

Riverside County AGRICULTURE

The official publication of Riverside County Farm Bureau, Inc.

A private, nonprofit organization serving farmers throughout Riverside County since 1917

Our 75th Year of Publication: Volume LXXV, Number 4, April 2021.



Photo by Alexander Schimmeck on Unsplash.com

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Welcome New Members

We would like to "Thank You" for becoming part of the Farm Bureau Family.



NEW DATES ADDED!

FREE REMOTE DELIVERY

Produce Safety Training



Food Safety Training Partnership is pleased to offer FREE Produce Safety Training (required by the Produce Safety Rule) offered through Web-based live remote delivery by Produce Safety Alliance-approved instructors from the Food Safety Training Partnership's Safe Food Alliance!

May 11, 2021

Two Half Day Sessions May 11-12 from 10am-3:30pm (PST)

May 26, 2021

Two Half Day Sessions May 26-27 from 10am-3:30pm (PST)

June 8, 2021

Two Half Day Sessions June 8-9 from 10am-3:30pm (PST)

June 23, 2021

Two Half Day Sessions June 23-24 from 10am-3:30pm (PST)

Space is limited!

A high-speed internet connection and confirmed attendance for the full course will be required.

Register Today!

Register at Food Safety Training Partnership; visit <http://foodsafetytrainingpartnership.org> For more information or call 916-561-5672.

COVID-19 Vaccine Information

Riverside County continues to release appointments for the COVID-19 vaccines as they become available. The demand for the COVID-19 vaccine throughout our community continues to exceed the limited supply available. Community members are encouraged to check Riverside County's Vaccine Dashboard on a regular basis to make sure they are informed of new vaccine clinics as appointments become available.

- Visit Riverside County's new Vaccine Dashboard, at <https://www.rivcoph.org/COVID-19-Vaccine>
- Email your questions about Riverside County vaccinations to rivco.vaccines@ruhealth.org.
- For information on Riverside County's COVID-19 Response, visit www.rivcoph.org/coronavirus.
- Please visit the CDC Essential Worker COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit to help educate your workers about important prevention tools and why vaccines are important. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/toolkits/essential-workers.html>
- Follow Riverside University Health System – Public Health on Social Media for the latest updates
 - Facebook: www.facebook.com/countyriversidedepartmentofpublichealth
 - Twitter: <https://twitter.com/RivCoDoc>

Air Resources Board offers significant incentives for electric farm equipment

California has ambitious climate goals and agriculture is part of the solution to reduce our carbon footprint. Farmers already contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) through healthy soils programs to improve carbon sequestration and overall soil health. Many are adapting sustainable practices in growing their crops or livestock. And as technology is advancing, agricultural machinery offers another opportunity to eliminate harmful emissions. In order to meet the state's climate goals the California Air Resources Board (CARB) offers several incentive programs that pay for up to 80% of the cost of replacing diesel equipment with zero emission equipment.

CARB offers incentives through the Funding Agricultural Replacement Measures for Emission Reductions (FARMER) and the Carl Moyer programs. The FARMER program offers a scrap and replace program which would pay up to 80% of the acquisition of an electric tractor. Applications are being received by the local air districts. The FARMER program also added a new category for Advanced Technology Demonstration Projects. Under this project local air district would develop and fund demonstration projects, with CARB approval, without requirement to scrap existing vehicles or equipment. And finally, the Modified Category for Zero-Emission Agricultural UTVs offers applicants a refund of \$13,500 or 75% (whichever is less) for the purchase of an electric UTV. Additionally, the Carl Moyer Program, a voluntary program that reduces air pollution from vehicles and equipment by offering funds to private companies and public agencies, provides grant up to 85% to purchase emission reduction technologies. Check with your local air district if there is a program in your area.



Solectrac's all electric eUtility mowing

American manufacturer and distributor of zero emission electric farm and utility tractors with offices and an assembly center located in Santa Rosa, CA. The company offers a 30 HP equivalent 4 WD compact electric tractor (CET) and a 40 HP equivalent eUtility tractor. The tractors can be charged off the utility grid or from renewable sources, like solar and wind. To learn more, please check out www.Solectrac.com.

Written by Christiane Heckerth, CCO, Solectrac, Inc. Solectrac has been a member of the California Farm Bureau since 2020.

California UI Taxes to Rise Soon?

Bryan Little, Farm Employers Labor Service

Massive unemployment insurance payments (and fraud) have caused California's Unemployment Trust Fund debt to the federal government to skyrocket. As of April 6, the state UI Trust Fund owed a \$21.8 billion debt, incurred to federal trust funds to backfill state trust funds during periods in which claims exceed employer payroll tax collections. The Employment Development Department projects the state UI trust fund will be \$40 billion in debt by the end of 2021. It's important to note that the state's UI trust fund debt after the 2009 recession only reached \$10 billion, and California employers bore the burden of increased federal UI payroll taxes to repay that debt for nearly a decade.

California employers pay a 0.6% tax on the first \$7000 of an employee's wages – or \$42 per employee when the state fund is solvent. For each year when the fund is insolvent, the tax rate rises by 0.3%. If the fund is insolvent for enough years (roughly 18 years) employers will face a per-employee tax of \$4200 per employee. This will continue until the trust fund regains solvency.

The next-largest state trust fund debt after California is New York: \$10.2 billion. Most state funds with current debts (20 states are currently in debt) have debts of less than \$1 billion.

During the 2009 recession, there were some discussions at Capitol about addressing the then-seemingly massive debt, which again was only a quarter of the debt projected for the end of 2021. At that time there was conversation around increasing the taxable wage base to as much as \$15,000 and increasing the state tax rate to increase collections. None of these proposals moved forward, as representatives of organized labor insisted on significant liberalization of eligibility for UI and much more generous benefits.

In 2021, the Legislature is focusing on new paid sick leave, COVID-19 safety, and other employer mandates, and may not turn to the issue of the UI trust fund debt in 2021. However, the massive debt and the very high taxes required to repay that debt may make state UI higher taxes and even liberalized benefits seem like a reasonable trade-off for massive federal UI trust fund repayment taxes for tax-beleaguered California employers.

CDFA teams up with partners to introduce California Pollinator Coalition

By California Department of Food and Agriculture, Office of Public Affairs

A broad array of organizations from across California's agricultural and environmental landscape announced a working coalition to address their shared commitment to the health of wild and managed pollinators.

The Coalition is focusing on increasing the value working lands provide to our environment, to benefit biodiversity and farmers alike. The California Pollinator Coalition, convened by Pollinator Partnership, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, and the Almond Board of California, includes more than twenty organizations—representing the large majority of California's crop and range land—pledging to increase habitat for pollinators on working lands.

Together, the goal is to increase collaboration between agriculture and conservation groups for the benefit of biodiversity and food production. The result will be on-the-ground improvements, technical guidance, funded research, documentation of relevant case studies, and tracked progress toward increasing healthier pollinator habitats.

Achieving this bee friendly goal is laden with benefits for farmers and the environment in California, increasing biodiversity and sequestering more carbon in the soil.

The Coalition also hopes its success will serve as a model for even more collaboration among interests who have not always been aligned, but who are willing to come together in partnership to confront common challenges.

"What we are doing in California is acknowledging the urgency to address the critical issue of protecting all pollinators, including native and managed species," said Laurie Davies Adams, President and CEO of Pollinator Partnership. "Agriculture and conservation must work together to achieve this goal, especially when we will be facing many of the same issues—increasing temperatures, erratic and unpredictable weather, fires, drought, soil depletion, and more. The outcome will not be a tidy report that sits on a shelf, but rather a metric of acres, projects, and species added to the landscape while agriculture continues to profitably feed the nation."

The collective land represented by coalition members will provide the critical mass to address habitat on an unprecedented scale, for the benefit of beneficial insects, such as bees, butterflies, beetles, wasps, moths and more. California is home to more than 1,600 native bees and hundreds of other species of pollinating insects. Globally, pollinators provide service to more than 180,000 different plant species, more than 1,200 crops, and are responsible for producing an estimated one out of every three bites of food. They sustain our ecosystems and support natural resources, all while adding \$217 billion to the global economy each year.

But pollinator populations are declining and often suffer from the same challenges as California's agriculture. The Coalition will work together on a variety of fronts to support pollinators:

- Preparing farmer-friendly guidance to build and maintain pollinator habitat on farms and ranches
- Promoting voluntary, incentive-based habitat establishment projects and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices
- Conducting research and disseminating relevant science
- Monitoring outcomes (adoption rates and effectiveness of practices)

"Collaborative action can mitigate risks to California's pollinators, and that's exactly why this coalition has come together," said Karen Ross, Secretary of California Department of Food and Agriculture. "We need urgent action, yet the first step in the process is building trust that encourages, enables, and enhances the result. The California Pollinator Coalition is a big step forward in a journey of grower and conservation groups voluntarily demonstrating leadership."

"This will not be an easy or quick fix," said Josette Lewis, Chief Scientific Officer of the Almond Board of California. "It will require a robust and sustained effort, but we are determined to be part of the solution. Almond growers and many other farmers depend on pollinators to produce a crop and pollinators depend on us to provide safe habitat. Working lands can and should be part of the solution."

"Farm Bureau supports voluntary, farmer-friendly efforts to improve habitat for native pollinators, and we have long advocated improved research on pollinator health," said Jamie Johansson, President of the California Farm Bureau. "We will work with the coalition for the benefit of native pollinators and managed bees, and to assure stability for the domestic bee business."

"Climate change will affect the wildlife of California and the way we grow food in many ways," said Dan Kaiser, director of conservation at Environmental Defense Fund. "The best chance for biodiversity and farms to thrive is to rebuild the natural infrastructure that supports pollinators, soil health and water resilience throughout the Central Valley. This coalition will promote robust research and guidance to support a more resilient and biodiverse agricultural landscape."

While just beginning its work, the Coalition is catalyzing new collaborations and continuing to recruit partners who understand the urgency and share the common goal of supporting both the health of pollinators and agriculture.

About the California Pollinator Coalition — The California Pollinator Coalition, convened by Pollinator Partnership, the California Department of Food and Agriculture and the Almond Board of California, is made up of a diverse group of agricultural and environmental organizations with the shared goal of providing enhanced habitat for pollinators. The Coalition and its members have pledged to increase habitat for pollinators on working lands. Additionally, the group plans to promote research and track its progress toward healthy and abundant habitats.



(Credit: Ivan Marjanovic/Shutterstock)

No need to amend soil when planting new trees or perennials

By Jeannette E. Warnert, Author - Communications Specialist, UCANR, UC Kearney Research and Extension Center

Gardeners who follow conventional wisdom and nursery recommendations to mix organic amendments into the soil when planting new trees or perennials in their landscapes are making a mistake, according to UC Cooperative Extension environmental horticulture experts.

"This is one of the garden myths that I'm trying to dispel," said Jim Downer, UCCE environmental horticulture advisor in Ventura County. "We recommend residents not amend the soil when they are planting based on outcomes we have observed in research."

Downer and Ben Faber, UCCE advisor for water, soils and subtropical crops in Ventura County, summarized this and other information about the use of organic amendments in home landscapes in a six-page publication now available for free download from the UC Agriculture and Natural Resources catalog at <https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/Details.aspx?itemNo=8711>.

The publication says research has not shown that adding amendments to planting holes for perennial plants provides a significant advantage compared to using native backfill.

With perennial plants, the roots do not stay in the planting hole for long, so amendments would only be effective for a short time. The practice of amending the soil further harms the plant by creating an interface where the soil in the planting hole is different from the native soil.

"When that happens, roots and water don't move as well through the soil," he said.

While there are some situations where amending poor soil can improve tilth, increase water-holding capacity and add nutrients, by and large most un-amended soils allow for adequate plant growth of trees and perennials. Potential problems introduced by amending the soil include nitrogen immobilization, which makes the nutrient unavailable to plants; toxicity from residual chemicals, such as herbicides applied to plant material in the amendment; addition of weeds or root pathogens; damage or destruction of the soil structure; harm to the soil food web; and increased salinity.

While there are few reasons to mix organic amendments into the soil, Downer said mulching the soil surface with uncomposted organic matter is almost always beneficial.

"If your goal is to get organic matter into the soil, we recommended topping the soil with fresh, undecomposed wood chips. It will give you microbial stimulation and suppress disease. Arthropods will slowly grab pieces of the mulch and incorporate it into the soil at a gentle rate," he said.

The publication also provides information about various common organic amendments – such as coconut fiber, coffee grounds, horse manure, peat moss and green waste compost – with details about each product's benefits and detriments.



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Save the Date

Virtual Regional Workshops



Provide input on meeting the State's commitment to conserve 30 percent of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030 and accelerate nature-based solutions to address climate change.



MEETING DATE/REGION

- April 20 — Sacramento Valley Region
- April 21 — San Francisco Bay Area Region
- April 27 — Central Coast Region
- April 28 — Sierra Nevada Region
- April 29 — San Joaquin Valley Region
- May 4 — North Coast Region
- May 5 — Los Angeles Region
- May 6 — Inland Deserts Region
- May 11 — San Diego Region

All meeting times are 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Nature-Based Solutions and 30 by 30 Virtual Regional Workshops

Provide input on meeting the State's commitment to conserve 30 percent of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030 and accelerate nature-based solutions to address climate change. All meetings are open to the public, regardless of participants' geographic location. The meetings will be accessible through the Zoom virtual platform, a phone dial-in option and livestreamed on YouTube. Regional workshop will also include closed captioning, and simultaneous interpretation in Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Vietnamese. The public will also be invited to take a brief online Input Questionnaire set to be released in advance of the regional workshops. Registration links for all nine workshops are below.

- May 5--Los Angeles Region
Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, and the western parts of San Bernardino and Riverside counties

Register at:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcuduytqDgqGNWmP4fJ45oAF2k4Ir-WN3Yxb>

- May 6 --Inland Deserts Region
Imperial and the eastern parts of San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

Register at:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMvf-CoqT0qGdQp7u5ARhjk5YQ4pRaLI3O1>

Visit: <https://resources.ca.gov/Initiatives/Expanding-Nature-Based-Solutions>

Nationwide Disaster Information

In the event you have been impacted by an event in your area, contact Nationwide Insurance day or night to report a claim by calling 1-800-421-3535. We are here to help you get your home back in order and we work with local authorities on all events.

Nationwide offers the following tips for homeowners to help protect from contractor/repair fraud:

- § Request an itemized written estimate for any proposed work from contractors.
- § Be wary of estimates that seem wholly unreasonable. Nationwide will provide compensation for reasonable estimates for the correct method of repair. Policyholders can call and ask us about an estimate.
- § Beware of profiteers and fraudulent contractors. Contact your local Better Business Bureau or the California Department of Insurance if you have any concerns with a contractor you decide to use for repairs.
- § Avoid paying any upfront fees and be wary of cash deposits. One common scam is to show up with equipment to perform the work, promise to return in a few hours and never come back.
- § It is always a good idea to take pictures of any damage before repairs begin.

If you have any questions, please call the Nationwide claims hotline at 1-800-421-3535 or your local agent immediately.





FRESH FACTS PICKED DAILY

The Fresh Facts app from Index Fresh is your daily look into the world of avocados. Get useful avocado market information—from bin counts to price estimates to inventory and shipping information—right at your fingertips, every day.

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USDA's Farm Service Agency is currently accepting new and modified CFAP 2 applications

ATTENTION AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS

Has your operation been directly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic?

USDA is implementing updates to the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) for producers of agricultural commodities marketed in 2020 who faced market disruptions due to COVID-19. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced an expansion of CFAP on March 24, 2021. This is part of a larger effort to reach a greater share of farming operations and improve USDA pandemic assistance.

In 2020, did you own/produce any of the following?

- Livestock (cattle, pigs, sheep/wool, broilers/pullets, eggs and more)
- Row or specialty crops (including aquaculture, nursery, and more)

If so, you may be eligible for financial assistance through CFAP 2. The CFAP 2 signup period has reopened as part of USDA's new Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative. Note: Participation in CFAP 1 is NOT required for assistance through CFAP 2.

To learn more, visit farmers.gov/CFAP, contact our call center at 877-508-8364, or contact your local FSA office.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS



📅 May 12, 2021 ~ 5:30 PM, Riverside County Farm Bureau Board of Directors Hybrid meeting, Russo's Italian Kitchen in Banning and to be held by a Zoom Conference. If you are interested in participating, please call our office at (951) 684-6732.

Food and Farm News

Courtesy of CFBF

Farmers could gain fire-insurance options

Two concurrent efforts aim to help farmers and ranchers insure their properties in fire-prone areas. Legislation sponsored by the California Farm Bureau would authorize the state's insurer of last resort, the California FAIR Plan, to underwrite coverage for commercial farms and ranches that can't find it on the open market. At the same time, Nationwide has begun offering supplemental insurance for farmers who qualify for FAIR Plan coverage.

Plant nurseries see rising demand

With people staying closer to home during the pandemic, more have taken up gardening—and that has brought new demand to plant nurseries. Nursery operators say they may run low on inventory this spring as a result of the surge in sales, which caused some to sell plants last year that they had planned to save for this year. Edible plants remain popular, with nursery owners reporting strong customer interest in herbs, vegetables and fruit trees.

Forecast predicts larger strawberry crop

The season started slowly, but California strawberry production should ultimately be larger than last year's, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In a new report, USDA says California farmers planted more strawberries last fall, which should lead to a bigger harvest this season. The report says Americans' strawberry consumption has more-than-doubled since the turn of the century, with both domestic and foreign supplies rising to meet the increased demand.

"Farm Bureau Working for You"