



Fresno County Farm Bureau

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American Farm Bureau hosts presidential candidates; talk farm issues

The American Farm Bureau Federation's Council of Presidents met via teleconference on Wednesday with leading presidential candidates Sen. Barack Obama and Sen. John McCain to discuss farm issues.

Sen. McCain expressed support for trade agreements that will open markets to U.S. agriculture. Sen. Obama emphasized support of the recently passed farm bill, citing its increased funding to fight hunger, increased funding for conservation, and provisions to help stabilize markets for farmers.

Both Senators McCain and Obama emphasized the need of agriculture to meet America's energy requirements, and both candidates touched on two key issues for American agriculture: the estate tax and immigration reform.

Sen. McCain said the first \$10 million of an estate should be exempt from the estate tax with anything above the \$10 million level taxed at a 15- percent rate. Sen. Obama said he would keep the estate tax exemption at the 2009 rate, \$3.5 million for single filers and \$7 million for married couples, but pledged to not raise it above that level. He said the \$7 million level will exempt 99.7 percent of all taxpayers.

Likewise, both Sen. McCain and Sen. Obama emphasized the need for immigration reform to meet the current labor crisis facing agriculture. Sen.

McCain highlighted the need for a temporary worker program. Sen. Obama pledged to have comprehensive immigration reform done in his first year of office, stating he hopes to have the Ag Jobs section of the immigration reform package done by the first year.

Legislative Update

By Teresa Plascencia

FCFB Governmental Affairs Coordinator

A Congressional Hearing on the drought emergency will take place on Monday, July 21 at 10 a.m. at Fresno City Hall, Council Chambers, 2600 Fresno St., downtown. The topic of the House Subcommittee on Water and Power field hearing is "Federal Response to the California Drought Emergency".

On Monday, scheduled witnesses will present testimony before the Subcommittee. Members scheduled to participate are Chairwoman Rep. Grace Napolitano, Rep. Jim Costa, Rep. Dennis Cardoza, Rep. George Radanovich, Rep. Kevin McCarthy and Rep. Devin Nunes

Last month, the Valley representatives asked the subcommittee to host a hearing to discuss the drought and its impact on the Central Valley. The subcommittee's responsibilities include forming federal policies for water and power resources, including jurisdiction over irrigation, water recycling and hydropower.

The hearing is open to the public, however the public will not have the opportunity to present comments. For more information, contact FCFB's Teresa Plascencia at (559) 237-0263 or via email at teresap@fcfb.org.

The Emergency Agriculture Relief Act, sponsored by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, continues to try to move closer to a farm labor solution. The bill, which seeks to provide temporary immigration status for experienced farm workers for five years, will need 60 votes in order to pass out of the Senate. This legislation will not provide green cards and the temporary program will be limited to 1.35 million workers. Those employees who can provide proof of agriculture employment for at least 150 days or 863 hours, or who have earned at least \$7,000 working in the U.S. agriculture during the past 48 months would be eligible for the program.

Metal theft legislation makes it through another hurdle. Assemblymember Tom Berryhill's AB 844 passed out of the Senate Environmental Quality Committee on Monday. The bill now faces a tough hurdle in the Senate Public Safety Committee, whose members include: Sen. Gloria Romero (Chair), Sen. Bob Margett (Vice Chair), Sen. Gilbert Cedillo, Sen. Dave Cogdill, and Sen. Don Perata.

This bill aims to stop metal thieves and would mandate the following: require junk dealers to pay recyclers by check with a three-day hold and/or would allow recyclers to pay in cash to their regular customers, require photo identification from sellers and of the materials purchased, require recycling companies to fingerprint sellers, and would allow local governments to modify existing laws to meet their local needs. This last item would allow local governments to pass stricter ordinances by a two-thirds vote.

There may be a possible issue with the fingerprinting component of the legislation. It is critical to contact the Senate Public Safety Committee members, urging their support of this bill. Letters can be faxed to the attention of Sen. Gloria Romero (Chair) at (916) 445-4688.

In the next few weeks, a hearing date will be set. FCFB will keep monitoring this legislation as it moves forward.

California water bond is taking significant steps towards the November ballot. Late last week, Governor Schwarzenegger and U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein announced a \$9.3 billion plan for a comprehensive water solution for California.

The proposal aims to address the issues of ensuring a reliable water supply, by including new surface water storage, underground storage, and conservation measures. Specifically the Schwarzenegger-Feinstein plan includes:

- \$3 billion for reservoirs and other water storage projects.
- The costs of new water storage would be shared between the state and the local water providers who would benefit, a key sticking point in previous negotiations.

- \$2 billion in funding for regional projects to increase water-use efficiency, protect water quality, reduce energy use and agricultural runoff.
- \$1.9 billion for a plan to manage the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, modeled on the recommendations of a panel the governor appointed. The delta provides irrigation water for thousands of acres of cropland and supplies drinking water for two-thirds of the state.

The next step is for the legislature to approve this proposal for the November ballot.

Fresno County dairyman elected to national board

Jim Quist, of Fresno, has been elected to serve in a leadership role for the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA), serving as the director for the board.

Quist operates Quist Dairy in partnership with his father, Alvin, who is a lifetime director of Fresno County Farm Bureau. The Quists raise Registered Jerseys at their dairy located west of Fresno. Quist is an alumnus of the California Agricultural Leadership Program, and has served on the governing boards of Fresno Dairy Herd Improvement Association and Farm Bureau, as well as the board of the California Jersey Cattle Association.

The American Jersey Cattle Association was organized in 1868 to improve and promote the Jersey breed.

In addition, Merced County producer James Ahlem, of Hilmar, was re-elected as president of National All-Jersey Inc. He is the owner and operator of James Ahlem Dairy, a 2,000-milking-cow herd. Ahlem is also an owner of Hilmar Cheese Company, the 28th largest dairy processor in the U.S.

Watermelon field day set for July 31

A "Mini-Personal" Watermelon Field Day will be held on Thursday, July 31 from 8 to 10 a.m. at the U.C. Kearney Research and Extension Center, 9240 S. Riverbend Ave., near Parlier.

The field day is sponsored by the Fresno County U.C. Cooperative Extension and features 33 varieties or organically grown small-sized or mini watermelons. Tasting of the varieties is also planned. For details, contact UCCE Farm Advisor Richard Molinar at (559) 456-7555.

Veggie acreage is down in state

The USDA's California Vegetable Review reports fresh market vegetable acreage is down overall this summer from 2007 plantings.

The prospective area for harvest of 11 selected fresh market vegetables during the summer quarter is forecast to be 282,400 acres, down six percent from last year. Acreage declines in snap beans, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, sweet corn, head lettuce, and tomatoes more than offset acreage increases in carrots and celery. Cucumbers and bell peppers harvested area remains unchanged.

The area forecast for melon harvest is 109,900 acres, down eight percent from last year. Cantaloupe area is forecast at 34,000 acres, seven percent below 2007. Honeydew area, at 13,000 acres, is down six percent from last year. Watermelon area, at 62,900 acres, is nine percent below a year ago, reports the USDA California Field Office.

Speaking of veggies... Make fruits and veggies matter

Right now is the best time to enjoy the bounty of all the summer season has to offer.

Not only are they tasty, fresh fruits and vegetables provide essential vitamins and minerals, fiber, and other nutrients that are important for good health. Persons with diets high in fruits and vegetables are more likely to have a reduced risk of chronic diseases as compared to people who eat only small amounts. These diseases include stroke, type-2 diabetes, some types of cancer, and potentially heart disease and high blood pressure. Most fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat and calories, so substituting them for high-calorie foods can be a calorie-reducing strategy.

Good sources of fiber include: apples, cherries, figs, kiwi (also high in vitamin E and potassium), oranges, papaya (also a good source of vitamin C and folate), peaches (may also keep blood sugar and cholesterol levels low), strawberries, tomatoes, eggplant, spinach, sweet potatoes and zucchini. High in minerals are garlic (may also lower cholesterol), green beans and okra. Good sources of folate are corn, lettuce and okra. So stock-up now while most of these are fresh and local!

Suggestions on ways to prepare many vegetables and fruits are available through the U.S. government initiative, "[Fruits and Veggies: More Matters](#)."

Another record almond crop is forecasted

This year's almond crop is forecasted to be another big one! The USDA reports California's 2008 almond production is forecast at a record 1.50 billion meat pounds, up eight percent above last year's crop. The forecast is based on 660,000 bearing acres. Production for the Nonpareil variety is forecast at 538 million meat pounds, three percent above last year's deliveries. The Nonpareil variety represents 36 percent of California's total almond production.

Did you know?

According to the Old Farmer's Almanac, the best days for certain summer garden activities based on the Moon's signs are:

Destroy pests and weeds: July 23, 24

Plant belowground vegetables: July 21, 22, 30, 31

Prune to discourage growth: July 23, 24

- To extend the indoor life of your cut flowers, put them in a solution that is one part water, one part clear soft drink (such as 7-Up, Sprite, etc.), and a few drops of chlorine bleach.
 - Now we have an excuse-- July 20 is National Ice Cream Day. Scoop away -- what better way to keep cool!
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Next Week's Calendar

July 21 Congressional Field Hearing on drought, 10 a.m., Fresno City Hall;

July 22 Fresno Fair Board of Directors meeting, 4 p.m., Fairgrounds

July 23 Fresno Blueprint Committee meeting, 9:30 a.m., Fresno COG office

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

This Week's Calendar

July 14 FCFB Public Relations Committee meeting

July 16 Operation Clean Air

July 17 FCFB Executive Committee

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