



## Fresno County Farm Bureau

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### Regional effort to focus on saving Land Conservation Program

Representatives from the nine counties, including members of the Boards of Supervisors, agricultural commissioners, planning departments and various agricultural organizations, met at the Fresno County Farm Bureau on Monday to learn of the status on the Williamson Act from the CA Department of Conservation and to discuss taking a regional approach to keeping the 37-year old program going. The participating counties include Fresno, Kings, Kern, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare.

All of the county supervisors and agricultural commissioners expressed the important role Williamson Act plays in helping keep farmland in production. With the current pressures on farmers and ranchers, such as low commodity prices, inadequate water supplies and costly environmental regulations, any increased production costs -- such as increased land-based taxes -- could be enough to drive farmers out of production.

Nearly one-third of all private land in the state is under a Williamson Act contract, said Brian Leahy, of the CA Department of Conservation. More than 176,000 acres of farmland and grazing land were lost between 2004 and 2006 including 81,247 acres considered as prime farmland, Leahy said.

Counties can't cancel existing Williamson Act contracts, but they can initiate the process for a non-renewal, Leahy explained. It is a nine-year path, where the property taxes gradually increase each year. Either the landowner or the County may initiate non-renewal process.

If the local agency chooses to not renew the contract the landowner can protest the non-renewal and retain the full value of their Williamson Act tax reduction for four years until their property taxes begin to ramp up, over the following six years, to the non-Williamson Act rate, explained Leahy. If the city or county seeks to non-renew a contract, they must give the landowner notice at least 60 days prior to next renewal date, he added.

FCFB is urging Fresno County supervisors to continue the program. The Board of Supervisors likely will consider this item at a hearing on Sept. 22. For a full recap of the Aug. 31 meeting, see the September issue of *Agriculture Today*.

## **Legislation update**

*By Teresa Plascencia*

*FCFB Governmental Affairs Coordinator*

### **State**

On Wednesday, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed the "card check" legislation, SB 789 (Steinberg, D-Sacramento). According to the Governor's veto message, "This process fundamentally alters an employee's right to a secret ballot election that allows the employee to choose, in the privacy of the voting booth without coercion or manipulation, whether or not to be represented."

With less than a week left for the State Legislature to pass legislation, please know that your continued advocacy is still needed. To see a detailed list of pending legislation and to submit your comments, please visit FARM Team's website: <http://capwiz.com/cfbf/state/main/?state=CA>.

### **New "California's Water" Segment will air locally on Friday**

The latest segment of the "California's Water" series for public television will be shown at 7 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 4 on KVPT-Channel 18 in Fresno.

"California's Water Crisis" offers a first-hand look at the mounting toll of water shortages on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley this summer. Producer Huell Howser interviews a fourth-generation farmer who has fallowed 70 percent of his acreage due to shortages this year, talks with other growers struggling to keep tomatoes and almonds going and visits an extremely low San Luis Reservoir.

The segment also airs in Sacramento, Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Bernardino. The "California's Water" series is underwritten by the Association of California Water Agencies.

### **Large processing tomato crop predicted**

Despite severe water shortages in critical tomato-growing areas, this year's processing tomato production is expected to top previous year's crops.

The USDA estimates California processing tomato growers will produce 13.5 million tons with an average yield of 43.97 tons per acre. The forecasted contracted production for 2009 is 13 percent above the previous record in 1999. Planted and harvested acres are forecast at 308,000 and 307,000, respectively.

Historically, Fresno County is a leading tomato producing county. In 2008, there were 109,000 harvested acres and 125,000 acres in 2007. This year, more contracted acreage was moved to where there was adequate water, including Kern and San Joaquin counties. The season got off to a good start when producers were able to get their crop in on time due to dry weather during spring.

California leads the nation in processing tomato production.

### **Continuing education courses available online**

Fresno County Department of Agriculture in conjunction with the California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association have launched a Web site to allow licensees and certificate holders to complete continuing education requirements mandated by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) in the category of laws and regulations. All of the DPR-approved course work on this site is free-of-charge.

The courses are designed for the general public; professional applicators; pest control advisors and pilots; and all who employ pesticide handlers and field workers. The course provides an online explanation of laws and regulations, followed by a quiz to complete the course. After completion of the required course work, participants will be able to print his or her own Certificate of Completion as proof of course completion. For more information, click on this link: <http://www2.co.fresno.ca.us/4010/agce/agceinfo/home.aspx>.

### **Event to call for Family Business of the Year nominations**

An event to kick-off the 2010 call for nominations for the California Family Business of the Year will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 9, from 4 to 6 p.m. at the University Business Center, Room PB 194, California State University, Fresno.

Guest speakers from successful family businesses will be available to answer questions, to share information about what made their businesses stand out, and the benefits of being a Family Business of the Year. Registration is free. RSVP to the Institute for Family Business, (559) 278-5662.

### **Water and Energy Conservation Seminar to be held Sept. 15 in Fresno**

The International Center for Water Technology at California State University, Fresno will be partnering with the U.S. Department of Commerce to address water and energy conservation and climate change at an upcoming seminar on Tuesday, Sept. 15, at the Holiday Inn Downtown in Fresno from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

“Water and Energy Conservation: U.S. Department of Commerce Services for Agribusiness” is a one-day seminar designed to help agriculture-related businesses learn about strategies for sustainability and economic growth, coming to terms with climate variability, climate data, services and program availability, and enhancing global competitiveness, expanding market access, increasing exports. The ICWT is joining with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and International Trade Administration (ITA), both agencies of the Commerce Department, to bring this event to Fresno. Agency and industry experts will be on-hand to give updates on the latest programs and services for agribusiness.

The event costs \$30 per person, which includes lunch. To register and for a detailed agenda visit: [www.icwt.net](http://www.icwt.net).

### **Agricultural awards nominees being sought; Sept. 18 is deadline**

The annual awards programs saluting the best in Fresno County agriculture are looking for nominees. The 2009 Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce’s Agriculturist of the Year and Baker, Peterson & Franklin, CPA, LLP Ag Business Award are accepting nominations for both awards. The deadline to submit nominations is Friday, Sept. 18.

The Chamber’s award salutes an individual who has demonstrated a sincere commitment to the Fresno agricultural community through personal efforts and leadership abilities. The Ag Business Award honors a for-profit agricultural business or organization whose achievements and impact have significantly contributed to the agricultural industry and community. Both awards will be presented at a special luncheon on Nov. 18 at the Holiday Inn in downtown Fresno.

For nomination forms or more information, contact the Chamber at (559) 495-4813 or email: [info@fresnochamber.org](mailto:info@fresnochamber.org); or BP&F at (559) 432-2346 or email: [mail@bpfcpa.com](mailto:mail@bpfcpa.com).

### **Retirement dinner for Norman Smith, Ph.D. to be held Sept. 20**

A retirement dinner will be held for Dr. Norman J. Smith, entomologist for the Fresno County Department of Agriculture on Sunday, Sept. 20, at the International Catering Company, 4277 N. West Ave., Fresno. The social will begin at 4 p.m., with dinner being served at 5 p.m. The menu includes a Texas tri-tip barbecue.

Dr. Smith has provided entomology services to Fresno County for 30 years. His expertise has been instrumental in providing guidance to agriculture department decisions regarding pests, invasive species and best management practices. He also provides educational outreach every year as a presenter for the Fresno County Farm and Nutrition Day.

Dinner tickets are \$35 per person. The deadline to RSVP is Sept. 11 to Joyce Brown, of Fresno County Agriculture Department, at (559) 456-7510.

### Quote of the Week

*The happiest of people don't necessarily have the best of everything; they just make the most of everything.*

### Smile for the Week

*Life before computers...*

An application was for employment  
A program was a TV show  
A cursor used profanity  
And a keyboard was on a piano!  
Memory was something that you lost with age  
And a CD was a bank account  
And if you had a corrupted disk  
It would hurt when you found out!  
Compress was what you did to garbage  
Not something you did to a file

And if you unzipped anything in public  
You'd be in jail for a while!  
Log on was adding wood to a fire  
A hard drive was a trip on the road  
A mouse pad was where a mouse lived  
And a backup happened to the commode!  
Cutting, you did with a pocket knife,  
Pasting, you did with glue.  
The Web was where a spider lived  
And a virus was the flu!

*Source: Humor Jokes blog*

### Calendar of Upcoming Events & Meetings

- Sept. 3** FCFB Board of Directors' meeting, 6 p.m., FCFB office, 1274 W. Hedges Ave.
- Sept. 7** Labor Day Holiday. Office closed.
- Sept. 9** Fresno Chamber Governmental Affairs Committee meeting, noon, Chamber office;  
One Voice planning meeting, 3 p.m.
- Sept. 10** Sheriff's Metal Recyclers Task Force meeting, 9 a.m., Brooks Ranch Restaurant,  
Chestnut and Highway 99
- Sept. 11** Fresno Chamber Agricultural and Land Use Committee, noon, Chamber office,  
details: (559) 495-4818
- Sept. 13** Ag Boosters Barbecue, 4 p.m., Rancho Vista del Rio (Borba Ranch),  
details: [www.agonefoundation.org](http://www.agonefoundation.org)