



Member Feedback Opportunity: Forest Service Seeking Examples of Problematic Decisions Impacting the Ag Industry

With the new administration settling in across agencies, the US Forest Service is looking to identify areas where past decisions and regulatory hurdles have negatively affected the agricultural industry. The American Farm Bureau Federation is helping collect these examples, but members are encouraged to keep submissions concise and address the following: decisions that have made it more cumbersome to interact with USFS programs; decisions that have negatively impacted multiple use activities; and decisions that have resulted in reduced land management and/or increased fire risk. You can click here to submit your examples. Please note there is a short turnaround, as the deadline is April 25th. Staff Contact: Erin Huston, ehuston@cfbf.com

House Passes Budget Framework

Two weeks ago, the House of Representatives passed a budget plan by a narrow 216–214 margin. The plan would result in up to $1.5 trillion in cuts, marking a major departure from the Senate-passed version, which proposed only $4 billion in cuts. These differences will need to be reconciled before the legislation can move forward.

The Senate version narrowly passed in a 51–48 vote through the reconciliation process, which bypasses the usual 60-vote threshold required for cloture. However, this process limits what can be included in a reconciliation bill, so additional proposals from the White House will likely need to be introduced separately if they hope to advance further cuts and program extensions..

Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cfbf.com

CAFB Group Travels to DC, Meets with Lawmakers

Last week, nearly two dozen individuals representing California agriculture traveled to the nation's capital for a series of meetings and training sessions. The group included CAFB's executive team, the Leadership Farm Bureau class, several Board members, and additional staff.

They met with AFBF's policy team, sixteen Congressional offices, both California Senators at a constituent gathering, and officials at the Mexican Embassy, among others. The visit was a timely opportunity to discuss trade, while also allowing the group to advocate on workforce challenges, the Farm Bill, and key forestry and public lands issues.

These trips continue to be valuable opportunities to engage lawmakers on the most pressing issues facing California agriculture, with several offices already following up with attendees to schedule in-state meetings. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cfbf.com

USDA to End LFS and LFPA Programs

Last month, USDA announced it would be ending two Biden-era programs that connected local producers with schools and food banks. The Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement (LFS) Program and the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement (LFPA) Program had received over $1 billion in funding to distribute across the states, including California. Both programs were well received by public and private partners, and legislation is now being considered to provide more stable, long-term financial backing. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cfbf.com

US to Withdraw from the Tomato Suspension Agreement

Last week, the US Department of Commerce announced they would be withdrawing from the 2019 Agreement Suspending the Antidumping Investigation on Fresh Tomatoes from Mexico (or, the Tomato Suspension Agreement). In its place will be a 20.91% duty on most imports of Mexican tomatoes. Many organizations, including CAFB, had called for the agreement's termination to protect and promote domestic production, arguing that it effectively shielded Mexican growers from consequences tied to illegal dumping practices. The withdrawal and new duty will take effect on July 14 and represent a promising example of more targeted trade measures available to the federal government. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cfbf.com

Tariffs Delayed, China Back-and-Forth Continues

Just a week after the President announced sweeping tariffs on nearly every country, the administration has hit the pause button following mounting pressure to reverse course. A 90-day delay has been implemented for most of the proposed tariffs, although tensions between the U.S. and China continue to escalate, with both countries imposing new tariffs and other trade restrictions.In the days following the original April 2 announcement, global markets reacted sharply, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average dropping nearly 11% before the pause was announced. Markets remain volatile amid the growing trade conflict between China and the U.S. In 2022, California exported over $1.8 billion in agricultural goods to China, with pistachios, dairy products, and almonds accounting for roughly 60% of that total.

Adding another layer to the developing situation, Governor Gavin Newsom announced last week that the state would be suing the federal government for overstepping its constitutional authority on tariffs. CAFB continues to engage with offices in Washington, D.C., urging caution and advocating for more targeted trade measures that support California and U.S. agriculture. If you have personal experiences or impacts to share related to these trade actions with China, please don't hesitate to reach out. These insights are critical for assessing short-term effects on our industry. Staff Contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cfbf.com



Priority State Water Legislation for 2025 Advances

With several weeks of policy committee hearings now completed in the California Legislature, the California Farm Bureau has narrowed its focus to a list of key water-related bills to support or oppose in 2025. Most of these bills have active coalition efforts. To join a coalition on any of these measures, please contact Alex Biering at abiering@cfbf.com.

AB 263 (Asm. Rogers, D-Humboldt)
Would codify emergency regulations adopted annually by the State Water Board for the Scott and Shasta River watersheds until permanent instream flow requirements are adopted.
Sponsored by: Karuk Tribe, Yurok Tribe, and Coastkeepers Alliance
Status: Passed Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee on 4/8
CAFB Position: Oppose
Coalition: ACWA, CalChamber, Western Growers, California Municipal Utilities Association, others

AB 362 (Asm. Ramos, D-Highland)
Would recognize tribal water uses as "beneficial uses" of state waters and delay adoption of the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan Update.
Status: Passed Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee on 4/8
CAFB Position: Oppose
Coalition: ACWA, Western Growers, CMUA, others

AB 430 (Asm. Alanis, R-Modesto)
Would require the State Water Board to release an economic and environmental analysis when adopting non-fee emergency regulations for two or more consecutive years.
Status: Scheduled for Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee on 4/29
CAFB Position: Sponsor and Support

AB 929 (Asm. Connolly, D-Marin)
Would prohibit groundwater sustainability agencies in unmanaged subbasins from imposing fees or pumping limits on small community water systems serving disadvantaged communities and private managed wetlands.
Status: Scheduled for Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee on 4/29
Note: Reintroduction of vetoed AB 828 (2024)
CAFB Position: Oppose

AB 1146 (Asm. Papan, D-San Mateo)
Would prohibit the release of stored reservoir water under “false pretenses” and grant the State Water Board interim relief powers.
Status: Scheduled for Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee on 4/29
CAFB Position: Oppose

AB 1413 (Asm. Papan, D-San Mateo)
Would make findings in groundwater sustainability plans binding in court if the basin enters adjudication.
Status: Passed Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee on 4/8

CAFB Position: Oppose

AB 1466 (Asm. Hart, D-Santa Barbara)
Would establish a "substantial evidence" standard for parties challenging the actions of a groundwater sustainability agency with an approved plan during groundwater adjudications.
Status: Scheduled for Assembly Judiciary Committee on 4/8
CAFB Position: Oppose

SB 72 (Sen. Caballero, D-Merced)
Would require the California Water Plan and future updates to include recommendations for meeting beneficial uses, achieving storage targets, accounting for agricultural needs, and conducting a cost-benefit analysis.
Status: Passed Senate Natural Resources & Water Committee on 4/8
Sponsored by: California Municipal Utilities Association
CAFB Position: Support

SB 601 (Sen. Allen, D-Santa Monica)
Would create a new water quality permitting regime for "nexus waters" and allow private citizens to bring legal action on water quality violations.
Status: Passed Senate Environmental Quality Committee on 4/2
Coalition: Over 100 organizations in opposition
CAFB Position: Oppose

Consumer Watchdog Sues Lara

The consumer advocacy group Consumer Watchdog filed a lawsuit this week challenging Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara's 2023 agreement with insurers regarding financial responsibility for the FAIR Plan. As previously discussed, the FAIR Plan is financially backed by insurers in the regulated market—meaning those companies handle claims when the FAIR Plan lacks sufficient cash reserves. That scenario has materialized following the Palisades and Eaton fires. The FAIR Plan currently faces over $4 billion in claim losses, with only $1 billion in cash available to pay them.

The Department of Insurance reached an agreement with insurers last year requiring them to cover the first $2 billion in unpaid claims. For the remaining losses, insurers may assess their policyholders to cover 50% of the gap—likely through a one-time direct assessment. While the Department of Insurance has declined to comment on the pending litigation, it is defending the agreement as a necessary step to prevent further exits from the admitted insurance market in California. As of now, insurers have not confirmed whether they intend to pass along Palisades and Eaton-related losses to ratepayers.

In response to this issue, the California Farm Bureau supports AB 226, authored by Assemblymembers Lisa Calderon (D–City of Industry) and David Alvarez (D–Chula Vista). The bill would authorize California's Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank (iBank) to issue bonds for the FAIR Plan to help cover claim losses—offering an alternative to directly assessing ratepayers. The bill is advancing with bipartisan support and is currently on the Assembly Floor. It includes an urgency clause, which would allow it to take effect immediately upon the Governor's signature. Staff Contact: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com

AB 226 Offers Bond-Backed Relief for FAIR Plan Wildfire Claims

Related to this issue, California Farm Bureau supports AB 226, authored by Assemblymembers Lisa Calderon (D City of Industry) and David Alvarez (D Chula Vista) which would authorize California's iBank to issue bonds that would be available to the FAIR Plan to cover these claim losses, as an alternative to passing costs through to ratepayers. The bill is moving with bipartisan support and currently is on the Assembly Floor with an urgency clause so that it could take effect immediately upon signing by the Governor. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com