

In 2020 budget, Newsom strays from Brown on ag and climate

Gov. Gavin Newsom released a record-setting \$220-billion budget proposal on Friday. The draft budget further broadens the governor's growing list of environmental priorities through a new \$12 billion "Climate Budget."

"This governance proposal is the most comprehensive and collaborative environmental budget in our state's history," proclaimed California Environmental Protection Agency Secretary Jared Blumenfeld during a media call.

More cuts to climate-smart ag

To finance the Climate Budget, the governor is tapping into four revenue streams in what Natural Resources Sec. Wade Crowfoot called a push for "aggressively diversifying climate funding." This includes pulling cap-and-trade money from agricultural incentives programs that focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and were begun under former Gov. Jerry Brown.

"The biggest single change is that, in the last administration, we focused in a very targeted way on mitigation," explained Blumenfeld. "We're really focusing now, in addition, on resiliency and sequestration – using natural working lands to absorb carbon."

The proposed funding from the current state funds, however, show less money invested in working lands.

When Newsom has mentioned agriculture in press conferences, he was usually referring to CDFA'S Healthy Soils Program. The practices are known to sequester carbon and reduce emissions. Yet Newsom's January budget proposes to cut funding to that program by more than 30%, down to \$18 million.



Gov. Newsom delivers his budget at a press conference.

Methane reduction programs would also see \$12 million less, with a proposed \$20 million. This includes the dairy digester program, which the state’s Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO) has found to be the most cost-effective among the many emissions reduction programs. Brown had allocated \$99 million for those programs in his last two years in office.

With the implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) beginning this month, the administration has pointed to Healthy Soils as well as the State Water Efficiency Enhancement Program (SWEEP) as ways it is helping farmers adapt. Newsom is proposing to again fund SWEEP with \$20 million. Last year that money came solely from Proposition 68 funding.

The FARMER program for upgrading ag equipment was cut by \$15 million, down to \$50 million. Notably, the governor’s January budget in 2019 began with a similar amount for FARMER. In his May revision, he bumped the funding up to \$65 million. Brown had provided the program with \$122 million from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) in 2018. Trade groups advocating for FARMER have argued the cut has now led to a backlog of applications worth nearly \$200 million.

Among the many responses to the budget, the California Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN) approved of Newsom’s strategy in diversify funding sources, but was disappointed with the cuts.



California EPA Sec. Jared Blumenfeld

“We urge (Gov. Newsom) and the Legislature to be more ambitious and make larger investments in our rural communities and our food supply,” said Policy Director Jeanne Merrill in a written statement. “Reaching the state’s net carbon neutrality goal by 2045 depends upon it.”

The GGRF is also being tapped for funding to address sea level rise, wildfire prevention and safe drinking water.

According to the budget summary, the governor is also allocating \$350,000 for a work group to more broadly promote

sustainable pest management alternatives to chemical pesticides. That number is down from the \$5.7 million Newsom allocated last year for both the group and research into alternatives to the insecticide chlorpyrifos.

Bond money to finance water projects

Some of those dollars lost in incentives programs would be replaced with funding from a \$4.8-billion climate resilience bond proposed by the governor.

It would fill in gaps for Healthy Soils and SWEEP, while supporting nutrient management practices, on-farm habitat restoration and carbon sequestration projects. It also proposes \$250

million for emergency response centers focused on climate issues, including fairgrounds managed under CDFA.

More than 60% of the bond funding would go to policy actions outlined in the Water Resilience Portfolio. The budget outlines \$1 billion of bond money for a range of water projects that would include storage, conveyance and stormwater capture. The Salton Sea cleanup program would receive \$220 million from the bond – enough to complete the 10-year project and assuage the concerns of local irrigation districts as they negotiate a new long-term agreement for the Colorado River.

The budget also sets aside \$60 million from the General Fund to support pilot projects for water trading and water efficiency improvements to help farmers and communities adapt to SGMA.

Large bonds can be a risky bet, however. UC Davis Professor Jay Lund told the State Water Resources Control Board in August that 85% of the problem is local and large bonds are not the answer to the state’s water infrastructure issues. Two of his students also performed an autopsy on the \$8.9-billion Prop. 3 water bond in 2018, finding that “voters have shown that they’re unwilling to just throw money at state water problems.”

Convincing voters may be even more difficult when the state has yet to spend all of the \$7.5 billion in water bond money from Prop. 1 in 2014. Ellen Hanak, who directs the Water Policy Center at the Public Policy Institute of California, told *Agri-Pulse* the local partners are just waiting on the state to make the permitting happen. The administration does outline in the water portfolio an intention to streamline these permits.

Two existing bills offering a \$4-billion climate and water bond have spent the last year winding through the Legislature and are slated for hearings next week. Lawmakers have until the end of January for the respective houses to approve the measures. Another ballot initiative in circulation would put \$7.9 billion towards the climate and wildfire issues. Those November ballots will likely be crowded with other major initiatives as well, which seek reforms on AB 5, homelessness and Prop. 13.

A climate fund would instead lend the money

The administration is also proposing a \$1-billion Climate Catalyst Fund, which would offer businesses low-interest loans for infrastructure improvements and green tech. This would also support the dairy digester, SWEEP and FARMER programs, as well as composting projects and wood waste reuse.

The fund borrows buzzwords from two ambitious recycling bills aimed at reducing single-use packaging, which Newsom put his support behind during the budget press conference. Those bills are expected to return this year. Newsom is also promising to reform the Container Recycling Program, while legislators want to overhaul California’s Bottle Bill this year and extend it to wine. The fund would likely play a part in financing the initiatives.

Instead of a broad climate fund granting loans to farmers, however, Jeanne Merrill of CalCAN would rather see more spending from the cap-and-trade fund and a potential bond. **“Farmers are unlikely to take on additional debt, particularly small, diversified and socially-**

disadvantaged farmers, as well as the state’s dairy farmers, who have been operating in a deficient state for several years,” she said.

Rural communities get the governor’s attention

If the Legislature passes this budget in June, an ag economist will be joining CDFA to report on rural issues like the impacts of SGMA. The governor vetoed a similar proposal in October from Assembly Bill 417.

In returning to promises in his State of the State address last year, Newsom wants to support the San Joaquin Valley with \$33 million in seed money for a new Fresno-Merced Food Innovation Corridor Grant Program. The initiative, led by CDFA, would stimulate research and development for technology that supports sustainable agriculture and food processing, while drawing high-quality jobs to the area.

The administration also anticipates spending more than \$900 million on broadband access over the next five years. This includes supporting better mapping for gaps in connectivity – an effort the Federal Communications Commission has been heavily criticized for in the state.

Newsom is continuing cap-and-trade spending for the AB 617 air pollution reduction program with \$235 million allocated to the Air Resources Board. The program incentivizes ag and other industries to upgrade equipment and adopt new practices to improve air quality in the state’s most critically polluted regions, such as Shafter, Fresno and soon the Coachella Valley. Blumenfeld said this and other programs make up for GGRF spending cuts to clean transportation programs.



State Senate Republican Leader Shannon Grove

On the note of transportation, State Senate Republican Leader Shannon Grove shared her disappointment with the governor in allocating \$20 million towards enforcing the new AB 5 law on independent contractors. Ag haulers, however, have received a temporary exemption from the law, and two recent decisions by state and federal judges in ongoing lawsuits signal that will likely become permanent.

“We should be using this funding to house Californians instead of preventing them from earning an income the way they choose,” she said in a statement.

The budget summary also points out that a California sales tax exemption for both food processors and power generation will lead to a savings of \$277 million this year for those businesses.

The nod to rural issues has garnered the support of the California Farm Bureau Federation (CFBF). **“The proposals contained in his draft budget reflect (Newsom’s) concerns for the future of farmers, ranchers and the rural areas they support,”** said CFBF President Jamie Johansson in a statement.

Newsom pitches farm-to-school pilot, boosts nutrition funding

Gov. Gavin Newsom announced Friday he would increase school nutrition funding by 40%, to about \$70 million and add a farm-to-school program for CDFA.

The state would set aside more than \$10 million for establishing a grant program for school districts to participate in a farm-to-school incubator pilot project. CDFA calls the proposal “a roadmap for transformational change in the school food system that supports California farmers, expands food access, and helps achieve the state vision of a California for All.

The money would also support a working group to determine how to implement the program and to “explore how to create a more resilient and climate-smart food system,” according to the budget summary

The Community Alliance with Family Farmers called the proposal “a critical first step in ensuring all California kids have access to nutritious, sustainable and locally-grown California food.”



Jennifer Siebel Newsom attends Gov. Newsom's budget press conference.

Nick Anicich, who works in CDFA's Office of Farm-to-Fork, has noted that more than 1 billion school meals are served each year in California and the state invests more than \$160 million into school food purchases. A central aim of the office is to encourage districts to purchase California grown foods.

“Farm-to-school is *a* priority but not *the* priority,” he stressed, however, in a presentation last week to the State Board of Food and Agriculture, explaining the importance of access and nutrition.

A bill offering a similar pilot program to the farm-to-school proposal would have specifically subsidized organic meals for Bay Area schools. It died in an appropriations committee last year. Asm. Cecilia Aguiar-Curry told *Agri-Pulse* she plans to reintroduce the measure this year and may expand it to hospitals and the prison system.

California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson opposed the bill.

“It’s not about whether you’re eating an organic carrot or a conventional carrot,” he said in December. “It’s about eating the carrot and not the Cheeto.”



CDFA Sec. Karen Ross repeated that quote recently in sharing her support for the proposed program in the budget. While the program is aimed at supporting “sustainable food systems,” it does not appear to set limits on how the food is grown.

Yet Newsom could be on board with an organic proposal. His wine company has been shifting toward all-organic vineyard management. During a press conference on the budget, Newsom also said First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom has been working on reforming school nutrition programs alongside prominent organic foods advocate and billionaire Kat Taylor.

The first partner has also worked closely with Ross and Anicich, touring school food and garden programs together last year.

Taylor is the wife of democratic presidential candidate Tom Steyer and runs TomKat Ranch. The 1,800-acre cattle ranch is “a learning laboratory” for studying and promoting sustainable and regenerative ag practices. The billionaires have advocated heavily on environmental issues through their hedge fund management over the decades, while their non-profit charity and an educational foundation have funded UC climate-smart ag research projects and policy papers lobbying for organic and regenerative agriculture.

Two of the organizations working with the first partner on the nutrition reforms are supported by Kat Taylor and have led campaigns marketing organic foods to children.

Seven questions for a United Fresh policy expert

As senior vice president of public policy for the United Fresh Produce Association, Robert Guenther represents the fruit and vegetable industry before Congress, the presidential administration and national regulatory industries. He has more than 30 years of experience representing specialty crops in the nation’s capital.

Guenther recently shared with *Agri-Pulse* the top items on the United Fresh agenda for 2020.

The conversation has been edited for brevity.

1. What were your thoughts as 2019 wrapped up?

It's funny watching Congress. They don't do a whole lot, and then in the last two or three weeks everything gets done. It's like college kids cramming for their finals.

I've reflected back on where we are today. Even three or four months ago, we were somewhat pessimistic of getting some of our major agenda items through at least part of the Congress going into 2020.

The vote on the immigration bill in the House and the (U.S.- Mexico-Canada Agreement) are two of our biggest issues we focused on in 2019. The third was Child Nutrition. That's one of our banner issues: How we can get access to fresh fruits and vegetables in schools. Federal nutrition programs with the Child Nutrition Reauthorization is one of those vehicles. We hope the Senate and the House will conclude that in 2020, but we'll see what happens.

A fourth issue we're going to be spending a fair amount of time on is food safety. It's not from the standpoint of how we're going to fix problems. Obviously, there are going to continue to be



Robert Guenther

outbreaks and it's unfortunate. We're confident our industry is using the best science available to make sure the products are healthy and safe for consumers, but we're still going to have these outbreaks.

How do we address them when we have an FDA who is now posting advisories and not recalls? How can we help an industry that has nothing to do with the outbreak get over these tough times? In 2018, the FDA said don't eat romaine from anywhere in the country. In 2019, it said don't eat romaine from Salinas, even though they had several companies identified as part of this. There are a lot of folks out there who are struggling in the marketplace.

We're talking with Congress and the administration on how there can be some policies and tools in place that could help protect these growers when they're not part of this and they're losing the market. It's beyond just risk management and creating a crop insurance type of tool. We've gone through that before, but it's not going to be the answer for this. This is going to be a much broader discussion.



Rep. Zoe Lofgren led a bipartisan effort on the Farm Workforce Modernization Act.

Immigration is something we should not take for granted. The House (vote on the Farm Workforce Modernization Act) was an important monumental step. We've gone through this routine a number of times, mostly starting in the Senate and the House rejecting any kind of Senate strategy or bills.

It wasn't a majority of Republicans, but certainly the 34 who voted for this bill represented a broad cross section of people who support agriculture and specialty crops. We hope that sends a good message to the Senate. That'll be another heavy lift for us.

2. What is your perspective on trade and USMCA?

It can't be citrus, potatoes and apples doing our own thing. We need to look at policy from a much broader perspective, in terms of how we can change the way our negotiators look at trade negotiations from a specialty crop and holistic point of view – not just commodity by commodity, where there's winners and losers.

That's something we've got to talk about more broadly as an industry and get beyond the commodity-specific regional issues we've always had.

We can't let the administration and others define success in trade policy by countries buying a lot of pork, grain and soybeans. That's just one sector.

3. Can you describe the approach of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance?

It really started as a fruit and vegetable discussion. Then it broadened to include the nursery and landscape industry, the wine industry, the tree nut industry. As we progressed in our strategy on

farm bills – 2002 and 2008 – we knew we needed a much broader group of folks to help influence members of Congress to have a broader impact on farm bills.

It needs to start within the family first. I don't know if it's necessarily a Specialty Crop Farm Alliance one-off. But our industry needs to sit down and have a discussion about this. This isn't just about increasing exports. It's also helping growers who are having challenges competing with imports.

...For over 20 years now, trade has always been done by each commodity. For the last several years with some of the trade challenges we've had, it was on autopilot. It has dawned on us that we need to look at trade policy in a more holistic point of view. And that's going to be tough. There's a mindset out there of having turf battles and pitting people against each other.

We look at issues through multiple commodities and regions, even up and down the supply chain: growers, wholesale distributors, fresh cut and all the way to retail. The issues we spend the most time are those that crosscut commodities but also up and down the distribution chain from grower to consumer. There's a sense out there that we're in the lower tier of trade negotiations.

4. Which export markets are seeing a buildup right now?

Everybody's looking at India right now.

The issues there are with (sanitary and phytosanitary standards), and there are some tariffs right now. And there needs to be a middle-class economy with purchasing power.

5. Are you seeing more international competition?

With (the loss of the China market), there are other countries who are picking up the slack, in terms of apples, pears, cherries, citrus. A lot of folks are nervous that it won't just happen overnight and will take a while to build that market back up, since it's been going on so long.

6. What is the approach of United Fresh to pest and disease issues?

With citrus greening, we're finding it in Texas and California and there's still no solution for that. We're spending a lot more time in that space as well, especially on the research side.

That's where the Farm Bill has been very helpful to us, in having the Specialty Crop Research Initiative, for instance, focusing on some of these issues. (The Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research) is also focusing on a few of our priorities. That's going to continue to grow in terms of priorities related to finding solutions and even food safety. In 20 or 30 years from now, there might not be a kill step to address some of these issues related to food safety.

7. What's next for the trade deal with China?

The devils are in the details. We need to see this phase one deal and what it includes. We hope this is just the first start of a continued negotiation with China that can bring finality to this trade war. We need to give certainty to agriculture, especially to the fruit vegetable industry for those markets opening back up.

Candidates spar over USMCA, climate change mitigation

In the final debate before the Iowa caucuses, most of the leading Democratic candidates endorsed the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, citing its potential benefit to farmers.

Some of the candidates also touched on agriculture during some relatively brief exchanges on climate change, arguing producers could help address the problem. But farm issues largely played a minor role in the CNN-Des Moines Register debate, held on Tuesday at Drake University in Iowa's capital city.

There were no direct questions about President Donald Trump's "phase one" trade agreement with China, which he is scheduled to sign on Wednesday. The Senate is expected to vote before the end of the week to approve the USMCA implementing bill, sending the measure to Trump for his signature.

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and billionaire businessman Tom Steyer, who is running on the single issue of climate change, were alone among the candidates in opposing the USMCA.



Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Elizabeth Warren

"We could do much better than a Trump-led trade deal. This deal, and I think the proponents of it acknowledge, will result in the continuation of the loss of hundreds of thousands of good paying jobs as a result of outsourcing," Sanders said. He cited the opposition of environmental organizations who have criticized the deal for not addressing climate change.

Steyer said he couldn't support the agreement while at the same time arguing that climate change was his No. 1 priority. "We cannot put climate in the back seat all the time and say we're going to sign one more deal," Steyer said.

But Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who announced her support for USMCA earlier this month, said it was imperative to end the uncertainty about trade policy facing farmers.

"We have farmers here in Iowa who are hurting and they are hurting because of Donald Trump initiated trade wars. ... This new trade deal is a modest improvement. Sen. Sanders himself has said so," Warren said.

South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg also said the agreement was an improvement over the North American Free Trade Agreement.

"It is not perfect, but when you sit down with the people who are most impacted, they share just how much harm has been done to them by things like the trade war and just how much we can benefit, American consumers and workers and farmers, by making sure we have the right kind of labor and enforceability that Democrats ensured we got in this USMCA," he said.

Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar argued the agreement would help the United States counter China. “I think we need a big trading bloc with North America to take on China,” she said.

But she also used the USMCA issue to pivot to a criticism of President Trump’s handling of biofuel policy, recounting having visited a shuttered ethanol plant. “I went to this plant and there was one worker left in this plant,” she said.

On climate change, there was relatively little disagreement between the candidates.

Warren promised to reinstate environmental protections that Trump was rolling back, an apparent reference to the administration’s recent proposal to accelerate environmental reviews required by the National Environmental Policy Act. Among other things, the proposal could speed approvals of federal grazing permits.

But she and other candidates also insisted they wanted to use farmers to help reduce carbon emissions.

“I’ll bring in the farmers. Farmers can be part of the climate solution,” Warren said.

Buttigieg said, “If we get it right, farmers will be a huge part of the solution” to climate change. “We need to reach out to the very people who have sometimes been made to feel that accepting climate science would be a defeat for them, whether we’re talking about farmers, or industrial workers in my community, and make clear that we need to enlist the national project to do something.”

Biden made a similar point, saying that he wanted to make U.S. farmers “the first group in the world to get to net zero emissions by paying them for planting and absorbing carbon in their fields.”



Former Vice President Joe Biden says that, if elected, he wants to pay farmers for planting and absorbing carbon in their fields. Photo: Gage Skidmore

Walnut farmer joins court challenge: ‘Retaliation’s a terrible thing’

A court challenge to U.S. steel tariffs that resulted in a series of retaliatory duties on U.S. farm exports took a step toward a possible date with the Supreme Court in arguments held last week in Washington, D.C.

The venue was the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals, which is considering an appeal of the Court of International Trade’s decision last May upholding Trump’s decision to impose the 25% tariffs to protect national security.

In March, the CIT said it was “bound by” a 1976 Supreme Court decision in *Federal Energy Administration v. Algonquin SNG*, which found the president has broad — but not unlimited — discretion to impose Section 232 tariffs.

“I think it went about as well as could be expected,” said Alan Morrison, a George Washington University law professor who declined to speculate on the eventual ruling of the three-judge panel. In Algonquin, he told the Federal Circuit panel, “the court said there were boundaries, but it didn’t tell us what the boundaries were.”

The American Institute for International Steel petitioned the Supreme Court for review of the CIT’s decision, but the high court declined review this summer, putting the case before the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals. (AIIS, which represents steel importers and other companies in the steel supply chain, is different from the American Iron and Steel Institute, which represents North American steel producers and is siding with the government in the case.)

AIIS contends that Section 232, contained in the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, delegates legislative power to the president in violation of both the Constitution and the doctrine of separation of powers.

“Under the ‘nondelegation doctrine,’ Congress may not delegate any of its law-making powers, such as its power to regulate trade, unless it provides an ‘intelligible principle’ or set of clear standards defining the extent of the delegation,” according to an analysis of the CIT decision by Covington.

AIIS has the support of one farm entity — Basrai Farms, a Yuba City, Calif., walnut operation, which filed a friend-of-the-court brief in the Federal Circuit supporting AIIS.

“Retaliation’s a terrible thing,” owner Sarb Basrai said outside the courtroom Friday following the arguments. However, “It was an anticipated consequence” of the steel tariffs Trump imposed in early 2018.

Basrai said he got involved “because I didn’t like the price of walnuts falling by 50%,” which occurred following imposition of retaliatory tariffs on his commodity by China, India and Turkey ranging from 15-100% after the steel and aluminum tariffs went into effect.

“With nowhere to go, walnuts flood the domestic market, depressing prices further,” Basrai’s brief said.

His 2017 crop was valued at \$1.25 to \$1.33 per pound, but “today’s disrupted market” has put the anticipated price for his 2018 nuts at between 65 and 70 cents per pound, according to the *amicus* brief Basrai filed in the Federal Circuit. **Despite producing more walnuts in 2018 than 2017, Basrai expects his final gross revenue figure for 2018 to be about \$519,000. Without retaliatory tariffs, that figure would have been nearly \$1 million.**

AIIS and Basrai aren't the only ones concerned about the use of Section 232. Bills have been introduced in both houses of Congress seeking to give Congress a role — or the final say — on Section 232 tariffs.

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, said in November he's working to reconcile two Senate bills and hold a markup on legislation to reform Section 232.

Section 232, Morrison told the court in his oral argument, “violates the constitutional prohibition on the delegation of legislative authority” from Congress to the executive, “because the power given to the president to adjust imports contains no substantive boundaries whatsoever.”

In arguments before the CIT, Morrison said, the government was asked whether it could restrict imports of peanut butter in the name of national security. “The government did not answer that question, but it was clear that whatever the president did, the court could not review it,” he said. But he argued the Algonquin decision “assumes there are boundaries and second, that there is judicial review.”



Senate Finance Committee Chair Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa

Justice Department attorney Tara Hogan, however, said “there hasn’t been a delegation of legislative authority or lawmaking power to the president” in this case. Instead, Trump was “charged with finding facts, identifying the circumstances in which the policy is to be applied, and then applying it.”

“Absolutely, there has been a great amount of discretion that has been afforded to the president in this circumstance,” she added, but said that discretion is “consistent with the body of law of non-delegation doctrine cases.”

“Congress, in our view, clearly gave away the store when they wrote this statute,” Basrai attorney Jeff Grimson said following the arguments. “They might not ever have imagined it being used by a president the way it has been.”

Grimson said there's a chance the case will wind up before the Supreme Court.

"I think that whoever loses at the Federal Circuit will at least *try* to go to the Supreme Court," he told *Agri-Pulse* in an email. "Whether they accept the case is another question."

However, he said he thinks it's "likely under the foreseeable scenarios. It only takes four justices to vote for [review] for the case to be taken. If we win, the government will surely appeal. And if we lose, and the [Federal Circuit] says it is bound by Algonquin, then there is a growing interest by some of the justices to take a non-delegation case in order to try to put some new definition in the separation of powers."

He called for more in the ag community to support Basrai, whom he called “a guy in Yuba City really taking the weight of all the agricultural sectors on his shoulders and saying we have to be heard here in this case.” Basrai himself chose to become involved.

An attorney involved in the case said *amici* — friends of the court — were not sought, but added, "an ag guy suffering retaliation for 232 tariffs is helpful." A source at one major farm group said the case had not been flagged by legal advisers as something requiring their involvement.

News Briefs:

Alarm sounding over USDA hemp rule. State officials and industry groups are raising concerns about USDA's new regulations for hemp, with some officials suggesting that the department delay some "unworkable" portions of an interim final rule that was released last fall. In a letter to USDA, Minnesota Ag Commissioner Thom Peterson said the Oct. 31 deadline for states to switch over from pilot programs to USDA-approved plans is "not practical." He said staff would "not be able to manage" necessary documentation before Nov. 1 and growers "would also be inconvenienced by this timing of changing over during harvest." The Kentucky Hemp Industries Association also asked its state ag commissioner to keep the state in the pilot program's jurisdiction "until the USDA and FDA requirements are clarified." The group cited concerns over "THC compliance testing processes, the 15-day period between sampling and harvest, access to hemp genetics, restrictions on certain deliverable materials, and the effect of the overall interim regulation on an emerging industry."

Ready to eat your leafy reds? USDA's Agricultural Research Service has developed the world's first true red spinach: USDA Red. Researchers believe the new variety might provide some excitement and expanded consumption for spinach and other "leafy green" enthusiasts. Spinach consumption (and production) in the U.S. dropped from 2.3 pounds per person to 1.6 pounds in 2006 following an *Escherichia coli* outbreak in 2006, and it has never fully recovered, notes ARS. "A true red spinach like USDA Red will bring excitement to the spinach market and could help attract people back to eating spinach. It can be used as baby or 'teen' leaf in salad bags, as bunched products, and in spring mixes for fresh-market consumption. The red color in spring mixes is currently provided by red lettuce, radicchio or chard. Red spinach will give processors another choice," said ARS research geneticist Beiquan Mou, who developed the new variety. Mou is with the Crop Improvement and Protection Research Unit in Salinas, Calif. ARS says there are currently some true "red" spinaches on the market, but the red color is limited to the veins of the leaves. The red color of USDA Red comes from the phytonutrient betacyanin rather than the more common anthocyanin. Betacyanin is a potent antioxidant that has been shown to significantly reduce oxidative stress in patients and may even help in preventing chronic pathologies, inflammation, and cancer, according to the scientific literature. The antioxidant capacity of USDA Red was 42-53% higher than other spinach cultivars in five tests conducted over three years. "Betacyanin adds another benefit to a plant already loaded with phytonutrients, making spinach a true 'super food,'" Mou added. ARS has applied for a Plant Variety Protection certificate for USDA Red and is seeking a partner to license production of seeds for the market.

Farm Hands West: McCaffrey joins Organically Grown Co.

Jan McCaffrey has been hired as vice president of people at Organically Grown Co., in Portland, Ore. McCaffrey most recently was director of human resources for David Evans & Associates, a global civil engineering company.

Naturipe Farms in Salinas, Calif., has promoted **Jim Roberts** to president of sales, a new position at the company. Roberts has been at Naturipe for more than 15 years, most recently as vice president of sales. Before Naturipe, Roberts was with Shaws Supermarkets as senior manager of perishable procurement.

Brian Ronholm has joined Consumer Reports as the new director of food policy. Ronholm, former deputy undersecretary for food safety at USDA under the Obama Administration, previously worked at Arent Fox as a senior director of regulatory policy for food and agriculture policy areas.

The Organic Farmers Association hired **Patty Lovera** as its new policy director. Previously, Lovera helped start and grow Food & Water Watch, serving as the food and water program director for 14 years and representing FWW in the National Organic Coalition. Before joining FWW, she was the deputy director of the energy and environment program at Public Citizen and a researcher at the Center for Health, Environment, and Justice.



Kevin Hourican

The National Ocean Industries Association has hired **Richard England** and **Ashley Parkins**. England is now the vice president of government affairs and Parkins now works as the director of meetings and events.

Kevin Hourican has been named president and CEO of Sysco, a food service distribution company, effective Feb. 1. Hourican succeeds **Tom Bené**, who will step down from his role as president and c.e.o. on Jan. 31 after two years at the helm of the company. Bené will stay on with Sysco as an executive adviser until March 1.

Fair Trade USA, a non-profit that certifies fair trade products marketed in North America, has promoted **Nathalie Marin-Gest** as head of fresh goods, overseeing produce, floral and seafood. Marin-Gest joined Fair Trade USA in 2013, as the organization's first supply chain manager for produce and floral.

Lucy Murfitt has been promoted to deputy staff director of natural resources for Sen. **Lisa Murkowski**, R-Ark., on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. She previously worked as the deputy chief counsel.

Martha Spiker is now the press secretary for Sen. **Mazie Hirono**, D-Hawaii. She previously served as the press secretary for Rep. **Scott Peters**, D-Calif.

Connor Stubbs has been promoted to legislative director for Rep. **Adam Smith**, D-Wash. Stubbs covers the portfolio of energy, environmental protection, foreign trade, and immigration.

Cody Sibulo now serves as the communications director for Rep. **Gil Cisneros**, D-Calif. He most recently served as the press secretary for Rep. **Tim Ryan**, D-Ohio.

Holly Hinojosa has begun a new job on the Hill as Sen. **Steve Daines**, R-Mont., as a policy adviser covering the environmental protection and public lands and natural resources portfolio. Hinojosa previously worked at the USDA as a policy and congressional adviser. Before that she worked on the House Republican Conference for Rep. **Liz Cheney**, R-Wyo., as the deputy policy director.

Kiran Mysore has been named a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Mysore is a Noble Research Institute professor and his research is focused on finding new disease resistant genes in plants to help reduce crop plant losses. Mysore was elected as a fellow for his contributions to the field of molecular plant-microbe interactions, particularly in the area of non-host resistance and for developing genetic resources for plant functional genomics.

The National 4-H Council has announced the election of three new Trustees to its Board: **James Collins, Jr.**, chief executive officer of Corteva Agriscience; **Wade Miquelon**, chief executive officer of JOANN; and Tennessee 4-H alumnus **Justin Cross**, Young Alumni Advisory Committee (YAAC) Representative.

Richard Keehn, a founding member of the California Association of Winegrape Growers and the first chair of its board of directors, passed away on Dec. 20, 2019. After serving 15 years in the U.S. Army, Keehn began farming winegrapes in Mendocino County in the early 1970s. Keehn served as CAWG's chair for four years (1974-1978) and as a director for seven years. Keehn also served on the California World Trade Commission Advisory Council, California Board of Food and Agriculture, American Vineyard Foundation and Wine Institute.

Best Regards,

Sara Wyant

Editor

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