

Between the Furrows

A Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau Monthly Publication

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Between The Furrows is a monthly publication of the SCoCFB. Members receive a subscription as part of their membership investment.

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You're Invited! National Ag Day Spring Luncheon

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Heritage Hall, Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds

Ticket Price: \$75 per person

Hope to see you there for the presentation of...

- The 2025 Friend of Agriculture Award
- The announcement of our scholarship winners
- The announcement of the Poster & Poetry Contests and a great lunch with good friends and neighbors!

For reservations please contact
The Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau
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Reservations can be made online at www.eventbrite.com and search for National Agriculture Day Spring Luncheon

Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau **CULTURE**

- The SCCFB is firm in its **COMMITMENT** to provide responsive and effective services to its members, and to be a positive and integral part of the broader community through collaboration, education and social interaction.
- The SCCFB grows on a foundation of **TRUST**, bringing expertise, experience and good faith action to bear on topics related to agriculture, which can be relied upon by farmers, the agricultural community, and the community at large.
- The SCCFB honors and keeps its **TRADITION** of service to the diverse people, commodities and production systems that comprise the unique and complex agriculture community in Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro Valley.



President's Message



Dennis Webb, President

California Fires - Are We All At Risk?

This month I am writing about a topic I wish we didn't have to worry about at all, especially in February. The Palisades and Eaton fires in Los Angeles County last month are worth some frank discussion. The L.A. fires will likely go down as the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history. Most estimates are that these fires will end up costing the individual victims and our government over \$250 billion. Even worse, 10,000 families lost their homes, businesses and schools. As of this writing, 27 people are known to have died. Some studies already suggest that the indirect death toll will rise into the thousands when considering effects of toxic smoke, economic disruption and mental health. All this calamity in suburban L.A. neighborhoods where we least expect it in the wintertime.

These fires were the product of

many difficult circumstances. Certainly, the weather conditions were extreme, especially for January, and this is the simplest and probably clearest factor we can point to as a culprit for this tremendous disaster. Still, we need to acknowledge that our leaders can do more to prevent these catastrophes. Fuel reduction projects are constantly held up by environmental regulations that our leaders have a great deal of control over. Those fuel reduction projects that do move forward are plagued by the highest costs in the nation (again, due mostly to our regulatory environment) resulting in less fuel reduction getting done on the ground. Fire agencies have failed in many fires (including the L.A. fires) to correctly position Continued on Page 5



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ASK MARK

**Mark Bolda, Director & Farm Advisor, UCCE,
Santa Cruz County**

Fertilizer Management for Strawberry Growers

Q. Since it's been so dry, I'm wondering if I should be varying my nitrogen program in strawberries right now? I remember that a number of years ago during a dry winter some growers ended up salt damage from their plants from the extra nitrates in the soil.

A. Yes, I think nitrogen fertility and its appropriate use is an important topic for strawberry growers even in the wintertime, especially during dry periods like what we are currently experiencing.

To begin, strawberry plants at this time of year are still relatively small, so their nitrogen needs are not high, nor are they capable of consuming much. Therefore, nitrogen released from the pre-plant soil fertilizer applied at planting in the fall or applied through the drip tape currently will not be removed by the plant in appreciable quantities, nor will it be leached away by rain since there hasn't been any for a while.

In turn, it is worth the while to pay attention to how much nitrogen, in the form of the nitrate which strawberry consumes preferentially over other forms, is in the soil before making the decision to

add more. According to UCCE Irrigation Advisor Michael Cahn, who specializes in water and plant nutrient uptake in Central Coast vegetables and berries, a good concentration of nitrate to have right now for strawberry, or at any time of the season for that matter, is between 15 and 20 ppm (parts per million), which is the equivalent 60 to 70 lbs of nitrogen per acre, which is a lot considering that the total nitrogen requirement of a crop of modern strawberries lies between 200 and 250 lbs per acre in a season.

It important to give some mind to this matter, especially during a dry year as you indicate in your question, because yes nitrogen (that is to say, nitrate) excess can lead to damage to the developing strawberry plant, usually manifesting itself as leaf burning, first at the margins and progressively taking over the whole leaf if leaf unaddressed.

The above has been a brief note about nitrogen management in strawberry during a dry winter spell. For questions on this matter or any other regarding strawberries, caneberries or blackberries, please contact me at mpbolda@ucanr.edu. ■



THE WATER NANNY

News - Dog Chases Tail

We need housing throughout the State. We also need enlightened zoning, planning, policing, and fiscal prudence. Maybe we need wisdom, but that is for another article. We particularly need affordable housing for people who already work here, like our employees, but the law of supply and demand indicates that any housing will improve the affordable rental market. Yet we are fixated on very expensive, problematic homeless housing instead of rapidly approved, safe, funded construction projects of any type.

In Watsonville we have two examples of losing sight of our objectives; tiny homeless temporary houses, and backyard ADUs. ADUs were more or less mandated by State legislation, while tiny homes are chassed due to pre-existing State grant funding. In neither case was there a discussion of long term goals, objectives, community benefits, or bureaucratic processing time.



Tiny Homes: In December 2022 the State offered a grant for homeless "encampment" funding. In February 2023 Monterey applied for \$8 Million. In March 2023 the levee broke, flooding Pajaro. Monterey accepted the grant in June in a coalition with Santa Cruz and Watsonville. The idea is to build 34 tiny housing units, about 200 sq.ft. with common bathrooms, kitchens and an office for a manager for a cost of \$6 Million, with \$1,400,000 for management and counseling, after a 5% grant management fee to Monterey, for two years. In theory Santa Cruz county will support this task in the future, although Watsonville could be on the hook. The motivating source here is the generous support by Westview Presbyterian Church and free State money. At a cost of \$180,000 per tiny house, this may be a good deal, but it clearly was not previously planned, and not welcome by the neighbors.

ADU's: Back in 2020 the Watsonville City Council voted to allow ADU's due to a State mandate. Every council member thought more housing is needed, but the State was shoving this on the municipalities without any planning or objectives.

All true, but the bureaucratic process solves that problem, since little has been built, much less approved. Councilmember Emeritus Trina Coffman-Gomez, who abstained in 2020, applied for a detached ADU on a conforming lot, with plans and financing, and after years has not been approved by the planners. To be fair, the State mandate could be helpful, but without prompt review and approval, it is a toothless ordinance in Watsonville. However, it does look good on paper so Watsonville, can meeting its housing planning objectives.



Time is Money: State grant money has deadlines for implementation, regardless of the level of spending proposed. ADU's, and other privately funded projects, seek to have a return on their investment. Statistically a one bedroom Watsonville apartment rents for about \$1,690, however a search shows 1 room housing up to \$2,300. If you build an ADU the cost is about \$55,000 for planning, utilities and design, with \$500,000-\$800,000 to build, say an average of \$705,000 completed. A 5% return on this investment would be \$2,937/month rent. With a loan of 7% this project is underwater from the start. While ADUs are fashionable, there are not a good investment. Tiny homes in place for 8 years (they are pitched as temporary) will cost about \$2,300 per month, including limited management. Any delay in either project increases the cost and diminishes eventual possibility of construction.

Maybe the huge fire losses of homes in LA last month will jar the process of repeated and endless reviews with no prompt outcome, either up or down. "In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing," (Theodore Roosevelt) ■



FAVORITE RECIPES

Sweet Treats for February

In February we celebrate two days nationally...Valentine's Day and President's Day. So in honor of one of our past presidents, who recently passed away, and in honor of another of our Presidents and our very sweet February holiday, here are a couple of treats to share with your friends and family or your sweetheart. No matter who, hope you enjoy!

Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter's Peanut Brittle

3 cups granulated sugar	2 tablespoons soda
1 and 1/2 cups water	1/2 stick butter
1 cup white corn syrup	1 teaspoon vanilla
3 cups raw peanuts	

Boil sugar, water and syrup until spins thread; add peanuts. After adding peanuts, stir continually until syrup turns golden brown. Remove from heat. Add remaining ingredients; stir until butter melts. Pour quickly on 2 cookie sheets with sides. As mixture begins to harden around edges, pull until thin.

Mamie's Million Dollar Fudge from Mamie Eisenhower

4 1/2 cups sugar	12 ounces semi-sweet chocolate bits
pinch of salt	12 ounces German-sweet chocolate
2 tablespoons butter	1 pint marshmallow cream
1 tall can evaporated milk	2 cups nutmeats

Boil the sugar, salt, butter, evaporated milk together for six minutes. Put chocolate bits and german chocolate, marshmallow cream and nutmeats in a bowl. Pour the boiling syrup over the ingredients. Beat until chocolate is all melted, then pour in pan. Let stand a few hours before cutting. Remember it is better the second day. Store in a tin box.

These recipes were shared by the Presidential Libraries Foundation for National Archives. You can find these recipes and more in their cookbook [Eating with Uncle Sam](#).

President's Message - Continued from Page 2

and manage their resources in ways that could have stopped the flames before they got out of control. Fuel reduction programs and firefighting budgets are being cut across our state. And water agencies often have inadequate storage to meet the demand.

Most California homes are under-insured, and many are completely un-insured against the losses from disasters that have become almost inevitable. Insurance companies are running away from the California market as fast as they possibly can, and our state's insurer of last resort is on the brink of insolvency. In the increasingly rare event that fire victims can afford to re-build their homes, state and local

government seems to stand in their way, every step of the way.

When will our leaders stop responding to these fires after they are already disasters? When will we start treating fuel reduction like the emergency it is? When will we start making compromises on less important issues and start prioritizing public safety and the well-being of the people who have lost their livelihoods from this crisis? The L.A. fires are teaching a lot of Californians that we all are at risk, no matter where we live. It's time people in our state took this seriously. The next fire is coming. ■

"Agriculture, the Original Green"

BECOME A FARM BUREAU MEMBER

Join the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau



The Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau is an important voice for the Santa Cruz County and Pajaro Valley agriculture industry. Everyone is eligible to be a member and receive the many benefits and services available. By joining the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau you help support agriculture in Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro Valley.

How to Join

Go to www.cfbf.com and click on the "JOIN" button. No need to log in on this page. Go to the bottom of the page and click on NEVER BEEN A MEMBER to set up a new account.

Questions? Contact the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau
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Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau

National Agriculture Day Spring Luncheon

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Heritage Hall, Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds

SCCFB 108th Annual Meeting

Thursday, June 19, 2025

TBD

32nd Annual Golf Tournament

Friday, July 11, 2025

Pajaro Valley Golf Club

California State Fair

Friday, July 11, 2025 to Sunday, July 27, 2025

Cal Expo, Sacramento

Santa Cruz County Fair

Wednesday, September 10 to Sunday, September 14, 2025

Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds

Annual Directors' Dinner

Thursday, November 6, 2025

Location to be determined

CFBF Annual Meeting

TBD

Agri-Culture

17th Annual Down to Earth Women Luncheon

Thursday, May 15, 2025

Driscoll's Rancho Corralitos

17th Annual Testicle Festival

Saturday, August 23, 2025

Estrada Deer Camp

29th Annual Farm Dinner

Friday, October 10, 2025

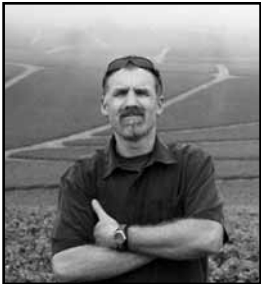
Land Trust Little Bee Barn

I am a Farm Bureau member because...

"I am a Farm Bureau member because I want to support agriculture in the valley and help preserve the area I grew up in."

David Rose, Owner
Green Valley Harvest
Member, Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau

Annual Production Survey for the Crop Report



David Sanford

The Agricultural Commissioner's Office is preparing to send out annual crop report surveys to our growers in order to collect production data for 2024. We hope to begin receiving the returned and completed surveys over the next several weeks. The data received is used to prepare the annual crop report for Santa Cruz County. The data is compiled solely for the purpose of reporting total countywide statistical averages. Nothing in the report details information specific to any grower, property operator or business.

Completing the annual report on the county's agricultural production is one of the functions of the local Agricultural Commissioner. The annual crop report is an important record for our county. The report provides a window of information on agricultural production and economics in Santa Cruz County and serves as good indicator of the health of the local farming community. The statistical data contained in the report provides our growers and our community with a reliable sense of current trends in agriculture in Santa Cruz County. In 2023, the total gross production value for our county was \$654,710,000 with the number one commodity being strawberries, valued at \$184,856,000. Information gathered at the county level is used by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to assess the value of agriculture in the state and nationwide. In 2023, California agriculture was valued at \$59.4 billion dollars, making it the leading state in cash farm receipts. California growers produce more than a third of our nation's vegetables and two-thirds of the nation's fruits and nuts.

The importance of California's agricultural production cannot be understated. California's agriculture is so important that our state receives more support and funding from the federal government for its protection than any other state. This is all thanks to your participation at the local level. Your contribution is essential in helping to create a more thorough and accurate report and to continue to promote and support agriculture in our county, California, and our nation. Thank you for taking the time to complete and return your annual crop report survey!



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*Must be a valid member of Farm Bureau for 30 days. A valid member email address is required for eligibility

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

**"Your mind is a garden.
Your thoughts are the seeds.
You can grow flowers or you can grow weeds."**

Unknown



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California's Many Consumer Protection Laws



California is one of the leaders in passing consumer protection laws. California has a robust set of laws and implementing regulations to make sure consumers are treated fairly and have recourse if they are not. Consumer protection laws safeguard buyers of goods and services, and the public, against unfair practices in the marketplace. These laws cover a wide range of issues including deceptive advertising, faulty products, and unfair business practices.

The California Department of Consumer Affairs (DC9A) is the primary state agency for enforcing consumer protection laws. The DCA oversees State boards and bureaus that regulate different professions and industries. For example, the Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR) handles issues related to car repairs, while the Contractors State License Board (CSLB) addresses complaints against contractors.

ADVERTISING: One important consumer protection law prevents deceptive advertising. California laws prohibit businesses from making false or misleading statements about their products or services. For example, The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) State Organic Program (SOP) is responsible for enforcement of the federal Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, and the California Organic Food and Farming Act of 2016. These statutes protect consumers, producers, handlers, processors and retailers by establishment of standards under which fresh agricultural products/foods may be labeled and/or sold as "organic". They provide for producer and handler registration, enforcement, education and outreach, and cost sharing.

UNFAIR BUSINESS PRACTICES: The state also has strict laws against unfair business practices. The Unfair Competition Law (UCL) prohibits any unlawful, unfair, or fraudulent business act or practice. This law is broad and covers a wide range of behaviors, including bait-and-switch advertising and charging hidden fees.

CONSUMER CONTRACTS AND WARRANTIES: California law has significant protections when it comes to consumer

contracts and warranties. For example, the Song-Beverly Consumer Warranty Act (also known as the "Lemon Law") protects consumers who purchase or lease new cars. If a new vehicle has substantial defects that are not fixed after a reasonable number of attempts, the consumer may be entitled to a replacement or a refund.

PRIVACY AND DATA PROTECTION: In recent years, consumer protection has begun to include data privacy. The California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) gives consumers more control over the personal information that businesses collect. It gives the consumer the right to know what data is collected, to whom it is being sold, and the ability to access and delete their data.

CONSUMER RECOURSE: There are several avenues for recourse if a consumer believes their rights have been violated. They can file a complaint with the DCA. They can take legal action against businesses through the courts. California law also allows class action lawsuits, where a group of consumers who have been similarly wronged can come together to sue a business.

SMALL CLAIMS COURT: For small disputes, consumers can take their cases to small claims court. This is a simpler, quicker and less expensive way to resolve legal disputes, without the need for a lawyer.

In conclusion, understanding consumer protection laws can empower you to make better decisions and know your rights when things go wrong. California's extensive consumer protection laws are intended to create a fair marketplace and provide consumers with the tools they need to stand up against unfair practices. These laws can help you fight deceptive advertising, unfair business practices, protect your personal data, and much more. ■

“Irrigation System Optimization: Under Pressure”



This article will continue with the theme of “off season” practices that growers can implement during non-peak production, this month looking at irrigation system optimization.

Trying to outrun a bad irrigation system design has many direct and indirect costs. These can include increased labor and increased energy costs. A bad irrigation system design is like trying to drive down the freeway stuck in third gear or trying to drink a 7-11 Big Gulp soda with a small coffee cup straw, one word sums it up: inefficient. No matter how hard you push down on the gas pedal or suck on the small straw, you just can’t outrun (or outwork) a bad design. It is an uphill battle. Luckily, basic irrigation (hydraulic) principles don’t change AND the experts have already figured out the hard part (math) for us! So you might think you would see nothing but perfectly designed, highly efficient irrigation systems in the field but that is not the case. What gives?

One of the easiest, low-cost ways to check efficiency is to measure pressure (PSI) at key points throughout the system. These include (but are not limited to): at the pump, before and after the filter, at the beginning/end of the longest beds, and the corners of blocks. Irrigation system components (i.e. submains, drip tape, sprinkler nozzles, drip emitters) are designed by engineers to be run at a specific pressure range. Ensuring your system is running within the correct range is one of the simplest things you can do and gives peace of mind that the system is operating correctly. Additionally, keeping an eye on pressure as the season progresses can help detect leaks or other problems that may not be visible to the naked eye. Operating at too high a pressure will lead to friction loss and decrease application uniformity, while operating too low will also apply unequal amounts of water to plants.

Need help with irrigation system design or optimization? Now is a great time to reach out to your local RCD for assistance! We would be happy to teach your team how to measure pressures correctly to ensure

your system is operating at maximum efficiency. Additionally, we can conduct more rigorous system testing procedures such as a whole system audit known as a *Distribution Uniformity* evaluation or DU (more on this in next month’s article). RCDSCC can also assist with monitoring one of your crops or plantings over the course of the season to measure overall *irrigation efficiency* (the amount of water used for crop production compared to total water applied). We can provide these services and trainings to you and your team in English or Spanish.

After working with your local RCD, you can explore the **PV Water Rebate** which is available for participating growers for any equipment that saves water. RCD staff will review your site and discuss your ideas for equipment that will help you to apply water more efficiently or otherwise save water. The program covers 100% of costs up to \$5,000 and 50% of costs above \$5,000 up to \$20,000.

Reach out to Cameron McDonald (cmcdonald@rcdsantacruz.org), Dan Hermstad at (dhermstad@rcdsantacruz.org), or Sacha Lozano at (slozano@rcdsantacruz.org) to learn more and connect with RCD services. All RCD services and programs are voluntary and non-regulatory. ■

Strange But Impossibly True!

Dorothy’s slippers in *The Wizard of Oz* weren’t always ruby red.

In L. Frank Baum’s 1900 novel, he describes them as “silver shoes with pointed toes.” But the 1939 movie was being shot with the new Technicolor technique, and red shoes made a more eye-catching choice than silver ones.

There were at least four pairs made for the film, one of which was recovered only last year after having been stolen from the Judy Garland Museum in 2005.

Excerpts from the Readers Digest

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2025 National Ag Day Poster and Poetry Contests

The Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau has announced the 2025 National Agriculture Day **Poetry Contest for grades 7-12**. The theme is **"Grown in Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro Valley"**. The deadline for entries is **Friday, February 21, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.** For more information, please call (831) 724-1356 or (831) 722-6622. The winning entry will receive \$250.

Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau & Agri-Culture Presents

2025 NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY POETRY CONTEST

For Grades 7-12
(top poems will be judged for best poem)

The winning entry will receive \$250

Theme: "GROWN IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY AND THE PAJARO VALLEY"

Any style poetry may be used and should not exceed 12 lines.
The winning entry will also be used on 18,000 placemats and distributed to county restaurants next year!

All entries must be submitted to:
Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau
141 Monte Vista Avenue
Watsonville, CA 95076

PLEASE PRINT FULL NAME, GRADE AND SCHOOL ON BACK OF ENTRY!

Deadline: Friday, February 21, 2025, 4:00 pm
For more information about agriculture in Santa Cruz County, please call (831) 724-1356 or (831) 722-6622

POSTER CONTEST

2025 NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY

CONTEST IS OPEN TO GRADES K-6

Theme: "GROWN IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY AND THE PAJARO VALLEY"
THE ABOVE WRITING MUST BE INCLUDED, LEGIBLY, ON THE FRONT OF THE POSTER AND MUST REFLECT THE ACTUAL CROPS GROWN IN THE REGION

First prize receives \$250
Second and Third place winners will be given a special prize and ribbon

Winning entry will be featured on 18,000 placemats and distributed to county restaurants next year!!!

Contest Rules

- Contest theme to be included, legibly, on front of poster
- Crops shown on poster must be grown in the Pajaro Valley
- Entries should be drawn on white paper no larger than 18" x 20"
- Each poster must be produced by one student, no team entries allowed
- Any medium may be used (acrylics, pencil, ink, pastels, etc.)
- All top three (3) entries from each grade level must be included in school directory
- On back of poster, please print full name, grade and school of the entry per student

Contest Deadline
Friday, February 21, 2025, 4:00 pm

Agri-Culture and the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau

The Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau has also announced the 2025 National Agriculture Day **Poster Contest for grades K - 6**. The theme is **"Grown in Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro Valley"**. The deadline for entries is **Friday, February 21, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.** More information is available by calling (831) 724-1356 or (831) 722-6622. The winning poster will receive \$250. Winners of both contests will be announced at the **National Agriculture Day Luncheon on March 19, 2025**. Tickets are available by calling the numbers listed above or online at Eventbrite. ■

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A Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau Monthly Publication

CALENDAR

THURSDAY - FEBRUARY 6
Policy & Resource
Committee meeting

MONDAY - FEBRUARY 17
President's Day Observed
Office Closed

THURSDAY - FEBRUARY 27
Board meeting

THURSDAY - MARCH 6
Policy & Resource
Committee meeting

FRIDAY - MARCH 14
Focus Agriculture
Session 1

WEDNESDAY - MARCH 19
National Agriculture Day
Spring Luncheon

THURSDAY - MARCH 27
Board meeting



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MEMBERS, OUR
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