thus charged with finding additional funding for increasing agriculture and nutrition programs over the baseline without raising taxes. Programs include a disaster assistance fund, specialty crops, nutrition, stewardship, farm export, renewable energy, agricultural research and crop support payments. It is important to note that nutrition programs are estimated to receive $600 billion over the next 10 years.

In response to the extension, the USDA issued the following statement: "The President has stated that he does not intend on signing another short term extension if Congress has not shown significant progress towards crafting a good farm bill that he can sign. It is up to the farm bill negotiators to demonstrate that progress is being made on legislation that provides real reform while using acceptable offsets to pay for any additional spending."
Heat illness prevention seminars begin next week
State Compensation Insurance Fund will hold a series of Heat Illness Prevention seminars designed for employers and supervisors, beginning next Thursday, April 24 at the State Fund office, 10 River Park Place East, Fresno and on Friday, May 9 at the U.C. Westside Research and Extension Station, 17353 West Oakland Ave., near Five Points. Both seminars run from 9 to 11 a.m. A complimentary breakfast will be provided at 8:30 a.m.

The information provided will help employers meet the Cal/OSHA standards by modifying their Injury and Illness Prevention Program to meet current standards. Topics also include identifying risk factors, providing a control for hazards, developing an emergency action response plan and training employees on heat illness. The presentations will be in English only. To RSVP for the event, contact Monika Flores at (559) 433-2688, via email at: mlflores@scif.com, or online at www.scif.com.

Apple Moth treatment poses no risks – misinformation creates concern in coastal counties
Eradication efforts for the Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM) have raised concerns in coastal and urban areas of the state due to misinformation and public perceptions about spraying and treatment to prevent the spread of the unwanted pest.

Last week, a study was released from doctors and scientists from the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, the CA Department of Public Health and the state Department of Pesticide Regulation who examined illness complaints that followed aerial spraying of a pheromone product in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties last year.

"We examined all of the complaints and it was not possible to link the reported symptoms to the aerial spraying," said Environmental Health Assessment Director Dr. Joan Denton.

The study considered all complaints the state received, both formal and informal, but most did not contain enough information to determine the cause of the symptoms reported. In addition, most of the symptoms reported were relatively mild or common among the general public, such as eye, skin or respiratory irritation that could be consistent with a variety of possible causes, like allergies, pollen or the common cold. The study found that many of the complaints were duplicates, and most never sought medical attention or called the State hotline. As a result, the agencies concluded in the report that they cannot conclusively determine whether or not there is a direct link between the reported symptoms and the aerial spraying.

Despite the study’s findings, several bills and resolutions have been introduced in the State Legislature that seek to create new procedures, limit or stop the aerial application of exotic pest management tools. The bills, AB 2892 (Swanson), AB 2764 (Hancock), AB 2765 (Huffman) and AB 2763 (Laird) and related resolution ACR 117 (Laird), were heard in the Assembly Agriculture Committee on Wednesday. California Farm Bureau Federation supported AB 2763, opposed AB 2892 and removed its opposition to AB 2765.

The Environmental Health and Pesticide Regulation departments had earlier examined the pheromone product that was sprayed and concluded the amount that reached the ground was extremely low -- less than one ounce of pheromones and other chemical ingredients was deposited on the ground per acre within the aerial-application areas.

There has been much misinformation spread about pheromone treatments. A pheromone is simply a chemical signal that resembles a scent. Pheromone treatments have been used in the U.S. for more than a
decade, without incident. As recently as last year, more than 3 million acres in the U.S. were aerially treated with moth pheromone to disrupt the mating of gypsy moths.

“For many years, environmentalists have urged farmers to develop alternatives to conventional, toxic, ‘kill on contact’ pesticides. Pheromones are that alternative,” said A.G. Kawamura, secretary of the CA Department of Food and Agriculture. “These pheromones don't even harm the moths; they merely mimic a signal ‘scent’ naturally emitted by the female moth, thereby distracting the males so they cannot locate a mate and reproduce,” said Kawamura.

Moreover, the pheromone products used in this program are approved for treating organic crops - they are safe enough that the law states you don't even have to wait or wash them off after a treatment before you eat the produce, he added.

To help dispel misconceptions and misinformation, the three state agencies are working to improve public outreach, surveillance and reporting of symptoms related to future eradication efforts. They currently are working to establish a dedicated toll-free telephone number for medical providers and the public to report any adverse health effects believed to be related to the aerial pheromone application.


**Farm animal initiative qualifies for November ballot**
The Treatment of Farm Animals initiative, sponsored by animal activist groups, has qualified for the November statewide ballot – an initiative Farm Bureau will oppose.

"We will be urging people to vote no. Family farmers believe animal care should be based on science that assures the health and welfare of farm animals. Those aren’t decisions that can be made at the ballot box," California Farm Bureau Federation issued in a recent statement.

The measure proposes to ban certain crates for veal calves and pregnant pigs, and conventional cages for egg-laying hens. However, since veal crating is virtually non-existent in California, and major pork producers here are voluntarily phasing out gestation crates, this initiative would do only one thing: outlaw the use of the predominant, scientifically proven method for housing egg-laying hens. Further, the ambiguous wording of the measure could result in a ban on most cage-free egg facilities as well.

The measure makes exceptions for transportation, rodeos, fairs, 4-H programs, lawful slaughter, research and veterinary purposes. Violators would be subject to misdemeanor penalties including fines of up to $1,000 and/or up to 180 days of jail time.

Animal welfare policies belong in the hands of experienced scientists, veterinarians and farmers who are best qualified to protect farm animals and the food they provide, said Farm Bureau. A group called Californians for Sound Farm Animal Agriculture has been formed to urge defeat of the initiative; contact: Scott Macdonald at (310) 996-2670.

**State FFA members to meet in Fresno**
Beginning this weekend, more than 5,000 members and advisors of the Future Farmers of America (FFA) Program will gather in Fresno for the annual Statewide Leadership Conference. The four-day conference
will begin Saturday, April 19 at downtown Fresno's Selland Arena. It is coordinated by California State University, Fresno's College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology.

The conference encourages students to develop personal and team leadership skills, discover agricultural careers and honor their peers. In addition, tours of local agricultural operations will be offered, as well as presentations from nationally recognized speakers and national FFA officers Becky Sullivan and Brady Rubels. The leadership conference also will highlight student accomplishment in areas ranging from public speaking to production practices with proficiency awards, scholarships and special recognitions.

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**Irrigation workshop to be held April 24 on west side**

A workshop to discuss irrigation management and research in row and field crop production will be held on Thursday, April 24, at 8 a.m. at the U.C. West Side Research and Extension Center, Oakland and Lassen avenues near Five Points.

The workshop will cover deficit irrigation concepts in alfalfa and cotton, drip irrigation maintenance and fertilizer applications, irrigation of grain and silage corn, cotton ET, irrigation and groundwater management using center pivot systems, and developing crop coefficients for vegetable irrigation. The workshop is sponsored by the U.C. Cooperative Extension Service. Lunch will be served. Details: (559) 456-7285.

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**Reminder: plan to attend Supervisor Candidates Forum on April 30**

The Fresno County Farm Bureau, California Grape and Tree Fruit League and Nisei Farmers League will host a Fresno County Supervisor Candidates' Forum on Wednesday, April 30 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 pm at Fresno County Farm Bureau, 1274 W. Hedges Ave., Fresno. Lunch will be served.

The Forum will include candidates from Supervisor Districts 2 and 5. Scheduled to participate are: District 2 candidates Susan Anderson, Brian Calhoun, and Paul Dictos; and District 5 candidates Nathan Magsig and Debbie Poochigian. Serving as moderator is Fresno Bee columnist Bill McEwen. To ensure appropriate food arrangements are made, RSVP to Teresa Plascencia at (559) 237-0263 or via email at: teresap@fcfb.org.

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**Water deliveries to begin on May 1 in Consolidated ID**

What a difference a year makes for growers in the Consolidated Irrigation District! Water users in the 143,000-acre district did not receive surface water deliveries last year because of dry conditions, but this year, they expect to begin receiving irrigation water on May 1.

The district will begin deliveries through its primary canal system on May 1 and expects to continue into the summer. “We anticipate being able to make water deliveries for 90 days, through July, unless there is a marked change in conditions,” said District Manager Phil Desatoff. CID water users with the historic “Church” water rights have been receiving water since April 2 and will continue through August.

Daily spring runoff quantities will determine how much entitlement CID will actually receive this spring and summer under the Kings River's water schedules. In a water year such as this, Consolidated generally needs hot weather and higher natural Kings River flows in order for the District's entitlement to be maximized, said Desatoff.
Despite this March being the seventh driest on record in the Kings River Watershed, current snow sensor readings for April 13 show it to be about 87 percent of the April 1 average, ranging from a high of 107 percent of April 1 average at Charlotte Lake (10,400-ft. elevation) to a low of about 53 percent at Bishop Pass (11,200-ft. elevation). The average water content in the Kings River Watershed is about 27 percent. The good news is there’s ample storage capacity at Pine Flat Lake, with almost 640,000 acre-feet of room available.

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**Clovis Rodeo happens next week!**

World class rodeo athletes will compete for prize money in Bull Riding, Barrel Racing, Bareback Riding, Team Roping, Saddle Bronc Riding, Calf Roping and Steer Wrestling beginning next Thursday, April 24 at the Clovis Rodeo.

Professional Bull Riding comes to town on Thursday night with a PBR Copenhagen Challenger Tour competition. Rodeo competition gets underway on Friday evening, followed by Emerson Drive performing at the Friday Night Concert. The 94th Annual Clovis Rodeo Parade is on Saturday, April 26 as well as rodeo competition on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. A dance is held on Saturday night. Ticket information is available by calling (559) 299-5203. The four-day event is sponsored by the Clovis Rodeo Association.

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**Study shows benefits of drinking low-fat milk**

New research shows the benefits of reducing blood pressure by consuming low-fat dairy products. Women over age 45 who regularly consumed three or more daily servings of low-fat dairy products were 11 percent less likely to develop high blood pressure, according to research conducted at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. Researchers attributed the benefit to food sources of calcium and vitamin D because the preventative effect was not evident in participants taking dietary supplements. Study results appeared in the Feb. 7, 2008, special edition of the journal Hypertension (http://hyper.ahajournals.org).

"High blood pressure is known as a 'silent killer' that affects one in three adults, and while this study offers promise for reducing those numbers, less than one-quarter of adults eat enough low-fat dairy products to benefit," Andrea Garen, M.A., R.D., project manager at Dairy Council of California, said in a Dairy Council news release.

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**Did you know?**

The Jewish holiday, Passover, begins at sundown on Saturday, April 19. Passover is a Jewish holy day and festival occurring in Spring that commemorates the Exodus from Egypt and the liberation of the Israelites from slavery. It is also known as Festival of the Unleavened Bread. Passover commemorates God's sparing of the Hebrew firstborn as he saw the blood of the Passover lamb on the doorposts of their houses on the night of the Tenth Plague. The Festival of the Unleavened Bread refers to the week-long period when leaven has been removed, and unleavened bread or matzah, the holiday's primary symbol, is eaten to recall the rapid departure of the Israelites from Egypt.

Jewish families gather on the first night of Passover (first two nights outside the land of Israel) for a special dinner called a Seder. The table is set with the finest china and silverware to reflect the importance of this meal. During this meal, the story of the Exodus from Egypt is retold.
Next Week’s Calendar
April 21    FFA Conference presentation on ag communications, 11:30 a.m.
April 22    Farm and Nutrition Day Wrap-Up meeting, noon, FCFB office, 1274 W. Hedges Ave.;
            Fresno Fair Board of Directors, 4 p.m., Fairgrounds
April 24    Clovis Rodeo activities get underway through Sunday, Clovis Rodeo grounds
April 25    Fresno Ag Roundtable, 7 a.m., Marie Calendar’s Restaurant, Cedar and Shaw avenues

This Week’s Calendar
April 14    FACT Class Session on Kings River
April 16    Operation Clean Air meeting
April 17    Model Farmland Conservation Program Advisory Committee meeting; FCFB Executive
            Committee meeting; judge FFA Creed contest at Conference
April 18    Common Threads Workshop and Luncheon, 9 a.m., Fresno State campus

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