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16 Discover how drones can enhance farming on Sept. 9 in Fresno County. Three drones are illustrated mapping a field with a multicolored data grid; the center drone is spraying crops; and the right drone is releasing small beneficial insects, with a magnified inset showing a ladybug on a leaf. Mountains and a blue sky appear in the background.

26 From California Farms to Healthy Families: The Benefits of Eating More Fruits and Vegetables. California agriculture plays an essential role in feeding families across the nation. California grows nearly half of the country's vegetables and more than three-quarters of its fruits and nuts. Our farms provide an impressive variety of nutritious foods—from grapes, citrus, berries, and melons to carrots, tomatoes, lettuce, and many other vegetables.

29 Paraquat Registrations Voluntarily Cancelled in California: What Almond Growers Need to Know. Almond growers who use paraquat will see the herbicide phased out in the state after pesticide manufacturers voluntarily cancelled registrations for products containing paraquat-dichloride.



Growing Bigger or Growing Better? Rethinking Success in Agricultural Business

By Gillian Christie



For generations, progress in agriculture has often been measured in visible ways: more acres, more equipment, greater production, additional employees or higher sales. Expansion can certainly signal a healthy operation. But bigger and better are not always the same thing.

Perhaps the more important question is whether expansion is making the operation itself stronger.

Agricultural businesses have many ways to strengthen their future beyond simply increasing size. Recent research from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service examines a broad range of approaches farmers use to manage long-term risk, including diversification, financial safeguards, investments in farm improvements and succession planning.¹ The common thread is not simply expansion. It is making deliberate choices about how available resources are used to support the future of the operation.

That distinction matters.

Every agricultural operation has finite resources: land, capital, equipment, labor, time and management attention. Any new opportunity requires some combination of them. The strategic question is whether that investment moves the business closer to what its owner ultimately wants to achieve.

Strategy Starts With the Destination

After more than 33 years of working with business owners and entrepreneurs, I have seen how easy it is to pursue expansion simply because it is considered the natural next step. A successful company enters another market. A farmer acquires additional acreage. A manufacturer adds a product line. A dealer expands its territory.

But every opportunity has a cost—not only in dollars, but

also in time, attention and capacity. The question shouldn't simply be, "Can we grow?" It should be, "What will this accomplish?"

That is where strategy begins.

The word strategy has its roots in the Greek concept of leadership and the skillful deployment of resources toward a defined objective. Although its earliest applications were military, the principle remains remarkably relevant to business: first determine what you are trying to accomplish, then decide how best to use what you have to get there.

Without a clearly defined objective, getting bigger can become the strategy.

It shouldn't be.

Expansion should serve the strategy.

For one agricultural operation, success may mean increasing acreage and production. For another, it could mean improving margins without adding land. Others may want to reduce debt, automate a labor-intensive process, diversify revenue, develop the next generation of leadership or build an operation strong enough to pass along to their children.

There is no single right answer. What matters is knowing yours.

Penn State Extension's agricultural business management guidance reinforces this principle, emphasizing that successful agribusiness management requires careful planning and coordination of fundamental resources such as land, labor, capital and management. It also notes that a business plan can help establish goals and provide clear direction.²

Keep It Real

Before making a significant investment or expansion decision, I encourage owners to ask several deceptively simple questions: What result are we trying to achieve? What will this opportunity require from us? What might we have to postpone or give up to pursue it? Will it make the operation stronger, or simply larger? And how will we know three or five years from now whether the decision was successful?

Those questions require something that can sometimes be uncomfortable: an honest assessment of where you are today.

I have long followed a simple philosophy: Keep It Real.

In strategic planning, that means looking beyond optimism and examining the operation as it actually exists. Where are you strongest? Where are you vulnerable? What do you genuinely have available? Which parts of the operation are producing value? Where are time and money being consumed without sufficient return? What do your customers need? And perhaps most importantly, what do you want the business to provide for you, your employees and your family?

A sound strategy begins with reality.

Invest With Purpose

This is particularly important when evaluating equipment and technology. The newest or most advanced solution is not automatically the right investment for every farm. The better question is whether it addresses a clearly identified need.

Will it reduce labor requirements? Improve efficiency? Lower an input cost? Increase capacity without adding comparable overhead? Improve reliability? Allow employees to devote their

time to higher-value work?

The answer will be different for every operation. That is precisely why defining the objective first matters.

The same principle applies beyond equipment. Adding a crop, entering a market, hiring employees or establishing a partnership may look like progress on paper. But each decision introduces complexity and risk alongside its potential return.

Sometimes Growth Means Saying No

Sometimes the smartest decision is to expand.

Sometimes it is to improve what you already have.

And sometimes it is to say no.

That last option can be one of the most difficult. Farmers and entrepreneurs are naturally accustomed to seeing possibilities. Yet good planning is as much about deciding what not to pursue as deciding what deserves investment. A dollar, hour or employee committed to one opportunity cannot simultaneously be devoted somewhere else.

The Value You Can't See on a Balance Sheet

There is also another kind of value that is harder to measure on a balance sheet: reputation.

Whether you operate a farm, dealership, manufacturing company or agricultural service business, the reputation you build with customers, employees, suppliers, lenders and your community becomes part of the strength of the enterprise. A trusted name can open doors, create loyalty, attract talented people and give customers greater confidence in doing business with you.

That is why I believe building a brand is ultimately about building trust.

A brand is not simply a logo or an advertising campaign. It is the accumulation of what you promise, what you deliver and what people come to expect when they interact with you. Over time, consistency between those three things creates something competitors cannot easily reproduce: confidence in your name.

That kind of progress may not add an acre or another piece of equipment, but it can add tremendous value.

Defining Better

Agriculture will always need people willing to move forward. We need ambitious farmers, innovative manufacturers, strong dealers and entrepreneurs prepared to invest in what comes next.

The opportunity is to become more intentional about what progress means.

Bigger can be better. But better can also mean more profitable, more efficient, less complicated, more adaptable, more trusted, easier to operate or better prepared for the next generation.

There is no universal definition of a successful agricultural business.

There should, however, be a clearly defined one for yours.

Before asking how much your business can grow, perhaps the more valuable question is:

What are we growing toward?

1. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Risk Management Practices on U.S. Farms and Ranches, 1996–2020. Economic Information Bulletin No. 296, April 16, 2026.

2. Penn State Extension. Agribusiness and Farm Management; Agribusiness Planning: Providing Direction for Agricultural Firms, updated January 13, 2026

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CDR Continues Fight for Honeybee Producers on ELAP Mortality Rate



Crop Disaster Recovery (CDR) is continuing its fight on behalf of honeybee producers affected by the ELAP normal mortality rate issue.

Since first raising concerns regarding USDA's implementation of the 15% honeybee normal mortality rate established under Public Law 119-21, CDR has remained actively engaged in pursuing clarification, administrative review, and a path forward for impacted producers.

The issue remains unresolved, but CDR's position has not changed.

"We are still fighting for the honeybee community," said CDR Co-Founders David and Kimberly Lott. "Our goal is to establish a clear precedent that ensures the law is applied fairly and consistently. Once that precedent is established, our work will not stop with the producers currently involved."

Shane Cassell, Director of Client Relations for Crop Disaster Recovery, echoed that commitment and emphasized the broader importance of the effort.

"This is bigger than one producer or one ELAP determination," Cassell said. "We have producers who trusted that their determinations were calculated correctly and may not have known there was anything to challenge. We are going to continue fighting to establish the right precedent, and if that door opens, we intend to go back through our client base, identify the producers who may have been impacted, and pursue every appropriate avenue available to them. The honeybee community deserves consistency, and they deserve to know that someone is willing to keep

pushing on their behalf."

CDR believes a favorable administrative determination or other controlling precedent could create an opportunity to revisit additional 2025 ELAP determinations that may have been calculated using the higher prior mortality rate.

That means the current effort is about more than the claims immediately in front of CDR.

If a precedent is established confirming that the 15% mortality rate should apply to eligible 2025 determinations, CDR intends to identify and pursue available administrative remedies for other clients who may have previously received reduced ELAP payments or who may not have challenged their original determination.

Some producers may have accepted their original payment because they were unaware of the change in law, did not understand the potential impact of the mortality-rate calculation, or believed their opportunity to challenge the determination had passed.

CDR intends to evaluate those situations individually and determine what review, reconsideration, appeal, or other administrative pathways may remain available.

"Our responsibility is not only to fight the case in front of us," the Lotts said. "If we are able to establish the precedent, we want to go back and determine who else may have been affected and what options exist to help those producers."

CDR continues to work through the appropriate USDA administrative channels while gathering documentation, evaluating impacted determinations, and advocating for consistent implementation across counties and states.

The company is also encouraging honeybee producers to retain their 2025 ELAP determinations, payment calculations, notices, and supporting documentation. Those records may become important if additional review opportunities develop.

For CDR, the objective remains the same: ensure honeybee producers receive accurate and fair determinations based on the law and that producers who may have previously missed an opportunity to challenge an ELAP calculation are not forgotten if a pathway for relief becomes available.

CDR will continue fighting for clarity, consistency, and fair treatment for the honeybee producers who depend on these programs

Sleep easy.

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The Electric Revolution Is Reaching the Farm



Why More Growers Are Considering Electric Weed Control Before Investing in Another Herbicide Program

The electric revolution is no longer limited to passenger vehicles and transportation. It is beginning to transform agriculture as well.

The Lightning Weeder®, developed by LASCO, uses electricity instead of herbicides to destroy weeds from the inside out. The technology gives growers another option to combat herbicide-resistant weeds, improve harvest efficiency and strengthen an integrated weed-management program. Through on-farm demonstrations and rentals, producers can evaluate its performance under their own operating conditions before making an equipment investment.

Every growing season, farmers face the same question: What will work better next year?

For decades, the answer has often been another herbicide application or a different chemistry. Yet resistant weeds continue to increase production costs, complicate harvest, reduce yields and challenge long-term weed management across North America.

According to the International Herbicide-Resistant Weed Database, scientists have documented 548 unique cases of herbicide-resistant weeds involving 275 weed species across 76 countries. Resistance has been reported to 168 different herbicides.¹ As resistance continues to spread, the Weed Science Society of America recommends integrated weed-management practices that combine multiple approaches rather than depending on a single method of control.² Electric weed control can become one of those complementary tools—not as a replacement for every existing practice, but as another option for controlling weeds that survive conventional programs.

How Electric Weed Control Works

The Lightning Weeder® directs high-voltage electrical energy through weeds that extend above the crop canopy. The energy generates heat inside the plant, converting its internal moisture into steam and destroying tissue throughout the stem and root system. Rather than simply burning the visible portion of the weed, the process disrupts the plant from the inside out. Growers can often see the effects within minutes.

“The best example is to put somebody in a tractor and make a few rounds,” said Kevin Olson, President of LASCO. “When we turn around at the end of the field, the weeds we’ve treated are already dying. It’s basically instant gratification.”

A Proven Technology Returns to the Field

Although agricultural electrification may sound futuristic, electric weed control is not a new concept. The Lightning Weeder® was originally developed in the early 1980s for sugar beet production. Today, many of the challenges that inspired the technology more than four decades ago have returned, including resistant weeds, difficult late-season escapes and harvest complications.

“We’re back in sugar beets again,” Olson said. “We have chemical-resistant weeds, harvest challenges and many of the same issues that started this technology in the first place.”

The renewed interest now extends beyond sugar beets. Conventional row crop, specialty crop and organic growers are evaluating electric weed control as an additional way to strengthen existing management programs. For California agriculture, this renewed attention is part of a broader movement toward precision equipment and energy-based technology. The state’s diverse mix of vegetables, vine-

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yards, orchards, row crops and other specialty crops creates a need for adaptable equipment that can complement established field practices.

Why Timing and Crop Height Matter

As with most weed-control practices, timing affects performance. Younger plants are generally easier to control, and the target weeds must extend above the crop canopy so the applicator can contact them without contacting the crop.

"The younger the plant, the better," Olson explained. "The weeds need to extend above the crop canopy so you're targeting the weeds—not the crop."

Addressing escapes before they mature may improve harvest efficiency, protect crop quality and reduce weed-seed production. Preventing surviving weeds from replenishing the seedbank can also help limit future pressure. Growers evaluating the technology should begin by identifying which weeds are surviving their current program and whether those species are becoming increasingly difficult to manage. Crop height, weed maturity, field conditions and the appropriate treatment window must also be considered.

Evaluating the Technology Under Field Conditions

Equipment performance cannot be fully assessed from a brochure or video. Growers need to see how a machine operates with their tractor, crops and field conditions.

LASCO's demonstration and rental programs allow producers to mount the Lightning Weeder® on their own tractor and test it against the weeds creating problems in their

fields. This firsthand experience can help them evaluate operating requirements, treatment timing and potential value before purchasing the equipment.

"I've had growers tell me they saw a three- to five-ton yield difference after using the Lightning Weeder," Olson said. "The return on investment can be very, very quick. We bring the machine out, set it up on their tractor and let them run their own acres."

Results will vary depending on the crop, weed pressure, treatment timing and operating conditions. Evaluating the technology on the farm allows each producer to determine whether it has a practical place within the operation's broader weed-management strategy.

Planning for the Coming Season

As harvest approaches, growers begin examining what worked, what fell short and what should change during the coming season. Late-season escapes can reveal weaknesses that may not have been visible earlier and help producers decide where another management tool could be useful. For farms facing resistant weeds or difficult escapes, electric weed control may offer a practical addition to an integrated program. Its renewed relevance reflects a broader reality in modern agriculture: managing resistant weeds will require more than another product or a single method.

It will require combining proven practices with technologies that give growers greater flexibility, precision and control in the field.

Winegrape Industry Commits Additional Funding to Help Stop Dangerous Pest

Large-scale, costly response underway to prevent spread into wine regions

To stop the glassy-winged sharpshooter from spreading a fatal grapevine disease into Northern California, the Pierce's Disease and Glassy-Winged Sharpshooter (PD/GWSS) Board at the California Department of Food and Agriculture committed \$820,000 to the ongoing emergency response.

Preventing the glassy-winged sharpshooter from becoming established in new areas protects winegrapes and other agricultural and landscape plants. California's wine industry generates about \$73 billion in annual economic activity and supports more than 422,000 jobs statewide. A 2025 economic study estimated that if glassy-winged sharpshooters spread unchecked, outbreaks of Pierce's disease could cost winegrape growers an additional \$56 million a year in lost production and vine replacement.

Since May, county agriculture officials have been locating nearly 10,000 grapevines from a Fresno nursery that may have carried the invasive pest into 40 counties. The PD/GWSS Board's special emergency funding is intended to support those efforts. Officials have contacted more than 3,100 customers who purchased the grapevines, inspected and/or destroyed more than 2,900 plants and set more than 2,700 additional insect traps.

Glassy-winged sharpshooters have been found on customer plants in 22 counties. Inspections and trapping must continue for at least three years to track if the pest spreads beyond customers' properties.

"California's winegrape industry is facing some of the hardest economic times in a generation, but we recognize what is at stake if this destructive pest becomes established in Northern California," said Trey Irwin, PD/GWSS Board chair. "Putting \$820,000 from the Board's limited reserves toward this effort is a major commitment for our industry and

Continued on next page



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Continued from previous page

shows how seriously we're taking this threat."

The funding comes from assessments paid by California winegrape growers to support pest and disease research and prevention. Since 2001, the Board has invested \$99 million in research, outreach, prevention and control for Pierce's disease, grapevine viruses and the insects that spread them.

"It is important that we continue with inspections and trapping to closely monitor the situation," said Michelle Pham, response lead with the CDFA Pierce's Disease Control Program. "This effort depends on close coordination among growers and county, state and federal agencies. For 25 years, that partnership has helped keep the glassy-winged sharpshooter from spreading throughout California."

People who suspect they have found a glassy-winged sharpshooter should contact their local agricultural commissioner's office (bit.ly/CountyAg). For pictures of the pest and for more information, visit bit.ly/GWSS-Costco.

FALL FARM PREP:

10 Things California Farmers Should Do Before Winter



Fall is one of the most important times of the year on California farms. The harvest may be winding down, but the work is far from over. What you do in September, October, and November sets the stage for a successful season ahead. Here are ten essential things every California farmer should focus on before winter arrives.

By Joe L. Neyer III

1. Finish Strong and Review the Season

Before turning the page to next season, take time to review this year. What worked well? What didn't? Look at your yields, input costs, and equipment performance. These lessons are valuable for making better decisions in the year ahead.

2. Service and Winterize Equipment

Your equipment works hard all year—don't let it sit idle without proper care. Change the oil, replace filters, grease fittings, and inspect belts and hoses. Check fluids and make sure everything is ready to go when you need it. If equipment will be sitting outside, make sure it's cleaned and protected from the elements.

3. Prepare Your Soil

Healthy soil is the foundation of every good crop. Consider a soil test to check nutrient levels and pH. Add amendments if needed and think about planting cover crops like cereal rye, vetch, or clover. Cover crops improve soil structure, add organic matter, and help control erosion over the winter months.

4. Manage Crop Residue

After harvest, dealing with crop residue is key. Shred, disc, or incorporate residue to speed up decomposition and reduce pest problems. Good residue management also helps with water infiltration and sets up a cleaner field for planting.

5. Check and Maintain Irrigation Systems

Fall is the perfect time to inspect and maintain your irrigation systems. Drain lines, flush lines, and make sure pumps and filters are in good shape. Proper maintenance now helps prevent costly breakdowns when water demand increases.



6. Plan Your Water Strategy

Water is still a top concern in California. Review your water allocations and storage. Plan ahead for next year by evaluating your needs and exploring conservation options. Every drop counts, and efficient planning can make a big difference.

7. Control Pests and Weeds

Fall is an ideal time to get ahead of pests and weeds before they become major problems. Remove weed sources, scout for insects, and take care of field edges and ditches. Good management now reduces headaches next season.

8. Take Care of Your Orchards and Vineyards

If you're in tree nuts, citrus, grapes, or other perennial crops, fall is the time for pruning, cleaning up debris, and preparing trees or vines for dormancy. Make sure to monitor for diseases and take care of any irrigation or trellis repairs.

9. Plan Next Season

Good farmers are always thinking ahead. Order seeds, review fertilizer and chemical needs, and schedule any custom work early. The more planning you do now, the smoother next season will be.

10. Take Care of Your Team

Don't forget your most valuable resource—your people. As the season winds down, take time to thank your crew, reflect on the year, and make sure everyone heads into the off-season safely.

*Fall may not be as busy as planting or harvest, but it's just as important.
A little extra effort now will pay off big when spring rolls around.*





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Discover how drones can enhance farming on Sept. 9 in Fresno County



By Pamela S Kan-Rice

Three drones flying above rows of green crops. The left drone is illustrated mapping a field with a multicolored data grid; the center drone is spraying crops; and the drone on right is releasing small beneficial insects, with a magnified inset showing a ladybug on a leaf. Mountains and a blue sky appear in the background.

On left, drone is mapping a field with a multicolored data grid; the center drone is spraying crops; and the drone on right is releasing small beneficial insects like ladybugs..

Variety of applications to be demonstrated at UC Kearney Research and Extension Center

The farming community is invited to see how drones are transforming agriculture through precision applications, mapping, spraying and innovative field practices at the UC Cooperative Extension Drone Applications in Agriculture Workshop on Sept. 9 at UC Kearney Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Parlier.

Growers, agricultural professionals, researchers, students and others who are interested in drone technology for farming are invited.

"Participants will hear from experts about drone regulations and agricultural applications, then see the technology in action during equipment and field demonstrations," said Anderson Safre, assistant UC Cooperative Extension specialist for agricultural innovation and technology, who is organizing the workshop.

Drones can be used to collect data and create high-resolution imagery to inform a farmer's decision-making. With targeted application of sprays, growers can save money and protect crops more efficiently. Drones also can be used for precise releases of beneficial insects for natural pest control.

The drone workshop will be held from 8 a.m. to noon

on Sept. 9 at Kearney Agricultural Research and Extension Center, 9240 S. Riverbend Avenue, Parlier, CA 93648. Registration includes lunch. Preregistration is \$10 at <https://link.ucanr.edu/drones4ag> and \$20 on the day of event.



Anderson Safre will give an overview of how drones can be used in farming.

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What is a strong El Niño and what does it mean for California?

By Pamela S Kan-Rice - Warming of the tropical eastern Pacific Ocean is creating what meteorologists call a strong El Niño. Many people are asking what that means. In response, Daniel Swain, climate scientist in the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources' California Institute for Water Resources, has written an El Niño fact sheet and explains El Niño in the fact sheet.

El Niño 2026-2027: A Potentially Historic Global Climate Event

By Daniel Swain, Ph.D

What is El Niño?

El Niño is the warm phase of a natural cycle, known as El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO), that occurs roughly every two to seven years in the tropical Pacific Ocean. During El Niño events, the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean warms to well above typical levels. El Niño directly affects local climate in the countries closest to the unusually warm ocean waters, but can also indirectly influence the climate of distant regions thousands of miles away. During the strongest events, El Niño can profoundly affect climate even on global scales, causing temporary planetary warming and disrupting large-scale precipitation patterns.

What is the forecast for 2026-2027?

As of August 2026, a strong El Niño event has already developed in the tropical Pacific Ocean—and substantial further strengthening is expected. In fact, there is now a very high likelihood (>90%) that El Niño will become very strong, and a high likelihood (~70%) that the 2026 event will become the strongest on record (since at least 1950) later this year, likely peaking in intensity between October and December.

What might be the global effects of a very strong El Niño?

Given its potentially historic magnitude, the current El Niño event will likely have substantial global impacts. By increasing the total amount of heat and water vapor in the Earth's atmosphere, and by shifting global storm tracks, this event will likely contribute to significant regional drought and flood events, as well as extreme heat. Additionally, the temporary effects from this very strong El Niño event will amplify the effects of long-term warming from climate change, greatly elevating the likelihood of record-breaking global temperatures and extreme weather events during 2026-2027.

What might this very strong El Niño event mean for California?

While El Niño events of weak to moderate strength tend to exert only modest and/or uncertain effects on California climate, very strong east Pacific-based events (like this year's) tend to increase confidence in larger and more widespread effects. These effects and potential consequences include:

- Warmer near-shore ocean temperatures and higher coastal humidity; marine ecosystem disruption and potential for increased human health impacts from late summer/autumn heatwaves
- Higher local sea levels and stronger wave action along coast, with elevated water levels in bays; risk of significant coastal inundation and/or erosion, especially during king tides and storm events
- A shifted winter storm track that favors increased seasonal precipitation; potential inland flood risk from heavy precipitation
- Peak impacts arriving by November or December, and possibly lingering through March; preparedness actions taken by individuals and governments should be completed by that time

Importantly, El Niño – even a very strong one – does not guarantee specific outcomes in California. This is particularly true with respect to winter precipitation and inland flood risk. However, this year's exceptionally strong event will likely result in a strong tilt in the odds toward a wetter than average winter, particularly in central and southern portions of the state, and also toward individual heavy precipitation events. This may increase the risk of inland freshwater flooding of rivers, creeks and streams, though it is important to note that consequential flooding can occur in California during any winter – El Niño or otherwise.



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California Farmland Trust Secures 90th Conservation Project

As state continues to lose thousands of acres of farmland each year, Farm Credit is proud to help the Trust expand its efforts which now protects more than 20,000 acres of prime irrigated ag land

There's a simple but compelling reason why the California Farmland Trust has been working to preserve prime farmland in the state's Central Valley for 23 years.

"Without agriculture, we don't eat. Without farmland, we don't have agriculture," said Farmland Trust board member Mike Machado, who has placed three San Joaquin County properties into the Trust over the years.

That's why the Trust continues to protect prime irrigated farmland by working with landowners to sell or donate their development rights to the Trust, ensuring that farms can stay in production for generations to come while permanently protecting the land from development.

The Trust recently celebrated its 90th conservation project — an orchard in Stanislaus County — and has now secured 20,068 acres of farmland from Elk Grove to Fresno that will remain farms forever.

Charlotte Mitchell, the Trust's executive director, said protection is becoming more urgent.

"It's easy in the most prolific agricultural state in the nation to presume that what we have now will always be, but it's a fool's errand to presume that we're going to continue to maintain the same amount of ag land actively used to produce food, fiber, flora and fauna for the world," Mitchell said. "Our state loses approximately 50,000 acres of farmland to development every year, and anecdotally, we know that number is growing."

Jacob DeBoer, Director of Marketing for American Ag-Credit said preserving California's prime farmland from development is important for many reasons.

"Our state's farmland, particularly in the Central Valley, is among the best in the world, so growing food to feed the nation and the world here is the highest and best use for these soils," DeBoer said. "And we can't forget that agriculture is a cornerstone of California's economy, generating more than \$50 billion a year and employing over 400,000 people. Farm Credit is proud to support the great work the Farmland Trust is doing to keep farming here forever."

Kevin Ralph, California President for AgWest Farm Credit, noted that conservation easements can be both practical and personal.

"Families gain peace of mind that comes with knowing their family farm will remain a farm forever," Ralph said. "Easements can help keep the farm intact through inheritances or other ownership changes and often provide an infusion of cash for operations or debt reduction. In many cases, it's a real win-win."

Farm Credit associations supporting California Farmland Trust are AgWest Farm Credit, American AgCredit and Co-Bank. These organizations are part of the nationwide Farm Credit System — the largest provider of credit to U.S. agricul-

ture.

The Trust is California's only land trust dedicated solely to conserving irrigated farmland. Today, it's targeting key areas — west and south of Lodi, the Manteca-Lathrop area, north of Modesto and pockets in Merced County — with the goal of linking working farms into greenbelts to protect agricultural landscapes at a larger scale.

Its most recent acquisition is the 593-acre Three Bars Ranch near Oakdale. Once a renowned horse ranch, in recent years it's been converted to almond and walnut production, with a small olive grove and grazing land. The property is highly visible from Highway 108/120, making the protection meaningful for not only ag but also for the scenic rural landscape of eastern Stanislaus County.

The property also represents an important example of conservation in a landscape facing development pressure. Three Bars Ranch is near the planned North County Corridor, a major transportation project intended to realign Highway 108 around Modesto, Riverbank and Oakdale. During the conservation process, the Trust worked with the landowner and project agencies to identify and exclude areas that could potentially be affected by the future transportation project, allowing the conservation easement to focus on the agricultural land intended for long-term protection.

"This project reflects the collaborative nature of farmland conservation," Mitchell said. "Working with landowners, public agencies and funding partners allows us to find solutions that protect agricultural land while recognizing the realities of a changing region. The result is a stronger future for both farming and the communities that depend on it."

Besides working to prevent a hodgepodge of farms interspersed with urbanized parcels, Mitchell said the Trust is prioritizing working agricultural greenbelts that will continue to have access to water as the state limits groundwater pumping in many areas.

The Trust is funded in part by grants and donations from individuals and organizations like Farm Credit along with mitigation fees from developers, but the largest source of revenue are grants from the State and USDA farmland protection programs. She said additional funding would be welcome, but because the decision to prohibit future non-agricultural development can't be entered into lightly, the Farmland Trust will continue to move slowly and methodically to make sure a family is convinced that establishing a permanent easement is the right thing for them.

"This is a process that needs to take into consideration a lot of important factors, starting with the family and how the family will be affected, where you're at generationally, who is currently running the farming operation, where elders sit in that decision-making process and certainly where the next generation fits into things," Mitchell said.

"When we say forever, we really do mean forever. So, we have multiple points in our process for families to stop, pause, reflect, and ask questions."

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From California Farms to Healthy Families: The Benefits of Eating More Fruits and Vegetables



Azin Pourkhalili, Ph.D., Farm Bureau

By Azin Pourkhalili, Ph.D.,
*Youth, Families, and Communities Ad-
visor, UC Cooperative Extension, Kern,
Inyo, and Mono Counties*

California agriculture plays an essential role in feeding families across the nation. California grows nearly half of the country's vegetables and more than three-quarters of its fruits and nuts. Our farms provide an impressive variety of nutritious foods—from grapes, citrus, berries, and melons to carrots, tomatoes, lettuce, and many other vegetables.

Despite this abundance, most Americans do not eat the recommended amounts. An analysis of 2019 data found that only 12.3% of U.S. adults met fruit recommendations and only 10% met vegetable recommendations. The gap also affects younger generations. An analysis of California Health Interview Survey data found that only 29.3% of children and 25.9% of adolescents reported consuming five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

Fruits and vegetables are important sources of dietary fiber, potassium, folate, and vitamins A and C. Fiber supports digestive health, while potassium contributes to healthy blood pressure. Regular consumption of fruits and vegetables, as part of an overall healthy diet, is associated with a lower risk of cardiovas-

cular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and some cancers. A large analysis involving nearly 1.9 million people found that consuming about five servings per day was associated with a 13% lower risk of death compared with consuming two servings per

day. Because this research was observational, the findings show an association rather than proving that fruit and vegetable consumption alone caused the reduction in mortality.

Families do not need to make major changes all at once. Small, consistent steps can make a meaningful difference:

- Add fruit to breakfast or choose it as a snack.
- Include at least one vegetable with lunch and dinner.
- Keep washed and cut produce visible and ready to eat.
- Let children select and help prepare a fruit or vegetable.
- Choose seasonal produce when possible, for better flavor and value.
- Use frozen or canned options without added sugar or excess sodium when fresh produce is unavailable.

Variety also matters. Choosing different colors throughout the week helps provide a wider range of nutrients.

From the field to the family table, California agriculture is closely connected to community health. By enjoying more of the foods grown in our state, families can build healthier eating habits while recognizing and supporting the farmers and agricultural workers who make these foods available.

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Organizations

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California Cattlemen's Association
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California Dairy Research Foundation
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Paraquat Registrations Voluntarily Cancelled in California: What Almond Growers Need to Know

California almond growers who use paraquat will see the herbicide phased out in the state after pesticide manufacturers voluntarily cancelled registrations for products containing paraquat-dichloride, according to the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR). While the announcement has been described in some places as a ban, DPR's action is more accurately a voluntary cancellation by registrants following the state's reevaluation process.

DPR announced the cancellations on August 10 after the manufacturers chose not to submit additional scientific data requested by the department. The decision starts with a transition period rather than an immediate stop in use, meaning products already in the distribution chain may continue to move through the system under existing rules.

How We Got Here

DPR initiated the reevaluation in November 2024 in response to language passed that year by the State legislature mandating that a review be completed by Jan 1, 2029. Based on that review, DPR asked registrants to provide studies addressing data gaps related to potential human health and ecological concerns. Rather than generating the additional data, manufacturers began cancelling California registrations in April 2026. The final cancellation was completed on August 6.

What It Means for Growers

DPR-licensed pesticide dealers may continue to possess and sell affected paraquat products for up to two years after each product's effective cancellation date. Growers who buy those products, or already have them on hand, may use them until supplies are exhausted. Applicators should continue to treat paraquat like any other restricted-use pesticide by following the label, observing all safety requirements and keeping required application records.

Paraquat's Role in Almond Production

Although paraquat use as a post-emergence herbicide in almonds has declined, it remains an important weed management option for some operations. Its value is tied in part to its alternative mode of action, which can help growers manage weeds that are becoming harder to control with other herbicides. That role may be especially relevant as resistance issues continue to shape orchard weed-management decisions.

Looking Ahead

While some new herbicides are in the registration pipeline, it is uncertain when they will complete the EPA and CDPR registration processes. As remaining paraquat supplies decline, growers who rely on paraquat should begin evaluating alternative chemical and nonchemical weed-control strategies for their orchards. That may include reviewing current herbicide programs, mowing, rotating modes of action where appropriate, and improving application timing that fit individual orchard conditions.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 2026

17: Constitution Day: The U.S. Forest Service Recreation fee-free day. For more information visit www.fs.usda.gov/visit/passes-permits.

23-25: Join the 2026 California Agritourism Summit in Paso Robles. Whether you're an established u-pick farmer, a travel professional looking for a way to set yourself apart from the pack or a small farming operation looking into ways to grow your business, the 2026 California Agritourism Summit offers valuable insights into one of agriculture's fastest-growing opportunities. For information visit <https://na.events-cloud.com/website/83086/home/>. Register by September 11, 2026 at 5:00. Hotel: The Ava Hotel, 944 Pine Street Paso Robles, CA.

26: National Public Lands Day: The U.S. Forest Service Recreation fee-free day. For more information visit www.fs.usda.gov/visit/passes-permits.

OCTOBER 2026

2: Join us for the AgVentures! Luau for Learning. Enjoy an evening of tropical food, live entertainment, and community while supporting hands-on agricultural education for the next generation. International Agri-Center, 4500 South Laspina Street, Tulare, CA 93274. For more information <https://iacagventures.org/luau/>

3: Cow Palace Annual Women of Rodeo performance, and enjoy an action-packed night of the fastest growing women's sport in the Nation! Daly City.

9-10: Cow Palace Grand National Rodeo & Livestock Show- Daly City. Annual Grand National Rodeo. Come see these high-energy rodeo competitions complemented by comedy, music and jaw-dropping performances, including trick riding.

27: Theodore Roosevelt's Birthday: The U.S. Forest Service Recreation fee-free day. For more information visit www.fs.usda.gov/visit/passes-permits.

NOVEMBER 2026

11: Veterans Day: The U.S. Forest Service Recreation fee-free day. For more information visit www.fs.usda.gov/visit/passes-permits.

To list your special event in California Farm Equipment send details to CFEM, PO Box 1128, Visalia, CA. 93279. or email to: info@cfemag.com.

Study Reveals How Avocados Reverse Sexes Throughout the Day

Avocados Have Followed the Same Flowering Rhythm for Over 40 Million Years

by Liana Wait

To avoid self-pollination, avocado trees alternate between opening male and female flowers at different times of day. Some avocados are female in the morning and male in the afternoon, while others are on the opposite schedule. How avocados do this has been unclear — until now.

In a new study, a team led by researchers from the University of California, Davis, revealed that this rhythm is dictated by variation in a single gene that evolved about 42 million years ago. Published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, this finding could help avocado breeders and researchers quickly sort seedlings to maximize yield and develop new varieties.

“Our study provides a genetic explanation for a century-old mystery of avocado pollination,” said first author Jeffrey Groh, who led the project as a Ph.D. student at UC Davis and is now a postdoctoral fellow at UC Berkeley. “Flowers are not just static decorations; they are highly evolved and dynamic structures. We can see this in the pulsating rhythm of avocado flowers opening and closing throughout the day. Through the power of genetics, we can detect traces of this rhythm far into the ancient past.”

Cluster of small yellow star-shaped flowers with glossy green leaves, close-up

The flowers of an avocado tree. All avocado trees are hermaphrodites, but at any given time their flowers function either as male by releasing pollen, or as female by receiving pollen. (Jeffrey Groh)

All avocado trees are hermaphrodites, but at any given time their flowers function either as male by releasing pollen, or as female by receiving pollen. Approximately half of all avocado trees (“A-type” plants) open female flowers in the morning and male flowers in the afternoon, whereas the other half (“B-type” plants) follow the opposite pattern. This partitioning minimizes the risk of self-pollination, which can result in inbreeding. Avocado breeders have known about this for over a hundred years, and because these two types easily pollinate one another, avocado farmers usually try to plant a mixture of A- and B-type trees.

“If every plant was male at the same time, and then female at the same time, there’d be no exchange of pollen,” said Graham Coop, a UC Davis professor of evolution and ecology and a senior author on the paper. “Having these two types that reciprocally and synchronously flower male and female allows avocados to exchange and use pollen throughout the whole day.”

To identify the genetic mechanism behind this daily rhythm, the team analyzed the genomes of hundreds of avocado trees grown by collaborating researchers at UC Riverside. By comparing the trees’ genomes in the context of their flowering behavior, they were able to pinpoint a single gene called SDMYB that was associated with the tree’s A- or B- type schedule.

Hand holding small bumpy green avocado on a plant in a black nursery pot

Jeffrey Groh holds an avocado hanging from its stem in a greenhouse. (Brandon Mejia)

SDMYB regulates the timing of flower opening, and its expression level oscillates throughout the day. In avocados, there are two alternative versions or “alleles” of the gene, similar to how many species have two alternative sex chromosomes. Whereas A-type plants carry one copy of each version, B-type plants carry two copies of the recessive version.

“One allele of this gene is dominant, and it shows a unique pattern of temporal regulation that is closely linked to the difference in the timing of flowers opening and closing between A- and B- types,” said Groh.

By comparing avocado genomes to those of related tree species, the team showed that the same two versions of SDMYB are shared by at least 26 related tree species. This suggests that this genetic mechanism is regulating flowering behavior and preventing inbreeding far beyond avocados.

“We were blown away by the idea that these plants have been alternating male and female activity over the course of a day for over 40 million years, over potentially hundreds of species,” said Coop.

The study provides a genetic framework for easily categorizing A- and B-type plants at the seedling stage — something previously only possible in mature, flowering plants.

“These genetic markers will greatly speed up avocado breeding and research,” said Coop. “This has been a major impediment for avocado breeders. Previously, you could not tell whether a plant was an A- or a B- type until it flowered, and avocado plants may take up to 10 or 15 years to flower in the first place.”

Smiling Jeff Groh tending potted plants in a sunlit greenhouse, surrounded by green leaves.

Jeffrey Groh stands behind pots of avocado trees in a greenhouse. His new study helps advance avocado breeding by providing an easy way to categorize A- and B-type plants at the seedling stage. (Brandon Mejia)

Additional co-authors include Gracie Ackerman from UC Davis; Marllon F. Soares dos Santos, Emmanuel Avila de Dios, Rodrigo A. Iturrieta, Eric Focht, Danelle Seymour and Mary Lu Arpaia from UC Riverside; Edwin Solares from UC San Diego; and Brandon S. Gaut from UC Irvine.

The research was funded by the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, the UC Natural Reserve Maurer-Timm Endowment, Eurosemillas and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

This project used the UC Davis High Performance Computing Core Facility, the UC Lindcove and South Coast Research and Extension Centers in Exeter and Irvine, and UC Quail Ridge Reserve.

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