State Affairs -

NRCS Extends Livestock Wolf Deterrence and Management Assistance Funding

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in California announced today an extension to sign up for the California Livestock-Predator Interaction Management Initiative. Applications are currently being accepted through Friday, June 13, 2025. The extended ranking deadline is now Friday, June 27, 2025. California has 16 counties eligible for the sign up, including Butte, Del Norte, Fresno, Humboldt, Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Tehama, Trinity, and Tulare. More information and to apply, visit the NRCS website or visit your local service center.

The California Livestock-Predator Interaction Management Initiative supports California's forest and rangeland producers in managing predator interactions, especially with wolves using non-lethal strategies. It aims to reduce conflict, maintain habitat connectivity, and sustain agricultural productivity across 16 Northern and Central California counties. The goals of the initiative are to assist affected landowners to implement practices available to NRCS in California, to reduce financial and social burdens caused by wolf-livestock interactions. Staff Contact: Steven Fenaroli; sfenaroli@cfbf.com

Fair Plan Update
The Assembly Committee on Insurance held an oversight hearing regarding the Fair Plan. As you may recall, Farm Bureau sponsored legislation regarding the Fair Plan two years ago SB 505, authored by Senator Susan Rubio-which created a commercial policy clearinghouse to help depopulate Fair Plan policies. The focus of the hearing was testimony from the Fair Plan's President Victoria Roach and the challenges faced by the Fair Plan due to unprecedented policy growth. Ms. Roach shared that the Fair Plan has grown to over 450,000 policies with more than $600 billion in liability exposure. Over the past year, most of that growth has occurred outside of high wildfire risk areas. Suburban community non-renewals are growing at the fastest rate, making up 40% of new Fair Plan policies.

Assemblymembers asked how the Fair Plan expects to be able to depopulate the number of policies. Ms. Roach would not comment on the actions that admitted market insurers will take in response to the Department of Insurance's strategy to restore market competition. However, she noted that sometimes, the Fair Plan combined with a difference-in-conditions policy can cost less than an admitted market policy. This suggests consumers are choosing the Fair Plan based on cost and likely, the Fair Plan costs in those areas need to be increased to disincentivize that. Overall, the growth in suburban Fair Plan policies may indicate a slow path for policies in more rural areas to return to the admitted market through depopulation mechanisms-unless insurers can bring lower-risk suburban policies into the admitted market and have those count towards Fair Plan depopulation goals. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com

SB 444 Moves Forward
SB 444, authored by Senator Melissa Hurtado (D Bakersfield) and sponsored by the California Farm Bureau, passed from the Senate Appropriations Suspense file and is now on the Senate Floor Consent Calendar. This means the bill enjoys bipartisan and unanimous support. SB 444

draws a clear connection between locally grown and raised healthy foods and their important role in nutrition and public health. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com

AB 1156 Advances Without Fiscal Accountability or Key Amendments

AB 1156, authored by Assemblymember Buffy Wicks (D Oakland) passed from the Assembly Committee on Appropriations Suspense File - despite a similar bill by Assemblymember Arambula (AB 2528), having previously been held under submission. AB 1156 allows for the cancellation of a Williamson Act contract in favor of a solar use easement without requiring the landowner meeting their contractual obligation to make an early contract cancellation payment. The bill benefited from a favorable Appropriations Committee analysis that did not specify a cost to implement the bill, despite an analysis last year projecting a multi-million-dollar impact to the General Fund. During a budget crisis year, bills that carry unappropriated, unbudgeted costs typically held in Appropriations Committee. Unfortunately, that did not occur in this case, and so AB 1156 moves to the Assembly floor. Farm Bureau offered amendments to improve the bill by clearly defining "insufficient water supply" and avoiding the negative fiscal impact to the General Fund. However, Assemblymember Wicks rejected those amendments and Farm Bureau remains opposed unless amended. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com

Advanced Clean Fleet/ Zero Emission Forklift

CARB has acknowledged that because they never received authorization for the zero-emission forklift rule, which was passed in Fall 2024, that they will not be enforcing the regulation on any privately-owned or operated fleets nor against any manufacturers or dealerships. It is worth noting that they followed the notice by saying "Because CARB is committed to reducing air pollution to protect public health, we encourage affected industries to continue reducing their emissions and we look forward to continued partnership in these efforts. CARB staff encourages all manufacturers and fleets to voluntarily report in the meantime. Zero-Emission Forklifts (ZEFs) are already widely used and often provide fuel and maintenance cost savings compared to tradition spark-ignition forklifts." Staff Contact: Steven Fenaroli; sfenaroli@cfbf.com

$21 Million Boost to Screwworm Eradication Effort

In an ongoing partnership with Mexico to combat the New World Screwworm (NWS), Secretary Rollins announced the USDA is investing $21 million to renovate an existing fruit fly production facility in Metapa, Mexico to further the long-term goal of eradicating this insect. When operational, this facility will produce 60-100 million additional sterile NWS flies weekly to push the population further south in Mexico. Given the geographic spread of NWS, this additional production capacity will be critical to our response. Staff Contact: Steven Fenaroli; sfenaroli@cfbf.com

AB 491 - California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006: climate goals: natural and working lands

AB 491, authored by Assemblymember Connolly, was held on the Assembly Appropriations Suspense File last Friday and became a two-year bill. This bill aimed to codify the nature-based solutions (NBS) climate targets established in April 2024 by the California Natural Resources Agency pursuant to AB 1757 (2022, C. Garcia). While Farm Bureau is supportive of many of the targets in the NBS document, including targets to conserve a specified number of acres of annual and perennial croplands per year by 2045, and to implement specified acreage amounts of beneficial fire and fuel reduction activities per year by 2045, other targets are discomforting, specifically one to convert 20 percent of the state's conventional farming systems to organic systems by 2045. Farm Bureau staff conveyed multiple concerns to the author's office and to various members of the Legislature, highlighting that many factors control the scale and pace at

which climate smart practices are adopted on-farm or ranch, complicating the ability to achieve climate targets established at a single point in time. Furthermore, staff communicated that increased organic acreage should be market driven, as opposed to statutorily requiring a percentage of farms to transition to organic. Staff Contact: Richard Filgas; rfilgas@cfbf.com

Federal Affairs -

House Passes Reconciliation Package

On May 22nd, the House passed what is now known as the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" (H.R. 1)—a large reconciliation package that would extend tax cuts from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, make significant reforms to the SNAP program, and pass several provisions that would otherwise be included in a traditional Farm Bill (among many other pieces as well). In the Senate, lawmakers are looking to remove significant pieces of the legislation, many of whom believe will include those farm-related programmatic changes. To pass through what is known as the "Byrd Bath," lawmakers will need to be particular on what pieces remain in the bill or not, many of which have been argued to exceed the authority of what reconciliation bills typically allow. This method of legislation requires only a simple majority in the Senate to pass, meaning Republicans can effectively work on the bill by themselves due to their majority. We will continue to update members as their version takes shape. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cfbf.com

MAHA Commission Releases Initial Report

The Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) Commission, spearheaded by Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., released a wide-ranging report two weeks ago on their initial assessment of what they consider a childhood chronic disease crisis. The long-awaited report covered a number of items, but largely focused on several areas of concern, including: the prevalence of "ultra-processed foods," overmedication, lifestyle changes, and potential exposure to dangerous chemicals. While often citing healthy fruits and vegetables from the agricultural industry as a method for combating some of these challenges, the report also listed pesticides as a major area of concern that needs farther assessment on the overall health impacts to children.

Several organizations in the agricultural community pushed back on this messaging, arguing that many of the most commonly used pesticides have been studied, tested, and approved as safe for decades. Calling into question some of the report's validity are recent stories showing that several of the sources were either improperly cited or do not actually exist, suggesting that perhaps artificial intelligence was used in the gathering of data. The White House said a corrected version is being updated to account for minor oversights. In addition, the Commission is supposed to issue a more formal set of recommendations in the next 100 days, but it is largely encouraging new studies to determine the accuracy of some of these claims. Central to many of their arguments are what they see as corporate and industry influence of previous studies, suggesting that their influence has clouded the validity of long-held industry standards. While the Commission did say it will be working closely with public and private partners, no agricultural organizations were consulted in its preparation of the report.
Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cfbf.com

USDA to Spend $200 Million in Support of Timber Production

Last week, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced it would allocate $200 million to boost domestic timber production. This funding follows a March Executive Order from the White House directing USDA to implement a streamlined plan aimed at increasing timber supply for both energy use and forest health. As a result, timber harvesting on federal lands is expected to rise by approximately 25% by 2028. For years, regulatory hurdles have hampered the timber industry

and delayed wildfire mitigation efforts on or near federal lands. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cfbf.com

CAFB Joins in Support of Dairy Workforce Letter
Earlier this month, several Farm Bureaus—including the California Farm Bureau—joined others from the nation's largest dairy states in submitting a letter to the Chairmen of the House and Senate Judiciary Committees. The letter urged Congressional action to expand the H-2A visa program to allow year-round employment eligibility.

This change would open the program to the dairy industry, which is currently excluded due to the non-seasonal nature of dairy work. (H-2A visas are currently limited to temporary, seasonal jobs.) The lack of access for dairy employers—despite ongoing labor shortages—has been a major barrier to previous attempts at comprehensive agricultural labor reform in Congress. The H-2A program is in serious need of reform, including—but not limited to—allowing year-round positions. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl; mviohl@cfbf.com

Member Grant Opportunity: LAMP & SCBGP Funding
USDA has opened up $100 million in grant opportunities for a series of programs that members are encouraged to consider. This includes the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP)—which has three separate components: the Local Food Promotion Program, the Regional Food System Partnerships, and the Farmers Market Promotion Program. More on each can be found here, but please keep in mind most applications are due by June 27th. In addition, roughly $73 million of those funds will go towards the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP), although those funds are diverted through state agencies, with more information expected to come through CDFA later this summer. Staff Contact: Erin Huston, ehuston@cfbf.com

Legal Battle Over Tariffs Takes Shape
While the trade front has been relatively quiet in recent weeks—following a reduction in retaliatory tariffs between the U.S. and China—it has returned to the spotlight amid legal challenges questioning the President's authority to impose the original tariffs. At the center of these cases is the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), which grants the President expanded economic authority during declared national emergencies. The White House has argued that the U.S. trade deficit constitutes such an emergency, justifying the imposition of tariffs. Although the Constitution grants Congress the power over trade policy, that authority has gradually shifted toward the Executive Branch. Opponents argue that the White House exceeded its authority under IEEPA, and have brought forward multiple lawsuits challenging the tariffs.

Last week, a panel from the U.S. Court of International Trade ruled the President overstepped his legal authority and ordered the tariffs to end within 10 days. Meanwhile, a federal court in D.C. issued a narrower preliminary injunction to halt the tariffs within two weeks. However, by the end of the week, an appeals court reversed the first ruling and granted two weeks for both sides to present further arguments. It remains unclear whether these legal challenges will ultimately curb or reinforce the administration's trade powers, but many expect the issue to be resolved by the U.S. Supreme Court. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl; mviohl@cfbf.com