

California DPR moves to ban chlorpyrifos

The California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) announced today that the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) is acting to ban the use of chlorpyrifos in California by initiating cancellation of the pesticide. The move comes as state lawmakers were considering [Senate Bill 458](#) by Senator Maria Elena Durazo, D-Los Angeles, which would completely ban the broad-spectrum insecticide in the state.

Last week, the New York State legislature passed a total ban on chlorpyrifos. Hawaii was the first state to pass a full ban last year. Similar actions are under consideration in Oregon and Connecticut are trying to do the same.

Chlorpyrifos is widely used by farmers on fruits and vegetables to kill pests on more than 50 crops.

Last month, an appeals court issued a three-paragraph [order](#) giving the Environmental Protection Agency until mid-July to respond to objections from farmworker and environmental groups to EPA's [2017 decision](#) permitting continued use of the insecticide.



CalEPA Secretary Jared Blumenfeld

“For some crops and target pests, chlorpyrifos is the only line of defense, with no viable alternatives,” Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue said when EPA asked the appeals court to rehear the case. Losing the use of chlorpyrifos “endangers agricultural industries and is expected to have wide economic impacts.”

DPR said it will consult with county agricultural commissioners and local air pollution control districts before filing for cancellation. The cancellation process could take up to two years.

CalEPA and the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) also announced that Governor Gavin Newsom will propose \$5.7 million in new funding in the May Revision budget

proposal to support the transition to “safer, more sustainable alternatives, and plans to convene a working group to identify, evaluate and recommend alternative pest management solutions.”

“California’s action to cancel the registration of chlorpyrifos is needed to prevent the significant harm this pesticide causes children, farm workers and vulnerable communities,” said CalEPA Secretary Jared Blumenfeld. “This action also represents a historic opportunity for California to develop a new framework for alternative pest management practices.”

In a release, DPR said the decision to ban chlorpyrifos follows mounting evidence, including recent findings by the state’s independent Scientific Review Panel on Toxic Air Contaminants, that the pesticide causes serious health effects in children and other sensitive populations at lower levels of exposure than previously understood. These effects include impaired brain and neurological development.

In April, chlorpyrifos was formally listed as a “toxic air contaminant”, which California law defines as “an air pollutant which may cause or contribute to an increase in mortality or an increase in serious illness, or which may pose a present or potential hazard to human health.” The listing requires DPR to develop control measures to protect the health of farm workers and others living and working near where the pesticide is used.

DPR has determined, in consultation with CDFA, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), and the California Air Resources Board (CARB), that sufficient additional control measures are not feasible.

In addition, DPR plans to convene a cross-sector working group to identify safer alternatives to avoid replacing chlorpyrifos with an equally harmful pesticide. This will include the use of biological controls and other integrated pest management practices. They will also partner with growers as they transition from using chlorpyrifos to implement safer alternatives, according to DPR officials.

During the cancellation process, DPR’s recommendations to county agricultural commissioners for tighter permit restrictions on the use of chlorpyrifos will remain in place. These include a ban on aerial spraying, quarter-mile buffer zones and limiting use to crop-pest combinations that lack alternatives. DPR will support aggressive enforcement of these restrictions.

“We look forward to working with the Legislature through the budget process on the Governor’s proposal to support growers in the transition to alternative pest management,” said CDFA Secretary Karen Ross.

In 2015, DPR designated chlorpyrifos as a “restricted material” that requires a permit from the county agricultural commissioner for its application. In addition, applications of chlorpyrifos must be recommended by a licensed pest control advisor and supervised by a licensed certified applicator.

The proposed cancellation would apply to dozens of agricultural products containing the pesticide. The pesticide has been prohibited by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for residential uses since 2001.

Chlorpyrifos is used to control pests on a variety of crops, including alfalfa, almonds, citrus, cotton, grapes and walnuts. It has declined in use over the past decade as California growers have shifted to alternatives. Use of the pesticide dropped more than 50 percent from two million pounds in 2005 to just over 900,000 pounds in 2016.

The five main manufacturers of chlorpyrifos include Dow AgroSciences (now Corteva Agriscience), Cheminova, Makteshim-Agan, Garda and Platte Chemical.

California leads fight to fix national farm labor shortage

From California to Georgia, farmers can't find enough workers to harvest their crops or milk their cows. Combined with Congress's decades-long failure to act on long-promised comprehensive immigration reform, **the result is that U.S. consumers are paying more for a less-secure food supply as more production moves south of the Mexican border in search of farm labor.**

But a fix could be slowly brewing, thanks to White House intervention being led by Jared Kushner, special advisor to President Trump. Helping this effort is immigration expert Kristi Boswell, an attorney who was Director of Congressional Relations for the American Farm Bureau Federation before moving to USDA as senior advisor to Ag Secretary Sonny Perdue, then on to Kushner's White House Office of American Innovation.

Jaime Castaneda, senior VP of policy strategy and international trade at the National Milk Producers Federation, points to past efforts on comprehensive immigration reform raising hopes, then failing each time. With 2018's latest attempt, he tells *Agri-Pulse*, "We got stuck again."

But Castaneda's hopeful about a breakthrough this year. First, he welcomes the Kushner/Boswell intervention and President Trump's repeated acknowledgments that the farm sector has special needs. Castaneda also sees heightened congressional interest in "bipartisan legislation focused on agricultural immigration." **He says targeting ag, without adding the complexities of comprehensive immigration reform, "could grease the path to something bigger."**

The "doable" next step, Castaneda says, is for Congress and the White House to agree on legislation that "takes care of agriculture's current workers. But no legislation will move forward without addressing the unique needs of dairy for year-round workers, because the current H-2A program's limitations to only seasonal and temporary jobs hurts both workers and agriculture."



Jaime Castaneda

The driver for this next step is today's tight farm labor supply. Just how tight is shown in the California Farm Bureau Federation (CFBF) 2019 Farm Worker Scarcity Survey published April 30 with UC Davis. **It concludes that "farmers face continuing challenges in agricultural employee availability. In California alone, farmers and ranchers hire nearly 473,000 employees during peak season. National estimates put the agricultural workforce at 2.5 million hired employees."**



The report adds that “Experts calculate that 50 to 70 percent of the hired workers are not authorized to work in the U.S.” This large percentage of undocumented farm workers means at least half of farm workers risk deportation while their employers face the constant threat of losing their workforce without warning and without available replacements.

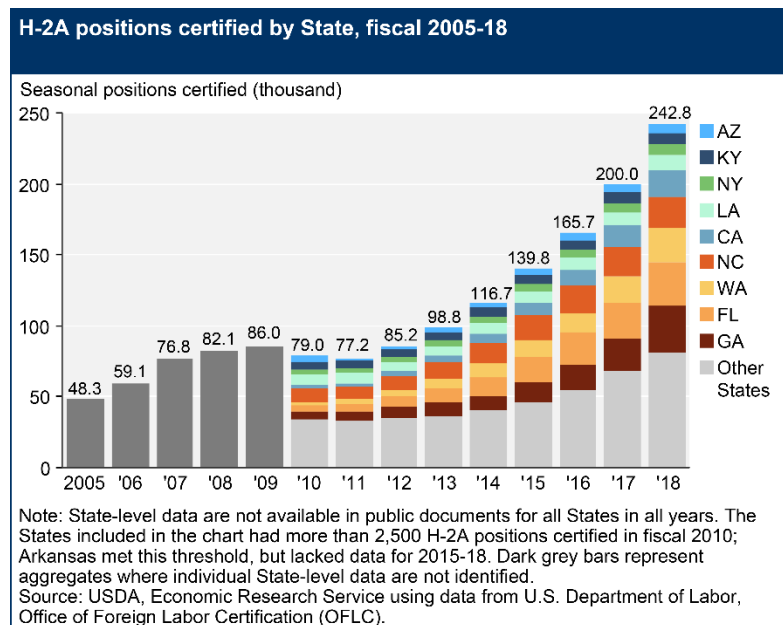
In response to what CFBF’s 2012, 2017 and 2019 surveys show as an increasing labor shortage, the 2019 report calls for **“agricultural workforce reform that provides existing employees with a legal status and allows entry for future guest workers who desire to work in U.S. agriculture.”**

The 2017 survey concluded that **“despite raising wages, increasing benefits, converting to less labor-intensive crops, investing in mechanization and other efforts, California farm employers have experienced continued employee shortages, and have continued to alter their production practices in response to the shortages, which stem in part from a lack of agricultural labor reform at the federal level.”**

In its 2012 survey, CFBF warned that farmers have responded by adjusting crop plantings, competing for employees by offering year-round employment, investing in mechanization if available, or transferring some production to other countries. The farm group concluded that “No matter which of these options farmers take in response to chronic employee shortages, the impact will affect the crops grown, the diversity and the long-term economic value of California agriculture.”

Part of the problem is that **“Nobody, including farm workers, is raising their kids to be farm workers.”** That’s according to California farm labor contractor Steve Scaroni. His fast-growing Fresh Harvest company supplies legal migrant workers to farmers in California, Oregon and Washington under the federal H-2A visa program that legalizes hiring seasonal migrant labor.

Scaroni tells *Agri-Pulse* H-2A is sorely needed but far short of meeting farm labor needs due to the program’s high costs for farmers and complex regulatory burdens. As a result, he says, too much fruit and vegetable production has already shifted from California to Mexico. This shift included Scaroni setting up his own Harvest Tek de México company 14 years ago to raise produce in Mexico for the U.S. market because he “saw a lack of labor and major cost escalations coming to United States agriculture.”



As operated currently, H-2A includes requirements that farmers pay above-market wages to H-2A workers along with providing free housing, transportation and other benefits. The requirements are designed to encourage farmers to prioritize hiring U.S. citizens instead of migrant workers. **Scaroni says the only answer is to “recognize that legal United States residents are not going to do farm work” and therefore “We’ve got to design a system that facilitates bringing in migrants from other countries on a temporary basis.”**

Bill Brim, raising vegetables, cotton and peanuts on Lewis Taylor Farms' 6,500 acres in Tifton, Georgia, testified in a House Judiciary hearing April 3 that "without access to what used to be a steady stream of workers, more and more farmers began turning to the H-2A program, not because they wanted to, but because they had to. It was, and still is, despite the bureaucracy, costs, and uncertainty, the only viable option to hire farmworkers who are legally authorized to work in the U.S."

Brim pointed out that he had to increase his efforts to hire locally because "The porous southern border that once enabled workers to relatively easily cross into the U.S. began changing after 2001. Since that time, border security has dramatically increased. Worksite enforcement has dramatically increased." The result, he said, is that "tighter security at the border, tighter security in the interior of the country, and tighter security at the worksite has led to a tighter labor market for agriculture."

"There simply are not enough U.S. workers who are willing and able to do this work," Brim explained. "The hiring statistics from our farm illustrates the story very well. Last year, we had nearly 900 positions certified as eligible to be filled by H-2A workers. Just ten U.S. workers responded to fill those positions and they were hired, but eight of them did not finish the season."

Daniel Hartwig, resource manager for Woolf Farming, tells *Agri-Pulse* the family-owned operation's 20,000-acre main ranch in Huron, California also has been experiencing serious labor shortages. "We've mechanized where we can," he tells us, "but especially at harvest time, labor is really tight." He adds that because the H-2A program "is just really, really difficult to use . . . no one around here uses it."

Yet increasingly, as the graph above shows, H-2A use has surged, with nearly 250,000 H-2A contracts signed last year. With this surge, H-2A workers now provide about 10 percent of agriculture's estimated 2.5 million hired employees.

California Farm Bureau Federation President and Lodestar Farms olive grower Jamie Johansson tells *Agri-Pulse* California's use of the H-2A program has grown from about 8,000 workers in 2015 to over 18,000 H-2A



Jamie Johansson

workers in 2018. **"It's increasingly important and the primary reason," he explains, "is desperation for labor by our farmers. So, H-2A is almost serving as a last resort for a lot of farmers, using H-2A to get the labor they need."**

To deal with the growing worker shortage, Johansson says, "getting comprehensive immigration reform really is one of our critically important issues this year in this new Congress." As part of the reform, he'd like to end the bureaucratic chaos created by the fact that USDA shares H-2A program responsibility with the State Department, the Department of Labor, and Homeland Security.

To fix the farm labor shortage, California Farm Bureau's Farm Employers Labor Service COO Bryan Little tells *Agri-Pulse* that the first step is to provide legal status for undocumented migrant farm workers already here "living in our communities and harvesting the food that we eat." Next, he adds, Congress needs to replace H-2A with a new guest worker program "that is going to be more flexible and more cost effective."

Little calls for a new worker program “that allows us to replace the current farm workers that we legalize when they either age out or move on to other jobs.”

Sábor Farms ranch manager Richard Bianchi, raising 2,000 acres of cilantro and other leafy greens in California’s Salinas Valley, tells *Agri-Pulse* that using about 100 H-2A workers is vital to his operations, to replace the undocumented migrant workers he previously relied on.

Facing the increasing labor shortage, Bianchi says automation is essential because “We’re all trying to do anything we can do to get away from any type of hand labor.” He sees the solution as first, “giving our existing work force some type of legal status. You’ve got to take care of these people because they’re productive people we all grew up with.” Second, he calls for a more workable guest worker program that brings in new migrants to replace those who’ve aged out, left for other jobs or can no longer make it across an increasingly sealed border.

Nov. 2018’s USDA Economic Research Service report Farm Labor Markets in the United States and Mexico Pose Challenges for U.S. Agriculture points to more problems ahead. It concludes that with the Mexican economy improving, “**rural Mexicans are less likely to work as farmworkers either in Mexico or in the United States.**” It adds that overall, “The U.S. farm labor market shows many signs of tightening, including producer reports of labor shortages, increases in farm wages, more employment of guest workers through the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Program, and a shrinking supply of farm labor from rural Mexico.”

One potential answer comes from the Agricultural Worker Program Act (S.175 and H.R.641) introduced in January by California Democrats Sen. Dianne Feinstein and Rep. Zoe Lofgren along with 13 Senate co-sponsors and 73 House co-sponsors. The bill would provide immediate legal “blue card” eligibility for established migrant farm workers to continue working in the U.S., along with a pathway to longer-term permanent residency and possible citizenship for these workers and their families.

Tom Nassif, president and CEO of the Western Growers Association that represents fresh fruit, produce and tree nut growers, packers and shippers, has challenged Congress directly. Testifying in in the House Judiciary hearing April 3, **he pointed to a Texas A&M report showing that 77 percent of U.S. vegetable farmers have scaled back operations in response to labor shortages and that more than 80,000 acres of fresh produce once grown in California have moved to other countries.**



Tom Nassif

Nassif said it’s clear the fruits and vegetables eaten in the U.S. “will be harvested by foreign hands” and Congress must decide “do you want those foreign hands harvesting your fruits and vegetables to be on farms here in the United States or do you want to see production continue to shift to farms in foreign countries?”

At this point, the sense the urgency that farmers and ranchers feel on a daily basis seems missing in Washington. President Trump met with a dozen senators Tuesday to talk about immigration reform plans the White House has been developing. But the senators said there was little discussion about overhauling H-2A and other guest worker programs. The focus instead was on strengthening border security and reforming the nation’s legal immigration system.

The president’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and USDA adviser Kristi Boswell have been working on a plan that would reform H-2A. But Sen. David Perdue, R-Ga., told *Agri-Pulse* that reforming

guest worker programs, a top priority for many in agriculture, is being left until later. “We think that gets a little bit too broad,” Perdue said.

Sen. Kevin Cramer, R-N.D., also said the meeting steered away from guest worker issues. Cramer said of the administration’s proposal: “I don’t want to call it modest, but it’s in the doable range.”

In search of rural economic analysis to gauge SGMA, other impacts

One of the world’s most comprehensive water storage and conveyance systems will soon be getting much more complex under California’s Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). The state is responding with new strategies to cushion the transition for farmers and those who live in rural parts of the state. One of those is a bill currently in the California Assembly that would create a California version of the Rural Development agency of the U.S. Department of Food and Agriculture in order to advance “data-driven policymaking.”

“In rural California, we need reason to believe that we're not getting left behind. That's because that's what it feels like,” said Assemblymember Robert Rivas, D-Hollister, in presenting Assembly Bill 417. “Many of our communities often lack access to the resources, the capital, the technical assistance that would help move our agricultural economies forward.”



Assemblymember Robert Rivas, D-Hollister

Assembly Bill 417, known as the Agriculture and Rural Prosperity Act, aims to address the unique challenges of rural communities. **It would create a position within the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) for an economist, who would lead a comprehensive study calculating SGMA impacts at the sub-basin level across the state. The report would track data on crop production, employment figures, industries indirectly impacted, land values and property and income tax revenues.**

CDFA would submit that report to the governor’s office by July 2022, though the first groundwater sustainability plans for SGMA will begin to be implemented in January 2020. According to the bill, the study would supply the governor with recommendations to mitigate the economic impacts, including “incentive-based fallowing” and water trading markets.

The bill is - in part - a response to a February report by the Public Policy Institute of California, which found that at least 500,000 acres must be fallowed within the San Joaquin Valley alone to meet the requirements of SGMA and \$5.3 billion in annual revenue could be lost.

“We’re asking for the SGMA study not as method to demonize the policy, but to say we need to be adaptive, just like we study climate change to see how we can adapt,” said Taylor Roschen, a policy advocate for the California Farm Bureau Federation, during a hearing on AB 417 before the Assembly Agriculture Committee in March.

Along with SGMA, the rural development program would address the high poverty and unemployment rates in rural ag communities, supporting the CDFA mandate to “promote and protect” the agricultural industry of the state.

“The bookkeepers, the business managers, the labor contractors, the irrigators: Everyone you could imagine in these rural communities are really dependent on the production of ag,” said Roschen.

The program would investigate gaps in rural access to broadband, study opportunities for agtech innovation, establish workforce training programs and coordinate development and funding opportunities across federal, state and local agencies and private programs. The Appropriations Committee noted that this second mission of the program may fall to the wayside if only one position is created for both efforts.



“This isn’t a rural bill,” said Assemblymember Devon Mathis, R-Visalia, who joined as a coauthor. “It’s a bill about supporting the communities across California, which support the larger cities and everyone else. Everybody’s interdependent on each other.”

The bill also proposes a Rural Economic Development Account based on public and private moneys, which would cover the cost of the new economist position.

AB 417 passed the Agriculture Committee and is currently in the suspense file for the Assembly Appropriations Committee, which has until May 17 to decide whether to advance the bill for a vote on the floor.

China outlook dims on latest US trade spat

The optimism coming out of the White House and USDA for a U.S. deal with China to end the trade war has been growing for months, but the rosy outlook dimmed this week because of a new rift between both countries’ negotiators.

U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, claiming China is now refusing to live up to pledges, announced Monday he will raise the rate of tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods from 10 percent to 25 percent and place new 25 percent duties on an additional \$325 billion of imports from China.

The U.S. ag sector and farm state lawmakers are hoping Trump’s hardball tactics push China to fall in line, but fears are high that the escalation will either torpedo the talks or delay an overall deal while U.S. ag exports continue to bear the brunt of Chinese retaliation.

Chinese Vice Premier Liu He is still scheduled to lead a trade delegation to Washington for talks on Thursday and Friday, but the U.S. tariffs are scheduled to rise during those negotiations and the ramifications are unclear.

“I’m not sure we know exactly where things stand on this China negotiation,” International Dairy Foods Association President and CEO Michael Dykes told *Agri-Pulse*. “Is the whole thing up in the air or not? I don’t know.”

But Lighthizer’s hard ball tactics are garnering support from some on Capitol Hill, while others are worried he may have overstepped.

“We have to be strong with them,” Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said of China. “Any time they detect weakness, they take advantage. I believe we ought to hang tough. There ought to be no rush to sign something that’s just a photo op.”



U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer

Republican Senator Joni Ernst of Iowa isn’t so sure.

“Hopefully he has a negotiating strategy and hopefully this will bring China to the table,” she said. “If it doesn’t, it was a huge, huge risk and our farmers are losing patience.”

The longer the U.S.-China trade war rages on, the longer the U.S. ag sector suffers under Chinese retaliatory tariffs, and U.S. dairy is feeling a lot of pain as it sees sales of nonfat dry milk powder, whey and cheese plummet.

The U.S. exported a record-breaking \$577 million worth of dairy products to China in 2017, and the industry was on its way to sell even more than that last year before the trade war commenced and China slapped the products with retaliatory tariffs.

“After the tariffs that are currently in place were assessed, a significant amount of business dropped off,” U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC) President and CEO Tom Vilsack told *Agri-Pulse*. “In this year the Chinese have increased their dairy purchases by 11 percent across the board; however U.S. (exports to China) are down 48 percent from where they were.”

Senate Finance Committee Chuck Grassley is supporting the U.S. tariff escalation.

“I have some sympathy for Trump’s lack of patience with the Chinese,” he told reporters Tuesday. **“It’s time to strike a strong, enforceable deal so that whether you’re a farmer or a business ... you can get some certainty. I urge the Chinese negotiators to bring these talks to a ... successful close so that we can avoid prolonged tariffs.”**

But prolonged uncertainty and tariffs may be the result of the latest U.S.-China rift.

Vilsack and other ag sector leaders are concerned the new tariff increase on China could spur new retaliation from China and extend the negotiating process and the pain as exporters lose more and more contracts.

At some point — if that point hasn’t already been reached — the damage will be irreversible, Vilsack said.

“When this all started, many farmers believed that while American agriculture was being asked to take a hit, at the end of the day the deal would result in a better deal for American agriculture over the long haul,” Vilsack said. “As this continues and the tariffs increase and business opportunities are lost ... it makes it more likely that whatever the deal is, it’s not going to be enough to compensate for the pain that it has caused and that pain will continue.”

Vilsack, a former Ag Secretary during the Obama administration, predicted that the U.S. may never be able to export 30 percent of its soybeans to China again.

The U.S. exported \$3.1 billion worth of soybeans to Chinese importers in the 2018 calendar year, about a fourth of the \$12.3 billion it sold to them in 2017, according to USDA data.

Before Lighthizer spoke to reporters Monday, President Donald Trump took to Twitter on Sunday to lash out at China, and the shock waves spread quickly through the U.S. ag sector.

“I was shocked, because that’s something I didn’t see coming,” Davie Stephens, president of the American Soybean Association said in an interview with *Agri-Pulse*. “We’re just hoping that they’ll give us back our market.”

Less than a week earlier, the prospects of a quick and successful deal between the U.S. and China were a lot better. Ag Secretary Sonny Perdue was telling reporters about the “huge potential” of a China deal for U.S. farmers and ranchers.



Ag Secretary Sonny Perdue

“I think the numbers we are looking at and discussing with China on (ag) purchases will be very, very good and we think it will be multiples of what they’ve done in the past,” Perdue said in a press conference at USDA headquarters in Washington. “It will be very good for American agriculture.”

But at roughly the same time, Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin were in Beijing for talks and they were not going well. **China, Lighthizer told reporters Monday in press briefing after the USTR delivered the bad news to Trump, was “reneging on prior commitments.”**

Lighthizer did not go into detail, but stressed that the Chinese offenses were serious.

“If we can get the kind of deal that makes substantial structural changes, the president would like that kind of deal ... but that’s just not where we are now,” he said.

But many are clinging to the hope that because the Chinese negotiators have not canceled their trip to Washington, this week is a reason for some hope.

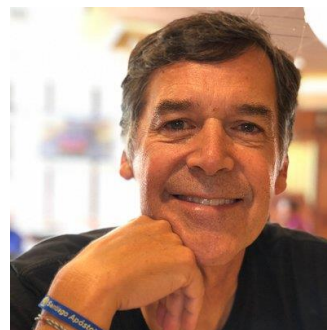
“The fact that the Chinese negotiator decided to come to the meeting is I think a good sign,” said Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas. “This could be a negotiating tactic. I don’t think any of us have any way to know.”

Governor Newsom to prioritize trade for California ag

The administration's senior advisor for international affairs and trade, Bud Colligan, told the California State Board of Food and Agriculture yesterday the governor is hoping to **expand the state's involvement in international trade efforts in Asia, Europe and the Americas and wants to differentiate the state from President Trump's international trade policies.**

"We want people to know that we are open for business, that we're open for visitors, and that we want a red carpet out there," he said.

Under the leadership of then-Governor Gray Davis, the governor's office closed all trade offices, with the number of staff dedicated to trade dropping from 45 to just three today. **Newsom plans to reopen some of those offices as early as this summer, starting with Mexico, though they will now be supported through industry funding.** Colligan said the new International Affairs and Trade Development Interagency Committee led by Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis will have its first meeting on this on May 30.



Bud Colligan on Twitter @collbud

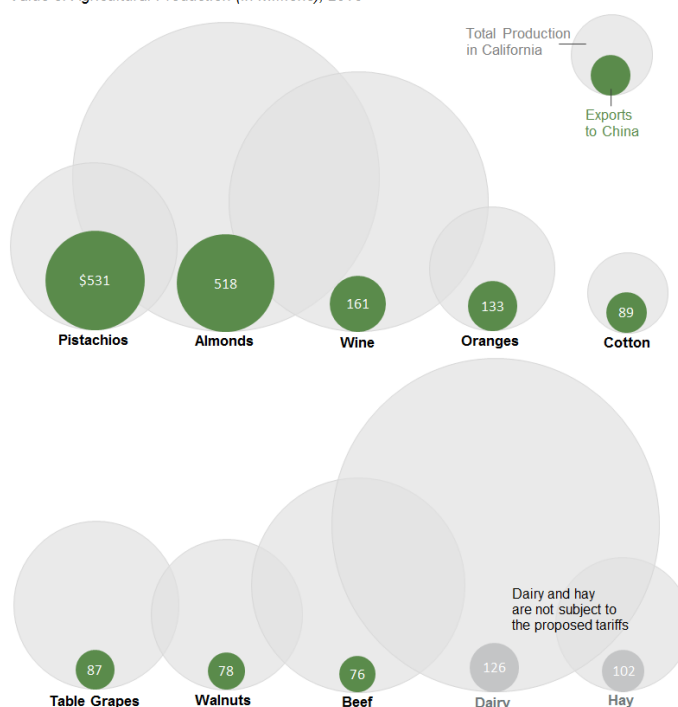
He also outlined plans to collaborate with agencies that promote foreign investment, such as SelectUSA within the U.S. Department of Commerce, to "get our inland areas more connected with foreign investment."

According to Colligan, the California economy has been growing faster than the U.S. economy and is likely to take fourth place among the world's largest economies. While agriculture accounts for just two percent of the state's economy, it is responsible for 12 percent of its exports.

That has been changing as trade tariffs have taken a toll on exports. He pointed out that Chinese tariffs on grapes have risen to 53 percent, walnuts to 45 percent and almonds to 50 percent.

"It's hard to adjust momentarily to these tariffs," he said. "This has only been going on for the last 9 to 12 months, and all of a sudden boom, you have to readjust your supply chain and figure out how you're going to deal with it."

Top Agricultural Exports to China
Value of Agricultural Production (In Millions), 2016



Source: *The California Legislative Analyst's Office shows impacts on ag product exports to China.*

But Calligan was optimistic. He pointed out that California agricultural exports have grown from \$11 billion in 2011 to \$21 billion today. He said the success has come from innovative companies, research and extension support from universities, a push for environmentally sustainable products and for the state's high-quality ag products.

“We complain about food safety regulations,” he said. “But they mean a lot to the rest of the world. People know that they get a quality product from California.”

News Briefs:

EPA seeks comments on glyphosate registration review, petition. The Environmental Protection Agency has kicked off comment periods on two glyphosate-related matters — one a [proposed interim registration decision](#) and one a [petition](#) to eliminate its use as a pre-harvest desiccant for oats. In its registration review [document](#), EPA proposed changes “to reduce off-target spray drift and establish a baseline level of protection ... that is consistent across all glyphosate products. Reducing spray drift will reduce the extent of environmental exposure and risk to non-target plants and animals.” The document also reaffirmed the agency's conclusion that glyphosate is unlikely to cause cancer. The petition was submitted in September by the [Environmental Working Group](#), which was joined by food and nutrition companies including MegaFood, Ben & Jerry's and Stonyfield Farm. It seeks a ban on the use of glyphosate as a pre-harvest desiccant on oats and a lowering of the allowable glyphosate residue on oats from 30 parts per million to 0.1 ppm. [Comments](#) on the proposed interim registration review decision are due July 5. [Comments](#) on the petition are due June 5.

UN species extinction report pushes ag sustainability. The United Nations [report](#) concluding that 1 million species are at risk of extinction included some familiar advice for agriculture: Adopt more sustainable practices, preserve genetic diversity in seeds and animals, and involve more sectors, including the public, in the food system. Worldwide, a summary of the report says, “Agricultural expansion is the most widespread form of land-use change, with over one third of the terrestrial land surface being used for cropping or animal husbandry. This expansion, alongside a doubling of urban area since 1992 and an unprecedented expansion of infrastructure linked to growing population and consumption, has come mostly at the expense of forests (largely old-growth tropical forests), wetlands and grasslands.” (In the U.S., the latest Census of Agriculture showed a [drop](#) in ag acres from 914.5 million to about 900 million, from 2012 to 2017.) “Reductions in the diversity of cultivated crops, crop wild relatives and domesticated breeds mean that agroecosystems are less resilient against future climate change, pests and pathogens,” the summary said. Losses of intact ecosystems have mainly occurred in the tropics, “home to the highest levels of biodiversity on the planet.” Ethan Lane, senior executive director of federal lands at the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and executive director of the Public Lands Council, said in response to the report, “Family ranchers maintain hundreds of millions of acres of large, intact landscapes which many species depend on. Ensuring the continuity and viability of U.S. ranching operations is critical to maintaining vibrant biodiversity in these ecosystems.”

U.S. to impose new tariffs on Mexican tomatoes. The Trump administration announced it will resume collecting 17.5 percent tariffs on all chilled and fresh Mexican tomatoes after the Tomato Suspension Agreement expired on Tuesday. [The Commerce Department](#) had signaled in February – giving the required 60-day notice – that the U.S. would withdraw from the six-year

old agreement and resume an anti-dumping investigation into Mexican tomatoes. Florida growers and their lawmakers have long complained that Mexican growers are subsidizing their tomato crops and that the suspension agreement contained too many loopholes that allow Mexican growers to circumvent the minimum price. “The Department of Commerce remains committed to ensuring that American domestic industries are protected from unfair trading practices,” said Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross. “We remain optimistic that there will be a negotiated solution.” A consortium of the largest Mexican growers issued a statement, expressing their disappointment and suggesting that the “duties that will be passed on to US consumers and totally disrupt the fresh produce market.” The consortium said it plans to “pursue our right to show that Mexican tomato imports are not responsible for any problems facing Florida. Those problems have been self-imposed.”

Listening sessions announced for Climate Smart Grant Program. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is seeking public comment on a program for competitive grants for providing technical assistance to farmers on practices related to climate smart agriculture. The practices fall under CDFA’s incentives programs for Alternative Manure Management, Healthy Soils and State Water Efficiency and Enhancement. The grant program stems from Assembly Bill 2377 passed in 2018. Resource Conservation Districts, University of California Cooperative Extension and nonprofit organizations will provide the technical assistance for those grants. The draft request for proposals is [here](#). Two listening sessions are scheduled for the coming weeks, both of which can be viewed remotely:

Sacramento

Wednesday, May 15
1:00 to 3:00 pm
CDFA building
1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA

Salinas

Monday, May 20
10:00 am to 12:00 pm
UCCE and Monterey County Ag Commissioner’s Office
1432 Abbott St., Salinas, CA

Comments can be emailed to cdfa.oefi@cdfa.ca.gov, by May 25.

Farm Hands on the Potomac...

The U.S. Grains Council named its Mexico council director **Ryan LeGrand** as its new president and CEO. LeGrand succeeds **Tom Sleight** who has served as president and CEO since 2012. LeGrand has been with USGC in Mexico since 2015, and has served as the director of the Council’s Mexico City office since 2016. Before joining USGC, he worked for Gaviola as the director of ingredients in Mexico, located in Guadalajara. LeGrand also served as the director of exports for Hawkeye Gold, LLC, exporting DDGs to Latin America and Asia.



Ryan LeGrand

The American Feed Industry Association picked **Constance Cullman** to succeed **Joel Newman** as its new president and CEO, effective July 2019. Cullman previously served as president of the Farm Foundation, a role she has served in for the past three years. Before that, she worked for Dow AgroSciences as their government affairs leader and as the senior director of regulatory, technical and international affairs at the Corn Refiners Association. She also spent time working at USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service and was the vice president of agricultural ecology at the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation.



Constance Cullman

Riya Mehta has left the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee where she served as a fellow to start a new position in Rep. **Jimmy Panetta**'s, D-Calif., office as his new agriculture legislative assistant.

Sen. **Debbie Stabenow**, D-Mich., has hired **Julia Rossman** to serve as her staff assistant for the Senate Agriculture Committee. Stabenow has also promoted **Rosalyn Brummette** to policy analyst, where she will focus on conservation and climate issues.

Tracey Massey has been promoted to global president of Mars Pet Nutrition, effective June 3. She previously served as Mars Wrigley North America regional president and has been with the company for over 20 years. **Anton Vincent** has been chosen to succeed Massey as the regional president for Mars Wrigley North America, bringing

along over 20 years of experience in the U.S. food industry and most recently working for Greencore Group plc. where he was CEO.

President **Donald Trump** nominated **Rob Wallace** to serve as assistant secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior. The Wyoming native has over 45 years of experience, having served as a seasonal ranger, assistant director of legislative and congressional affairs for the National Park Service, chief of staff to former Sen. **Malcolm Wallop**, R-Wyo., and Wyoming Gov. **Jim Geringer**. He served as government relations manager for GE Energy, and currently works with ranchers, energy companies, conservationists and regulators to balance the needs of conservation and energy development in the West.

Ephraim Leibtag has been appointed to take over as the acting administrator for the Economic Research Service. He steps in to take over after **Chris Hartley** stepped down due to tenure limits.

Courtney Knupp is now the chief of staff for USDA's Research, Education, and Economics mission area. She previously served as a senior policy adviser to the Foreign Agricultural Service.

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture promoted **Aline DeLucia** to senior director of public policy. Before joining NASDA, DeLucia served as a manager of federal government relations for Syngenta. She succeeds **Nathan Bowen** who served as executive director of public policy and



Courtney Knupp

has been with the organization for 10 years. Bowen will depart NASDA on May 31 to grow a career in the food and agriculture sector in London.

Jeff Sands is the new director of government affairs for USA Rice. He will manage policy issues affecting the rice industry as well as facilitating the day-to-day operations of the USA Rice Political Action Committee. Before joining USA Rice, Sands worked for the Agricultural Retailers Association and Syngenta.

Ian Lee is now the communications director and senior adviser for Rep. **Josh Harder**, D-Calif. He previously served as the communications director for Rep. **Sean Maloney**, D-N.Y. Maloney's office is currently searching for a new communications director.

Matt Simon is the new chief of staff for Rep. **Debbie Lesko**, R-Ariz. Simon will also cover the portfolios of energy, commerce, foreign trade, natural resources, and environmental protection.

Covering the environmental protection portfolio as the new legislative assistant for Rep. **Katie Porter**, D-Calif., is **Jessica Seigel**. She previously worked for the National Rural Health Association as an advocacy communications manager.

Best regards,

Sara Wyant

Editor

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