

Food and ag bond proposal would boost the field-to-food bank supply chain

A new proposal in the Legislature aims to support farmworkers and disadvantaged farmers while promoting climate-resilient farming practices. The measure also applies lessons learned from the pandemic to policies for bolstering the supply chain to food banks and food programs to better prepare the state for the next natural disaster.

“It’s time that we invest, it’s time that we improve and build a foundation for a better food system here in California to one that is more resilient, one that is more sustainable, and one that is more just,” said Assembly Agriculture Chair Robert Rivas of Hollister, author of the measure, **Assembly Bill 125**.

The title of the bill encompasses the broad range of provisions within the proposal. The Equitable Economic Recovery, Healthy Food Access, Climate Resilient Farms and Worker Protection Bond Act would put a \$3.1 billion bond measure on the November 2022 ballot.

The bond would allocate \$570 million to CDFA for increasing capacity for emergency food distribution through investments in cooling, storage and processing infrastructure. Another \$270 million would address food infrastructure, specifically in procuring California-grown foods for local communities. More than \$1 billion would support food access, infrastructure for school nutrition programs, emergency food grants and senior nutrition programs.



Food bank boxed products

“We look to connect small to mid-scale producers with people experiencing hunger through system changes in food production, processing, distribution, marketing and access to healthy foods

with a focus on equity,” said Andy Naja-Riese, CEO of the Agricultural Institute of Marin. “We have within our grasp the ability to eliminate hunger, and we can do this through equitable access to real food grown and produced sustainably and with organic practices.”

Through the bill’s many provisions, organic agriculture is prioritized in the incentives grants and promoted as a sustainable farming practice. Farmers transitioning to organic practices would benefit through \$35 million in grants for technical assistance.

The measure builds on CDFA’s suite of climate-smart incentives programs and would add nearly \$300 million for promoting healthy soils and water use efficiency. The recycling department would gain \$200 million for improving composting facilities and building food recovery projects to drive the composting.

The focus on food needs bridges the urban-rural divide often found in agriculture.



Asm. Robert Rivas, D-Hollister

“The reality is that there's a lot of connection between what's happening in our rural communities and our farming communities,” said Asm. Ash Kalra of San Jose, a co-author of AB 125. “Members of these communities rely on the resources from both regional and statewide farms, as well as local farms, to be able to feed their families.”

Socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers have a prominent role in the bill as well. Rivas hopes to allocate \$125 million to these communities for improving access to agricultural land.

Butte County rancher and former president of the California Cattlemen’s Association Dave Daley praised the \$125 million in grants for conservation easements to support the governor’s 30x30 conservation goal, as well as the \$10 million that would support grazing for wildfire prevention. Daley describe the “horrific fires” in his region that took most of his herd, destroyed the homes of friends, and took the lives of residents in nearby Paradise.

He was excited to see support for regional food processing, having seen many smaller local meatpacking plants forced to shut down over the years.

Rivas represents a district along the Central Coast with a large farmworker population, and this is reflected in the bill.

“The pandemic has elevated the need for the professional farmworkers and how they've been negatively impacted by COVID-19,” said Cesar Lara, executive director of the Monterey Bay Central Labor Council. “We can no longer take the health and safety of farmworkers for granted.”

AB 125 proposes \$450 million for developing farmworker housing units and \$50 million for improving indoor air quality and energy efficiency issues related to the use of swamp coolers in areas facing the worst air pollution in the country.

“These swamp coolers bring all the air pollution from the outside to inside the houses,” said Nayamin Martinez, executive director of the Central California Environmental Justice Network. “They do not have proper filtration or ventilation systems.”

Recalling the scramble in 2020 for N95 masks to meet new state air quality requirements when wildfire is present, the bill calls for \$25 million to stockpile PPE. The State Water Resources Control Board would dispense another \$100 million in grants for safe drinking water projects in farmworker communities. The bill would also support groundwater sustainability through \$75 million in grants to local agencies, technical assistance to farmers, and support for small and mid-sized farms and socially disadvantaged farmers in the valley and coastal regions.

Straying further from the bill’s central themes, the bond would allocate \$100 million to CDFA to help state and county fairgrounds recover from the pandemic shutdowns. It would also improve the facilities to support emergency operations to the fairgrounds as well as access for local communities and additional facilities for meat processing and commercial kitchens. While the Newsom administration has allocated support to state-affiliated fairs in recent budget proposals, advocates have pushed for county fairs to be included as well.

Rivas stressed that the measure goes beyond recovery and extends to resilience for climate impacts and societal challenges.

“We cannot go back to the way things were,” he said. “We need to ensure that our food system stays healthy—especially healthy in a crisis.”

Firefighters struggle to save people when livestock is at stake

In response to rising wildfires, the Newsom administration and CDFA have added more resources to support the evacuation of livestock during emergencies. Yet gaps still remain, and State Senator Steven Glazer of Orinda hopes to improve California’s disaster response through his bill.

During a Senate Agriculture Committee hearing last week on Glazer’s [Senate Bill 547](#), Christy Bouma, director of governmental affairs for California Professional Firefighters, testified that firefighting crews must focus their efforts on protecting property and suppressing fire, and are not equipped to handle large animals.

“With recent wildfires, it's shown that individuals are much less likely to follow evacuation orders when they're concerned about the welfare of their domestic animals and livestock,” said Bouma.

Veterinarian Jay Kerr, who has been the Northern California coordinator of the California Veterinary Medical Reserve Corps for more than 12 years, agreed.



Fire near livestock.

“Experience has shown that many people—and I would emphasize *many* people—will put themselves, and unfortunately first responders, at higher risk if their animals are not cared for,” said Kerr. “SB 547 will benefit the citizens and animals of California.”

Glazer explained that the state program for the evacuation and care of animals has struggled for at least a decade. He recognized that along with CDFA, some volunteer programs do this work as well.

“But they're just volunteers,” said Glazer. “There's no steady leadership that I think we need at this moment in time.”

Twice in the past five years, California has had to call on a veterinary emergency team from Texas A&M University to help care for animals.

“This bill would give California a world class veterinary emergency team to help the state prepare for disasters and respond to them,” said Glazer.



Asm. Steven Glazer, D-Orinda

He proposed establishing an emergency team at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine to work in coordination with CDFA and the Office of Emergency Services and roll out mobile clinics staffed by veterinarians and students during disasters. UC Davis already has a volunteer veterinary team for this—“essentially a student club,” according to Glazer. But their response has been short-term and limited.

The program would also conduct research and “bring together disparate and fragmented groups” throughout the state to provide training. Glazer expected the need

for such a program to continually grow, as California is prone to disasters and catastrophic wildfires are getting worse.

The bill passed with bipartisan support and will be considered by the Senate Education Committee.

“As a pet owner and someone who's lost property in the Creek Fire, this is a fantastic thing,” said Senator Susan Eggman of Stockton.

Farm Bureau: US farmers can get greener, but they'll need support

Agricultural greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S., when adjusted for productivity, are down by 24% over the past 30 years, but farmers can do better if Congress and the Biden administration amp up assistance, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation's chief economist, John Newton.

Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack and lawmakers are looking at ways to accelerate the growth of ag carbon markets as a way to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, but Newton says there is a lot that farmers and ranchers can do to make their operations greener with the tools and programs

already available to them — so long as Congress agrees to commit more funds and resources to the efforts.

Congress protected the integrity of the two primary working lands programs in the 2018 farm bill — the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program — but it did not increase funding. Lawmakers only preserved the conservation funding level of the 2014 farm bill (\$60 billion over 10 years) and drained money from CSP for other programs.

Working lands programs are very popular with farmers and key to making farming greener, but there is a shortage of USDA personnel needed to provide technical assistance, and the department continues to struggle to fill openings.



John Newton, AFBF

“There’s a backlog of projects to be approved,” said Newton, who stressed it may come down to the next farm bill to get the resources needed “to significantly expand some of these programs. ... We’ve been spending billions of dollars every year on working lands programs, on land retirement, on EQIP.”

In 2020 alone, CSP helped support conservation tillage, crop rotation, cover crops, nutrient and pest management and other activities on 14 million acres, according to data gathered by Newton.

Most programs need to be scaled up if farmers are going to be able to make their operations even greener, but getting more funding is always difficult, Newton said.

Senate Agriculture Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., suggested in January that an upcoming climate bill could be used to put significant new funding into conservation programs, but Democratic leaders have said little since then about their plans for the legislation. If Democrats use tax increases to pay for the bill, they would risk losing the support of major farm groups. AFBF has indicated that it wouldn't support a partisan climate bill.

Speaking at this week's *Agri-Pulse* Ag and Food Policy Summit, the top Republican on the House Agriculture Committee, Pennsylvania Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson, said it is too early to know how much additional money may be needed for conservation programs until the committee reviews the impact of the 2018 farm bill. **“That's how we'll determine how we make decisions on how we improve the conservation programs, which we know are very important tools,” he said.**

While nearly half of all farmland is no-till or reduced till, expansion is not always straightforward. Land and farming conditions are widely diverse and technical assistance needs are just as varied. Farmers’ needs in Arizona or California, where producers can often plant two or three crops in a year, are much different than they are in Iowa or Illinois.

“It’s not one-size-fits-all,” he said.

While more funds for programs like EQIP and CSP will be important to back up farmers’ efforts, improving forest management is also important to make sure all of that work and all of the billions of dollars in government funds are not wasted, according to both Newton and Vilsack.

Forestry is the biggest carbon sink in the United States, sequestering 750 million metric tons every year, said Newton, who stressed that represents about 12% of U.S. GHG emissions.

That's a fact that's not lost on lawmakers. Just last week, Democratic and Republican lawmakers in both houses of Congress introduced legislation to help the U.S. Forest Service plant 1.2 billion new trees in national forests over the next 10 years.

“Restoring our national forests will not only support our hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation economies, it’s also part of the solution to the climate crisis,” Stabenow said as she and other lawmakers introduced the Repairing Existing Public Land by Adding Necessary Trees Act (REPLANT). “Planting trees is a cost-effective way to draw carbon out of the air, restore our public lands, and create jobs.”

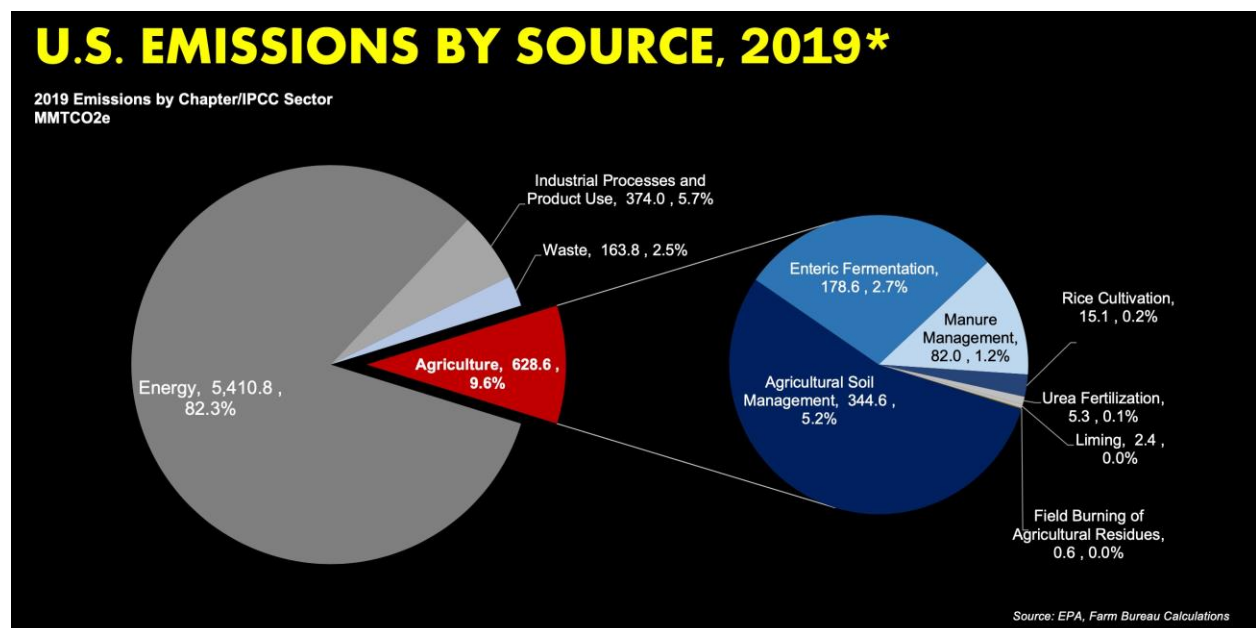
But good forest management — something that has been lacking for years — may be even more important than planting new trees, according to Vilsack and Newton, both of whom are participants in this week's *Agri-Pulse* summit.

“We can do everything in the food and ag space to improve our carbon footprint to get to net-zero as President (Joe) Biden has indicated his goal is ... but if we don’t deal with forests in the proper way, and reduce the amount of horrific fires that we’ve had, all of the carbon that we’re sequestering will go up in smoke as those forests burn,” Vilsack said Monday.

A program where the two differ is the Conservation Reserve Program. Vilsack explained that incentives for the set-aside program can be improved to lure more acres into the program without disrupting the marketplace.

But Newton says CRP is one government program not worth expanding.

“A set-aside is not going to accomplish our goals,” he told *Agri-Pulse*. **“A massive expansion of the CRP is not going to do it. ... If you put 50 million acres in a set-aside program, all you’re going to do is provide incentives to accelerate deforestation elsewhere. Deforestation in Brazil — they’ve taken out 100 million acres over the last few decades.”**



About 22 million acres were enrolled in CRP at the end of fiscal 2020. Former House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson, D-Minn., proposed legislation in December to increase CRP acreage to 50 million.

But even though U.S. farmers won't be planting under CRP, those crops will be grown somewhere else around the world, Newton argued. "They're going to do it in Eastern Europe, Russia and South America."

The U.S., with its set-asides, saw its percentage of harvested corn, soybeans and wheat acreage increase 6% from 2006 through 2020, according to Newton's data. Meanwhile, Brazil's acreage increased by 66% and Russia's acreage increased by 36% over the same time period. That data was given to *Agri-Pulse* in the form of a graph entitled "Set Aside Programs are Not a Solution."

(Editor's note: For more on the economics of carbon farming, listen to Newton and a panel of farmers speak later today, the third day of the Agri-Pulse Ag & Food Policy Summit.)

Farmworker advocates seek more enforcement of labor laws

Farm labor advocates are calling on the Biden administration to focus enforcement efforts on violations of labor laws that occur during and after recruitment of farmworkers to pick crops in the U.S.

In particular, they say Labor Department investigators need to look at the role played by farm labor contractors, or FLCs, which have become more popular in recent years as foreign competition intensifies and the demand for labor increases.

A recent report from the Economic Policy Institute on farm labor enforcement trends over the past 20 years found that more than 70% of federal labor standards investigations of farms conducted by the department's Wage and Hour Division detected violations — "things like wage theft and inadequate housing, as well as other violations of laws designed to protect farmworkers."

In addition, about 11% of WHD agricultural investigations found violations of H-2A regulations.

"The H-2A program doubled in size over the past six years, and the number of violations rose to 12,000 in FY19, when almost 5,000 H-2A and U.S. workers were owed back wages for [H-2A] violations," according to a summary of the data by UC-Davis's Rural Migration News. "Over 200,000 H-2A workers fill 10% of the jobs on U.S. crop farms, and H-2A violations are likely to rise as the number of H-2A guest workers increases."

And the EPI report said FLCs, "the fastest-growing segment of farm employment, are the worst violators, accounting for one-fourth of all federal wage and hour violations detected in agriculture and one-half of violations detected in two of the biggest states for farm employment, California and Florida."

Three of four WHD investigations of FLC's find violations of H-2A regulations, the Fair Labor Standards Act or the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act, the major law protecting farmworkers, the EPI report said.

The Equitable Food Initiative, which works with growers and food companies to try to improve working conditions on farms, says it will be releasing a report soon finding that

nearly 90% of workers “encountered unexpected fees in their journey from their communities to the farm gate,” says Kenton Harmer, managing director at EFI.

The survey involved 1,400 workers from 24 “sending communities” in Mexico, Harmer said. Under the H-2A program, workers are not supposed to pay recruitment fees or other costs such as visas, transportation or housing. “All of those fees under the H-2A program are expected to be borne by the employer,” Harmer says.



Kenton Harmer, EFI

“It’s really just the Wild West out there, where you have a whole bunch of people combing around these smaller and more remote communities — not just in Mexico anymore, but even into Central America” to deliver workers into an H-2A program or the Canadian guest worker program, Harmer says.” And with the labor shortage, there’s much more opportunity for bad actors to be taking advantage of workers.”

He said one story involved a bus “literally just pulling off to the side of the road and saying, we’re not driving another inch until everybody forks out more money,” Harmer says. The result is that some workers arrive in the U.S. in debt.

“Now you’re on the side of the road — well, guess what, the same person that is asking for the money might just be the same person that’s able to lend you the money to pay them,” he says. “Out of desperation and circumstances they’re agreeing to these transactions that are not in their best interest. And it’s not in the best interest of the farm that they ultimately arrive at.”

LeAnne Ruzzamenti, EFI’s director of marketing, says the individuals they are indebted to may or may not be affiliated with an FLC; they could be an upstream individual in a long string that the FLC may not know about.

Workers who are facing a debt are more likely to ignore food safety issues they might come across while picking, Harmer explains.

Michael Marsh, CEO of the National Council on Agricultural Employers, says he hasn’t heard the type of story told by Harmer, but said “ethical behavior is everyone’s business. And NCAE focuses its work to educate folks on compliance. From our executive committee’s viewpoint, we’re partners in compliance with the agencies.”

Marsh relayed an account of a person in a community in Mexico selling H-2A jobs for \$1,000, armed with paperwork bearing the letterhead of a farmer in Washington state, who was unaware of the scheme.

“This individual was not tied to any farm labor contractor in the United States,” Marsh says. “He was just ripping these guys off. And that type of thing can never happen and should never happen.”

Nevertheless, he says, “Farm labor contractors are going to be a continuing growth area for seasonal assistance,” he says. “I don’t see that going away.”

“The explosion of foreign production, competing with domestic production, is making it much tougher for smaller operators in the United States to sustain themselves and stay in business,” he says.

The way Harmer sees it, the current situation has growers over a barrel. “There’s so much economic power that now sits in recruitment agencies and farm labor contractors. We have large growers that are really at the mercy of these agencies, who deliver them the workers when they need them, and there is not currently much visibility into that segment of the market.”



Michael Marsh, NCAE

Growers are not ignorant of the situation with FLCs, says Guadalupe (Lupe) Sandoval, founder and executive director of the California Farm Labor Contractor Association. “I’m a believer that a farm labor contractor, a dirty farm labor contractor cannot exist without a dirty grower that hires them,” he says. “Because that dirty contractor will be able to come in and compete cheaper than a legitimate contractor.”

“It’s unfortunate that in agriculture in the United States, we rely on low-cost immigrant labor,” a large percentage of which is undocumented, he says. “And when you’re undocumented, you’re probably an easy target for certain unscrupulous employers out there.”

But like Marsh, Sandoval says he tries to educate his membership, about half of whom he describes as “tiny, mom-and-pop operations working out of a pickup truck and a kitchen table,” about the importance of compliance.

“As an association, we’re among the few groups that are doing continuing education for these FLCs,” he says. “If you’re going to do things properly, there are plenty of opportunities to have a very prosperous business in California. Unfortunately, there are too many people that found they can make money even faster doing it illegitimately who haven’t been caught, or they haven’t been penalized heavily enough.”

Sandoval says that lately, he’s heard a lot of complaints from his members about FLCs who operate on a cash basis.

“When they’re paying cash, they’re not making the deductions,” he says. “They’re running double books. They’re not paying workers comp insurance on those employees, they’re not paying taxes, unemployment insurance, or any of those other fees. And they can offer their services at a much cheaper rate to those growers. And so, it’s an unfair competition out there.”

Asked whether more enforcement is the right answer, he says it has to be “smart, targeted enforcement.”

“Go after the bad players — don’t just go after everybody out there,” he says, pointing to the EPI report, which found that the vast majority of violations are committed by “bad apples.”

For instance, the report found that in California, 10 FLCs accounted for more than 25% of the 19,000 total violations in the state and 22% of the back wages owed as a result of those violations.

“They’ve got names and numbers” in the report, Sandoval says. “They know who’s dirty out there.”

Marsh agrees that violators need to be rooted out because it’s important there be fair competition, but pushes back against the notion that most farms are violating the law in some way. Complaint-based investigations such as those conducted by WHD are likely to find more violations, he said.

He also said the 1.1% inspection rate decried by EPI is well above the Internal Revenue Service audit rate of 0.45% and is line with inspection rates for other businesses.

“Here in the United States, they do have pretty extensive labor protections under our laws, which leads to the situation where you do have the Wage and Hour Division doing audits at nearly three times the rate of the Internal Revenue Service,” he says.

Justin Flores of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO, in North Carolina, however, says “it used to be that [the Labor Department] knew that these were problematic people. So, they tried their best to go investigate each one of them. Now, there’s just too many of them — they’re too big, and they’re on too many farms.”



Justin Flores, Farm Labor Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO

Workers, however, are often reluctant to speak up, advocates say.

David Weil, former director of the Wage and Hour Division during the Obama administration, said in a webinar on the EPI report that it highlights “the fear of reprisals and retaliation that pervade this industry. You cannot have effective investigations if workers are frightened to speak to investigators.”

He said the WHD budget has essentially been flatlined since 2010. During the Obama administration, “we were able to have a peak of 1,100 investigators,” he said. “Right now, there are less than 780 investigators in the field,” which he called “a profound resource problem.”

But Weil said “it’s not just investigations, it’s not even just targeting and investigations. It’s a broader, more comprehensive approach of trying to change the factors that lead to such pervasive noncompliance.”

Lawmakers plot expansion of child feeding programs

Lawmakers are looking to pass the first child nutrition reauthorization bill in more than a decade this year by building on the political momentum behind measures to expand access to federally funded meals during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Senate Ag Committee Chair Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich. (Photo: Joy Philippi)

The Senate Agriculture Committee, which will hold a hearing on child nutrition programs on Thursday, is expected to move legislation this spring, with an eye to get a bill enacted by the fall, according to sources that have been briefed on the committee's plans.

Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., hasn't laid out her plans for the bill, but the committee's top Republican, John Boozman of Arkansas, has made clear that he wants the bill to be bipartisan and has signaled he's open to expanding some programs. In the House, the bill is under the jurisdiction of the Education and Labor Committee.

What's not at all clear is where the money will come from. One potential source: a climate-infrastructure bill — or package of bills — that would be funded through tax increases.

“That’s part of the whole negotiation,” Stabenow told *Agri-Pulse*, when asked how any expansion of child nutrition programs would be funded. “We certainly need to be doing that. We not only need to make sure children have healthy food during the school year but the summer as well.”

The bill would reauthorize the national school lunch and breakfast, and summer meal programs for low-income children, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition assistance programs. The suite of tools were last reauthorized in 2010 when the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act was enacted by a Democratic Congress and signed into law by President Barack Obama.

Boozman, speaking to the annual Anti-Hunger Policy Conference, indicated he is particularly interested in expanding access to the summer meals program as well as building on a program initiated by the Trump administration started during the pandemic in partnership with PepsiCo and the McLane Global logistics company to deliver meals directly to children in rural areas.

The Summer Food Service Program “is hamstrung by rules that dictate a one-size-fits-all solution, requiring children to travel to a central location and eat their meals together,” said Boozman. “In rural areas, where roughly 3 million low-income children live, the closest site could be several miles away.”

Meanwhile, the School Nutrition Association and anti-hunger advocates have been urging Congress to make free school meals available to more students, either by making all students eligible for free meals, regardless of income, or by expanding a “community eligibility” provision that enables all students in high-poverty schools to qualify for free meals.

"We know that there are a lot of kids who are not eligible for free meals but are still living in households that are having trouble putting food on the table," said Crystal FitzSimons, director of school and out-of-school time programs for the Food Research and Action Center.

There's now a precedent for providing government-funded meals to all kids: In the wake of the COVID-19 lockdowns, USDA authorized shuttered schools to distribute free meals to all children for free, regardless of income.

"We ... have a lot of really important lessons learned over the last year with the child nutrition programs," said FitzSimons.

Unpaid meal debts are a related issue. Multiple bills were introduced in the last Congress to prevent schools from "shaming" students who are unable to pay for their meals or who have outstanding meal debt. The bills included the No Shame at School Act, sponsored by Senate Ag member Tina Smith, D-Minn., and Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn., which would retroactively reimburse schools for unpaid lunch fees and bar collection agencies going after meal debts.

Stabenow alluded to the issue while speaking at the anti-hunger event. She said Congress should ensure that "children have access to healthy food at breakfast, at lunch, after school, frankly whenever they're hungry, and that they aren't shamed over a meal debt."

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, talking to the same conference, stopped short of endorsing universal free school meals, but he suggested making a case that it would help address the nation's obesity and diabetes problems.

"It's up to all of us to evaluate the benefits of creating a universal free program to specifically identify what those benefits (of free school meals) would be and weigh them against the costs associated, so that you can make the case to any skeptic that at the end of the day we would be better off," he said.

There also will be an effort this year, led in part by the chairwoman of the House Appropriations Committee, Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., to expand eligibility for WIC, which served 6.9 million women and children in fiscal 2020.

Last week, she and other House members introduced the Wise Investment in Children Act, which would increase the eligibility age to a child's sixth birthday and extend postpartum eligibility to two years for all mothers. Postpartum eligibility now ends at six months after childbirth or the end of the pregnancy. The WIC Act is one of a number of marker bills that lawmakers are introducing in hope that the provisions can get included in the reauthorization measure.

School nutrition standards also could be in play, although schools may oppose increasing them.

Public health advocates including the American Heart Association, American Academy of Pediatrics and the Center for Science in the Public Interest are sending a letter to lawmakers on Thursday that will urge Congress to tighten nutrition standards for school meals. The letter doesn't mention specific issues to address, but some of the groups behind the letter want USDA to reduce sodium limits and, for the first time, restrict added sugars.

"Science-based nutrition standards have been shown to decrease childhood overweight and obesity, decrease disparities in access to healthy food, improve nutrition, and can lower health costs," the letter says. "The next reauthorization must not only protect the current standards, but empower the U.S. Department of Agriculture to update the standards to align with the recently-released Dietary Guidelines for Americans and provide resources to help schools successfully transition back to following the evidenced-based meal pattern."

The witnesses at Thursday's Senate Ag hearing will include a representative of the pediatricians' group as well as the School Nutrition Association.

From the other direction, the dairy industry wants Congress to authorize the use of whole milk, including flavored versions.

It's possible that Vilsack could act on his own to increase school nutrition standards under authority provided by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.

At a recent National Press Club event, Vilsack noted that the existing standards were based on the 2010 federal dietary guidelines, which have since been updated twice.

"We need to continue to look for a multitude of ways, whether it's sugar, whether it's sodium or fat or whatever it might be ... to make sure that we are providing a nutritious meal," Vilsack said.

The 2015 guidelines added a new limit on added sugars of 10% of total daily calories. The 2020 guidelines, issued in December, maintained the 10% limit despite a recommendation by the Trump administration's science advisers to lower it to 6%.



Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack

"The question is how can we adjust and make sure that whatever we're doing on the school meal side is consistent with those 2020 guidelines," Vilsack said.

Other marker bills that have either been introduced this year or in the last Congress include:

- The recently introduced, bipartisan Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act would allow flavored and unflavored whole milk to be offered in schools. The sponsors include Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson, the ranking Republican on House Ag, but more importantly a senior member of the Education and Labor Committee. "Whole milk provides a valuable way for children to obtain dairy's nutritional benefits as part of a healthy eating pattern," said Jim Mulhern, president and CEO of the National Milk Producers Federation.
- The School Food Modernization Act, also newly introduced and bipartisan, that would provide grants for upgrading kitchen infrastructure and buying new equipment such as ovens, steamers and stoves. The bill is intended to help schools provide healthier meals and fresh products. "School kitchens must have the appropriate equipment to be able to provide children the foods they need," said Robert Guenther, senior vice president of the United Fresh Produce Association.
- The Farm to School Act of 2021, which would expand a program that has provided \$52 million in grants since 2013 to encourage local food procurement school meals, school

gardens, and food and agriculture education. The bill would mandate \$15 million in annual funding and increase the maximum grant to \$250,000. The House measure's co-sponsors include Nebraska Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, the top Republican on the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee.

- The Kids Eat Local Act, which was introduced in the last Congress and is intended to make it easier for schools to implement a preference for locally grown foods. Schools could specify that products should be “locally grown,” “locally raised” or “locally caught” and then award the purchase contract to the lowest bidder that can meet that specification. The bill's Senate sponsors included Senate Ag member Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio.
- The Small Farm to School Act, another bill that could be reintroduced this year, would create a pilot program in which schools would be reimbursed at a higher rate for sourcing food from local farms.
- The Summer Meals Act, reintroduced in the House in February, would expand eligibility for USDA's summer meals program.

Is more money in your pocket driving meat and poultry consumption?

Domestic meat and poultry consumption rose again in 2020 despite the COVID-19 pandemic and widespread disruptions to restaurants and food service, and the industry is watching to see if stimulus checks and the ongoing economic recovery can boost sales again this year.

The industry watched domestic consumption plunge after the 2008-2009 economic crisis, dropping from more than 220 pounds per person to nearly 200 pounds by 2014, but Americans have been finding their taste for meat again even as new plant-based alternatives started hitting the market.

In 2020, Americans consumed an average of 96.2 pounds of chicken, 58.4 pounds of beef, 52 pounds of pork, and 1.3 pounds of lamb, according to USDA. All of those were increases over 2017.

By comparison, in 2017, they ate 91.1 pounds of chicken, 57 pounds of beef, 50.2 pounds of pork, and 1.1 pounds of lamb. Turkey consumption was the only meat that saw a decline, going from 16.5 pounds in 2017 to 15.8 pounds in 2020.

USDA Chief Economist Seth Meyer said disposable income went up last year, providing an interesting data point to watch to determine if there is another increase that leads to increased meat consumption this year.

“Who knows how that stimulus turns into meat consumption,” Meyer told *Agri-Pulse*. “But those folks do need that strength of domestic demand that they saw last year.” Meyer asked whether once stimulus checks stop, does the industry then rely on gross domestic product to increase demand?



Seth Meyer, USDA

Last Wednesday, some 90 million economic stimulus payments were distributed to Americans, with millions more payments going out in the coming weeks, according to the Internal Revenue Service.

Meyer said the industry also needs solid export demand to use up some of the meat it's producing.

Tom Super, spokesperson for the National Chicken Council, said the rise in chicken consumption over the last few years is due to people buying more chicken wings and the “chicken sandwich wars” by food service companies.

“We’ve come to the conclusion that chicken wings are pandemic-proof food,” Super told *Agri-Pulse*. “We’ve seen consumption skyrocket in terms of the wings Americans are eating.” Traditional pizza and wing restaurants were built for takeout, he said, so they didn’t have to change their business model much when the pandemic shut everything down.

NCC estimates Americans ate about 31 billion wing segments in 2020. Consumption of that specific cut has seen a steady 1% to 2% increase each year since 2017. On Super Bowl weekend alone this past year, Americans devoured an estimated 1.42 billion wings.

Super said online home delivery services have also helped boost sales, and he hopes chicken consumption will surpass 100 pounds per person by 2022.

Meanwhile, the number of people who are eating beef at least once a week rose in 2020 despite the pandemic, said Shawn Darcy, senior director of market research at the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association. He said a lot of that was driven by the retail sector as people cooked more meals at home during the pandemic.

“There is a lot more volume, about 10% higher volume sold over this last year, which amounted to over \$9 billion in sales growth in the fresh meat department alone,” he said. Darcy noted \$6 billion of that was beef specifically.

Most of the retail sales are due to ground beef, which he said makes up about 40% of the volume.

Darcy said people likely won’t want to cook at home as much once pandemic restrictions loosen. He said approximately 61% of yearly sales are from food service. This year that number is closer to 55%.

“So, what does that look like for 2021? Does that fall in the 58% to 59% range instead of 61%?” he said. “Knowing that this is starting out a little slow, we would expect retail to take some of that (percentage) but eventually it probably will normalize.”

A separate report, issued by FMI and the Meat Institute Foundation and conducted by 210 Analytics, suggests that consumer acceptance of meat may be growing, with 94% saying they buy meat because it provides high quality protein.

“Americans feel better than ever about choosing meat as part of healthy, balanced diets. With COVID-19 deepening demand for convenient, affordable food that tastes good and matches Americans’ values, meat fits the bill,” noted NAMI President and CEO Julie Anna Potts.

Rick Stein, FMI's vice president of fresh foods, said as consumers do more cooking at home, "their confidence in cooking and preparing meat has increased."

"Further analysis also shows convenient meal solutions are key and that food retailers have opportunities to provide more choices, along with more information and education on consumer priorities like nutrition and meal preparation — building up what we call consumers' Meat IQ," he said.

Tara Dugan, director of consumer insights for the National Pork Board, said especially over the last year, pork sales have seen growth in both value and volume. According to research by Information Resources Inc., fresh pork sales for 2020 were up 18% by value and 11% in volume, she said.

For 2021, COVID-19 vaccination rates will play a role in demand shifts as people become more mobile, she said.

"We have seen that the year is off to a good start for fresh meat and fresh pork, but as folks start to get back out, we're likely going to see some of those behaviors shift over to food service," she said.

Dugan said the pandemic has also increased consumers' understanding of how to cook meat; they've become more comfortable preparing it after having spent so much time in the kitchen over the last year.

One year later: Food banks rise to pandemic challenges, reap benefits of increased hunger awareness

This story is the fourth installment in a series that will run in Agri-Pulse this month exploring how various facets of the food and agriculture industries adjusted to the COVID-19 pandemic. The series has also explored the impact of the virus on rural broadband, the nation's ag workers, and supply and demand issues in the livestock sector.

When schools, restaurants, hotels, and other places abruptly closed their doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic a year ago, children who relied on free meals at school suddenly had none. Many workers immediately lost their incomes. People were thrust into food insecurity, often for the first time. In the early days and weeks, demand at the nation's food banks swelled. It's gone down and up over the year, and in many places remains higher today than the baseline before the pandemic.

Last year, the Greater Cleveland Food Bank distributed 9 million more pounds of food than it had in 2019, said Jessica Morgan, its chief programs officer.

"We've dealt with crises before," she said, specifically pointing to things like economic recessions and major storms. "This was unlike anything any food bank had ever seen before."

Morgan said pre-pandemic, the GCFB only served clients directly from its location one day a month. It has about 1,000 partner agencies in six counties, which do the majority of distribution. But with schools closed, older volunteers not coming to work at food pantries, and many spaces too small for COVID safety requirements, "we knew that we needed to step up and do something."

When they set up drive-through distribution at their building, the response was so intense “we shut down traffic three miles in all sorts of different directions.” After three weeks, the food bank arranged to use a large municipal parking lot instead. Those weekly distributions continue.

Across the country, food banks have gotten similarly creative to meet the pandemic demand. **Feeding America, a network of 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries, estimates demand increased 55% last year.**

Vince Hall, director of the Food Bank of San Diego when the pandemic started and now interim chief of government relations at Feeding America, said along with the challenges, another trend emerged: Even as people who had never previously needed food assistance got in line for help, others who had never volunteered at a food bank came forward to offer it.

“It was just the most heartwarming and inspiring thing to witness,” Hall said. “People put on their masks, maintained social distancing, wore gloves, washed their hands. ... They stood up and said, ‘I heard the need and I’m here to serve.’”

What the food banks had to give out also changed. At the very beginning, many saw dips in the donations from supermarkets as panic buying emptied store shelves. But as government responses kicked in, many food banks benefited.

New partnerships

When Steve Brazeel, of SunTerra Produce in southern California, heard about USDA's Farmers to Families Food Box Program, he looked at his temporarily underutilized warehouse and his eager staff and thought, “Hey, we can do that.” In addition to growing fruits and vegetables, his company is also a packer and shipper. He got on the phone and started calling food banks. Eventually, his company won a USDA contract, worked with food banks in four states and the Navajo reservation, and delivered about 1 million boxes. The program shifted his perspective on how a company like his can help with food insecurity.



Vince Hall, Feeding America

“The weirdness of it all,” he said, is “there’s a ton of food that goes to waste and a ton of hungry people.” But he didn’t only distribute food that other customers would reject. With the government funding, the direct line from farmers to food bank clients became affordable for everyone in the chain. He specifically referenced a batch of romaine lettuce that was cut on a Monday morning, packed the next day and delivered to the Navajo reservation for distribution on Thursday.

“That’s faster than any supermarket can get fresh produce from the field into somebody’s hand.”

He said food bank partners were skeptical when he offered to include strawberries because their experience had always been that the fruit arrived on the edge of rotten. He got them strawberries that were harvested the day before.

On the farm side, his team also innovated to reduce expenses. A grapefruit grower was packing fruit into boxes that were then unpacked and thrown away because the grapefruit had to be placed in the program boxes.

“We started using his recyclable plastic field crates,” saving time and money, Brazeel said. Now, he says, “a compelling case can be made” for food banks to continue buying fresh produce even after the pandemic, with or without government support.

“We really look at this as an everyday program going forward,” he said, because it’s been “game-changing on a lot of levels.”

The dairy sector is also looking at how to maintain its expanded role in distribution through food banks. Early on, pandemic shutdowns caused the loss of some fluid milk.

“Overnight, our world changed,” said Jacqi Coleman, vice president of innovation partnerships at Dairy Management Inc. “Manufacturing facilities cannot change overnight.”

But processors, suppliers and distributors quickly came up with modifications to meet the need. Cheese blocks no longer going to restaurants were cut and packaged appropriately for food

banks. Schools got permission to distribute gallons and half gallons, instead of half pints, of milk.



Steve Brazeel, SunTerra Produce

Coleman said within weeks, there were truck drivers, processors and other partners helping get milk, cheese, yogurt and butter to food banks — 469 million pounds of dairy products from July 2019 to July 2020, For the current (July to July) fiscal year, Coleman says dairy is on pace to send 600 million pounds. And there is no sign of letting up.

“If we get to a billion pounds, that would (allow for) about 50% of what a traditional family would purchase at retail,” she said. A food bank or pantry providing that to its clients is “a pretty good goal to get to.”

In addition to repackaging, Coleman said partnerships with trucking companies brought dairy products to food banks when trucks otherwise would have been returning home empty. And researchers at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, developed a virtual product quality training for USDA that allowed for a million-pound government cheese purchase that went to food banks.

Donations increase

Coleman said the intensity of the pandemic need raised awareness about the breadth and depth of hunger and the challenge of getting food to people who need it, especially in rural areas. The

increased demand, which strained the existing system, “is not a good thing, but it has elevated the passion and excitement and willingness of people to act,” she said.



A man brings milk to a car at a Houston food bank distribution site. (Courtesy: Dairy MAX)

That includes individual donors, who have stepped up to support many food banks, and at least one prominent philanthropist. Mackenzie Scott, whose divorce from Amazon founder Jeff Bezos left her with billions of dollars, has made major unsolicited and unrestricted gifts to 42 food banks. In Cleveland, Morgan called the 8-figure gift “transformative,” though its exact amount has not been made public. She said a committee is working to decide how to “do the right thing with these dollars.” The Food Bank of Alaska, which distributed 43% more food in the second half of 2020 compared to that period in 2019, received a \$3 million gift from Scott.

“Her gift gives us an opportunity to bring hunger relief to more Alaskans — especially during this time of exceptional need,” director Jim Baldwin, CEO of the Food Bank of Alaska, said in a statement. Scott has not spoken publicly about the donations.

“The pandemic has not just awakened people to the problem of hunger today, but also the problem of hunger that has always been there,” Hall said. “One of the greatest challenges for all nonprofits is building capacity, but large gifts enable us to take a giant leap forward.”

The problem of hunger will not go away when the pandemic ends, but the charitable food distribution system may take some lessons from this crisis to make its processes more equitable, accessible and pleasing to clients.

Coleman said throughout the pandemic, she and her colleagues were constantly in a learning mode, trying to improve what they were doing.

“Being in this open mode, looking at innovative ways to reach people, is going to be a lesson learned that we want to continue,” she said.

Brazeel has been pleased and surprised by how successful SunTerra’s partnerships with food banks have been. Regardless of whether the Farmers to Families Food Box Program continues beyond its April expiration, he expects to continue getting fresh produce to food banks.

“It’s a major focus for our company to continue this program in some way, shape or form,” he said. But he emphasized that his role is on the back end, connecting farmers and distributors. He doesn’t actually put food into the trunk of a hungry family’s car — that’s left to the staff and volunteers at local food banks and pantries.

“They’re the real heroes out there,” he said, “doing the last mile distribution.”

News Briefs:

Hydroponics survives challenge to 'organic' label. Produce grown without soil can continue to be organically certified, a federal judge has ruled, deferring to USDA’s interpretation of the Organic Foods Production Act. The OFPA “does not speak directly to the issue and cannot compel any action related to hydroponics,” U.S. District Judge Richard Seeborg said in his

March 19 opinion. Therefore, USDA's regulatory interpretation "that soil fertility provisions apply only to production systems using soil is necessarily a permissible reading," he said. The Center for Food Safety and organic farmers sued USDA after the department rejected its petition seeking a prohibition on organic certification for soil-less systems, including hydroponics and aquaponics. Reacting to the decision, The Aquaponics Association trumpeted "Good News!" and said, "If the lawsuit was successful, aquaponic farms would have lost the organic certification that is vital to their commercial success." Paul Muller, co-owner of plaintiff Full Belly Farm in Guinda, Calif., said, "After the court's ruling, in-the-ground certified organic farms like Full Belly will have to continue to compete in the same marketplace with hydroponic producers who do not need to lift a finger to build soil."

Debt relief for minority farmers a good start, senators say. The \$5 billion approved in the American Rescue Plan for disadvantaged farmers, including \$4 billion in debt relief, is only the beginning of what should be done for farmers of color, three key U.S. senators told reporters Monday. Democrats Raphael Warnock of Georgia, Cory Booker of New Jersey and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts hailed the passage of the provisions included in the American Rescue Plan but said they would continue working to enact the Justice for Black Farmers Act, which includes a program that could end up transferring 32 million acres of land to Black farmers over 10 years. In 1920, Warnock said, there were more than 925,000 Black farmers. Now, the number is around 50,000. Booker said it's critical that USDA process the debt relief provisions swiftly, in order to help farmers facing foreclosure because of the COVID pandemic. Black farmers "were already in a weakened financial position" when the pandemic hit, he said. He also said USDA needs to listen to Black farmers in deciding how to allocate the additional \$1 billion in relief funds, which includes money for technical assistance and minority institutions such as Tuskegee University, as well as "one or more" commissions to address "racial equity issues within the Department of Agriculture and its programs."

Syngenta, Nature Conservancy and dairy industry roll out new sustainability framework. The dairy industry is teaming up with a major agribusiness and an environmental group to "develop a replicable program and toolset to scale the adoption of best management practices in feed/forage production and feed efficiency." The framework, announced at the Agri-Pulse Ag and Food Policy Summit, is aimed at supporting the American dairy industry's goal of net zero emissions by 2050. The industry is teaming up with Syngenta and The Nature Conservancy on the effort, which will provide "low-effort data tracking and decision support tools, technical support regarding best management practices (BMPs) implementation, Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV), and avenues for farmers to receive payment for ecosystem services/ conservation practice adoption." "This partnership really aims to develop a program that we can replicate across the country - that we can scale resources for the adoption of best management practices in feed and forage production and feed efficiency," Krysta Harden, president and CEO of the U.S. Dairy Export Council, said Tuesday at the event. "The plan is to launch in one or two sites across the U.S. later this year with a plan to really scale across the country over the next three years." Syngenta Group CEO Erik Fyrwald said the focus is on the feed/production side of dairy. "Syngenta brings a corn product, Enogen, for dairy feed, but also agronomists and digital technology to provide advice to farmers about best practices for sustainability and then tools for data collection and reporting." Enogen feed corn was originally developed for the ethanol industry but the company later learned that it had positive results for cows by being more digestible, enabling them to produce more milk while also reducing their methane emissions. To participate, farmers complete a self-assessment, select practices based on a recommendation, and goes through an implementation plan of those practices on their operations. The goal, the stakeholders explain in a handout, is to focus "on driving positive environmental outcomes, while assuring the value of participating is greater than the cost of participating for farmers." TNC's Lynn Scarlett said her organization is "an interface" with the

broader conservation and environmental community. We are a voice amplifier, and we blend our technology, our science....and our partnerships to help broaden out both the audience and the knowledge.”

Farm Hands West: Cattani appointed Kern County Water Agency Board

Laura Cattani was appointed to the Kern County Water Agency board, becoming the second woman to serve on the board of directors in the 60-year history of the agency. Cattani works on her family farm near Bakersfield, Calif.

Jason Okabayashi has been tapped to be the new chief financial officer for Pacific Trellis Fruit. Okabayashi previously worked as the chief financial officer for Ready Roast Nut Company, located in Madera, Calif. He has also been in finance related positions with Agriculture Capital Operations, POM Wonderful, and Pepsico.

The California Fresh Fruit Association has elected a new chairman and officers on its board of directors for 2021. **Kevin Herman**, The Specialty Crop Company, was tapped to be the new chairman; **Wayde Kirschenman**, Kirschenman Enterprises, was selected to serve as first vice chairman; **Melissa Frank**, Wonderful Orchards, was elected to second vice chair; and **Louis Pandol**, Pandol Bros., Inc., was tapped to serve as secretary and treasurer.



Jason Okabayashi

Weis Markets has elevated **Greg Zeh** to senior vice president and chief information officer. Zeh joined Weis Markets in 2016 as vice president and chief information officer.

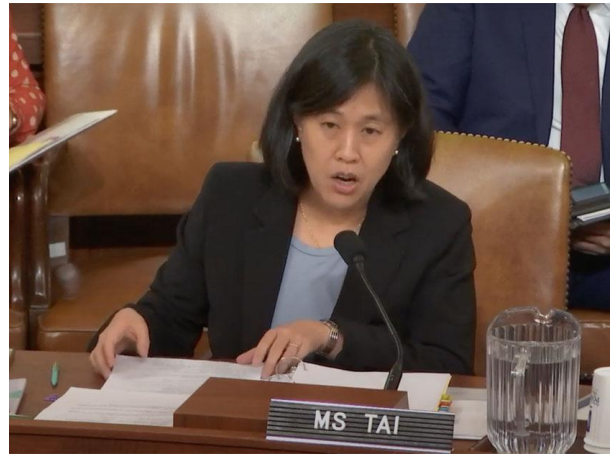
Vintner **Steven Spurrier** died March 8 at age 79 at his home on the Bride Valley Vineyard in the United Kingdom. Spurrier was known for helping put Napa Valley on the map as a region for producing great tasting wine. After touring the Napa Valley wineries in the 1970s, he returned to France bringing back some California wine to conduct a friendly wine tasting. He gathered up some French judges, the best whites and reds in France and paired them up against the upstarts from Napa Valley. The results of the blind tasting had a California wine winning in every category. Accused of switching votes and cheating, the event would live on as the Judgment of Paris, kick starting the craze around California wine country.

The Senate unanimously confirmed **Katherine Tai** to be the next U.S. Trade Representative on a bipartisan 98-0 vote. Tai previously served as the top trade lawyer for the House Ways and Means Committee and chief counsel on China trade enforcement at USTR during the Obama administration. To read more on Tai’s confirmation, click [here](#).

John Newton, **Jeremy Witte**, and **Macie Kelly** will join the Senate Ag Committee’s GOP staff. Newton will serve as the chief economist. He most recently held the same title with the American Farm Bureau Federation. Witte was hired as professional staff for Sen. **John Boozman**, R-Ark., covering research and dairy issues. Witte previously worked on the House Ag

Committee as professional staff for Reps. **GT Thompson**, R-Pa. and Mike Conaway, R-Texas. Kelly is now a staff assistant on the Committee. She previously worked in Boozman's personal office as a legislative correspondent.

Kristi Boswell has joined Alston and Bird as a counsel helping to advise agricultural and food clients on regulatory and legislative issues. Boswell previously served as a senior adviser to former Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue. She also worked in the White House and was the director of congressional relations at the American Farm Bureau Federation.



Katherine Tai

After 20 years working for Bunge, **Raul Padilla** has announced he will retire as president of global operations, effective Dec. 31. He first joined Bunge in 1997 with the Ceval acquisition and has been in his current position since May 2019. His operational responsibilities will be distributed internally over the coming months. **Julio Garros** will take over responsibilities for external relationships within South America. Garros has 19 years of experience with Bunge, most recently working in the role of global transformation leader for agribusiness.

Perdue Farms has named **Lynn Clark** senior vice president and chief human resources officer. Bringing more than 30 years of experience to Perdue Farms, Clark most recently served as the chief human resources officer for Colfax Corporation, a medical technology company.

Neal Gutterson, former chief technology officer for Corteva, has joined Radicle Growth as a partner and chief technology officer. He brings 40 years of ag tech experience to the position and will also serve as chair of the newly formed advisory board.

Sheryl Kunickis, director of USDA's Office of Pest Management Policy, has announced she will retire June 30 from her post. She has served in the position since May 2010.

Rep. **Filemon Vela**, D-Texas, a longtime House Ag member and current vice chair of the Democratic National Committee, will not run for reelection to the House next year. Vela is currently serving in his fifth term. President Joe Biden appointed Vela's wife, **Rose Vela**, a retired Texas state district judge and Texas appellate justice, to run the president's Commission on White House Fellowships.

Chairwoman of the Senate Ag Committee **Debbie Stabenow**, D-Mich., and Ranking Member **John Boozman**, R-Ark., have announced subcommittee assignments. The Subcommittee on Commodities, Risk Management, and Trade will be chaired by Sen. **Raphael Warnock**, D-Ga., and Ranking Member will be Sen. **John Hoeven**, R-N.D. The Subcommittee on Rural Development and Energy will be chaired by Sen. **Tina Smith**, D-Minn., and Ranking Member will be Sen. **Joni Ernst**, R-Iowa. The Subcommittee on Conservation, Climate, Forestry, and Natural Resources will be chaired by Sen. **Michael Bennet**, D-Colo., and Ranking Member will be Sen. **Roger Marshall**, R-Kan. The Subcommittee on Food and Nutrition, Specialty Crops, Organics, and Research will be chaired by Sen. **Cory Booker**, D-N.J., and Ranking Member will be Sen. **Mike Braun**, R-Ind. The Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy, Poultry, Local Food Systems, and Food Safety and Security will be chaired by

Sen. **Kirsten Gillibrand**, D-N.Y., and Ranking Member will be Sen. **Tina Hyde-Smith**, R-Miss.

Jared Henderson has moved over to the Senate, where he has started a new job with Sen. **Ben Ray Luján**, D-N.M., as senior agriculture adviser. He will cover issues related to agriculture, trade and transportation. Henderson previously worked for former Congressman **TJ Cox**, D-Calif., as his deputy chief of staff, and as an ag staffer for former Sen. **Heidi Heitkamp**, D-N.D.

Amanda Fitzmorris has joined the staff of Rep. Dan Newhouse, R-Wash., as his new press secretary. Fitzmorris previously worked at the Environmental Protection Agency, most recently as a special adviser in the Office of Research and Development. **Travis Martinez** has also been promoted to legislative director in Newhouse's office. He handles the portfolio for agriculture, trade, labor, international affairs, and transportation.

Corteva has announced an agreement with Starboard Value LP and its affiliates that adds **David Everitt**, **Janet Giesselman**, and **Kerry Preete** to Corteva's board of directors, effective immediately. Their term will expire at the company's upcoming annual meeting of stockholders, which is scheduled for May. Additionally, the company announced that **Karen Grimes** will join the company's board, effective immediately, with her term also expiring at the annual meeting. Everitt most recently served as interim chief executive officer of Harsco Corporation from February 2014 to August 2014. Before that, he had been with Deere and Company since 1975. He is currently retired. Giesselman most recently served as president of NH Enterprise. After 20 years with the firm, Grimes retired as senior managing director, partner and equity portfolio manager in 2018 from Wellington Management Group. Preete spent over three decades with the Monsanto Company, most recently serving as executive vice president and chief strategy officer.

The American Egg Board has announced nine new members and nine alternates to be added to the board and represent egg producers around the country. To view the full list, click [here](#).

Best regards,

Sara Wyant
Editor

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