

## Seven questions with CDFA Sec. Ross

California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross spoke with *Agri-Pulse* recently on her outlook for 2020. The conversation has been edited for brevity.

### 1. What are the biggest differences between Gov. Newsom and former Gov. Jerry Brown?

The Jerry Brown years were extremely challenging. The first two were about making really hard decisions on the budget. We lost about 33% of our General Fund support. If it couldn't move to fee-based, those (programs) we had to give up.

What that meant – as far as losing positions, potential staff reductions, elimination of certain functions – is really hard change.

The first four years were just about managing that change and refocusing on how we maintain the world-class scientific expertise we have for our programs, do our job as effectively as possible in a much leaner way and evaluate the risks that came with doing that.

At the same time, there were tremendous opportunities from working with a governor who really did care deeply about ag. He surprised a lot of folks because he knows a lot about agriculture. At that stage in his career and in his life, he was really focused on the history of the family ranch and knew at that time they would be building a home there. He always wanted to know about cattle



CDFA Sec. Karen Ross talks with USDA Sec. Sonny Perdue

prices and those kinds of things, because he leases the land out and he wanted to know what other kinds of crops we do there.

But then we go through all this change and the drought happened. That was almost five years of managing and trying to mitigate that. We moved from changes with the budget to one of the most severe droughts we had in decades. That absorbed a lot of time, but led to establishing our Statewide Water Efficiency Enhancement Program, which was the first of our climate-smart agriculture programs. Because of our climate agenda, we were really engaging with ag and setting up our environmental farming panel. That was all good stuff. It was very focused and lean in our operations but positioned us well for the future

Governor Newsom has just been terrific. He's very quick. He comes with this long family history in California. He knows the state very well and traveled it extensively while he was lieutenant governor. He spent a lot of time in the valley while he was lieutenant governor and campaigning. He gets the valley and the rural communities.

With the work of the Water Resilience Portfolio and our continued work on climate, Governor Newsom really wants us to take a very integrated, collaborative team approach across the cabinet. Jerry started that with flattening the silos and working together to solve problems. Governor Newsom is much more intentional. It takes time because you're constantly having to reach out to people.

## **2. How has the ag community changed during your time in office?**

Change is absolutely necessary. When you farm in a state of 40 million people, you need to find partners. This approach of collaboration is critical to success. It's been refreshing to see.

Sometimes it's hard because it feels like they're beating us up. It's hard not to feel defensive when you hear some of the rhetoric. But there are so many opportunities for partnership.

There are so many environmental NGOs who also have figured out that we spent all this money and the species aren't recovering. So, they've been willing to step into that space and partner with landowners and farmers.

Examples of early pioneers in that space include Sustainable Conservation – a San Francisco NGO that decided to venture into agriculture, because they're all about finding pragmatic solutions that are good for the environment and for the business. They partnered with dairy, on nitrate issues, of all things.

Look at the rice sector and the long list of partners they have. That's happening up and down the valley now. Everybody wins. You can't have healthy farms if you don't have a healthy environment.

## **3. Can you address the cuts to cap-and-trade funding for the climate-smart programs?**

A lot of it will depend on the dialogue with our partners in the Legislature.

The environmental farming title within the bond outlined by the governor when he released his budget includes Healthy Soils and SWEEP. He did put in a one-time General Fund expenditure

for SWEEP because he wanted to avoid a gap year and we understand the pressures from (the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act).

The FARMER (program for tractor and harvester upgrades) and dairy digester program are examples of programs that would most likely qualify for the new Climate Catalyst Fund. The creation of that catalyst fund is pretty remarkable. We have known from the beginning that there would come a time when cap-and-trade revenues would plateau and then start to go down because of fewer credits. If we became overly dependent on only cap-and-trade dollars, we would lead people off to not the best sunrise.

Looking for alternatives to supplement funding to make sure we keep this kind of innovation going is really what led us to the Catalyst Fund. Having a revolving loan program that will continually have money coming back in to perpetuate this kind of innovation will be transformative for the entire economy.

Ross signs an agreement on sustainable ag in October with her Mexican counterpart and Lt. Gov. Kounalakis (middle).



Ross signs an agreement on sustainable ag in October with her Mexican counterpart and Lt. Gov. Kounalakis (middle).

#### 4. What is the top goal for water?

We can't keep doing water the way we have for decades. I hate to use the term "farms versus fish," because that's a shorthand, simplistic, lazy way of describing water. Water is so complex, and in many ways, has lots of local aspects.

The governor's announcement and commitment last year to changing the way we do water has to be about collaboration and a commitment to the voluntary agreements.

The agreements will require projects for above- and below-ground storage and a combination of flow and habitat. That gives all of us a chance to come into this space and help problem solve and create new and unusual collaborations. If I had to name one thing that is important for our future, it is being able to create some sort of peace in water.

I'm hopeful this is a new day and a new chapter for California water. If we can do it there, there is a long list of things we could do in.

**5. What do you tell farmers worried more pesticide tools are on the chopping block without alternatives available?**

This points to the critical importance of publicly funded research. We've plateaued in our public dollars for ag research, basic as well as applied research.

In my 30 years in the state, it's been very hard because so many specialty crops were not getting the attention they needed. We've seen huge consolidation in the crop protection industry. Where do we get specialty crop attention to do this?

(USDA's) IR-4 is a critically important program. But it just scratches out a living. When the governor made the announcement last year to put money into that, we needed to have been doing that on a steady basis to make sure we're staying ahead of it. So, we're playing some catch up from the publicly funded space.

We also need to make sure that we continue to maintain investment in our Cooperative Extension – those people who are taking the findings from the campus and translating it to the end user. We've had a huge decline in IPM specialists and ag advisors. There's a lot of private sector services there. But the importance of having Cooperative Extension is that objective, third-party scientific credibility. We're paying now for not maintaining a commitment to that kind of investment.

The younger generation is demanding (alternatives) and consumers increasingly are demanding it. But our job is also to help them understand what it takes to produce that food for the table, and to try to engage in helping support us by advocating for publicly funded ag research that is credible for all of us.

We owe it to food security and to our farmers, ranchers and farmworkers to pursue alternatives as fast as we can. (Chlorpyrifos) has had the ratchet on it for a long time and I don't know that we're any closer (with alternatives). It's not an optimistic picture.

**6. What other priorities are on your radar this year?**

The implementation of SGMA, though we have no direct authority. When the plans are submitted, then there will be the long process of evaluating those: Understanding what is needed, as far as managing aquifer recharge and on-farm recharge; being engaged in those discussions; understanding what those plans might mean with regard to land use planning, such as finding alternative uses for those lands.

Our working lands can be a very important part of our climate resiliency. It's an exciting new space to be in.

Then we have Asian citrus psyllid and virulent Newcastle disease, which hopefully that one will be eradicated and we'll be declared free from. (VND) has been a long slog

Then we have things like Prop. 12, where we're working on the regulations. There are some legal challenges to that, but it doesn't stop our work.

We're working on our state plan for hemp. USDA has been a great partner, but we're hopeful and optimistic we'll see revisions to their proposal.

With the consolidation of our cannabis program, that's going to be a big change for the cannabis growers, who are like third-generation farmers and want to be recognized as farmers. Also, that's a big change for our employees, who have done tremendous customer service in processing almost 7,000 licenses.

Implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act: Using all of the data from the last two years of unfortunate illness incidents to pinpoint and develop solutions that prevent illnesses is huge.

The Farm-to-School program's going to be so much fun, with the work of putting together that grant program (as an incubator project). It's such a great thing for kids and communities, and farmers.

**7. This is shaping up to be a big year for bee health. How does CDFA intersect with this issue?**

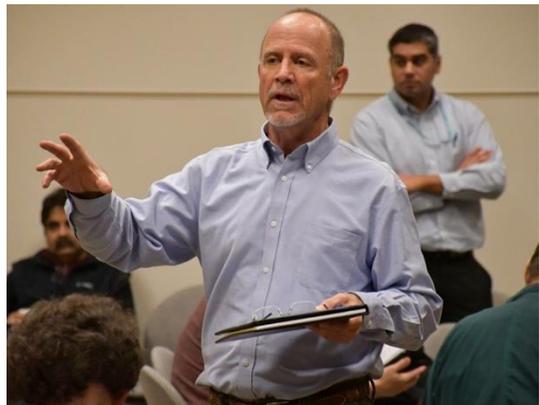
We got a law passed last year to give us some funding for our ag commissioners for enforcement. We want to make sure that all of the hives are getting registered, as a way to prevent theft and prevent any potential pesticide drift because people simply don't know where they are.

We're also contracting with Tehama County for their apiarist to assist us. We've added watering stations at all of our border stations. We're doing a pilot program with North Dakota – the first year was with Idaho – where we've done inspections at the point of origin for bees that are warehoused so they can get a clean bill of health. Then that will hopefully help them speed through our border stations. We're starting to get enough data to see if we can take that to more states that have that overwintering warehousing approach. We've got a lot going on in that space.

## **Chlorpyrifos workshops reach beyond one pesticide**

The discussion is too little too late for many in the ag community. The broader conversation about alternatives to chlorpyrifos should have come before the California Environmental Protection Agency decided last year to cancel the insecticide, according to the farmers and trade representatives who voiced their concerns in recent meetings.

The agency's Department of Pesticide Regulation, in partnership with CDFA, held three public workshops this month "to hear ideas about how farming communities can transition away from the use of the pesticide chlorpyrifos," according to a December press release.



Joseph McIntyre of Ag Innovations

**The conversations, however, focused on how the agencies can better implement new pesticide regulations in the future. Some participants traveled hours to offer input on what was believed to be a list of suggested alternatives delivered by the Chlorpyrifos Alternatives Working Group, which the agencies had commissioned for that purpose. Instead, the moderator of the workshops, Joseph McIntyre, whose company Ag Innovations is also facilitating the working group, announced the recommendations would not come until April.**



Pam Marrone, former CEO of Marrone Bio

This led to harsh criticism from Roger Isom, the CEO and President of the Western Agricultural Processors Association (WAPA), who called the Fresno workshop “an utter farce” and “a complete travesty,” in a WAPA statement. Isom said it served only for the agencies to check a box on outreach and for environmental activists to “lambast farmers with accusations of corporate greed and spraying indiscriminately.” He was angered the workshops did not “solve the immediate problem of the loss of chlorpyrifos in the short term.”

Walnut grower Billy Musselman, who drove from Chico to attend the Sacramento workshop, worried about the next pest management tools on the administration’s “chopping block.”

“If they don’t have a plan in place before they continue to chop off some of the tools we have, it’s going to make it difficult to battle the problems we have,” he said.

At the heart of the discussions was a breakaway session, when participants answered three questions in a round robin format. One question asked how the state should transition to “safer pest management tools” without hurting the industry. Another focused on where the agencies should place their funding to meet this larger sustainability framework. Notably, the top question asked for reactions to the draft recommendations

McIntyre set the tone when he acknowledged many will be disappointed the group would not be presenting an actual list of alternatives.

Instead, he offered a draft outline describing the four lists the group plans to submit. The first will highlight the alternatives currently available – a review of established research by the University of California Integrated Pest Management program.

The second will recommend further research for other crops. That list may include asparagus. The crop is already down to just a few farmers in California, due largely to labor costs and a competitive Mexican market. Cotton, another crop experiencing a decline in the state, is vulnerable to pests that can lead to “sticky cotton,” which contaminates the lint. With all sales of chlorpyrifos ending by Feb. 6, cotton growers will have no adequate product this season for combating the insects.

The third list will rank the toxicity of the suggested alternatives. A concerning issue in the pest control community has been that alternatives like biopesticides may require a greater amount applied, with multiple applications and possibly a combination of products to be successful, “rather than just one and done” with chlorpyrifos, as one workshop participant put it. This

approach has a number of potential tradeoffs, such as impacts to water quality with runoff and requiring more tractor use in the field, which could set back local air emissions targets.

**“If you switch a lever here, it’s going to then cause a domino effect somewhere else,” said Matthew Allen, who directs legislative affairs for the Western Growers Association, during the Sacramento workshop.**

The fourth list will include biopesticide alternatives. Marrone Bio Innovations, which manufactures biopesticides 20 miles from the DPR offices, has been closely involved in the alternatives process. Founder Pam Marrone serves on the working group, though she has recently retired as CEO of the company. Last week, DPR registered a new product for Marrone Bio in California, a biofungicide targeting downy mildew and other molds. That could replace Telone, or 1,3-D, as the department plans to further restrict the fungicide.

**In an interview with *Agri-Pulse*, Marrone said her company had “some very good bioinsecticides that are shovel ready and can be chlorpyrifos alternatives.”**

Paul Squires, a pest control adviser attending the workshop who also serves on the Alternatives Working Group, cautioned that the research behind biopesticides may work well in a controlled environment but not carry over to large-scale production as a viable option, while costs can be more than double for those products, resulting in higher food prices.

Miriam Rotkin-Ellman, a scientist with the National Resources Defense Council, appreciated the lists and aspirational goals for research, but wanted specific actions on how DPR will take more organophosphates off the market. She said all these groups and agencies spending their time on one pesticide “is not a good use of anyone’s resources.” She also wanted to see benchmarks for public health baked into the process.



Matthew Allen, Western Growers

Rotkin-Ellman was disappointed it has taken the state 20 years to ban chlorpyrifos after the U.S. EPA banned it from commercial use in 2000.

**“It needs to be geared towards how we get rid of all the chemical cousins of chlorpyrifos,” she said. “We cannot just keep going around and around coming back here every five years with another toxic chemical.”**

For more than 50 years, chlorpyrifos has been in use across the country, with numerous regulatory assessments gauging its efficacy over that time. Alternatives to chlorpyrifos are not likely to have that degree of scientific understanding.

The Alternatives Working Group plans to push Gov. Gavin Newsom’s administration to return funding to UC IPM and Cooperative Extension (UCCE) in order to perform the basic research for developing new alternative agents. UCCE has suffered large staffing reductions in the last two decades, and private companies do not have the overhead to carry out such fundamental research on specialty crops.

Part of the working group's five-year plan focuses on those regulatory improvements. This would also include aligning the priorities of DPR staff to help identify alternatives, though it may draw them away from other regulatory duties. Another recommendation was to educate pest control advisors on "non-pesticide approaches," which Taylor Roschen, a regulatory affairs director for the California Farm Bureau Federation, said was not an appropriate perspective.

"If you want to go toward IPM and if you want to go toward organic, pesticides are a part of those protocols," she said during the workshop.

That approach would likely add more continuing education hours to pest control advisors and ag inspectors, according to Riverside County Ag Commissioner Ruben Arroyo. He said that would take more time away from their jobs and personal lives for some and more state funding should instead be allocated to UCCE specialists, who are the "actual educators."

"But I try to educate before I regulate," he said. "That's a mantra for all of us."

While the workshops did not deliver recommendations, many of the participants appreciated the opportunity for a productive dialogue with their counterparts from opposing interest groups.

"That's the long-term solution to this – for me to understand the concerns of people who don't want pesticides used," said Paul Squires. "And it's important for me to actually get those people out in the field to show them how we make these decisions."

Squires said in his 26 years in the business, he never had an opportunity to sit down with such a diverse group.

"If we don't actually do like we did today and work together, we're not going to accomplish anything," he said.

DPR Chief Deputy Director Jesse Cuevas said the department is looking for a model like this, where they can engage the public at a deeper level, as opposed to the typical format of delivering comments in under two minutes during a formal hearing.

"People can kind of just scratch the surface of the issue and get a few high-level points across," he said. "What we see today is these people are taking a deeper dive."

## **Proposed BLM grazing EIS sparks differing reactions**

A just-announced Bureau of Land Management effort to revise grazing regulations is already sparking sharp disagreements between ranching supporters, who welcome it as common-sense reform, and opponents, who say BLM is favoring the needs of cattle over the environment.

In Tuesday's *Federal Register*, BLM issued a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement on potential changes to grazing regulations on about 155 million acres of BLM land.

Among the bureau's goals are more efficient permitting of grazing operations and more clarity in BLM regulations. A 2006 effort to rewrite grazing regs did not survive a court challenge in Idaho

and the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals, meaning the current grazing rules have been in place since 1995.

However, “Despite the injunction, the 2006 amended version of the grazing administration regulations still appears in the [Code of Federal Regulations],” BLM said in its NOI. “This has created significant confusion for grazing permittees and lessees, BLM staff, the public, and the courts.”

Tanner Beymer, associate director of the Public Lands Council and associate director of government affairs for the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, agreed, and said to efforts by the Trump Administration to alter the way the National Environmental Policy Act and Endangered Species Act are implemented are other examples of “common sense” regulatory solutions.



Tanner Beymer

“This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for BLM permittees to set the record straight,” said Dr. J.J. Goicoechea, who chairs the NCBA Federal Lands Committee and PLC’s Grazing Regulations Working Group. He said he could not emphasize enough the importance of ranchers commenting on the scope of the EIS.

But grazing critics — and frequent litigants — the Western Watersheds Project (WWP) and WildEarth Guardians said the NOI shows clearly where BLM is going with its rewrite: less public participation, for example, and the use of grazing as a wildfire-reduction tool.

Greta Anderson, deputy director of WWP, said BLM’s emphasis in the *Federal Register* on improving efficiency and ensuring “adequate,” but not “full” participation by the public so as not to “unduly burden” the administrative process, suggests that BLM “is somehow burdened by public participation.”

The notice also suggests an expanded use of Categorical Exclusions under NEPA, which define activities that do not need environmental review, and streamlining the protest process.

Beymer, however, said, “I don’t see anything in the NOI that says the public is going to be cut out of the process.” As for Categorical Exclusions, he added that while public opportunities to comment “are not the same, that’s not to say that the public doesn’t get to weigh in at other junctures.”

Perhaps the most controversial proposal scientifically is BLM’s apparent desire to use grazing as a way of reducing the risk of wildfire. There is a wide divide on that subject. Beymer says there’s a “wealth of data that grazing is a good wildfire reduction tool.”

But Judi Brawer, WildEarth Guardians’ Wild Places Program Director, said, “Saying that grazing reduces fire risk — there is in my experience no evidence of that.”

Authors of a recent U.S. Geological Survey paper, accepted for publication by the journal *Biological Invasions*, said their data “provide no support for the notion that contemporary grazing regimes or grazing in conjunction with fire can suppress cheatgrass.” Brawer said the study’s conclusions are in line with previous research.

Beymer, however, said he has spoken with researchers who have told him the study “is not worth the paper it’s printed on.” He said he expected NCBA and Public Lands Council to have a response to the paper within about three weeks.

The comment period on the NOI ends 15 days after the last scoping meeting.

Those scoping meetings are scheduled for:

- Feb 6 — Miles City, Montana at the Sleep Inn and Suites
- Feb 11 — Las Cruces, New Mexico at the Ramada Palms Hotel
- Feb 18 — Elko, Nevada at the Elko Convention Center
- Feb 20 — Casper, Wyoming at the Casper Event Center

## Checkoff reforms face uphill battle in Congress

Critics of farmer self-help commodity research and promotion programs — called checkoffs — are pressing for legislation aimed at tighter financial oversight and stronger fences around the activities allowed by national checkoff regulations, including stricter prohibitions against economic conflicts of interest by participants.

A Senate bill mandating such strictures, by Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah), and a companion House bill by Rep. Dina Titus (D-Utah) await action in the chambers’ agriculture committees, endorsed by dozens of groups representing small-farm economic interests and the liberal side of farm policy, along with some animal welfare groups, like the Humane Society of the U.S.

But Congress has had similar proposals in recent years and rejected them. In fact, groups representing a clear majority of American farmers and ranchers pleaded with drafters of the 2018 farm bill to reject the checkoff reform bills, and they did.

**Crop and livestock producers have voted their approval of checkoffs in past decades, and 22 remain, ranging from avocados to Christmas trees and even watermelon.** All are overseen by USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service. Once approved, all producers are assessed a percentage, or a per-unit fee or tax, on all sales of their checkoff commodity.

**“The whole idea of checkoffs is to have farmers and ranchers chip in to help support their own commodity ... (and) the whole concept has been generally supported (by farmers),” says John Hansen, Nebraska Farmers Union president, who’s tracked checkoff issues for the National Farmers Union for years.**

“You start running into trouble,” he says, “when those commodity dollars are used to support a particular organization who has close alliances with the processors.” Some reviews of spending by livestock checkoffs, he says, show “that they’re not just doing research ... they’re also supporting a political agenda that is working against our interests. So, then all the governance stuff comes into play.”

He asks: “How do you strike that balance between taking an involuntary excise tax, in this case a mandatory checkoff, and putting it in a safe area so it can’t be misused for political purposes?”

On that question, Hansen says, the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA), cattle owners’ biggest lobbyist organization, “has been a lightning rod for some time.”

In 2018, for example, NCBA received two-thirds of the \$41 million in contracts the Cattlemen’s Beef Board (CBB), the beef checkoff operator, awarded for approved research and promotion activities. Some of the other contractors include the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture, the U.S. Cattlemen's Association, and the North American Meat Institute.

AMS regulations impose many rules on how checkoff dollars can be spent: none for any



Colin Woodall

lobbying purpose; none spent to demean or disparage another farm commodity; none used outside the purposes for which the CBB grant is made.

**NCBA CEO Colin Woodall says his association follows the rules and uses no checkoff funds to lobby. As a contractor to the beef checkoff, NCBA “cannot use any of that money for lobbying ... it gets audited by us internally ... by the cattlemen’s Beef Board, and USDA audits it.”**

What he says about checkoff audits is true. The CBB and all other checkoffs pay for annual independent audits and sends the results to AMS for approval. Summaries of them are posted online, Agri-Pulse finds when checking several checkoff websites.

What’s more, “audits are just one of the checks and balances ... to ensure Pork Checkoff funds are being handled appropriately,” says Cindy Cunningham, assistant vice president for the National Pork Board, the pork checkoff operator. Further, as with other checkoffs, AMS can also require audits of state checkoffs, she notes.

Despite that, National Farmers Union President Roger Johnson says that though the audit summaries list essential categories of income and spending, “I think there’s a question as to the vigor of the audit and the regularity of the audit and the release of (detailed) audit results.”

**In fact, Joe Maxwell, president of Family Farm Action and advisor to a watchdog group called the Organization for Competitive Markets, relates OCM’s efforts since 2010 to force the release of thousands of pages showing specific NCBA expenditures in executing CBB grants. OCM finally filed a federal court complaint in 2014 to require release of such records, “and we’re still in court” to access those records, he says.**

“The issue is whether the actual expenditures are proprietary,” Maxwell says. OCM must prove to the court that “these documents are subject to the Freedom of Information Act — that they’re public records,” he says. He expects the current Senate and House bills, if passed, would mandate public access to specific checkoff expenditures.

**NCBA's Woodall disagrees. "None of this legislation does anything more than what's already required. The oversight they (proponents of the legislation) ask for is already in place. The transparency is in place," he says. He concludes: "We have no concern that (the bills) will get any more traction than they have in the past."**



*Joe Maxwell*

Woodall may be right about that, too. Checkoffs have long been a farm-sector issue, and most cattle owners are devoted to the beef program because they believe it pays off. For example, a Cornell University professor's [analysis](#) recently estimated the economic return for each dollar of beef checkoff funds, 2014 to 2018, was \$11.91 in beef industry profits overall.

So, although control of the House switched to Democrats since the 2018 farm bill was passed, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson, D-Minn., for example, hasn't indicated he favors the Titus legislation. "We're still evaluating the Titus bill," Democratic committee staff advised on his behalf.

In the Senate, Lee's assistant says, "there is no immediate plan to advance the bill ... (though) always looking for opportunities."

For checkoff critics, perhaps more important than financial transparency matters is real or suspected conflicts of interest when they perceive the nation's biggest cattle and swine industry groups — NCBA and the National Pork Producers Association (NPPC), respectively — getting millions of checkoff dollars to conduct activities they view as being more aligned with meatpacker interests than those of small producers.

**But some farmers believe checkoff critics have their own conflicts of interest because of their connections to the Humane Society of the U.S. and other "animal rights" groups who have funneled thousands of dollars into some of their anti-checkoff efforts. Joe Maxwell previously served as the HSUS Vice President of Outreach, they point out, and OCM has also received money from HSUS.**

AMS regulations (and related statutes) have long required "disclosure statements and conflict of interest statements ... signed and submitted by each board employee annually and by each board member," and regulations also, for example, ban conflicts of interest in any checkoff contracts.

But the legislation's backers such as Mike Eby, board chairman of the [National Dairy Producers Organization](#), want language in the current bills against conflict of interest and "anticompetitive activity" to apply more broadly, perhaps barring leaders of producer organizations from serving on checkoff boards. He believes a too-cozy relationship between [Dairy Management Inc.](#) (DMI, the checkoff), and National Milk Producer Federation (NMPF), the producer cooperatives group, "is the essence for the need of the transparency bill, to clarify what is and what is not permissible. I'm saying, at the very least it should be questioned," he says.

However, the crossover between boards seems to be infrequent. Among about 79 members of DMI's two boards and NMPF's 60 or so officers and board members, just four names, all farmers, appear in both places. Heather Oldani, DMI executive vice president for communications, notes, too, "the NMPF board is determined through an entirely separate

governance process and represents cooperative membership leaders” while the DMI boards represent individual farmers.

On the beef cattle side, too, dual board membership is rare for NCBA and the CBB. NCBA members serve on the CBB, Woodard declares proudly, “and there is nothing wrong with that because they’re cattle producers first, and you want somebody ... who’s engaged in our industry” on the checkoff board.

An *Agri-Pulse* perusal of lists of the CBB’s 96 members and a similar number of NCBA’s top officials and committee members found only three serving on both boards, and two of those are just on NCBA’s checkoff liaison panels.

“The dairy checkoff has a long history of growing consumer confidence and demand in dairy. Since the checkoff program began in 1983, per person dairy consumption has grown by 73 pounds, thanks to efforts including partnerships with major foodservice leaders that showcase dairy on their menus,” says Tom Gallagher, CEO of Dairy Management Inc. **“We understand there are forces working against us because of our success. Anti-animal-agriculture groups are doing what they can to divide dairy farmers into groups — large versus small, conventional versus organic, etc. — and their focus is to put all dairy farmers out of business by doing so. They are coming after the checkoff because they realize we are the only group that stands up for and will promote and defend all 38,000 dairy farms in the U.S.”**

## **News Briefs:**

**USDA, EPA name food waste ‘champions’.** USDA and EPA say six businesses and organizations are pledging to cut their food waste and loss by 50% by 2030. In a release Tuesday, the two agencies said Browns Superstores, Compass Group, Giant Eagle, Hello Fresh, Las Vegas Sands, and The Wendy’s Company were all “stepping up to reduce food loss and waste. The commitments made by these organizations in joining the Champions program will help propel the U.S. one step closer toward meeting the national goal of reducing food waste and loss 50 percent by 2030,” EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said in a statement. The six new Champions join the list of existing 2030 Champions, which include: Ahold Delhaize, Aramark, Blue Apron, Bon Appetit, Campbells, ConAgra, Farmstead, General Mills, Hilton, Kellogg’s, Kroger, Marley Spoon, MGM Resorts, Mom’s Organic Market, PepsiCo, Sodexo, Sprouts, Unilever, Walmart, Wegmans, Weis, Whitsons and Yum Brands. According to government estimates, the value of food loss and waste for retailers and consumers each year is estimated to be over \$161 billion, and food waste consumes 21% of the globe’s fresh water.

**Ready to plant more trees?** The U.S. will join the “One Trillion Trees Initiative” being launched at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, according to President Donald Trump. “And in doing so, we will continue to show strong leadership in restoring, growing, and better managing our trees and our forests,” he said Tuesday. Speaking to global government and business leaders, Trump reported that “the United States has among the cleanest air and drinking water on Earth” and “we’re going to keep it that way.” Trump did not directly mention climate change, but tree planting is widely viewed as one way to sequester carbon and address global warming. [The Trillion Tree Campaign](#), part of an initiative that first launched in 2006, says that 13.6 billion trees have already been planted.

## Farm Hands West: Martin joins California Giant Berry Farms

**Sean Martin** has been hired to succeed **Dan Nicola** as the new chief financial officer at California Giant Berry Farms. He brings over 30 years of experience in strategic planning, organizational restructuring and financial management. Nicola is transitioning into retirement after serving 30 years in the CFO role.

Eagle Eye hired **Joe Ange** as the new director of business development. Ange has been with Markon Cooperative Inc. since 2001, most recently working as purchasing director. He is a member of the Produce Marketing board of directors.

Watsonville Coast Produce Inc. has promoted **Jerud Manfreto** vice president of operations and **Adrian Contreras** to sales manager. Manfre most recently served as a buyer for the company. The moves follow the recent retirement of long-time buyer and partner **John Burkett**.

USDA deputy assistant secretary for civil rights **Naomi Earp** is resigning from her position effective Jan. 31. She gave her notice to the Office of the Secretary in early December. In a statement, USDA said it would "undertake a careful and thorough search for new leadership" for the office.

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) hired **Eric Deeble** as its new policy director. Before joining NSAC, Deeble worked with the office of Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., as a senior policy adviser for agriculture, animal welfare, nutrition, and the arts. He will begin his new responsibilities at the end of January. NSAC deputy policy director **Juli Obudzinski** served as interim policy director during the search and hiring process and will return to her prior role in February.

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) selected **Luis Guardia** to serve as president of the anti-hunger organization. Guardia most recently served as the chief business and financial services officer at Global Impact and chief operating officer at the ONE Campaign.

**Britt Raybould** was elected president of the National Potato Council (NPC). **Larry Alsum** will serve as the NPC immediate past president. Raybould serves as chief financial officer of Raybould Brothers Farm. She previously served the NPC Board as first vice president and vice president of the legislative and government Affairs Committee. She is the third generation of the Raybould family to serve as NPC president and the first female president in NPC's history.

**Carlos Abrams-Rivera** has been appointed U.S. zone president for Kraft Heinz, effective Feb. 3. Abrams-Rivera most recently served as executive vice president and president of Campbell Snacks. Before that he was president of Campbell's Pepperidge Farm unit.

House Agriculture Committee Chairman **Collin Peterson**, D-Minn., has added two to his Committee staff. **Jake Chisholm** has been hired to serve as staff director for the Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management and **Justina Graff** will serve as the deputy clerk for the House Agriculture Committee. In addition to the new hires, **Prescott Martin III**, counsel for commodity and conservation programs during the 2018 farm bill, was promoted to Chief Counsel.

**Ron Eckstein** is now the communications director for Rep. **Nanette Diaz Barragán**, D-Calif. He has spent the past three years as a freelance writer and before that was the communications director for Americans for Tax Fairness.

The Founder of Mycogen Seed, **Jerry Caulder** passed away near the end of 2019. Caulder's career began at Monsanto holding numerous management positions over 15 years. In 1984 Caulder moved to San Diego, Calif., and became the chairman and CEO of Mycogen, Inc. After Mycogen was acquired by Dow AgroSciences in 1998, Caulder held many leadership positions. Caulder's most recent endeavor was as the chairman of Athenix, Inc., a venture backed plant sciences company located in Research Triangle Park, NC.

**Frieda Rapoport Caplan**, a produce industry pioneer referred to as the 'Kiwi Queen', died at the age of 96. She was praised for her part in elevating the role of women in the fresh produce business and helped introduce kiwifruit and other specialties to the U.S. market in 1962. She started her own business Frieda, Inc., became the first woman in the U.S. to own and operate a produce company on the all-male Los Angeles Wholesale Produce Market.

**Bonnie Duvall**, wife of American Farm Bureau president **Zippy Duvall**, passed away after fighting a courageous battle with cancer. Bonnie and Zippy began their Farm Bureau journey in 1982 when they were chosen for the National Young Farmer and Rancher Award. Thirty-three years later Bonnie and Zippy continued their journey after Zippy was elected Farm Bureau president. Bonnie then took over keeping the books for her and Zippy's Georgia farm, so Zippy could focus his attention on the Farm Bureau members and organization. AFBF Vice President Scott VanderWal described Bonnie as "a special member of the Farm Bureau family."

**Best regards,**

**Sara Wyant**

**Editor**

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