

Productive ag land is degrading into “salt sacrifice areas”

More than a decade ago, a coalition of stakeholders came together to find a way to “prevent the Mesopotamia-ization of vast swaths of the Central Valley,” according to water policy expert Patrick Pulupa. In presenting the group’s recommendations last week, Pulupa said the impacts of salt and nitrate pollution are already costing the state at least \$3 billion per year and taking ag land out of production, with salts impacting the valley for decades to come.

“There’s tremendous salt accumulation in the groundwater and in the soils due to the water that’s used to irrigate crops in the valley,” said Pulupa, who is the executive officer for the Central Valley Water Quality Control Board. **“The salt is a creeping, pernicious thing that will end much of the most productive agriculture in the Central Valley if it’s not effectively managed.”**

Pulupa was presenting the findings of CV-SALTS (Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability) during a meeting of the State Water Resources Control Board on July 2. The proposed plan will amend the State Board’s overarching basin plans for the Central Valley.



Patrick Pulupa, Executive Officer, Central Valley Water Quality Control Board

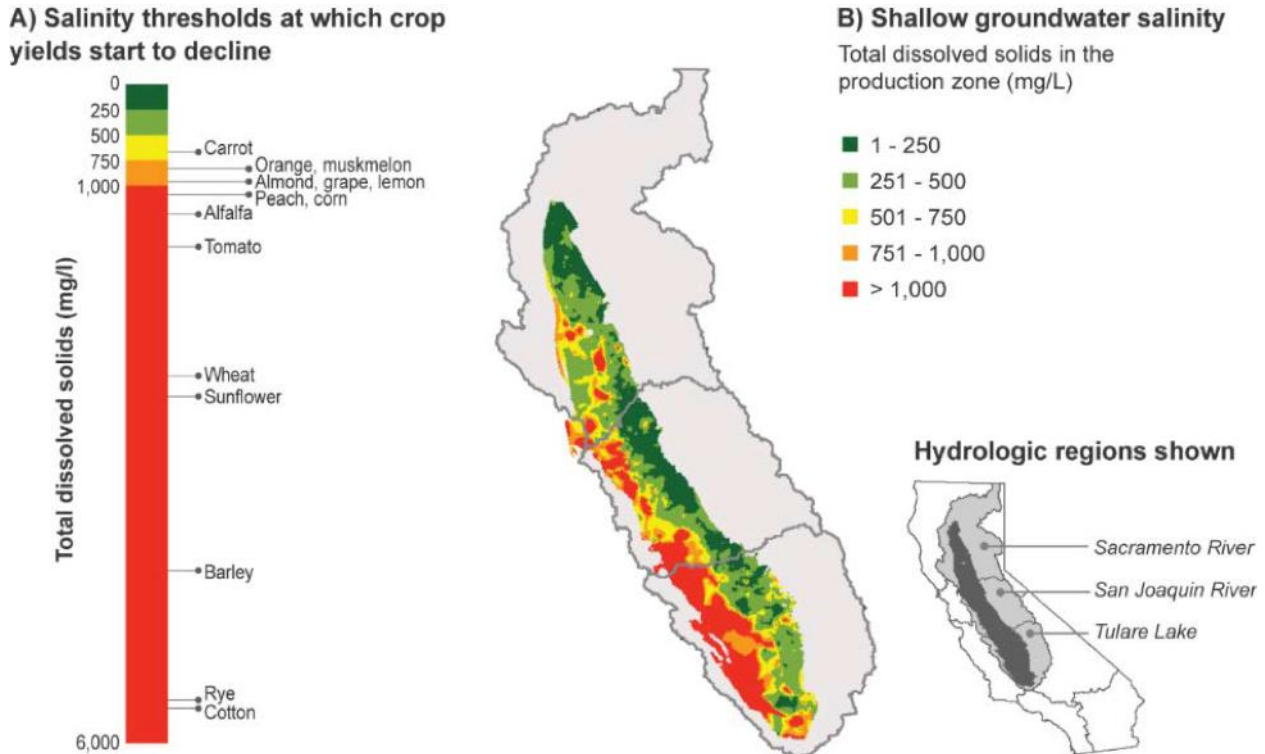
Known as the Central Valley Salt and Nitrate Control Program (SNCP), the proposal is a set of technical policy solutions for reducing nitrates and salts in the groundwater while ensuring safe drinking water for impacted communities.

The work began with the formation of the CV-SALTS stakeholder coalition in 2006, which grew to include a number of agricultural groups, water agencies and municipalities. The negotiations culminated in 2017 with a proposed plan, which was adopted by the regional water board in 2018 and is now awaiting approval by the State Board. The proposal offers a number of technical policy recommendations for improving and maintaining water quality, including across drought periods.

Pulupa said the most important part of the lengthy stakeholder process was that it now includes safe drinking water as part of the plan – a sign of the ag community gradually accepting shared responsibility for cleaning up the drinking water.

The problem of salts stems from decades of importing water into the valley through the state’s post-war water conveyance projects.

“When it comes to bringing water in, you have to figure out how to take the salt out,” he said. “That begs for large infrastructure improvements, whatever that may look like.”



The highest concentrations of salts are in the most agriculturally productive regions. Source: CV-SALTS

Nitrate contamination in the Central Valley has led to more immediate actions, as farmers bear the brunt of escalating regulatory fees and waves of scorn from lawmakers. The sources for that pollution are often legacy inputs from decades ago, from farms that may no longer exist. The list of current sources points to fertilizer applications, food processors, dairies and feedlots. Yet nitrates also come from septic systems, sewage treatment plants and other industries.

The contamination is worst in the more agriculturally productive areas, which are also regions that receive little rainfall. The lack of rain leads to less dilution of the contaminants. It also means the permitting options for regulating both nitrates and salts are “fairly limited,” said Pulupa.

“When you irrigate with water-efficient irrigation practices and even if you dial in your nitrate application very carefully, you’re still going to end up with a layer of nitrate and a layer of salts,” he said, “unless you have significant sources of freshwater coming in.”

While driving those numbers for salt and nitrate inputs lower, Pulupa said the SNCP would “make all the dischargers pay for drinking water in the interim” – a timeframe that will be “several decades at the earliest.”

The alternative, which is also the approach currently being pursued by the State Board in its decisions and the Central Valley Board in its basin plan, is to prohibit the discharge through an aggressive permitting system. Scaling that strategy up to tackle the entirety of the problem, would, however, “choke off the lifeblood of many agricultural communities in the entire Central Valley,” said Pulupa.

“That would be a disservice to the many people who are drinking that impacted groundwater to begin with,” he said.

Multiple programs and studies have come to the conclusion that even under the most efficient management strategies, there will be nitrate impacts and it will take “a long time to rectify those,” he pointed out.

When it comes to the technology needed to handle nitrate pollution specifically, the state is in a better position. Costs would only be in the tens of millions of dollars. Salt, however, will “require a major replumbing of a lot of the infrastructure in the Central Valley,” he said.

Pulupa saw the more aggressive permitting approach – as studied by the Alta Irrigation District – as infeasible. With the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, however, more freshwater will now be available for restoring the affected aquifers, while flushing out the contaminants over time.

The Alta District had also considered shutting down all agriculture in the area, which would have still required 70 years to achieve the water quality objectives. The district, and now the regional water board, instead adopted a more collaborative approach, working directly with the industry on these problems.

“I can't promise that we'll fix them,” said Tim Johnson, president and CEO of the California Rice Commission, in his testimony to the State Board. “But I promise that we've heard them and discussed them.”



Stakeholder workshops evolved through more than a decade of negotiations.
Source: CV-SALTS

Johnson said the dialogue with state regulators and the environmental justice community in the meetings began a three-year

legislative push to fund clean drinking water solutions, which culminated in the governor recently allocating \$130 million in the state budget.

“That was not even a possibility when we started the process,” he said. “We achieved that. That came out of CV-SALTS.”

Jennifer Clary, an environmental lawyer for Clean Water Action who was involved in the coalition from the beginning, was less optimistic, saying the new proposal is not any better than the status quo.

“If you put this plan in place, you’re putting in a poor solution that’s going to last for a very long time,” she said. “This will outlive all of us.”

Regardless of the plan put forward, Pulupa warned that the heavy salt imports have led to agricultural lands already being taken out of production, with many more areas that “we’ll likely be designating as salt sacrifice areas” in the future.

“Unmanaged, that’s happening anyhow,” he said. “The salt just kept building up and now you have deserts in many of those areas.”

China trade war takes its toll on California’s wineries

Negotiations between the U.S. and China resumed this week after Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping agreed last month to try again to end their trade war, and California’s wine makers are hoping a resolution can salvage years of work to turn the Chinese into faithful customers.

U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin spoke Tuesday on a teleconference with Chinese Vice Premier Liu He and Minister Zhong Shan in an effort to resolve “the outstanding trade disputes between the” two countries, a U.S. government official told *Agri-Pulse*. No details of the talks were given, but the official stressed that “both sides will continue these talks as appropriate.”

California’s vintners have been working for more than a decade with Chinese retailers and consumers to build a taste for Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay from Napa, Sonoma and elsewhere in the Golden State, according to a spokeswoman for the Wine Institute. The costly efforts have been wildly successful, helping to triple U.S. exports over the past decade, but all of that forward momentum came to a halt last year when the trade war began.

California wine accounts for about 85% of all U.S. wine production and about 95% of its exports, making producers in that state some of the biggest casualties in the trade war.

“While we are very proud to say that over the last 10 years our exports have gone up (by more than) 60% ... unfortunately the trend has been down these last couple years,” said Tim Schmelzer, vice president for California state relations of the Wine Institute, who blames most of the downturn on the U.S.-China trade war. “This last year in 2018 the value of wine exports went down 4.6%, and a lot of that has to do with the trade war.”

A look at the retaliatory tariffs that China has heaped on U.S. wine over the past year makes it easy to see what California producers are up against.

A little over a month ago, China raised its tariffs on \$60 billion worth of U.S. goods in the latest escalation of the trade war, and California wine was one of the commodities hit especially hard. China increased wine tariffs by 15% on June 1, the third time the rates have been increased in a little over a year. When all of the taxes and tariffs are put together, the effective, compound rate is 93%, according to the Institute's calculations.



Robert Koch

“This is the third Chinese tariff increase on U.S. wine in the past 14 months, and with each additional round, it becomes more and more difficult to compete in the fastest-growing wine market in the world,” Wine Institute President and CEO Robert Koch said in a recent statement. "It is imperative to resolve this dispute as soon as possible, so that our wineries do not suffer long-term market loss.”

In 2008 the U.S. exported only about \$20 million worth of wine to China, but that was just as the California industry was beginning to ramp up its efforts to introduce and hook Chinese customers on their product. In 2018, U.S. exports to China were worth about \$60 million, despite the ongoing trade war, which has not stopped the Wine Institute's marketing efforts.

“We have a full campaign of promotional and educational events in China and we’re going to continue that,” said an Institute spokesperson. “California has a very positive image in China. They like the ... whole vibe.”

But good vibes may not be enough to salvage all the market expansion work that producers have done for the past decade as tariffs continue to rise.

“It’s ugly,” Schmelzer said, summing up the situation during a June 28 hearing held by the California State Assembly. “It’s going from bad to worse. A year and a half ago the tariffs on California wine going into China were 15%. Beginning in June this year, they were at 93%.”



Sara Neagu-Reed, CFBF

Not only is California losing its sales to China, it’s also losing customers, says Sara Neagu-Reed, federal legislative associate for the California Farm Bureau Federation.

Wine producers in New Zealand and Australia are stepping in and providing what California producers cannot because of the tariffs, Neagu-Reed said.

“They’re being squeezed out of the China market,” she said. “We did all of that heavy lifting and now the market is being taken away from us.”

While the loss of the current Chinese market is painful, it’s the loss in market development after so many years of expansion that has people like Schmelzer concerned the most. That’s because

he and others can imagine the Chinese market continuing to grow to massive levels. Right now, China is only the fifth largest market for California wine exports, behind the European Union, Canada, Hong Kong (which actually passes along much of the wine it imports to China to avoid tariffs) and Japan. But China's consumption is growing fast, and producers here can imagine sales growing even faster over the next 10 years.

“There’s so much potential there and we’ve laid so much groundwork and to have the rug taken out from under us ... in this trade war is a terrible shame,” Schmelzer said. “It really hurts the potential for California wine exports.”

Five questions for Assemblymember James Gallagher

Becoming a lawmaker was “a natural progression” for Republican Assemblymember James Gallagher. His grandfather was a county supervisor and both of his parents served on the local school board. Growing up on a rice farm near Yuba City and later representing farmers as a lawyer, Gallagher wanted to help solve problems and found plenty by the time he ran for office.

He served as county supervisor for six years before running for State Assembly in 2014. His seat in District 3 encompasses the Sacramento Valley, including the towns of Paradise and Oroville and the proposed location for the Sites Reservoir.

Gallagher spoke with *Agri-Pulse* on how farmers must now invest time and money to get their voice heard in politics. Otherwise, he said, they can become collateral damage from bills like AB 5, a broad measure that is intended to target ride hailing companies.



Assemblymember James Gallagher

1. As a Republican representing a rural district, what has frustrated you most about the representation in the legislature?

Our region has always felt like it gets ignored because we don't have as much population. Representation in California, ever since the court cases have made it so, have always made our districts based on population. There's a whole lot of people making decisions that have no idea what our life is like in Northern California.

A constant obstacle that we have to overcome is how we educate people who don't understand farming, or the water rights in our region, or the way that our communities are constructed. I'm dealing with that right now in working on some legislation regarding housing issues in Butte County. It's an obstacle, but that's part of the job that I do. How do I help educate

some of these other members I have worked with on those issues? I've taken it as an opportunity to do just that.

For instance, I've had tours up into my district for people to come see our farming operations. After the Camp Fire that we experienced in Paradise earlier this year, we took 18 members to Paradise to tour the town and see the devastation firsthand, but also to talk to members of the community. That's always going to be an issue when you're a more rural area in a very urban urbanized state.

2. What do you see as the biggest challenges to your goals as an assemblymember?

As a Republican, it takes a little bit more skill as a legislator to be effective.

We are outnumbered. **Nobody's just going to give you something. Nobody's just going to pass your bill out "just because."** You've got to work a little bit harder. And you've got to spend time building relationships with people. You've got to really know your bills and know the substance of your legislation. If you do all those things, you can be successful. I think that myself and others have proven that out.

There are some battles we're just never going to win in this current dynamic.

But on issues when it comes to water, infrastructure, wildfire policy – all these things are areas that we can really be relevant to the conversation and can get policy through the process and passed into law.

3. What do you say to farmers concerned their voice is not being heard in Sacramento?

I'd say it is just a fact. We are overregulated, especially as a farmer in California. I feel that very acutely.

If we want to change things, we have to better communicate the importance of food to the world. My brother in law, who is a PCA (pest control advisor), underscored this point to me. A few years back, we had talked about this in terms of food. Everybody needs food. We're the ones who help bring that to people.

That's a really simple concept. But it's the simplest concepts that have the greatest impact. We just need to start talking about all these things more. If we're not allowed to do the things that we do, people are going to go without food. Hunger is a very real thing in many parts of the world.

The price of food and access to good, quality, healthy food in California is a major issue. We need people to start thinking of us as essential to their food supply. To you and me and your readers, it goes without saying. But to a whole lot of people, they don't understand that. We need to make them understand.

We have to be, in every election cycle, actively engaged in the nuts and bolts of politics. All the groups who have an interest in imposing regulations on us and who want to dramatically change

our way of life, every year and every election cycle they spend millions of dollars trying to get people elected who will implement their policies.

We better do the same and it better be in your budget. Every year as a farmer, as a rancher, you have to be actively engaged in politics, supporting an issue or a candidate.

You literally can't afford to sit on the sidelines anymore. This stuff's going to keep on coming. We're at the forefront of it here in California, because we're fighting these battles every year. Believe me, it's coming. We're seeing it at the federal level with this Green New Deal stuff.

These are people who have no concept of what it would take to bring food to your table. But they're going to be passing these grandiose policy ideas that are going to have huge implications on our ability to do what we do best.

I've seen this video of AOC (New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez) just chopping up vegetables at home in her apartment and talking about why this (Green New Deal) is so important. Does she even realize how the produce that comes into her home gets there and how that product is made healthy and safe? Everything that goes into that is brought to her by this agricultural industry, which she pays a fee for by her policies. By telling us that we shouldn't have cows, by overregulating us, she is going to make it so we are going to have less safe food. The things she is now chopping up might not even be able to be brought to you because people will go out of business.

That is the great irony that we're facing right now. People have these grandiose ideas, but the nuts and bolts of how this all works is totally lost on them. But they're gaining a lot more influence.

4. Has there been anything that surprised or concerned you in this legislative session?

One of the big discussions right now is this whole issue about independent contractors. There was a California Supreme Court case that just drastically changed the law in regard to independent contractors in many different industries.

One of the biggest ones is trucking. This is going to have a huge impact. We in agriculture rely on trucking. It's a critical part of getting our goods to market. It's now being worked out that they're going to exempt certain industries. The power brokers here in the capital are saying, "Well, we might exempt you and we're not going to exempt you." It's totally arbitrary.

5. What else have you seen impacting agriculture?

A lot of things have already been done. We had ag overtime pass. I was one of the strongest advocates against that. We killed the bill twice on the assembly floor. On the last time, they were able to push it through.

A tax on water rights is happening right now. A lot of stuff is in the regulatory sphere. The State Water Resource Control Board is going to impose restrictions on how much water we can divert in the Sacramento Valley. They're already doing it down the San Joaquin Valley. They're

trying to impose their own wetland rules. We've stopped Waters of the United States expansion federally, but the state is talking about trying to expand that even further.

We just have to continue to be engaged.

Judge will reduce \$80 million award in Roundup case

Despite some harsh words describing Monsanto's conduct, a federal judge said last week he plans to reduce an award of more than \$80 million to a California man who claimed exposure to Roundup caused his non-Hodgkin lymphoma (NHL).

“It's quite clear that I am required under the Constitution to reduce the punitive damages award and it's just a question of how much,” U.S. District Judge Vincent Chhabria said in a July 2 hearing in his courtroom in San Francisco.

The judge said he expects to issue a decision this week. It will come as Bayer, which bought Monsanto last year for about \$63 billion, struggles to get a handle on the growing Roundup litigation, which involves more than 13,000 cases in the U.S.

Late last month, the company announced it had retained an attorney with extensive experience “in several high-profile product liability cases” to advise its supervisory board on the Roundup litigation. Bayer also said it welcomed the appointment of Kenneth Feinberg as mediator in the litigation.

Following the first federal trial of thousands filed against Monsanto, a six-person jury in March awarded Edwin Hardeman \$75 million in punitive damages, \$3 million in past noneconomic damages, and \$2 million in future economic damages. Two other awards in state court, one for \$39.5 million and one topping \$2 billion, are being appealed by Monsanto, which was purchased last year by Bayer for \$63 billion.

The Supreme Court has said that in general, punitive damages should not be more than nine times higher than compensatory damages, which would put the outer limit of the Hardeman award at \$45 million. Hardeman's attorney cited decisions that she said would allow punitive damages to be higher than 9:1, while Monsanto's attorney argued the ratio of punitive damages to compensatory damages should be 1:1 or very close to that.

Chhabria said “there was a fair amount of evidence of Monsanto being pretty crass about this issue ... of Monsanto not really caring whether its product caused cancer or not, and a fair amount of evidence that the only thing that Monsanto cared about was undermining the people who were raising concerns about whether Roundup caused cancer.”

During the trial, “There was nothing suggesting that anybody at Monsanto viewed this issue objectively or with any amount of caring for human beings,” Chhabria said.



Judge Vincent Chhabria

Monsanto “didn't seem concerned at all with getting at the truth of whether Roundup caused cancer.”

Monsanto lawyer Brian Stekloff responded that **“there was substantial evidence that Monsanto cared about the issue,”** citing a Monsanto employee’s **“testimony about the extensive testing that had occurred on the product.”** Stekloff also emphasized approvals of the use of Roundup by regulatory bodies around the world.

Plaintiffs in cases tried so far — a handful of the more than 13,000 awaiting trial — have stressed the 2015 conclusion of the International Agency for Research on Cancer that glyphosate, the active ingredient in the widely used herbicide, is “probably” a human carcinogen.

While highly critical of the company’s conduct, Chhabria also reiterated his belief that “the evidence ... is very equivocal on whether Roundup actually does cause cancer.”

He added, “I believe that the way Monsanto conducted itself was reprehensible but, you know, less reprehensible than the tobacco companies if only because we didn't see any evidence that Monsanto actually knew of a danger and concealed that danger from regulators or from the public.”

Nor did the judge see any evidence that Monsanto “controlled” the Environmental Protection Agency or regulators in Europe. “It’s not a case where the regulators only approved the product because they were in the pocket of the company and the company ... concealed from the regulators information that ... the regulators should have seen,” he said.

Hardeman attorney Jennifer Moore, however, said Monsanto had refused to conduct testing to determine Roundup’s carcinogenicity.

In an unusual development, one of the jurors in the Hardeman case wrote a letter to the judge urging him to uphold the damages award. “Every single decimal in those numbers is the result of conscious collaboration and calculated, deliberate efforts by all six of us,” the juror, whose name was not disclosed, told Chhabria in a July 4 letter.

Monsanto, in a filing on Monday, urged Chhabria to ignore the juror’s letter and pointed out that jurors in the first state court case tried last year, involving groundskeeper Dewayne Johnson, recommended that San Francisco Superior Judge Suzanne Bolanos not reduce the size of the award. **“The fact that jurors from both trials wrote letters in support of constitutionally impermissible verdicts is highly unusual, and generates further anti-Monsanto bias in the Bay Area that will infect future Roundup trials,”** Monsanto said in the July 8 filing.

Glyphosate registrants defend product in comments to ATSDR

Glyphosate registrants defended their products as safe to use in comments submitted this week to the Department of Health and Human Service’s Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, which issued a report in April saying it could not “rule out” an association between exposure to glyphosate-based products and the risk of cancer.

The Joint Glyphosate Task Force, made up of 20 members with registrations for technical grade glyphosate, the active ingredient in Bayer's Roundup, reiterated its longstanding position that the substance is safe to use, is not a reproductive toxicant or endocrine disrupter, and is unlikely to cause cancer.

Glyphosate is currently the world's best-selling herbicide, used in more than 90 countries and on more than 150 crops, according to data from the U.S. Geological Survey. Glyphosate use in agriculture has tripled since 1997, largely due to the increasing popularity of Roundup Ready® crops† (including corn, soybeans and cotton), which have been genetically modified to tolerate glyphosate.

In comments on ATSDR's toxicological profile, the JGTF also questioned the validity of studies cited by the agency that suggested glyphosate or formulations containing it may cause genetic damage. The International Agency for Research on Cancer concluded in a 2015 monograph that glyphosate is "probably" a human carcinogen and that there was "strong evidence" of genotoxicity.

The JGTF recommended ATSDR construct a "table of genotoxicity conclusions" from various studies so as to "highlight the very isolated, unusual and unique aspect of the IARC monograph conclusion as well as the use or non-use of a weight of evidence approach in arriving at the genotoxicity conclusions."

ATSDR cited studies indicating that 3-4% of glyphosate enters the blood through skin, well above the less-than-1% rate cited by EPA. The JGTF said "although there is not a dermal absorption study available for glyphosate alone, multiple in vitro dermal absorption studies with formulations confirmed a low dermal absorption of glyphosate."

"Dermal penetration experiments, where glyphosate was left undisturbed on skin surfaces of experimental animals and on human skin in vitro, indicate a percutaneous absorption of less than 2%," the JGTF said in its comments.

The Center for Food Safety, in its comments, said tests commissioned by Monsanto on two glyphosate formulations produced widely divergent results on dermal absorption. "That absorption of glyphosate can differ by a factor of 8 in tests on just two formulations suggests that all glyphosate formulations should be tested for dermal absorption of the active ingredient," CFS said. "It is interesting to note that EPA still does not have a single study on dermal absorption of glyphosate (either technical or formulation) in its database."

CFS also called ATSDR's treatment of glyphosate's carcinogenic potential "disappointing. Rather than conduct an independent assessment, the agency has chosen to summarize EPA's deeply flawed treatment of the subject." EPA has concluded glyphosate is not likely to cause cancer in people.

"Weighing the totality of the animal, human epidemiological and genotoxicity evidence, likely to be carcinogenic is the classification that best fits glyphosate according to EPA's 2005 cancer assessment guidelines," CFS said.

Several growers also weighed in, urging the continued use of glyphosate.

“On behalf of cotton producers across the rolling plains of west Texas and the 1 million acres of upland cotton we produce, I want to reiterate the importance of glyphosate to our producers,” noted Lauren Decker. “Glyphosate is a critical tool against many noxious weeds in our fields. We would ask that you continue to allow us to use glyphosate for weed control across our growing area.” [To view all comments received on the docket, click here.](#)

ATSDR’s toxicological profile became the subject of controversy in 2017 when a 2015 email [surfaced](#) in which an EPA pesticide official said in an email he should “get a medal” if he could “kill” the ATSDR report.

EPA recently [reaffirmed](#) its conclusion that glyphosate is not likely to be carcinogenic to humans in a draft registration review document.

News Briefs:

California SGMA requirements affect San Joaquin growers. The most agriculturally lucrative sector of California is the San Joaquin Valley, and the current threat to groundwater in this region could affect major crops. After suffering the ramifications of many record droughts, the state of California rolled out the [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act \(SGMA\)](#) in an effort to preserve the remaining pockets of groundwater in the valley. Different sectors of the state have different deadlines by which basins must be stabilized. Much of the San Joaquin Valley is between high-medium priority, according to the California Department of Water Resources, and “under SGMA, these basins should reach sustainability within 20 years of implementing their sustainability plans.” Currently an estimated “20%—or 840,000 acres—of irrigated cropland in the valley has no access to surface water,” according to the [Public Policy Institute of California](#). Crops in these areas are of the same nature as crops in surface water areas, high-value fruit and nut crops, more lucrative than an annual crop. A decrease in groundwater allotment to those without surface water access “could result in unnecessarily large, undesirable reductions in high-value crop acreage, regional employment, and GDP,” says the Public Policy Institute. The approach the valley is taking is focused on cooperation between farmers and the water available, facilitating trading and sharing practices between those who have surface water access and those who do not. Also investment in smart water management practices and storage supplies “could offset some of the water use cutbacks expected in groundwater-only areas.”

Private R&D funding on the rise. The funding for research and development in the agricultural sector is on the rise, but the funding is no longer largely from the federal government and is instead coming from the private sector. In the past, public institutions were often the source of funding and a rise in this funding was traced throughout the 1980s. But since then, much of the funding efforts have plateaued and in recent years have even began to decrease. To compensate for this decrease, much of the funding is now being provided by private industry. According to the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS), “total private agricultural and food R&D doubled between 2003 and 2014, while public R&D fell.” The funding between public and private sectors often do not have conflicting focuses; the public R&D is historically very global in nature, searching for solutions to things like food safety, nutrition, etc. while the private industry dominates in research on machinery, industry productivity and ways to improve in those markets. While this separation of focus allows funding to not be wasted by repeat research, it remains that public government funding is on the decrease, which will affect all research efforts.

As the ERS states, “by 2010, private R&D for agricultural inputs alone surpassed the public level for all agricultural research, which also includes research in areas not directly related to crop and livestock production,” and currently those numbers are following the same trend.

VSV cases double in week, now total 16 confirmations. An outbreak of Vesicular Stomatitis Virus has now spread to 16 cases across three states. According to USDA's Animal Health and Plant Inspection Service, the cases are spread across Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, and 15 sites across eight counties are currently under quarantine. The amount of confirmed cases of the disease doubled in [this week's report](#). Currently there is no known vaccine or antibiotic for the disease, nor is much known about the way it originates in its host. If the virus is found in one animal, it is quarantined in an effort to minimize the risk of contagion. The virus can be found in sheep, horses, and cattle and causes fevers, affects eating patterns, and is visually recognized by severe, blister-like lesions surrounding the tongue, nostrils, hooves, and other sensitive areas. “VS is very similar in its clinical appearance to Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), so it is important to determine if, in fact, it is VS and not the more serious foreign animal disease, FMD,” said a statement by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. Due to the proximity with the cases found in Colorado, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture is also encouraging increased monitoring of equine and livestock for signs of the virus. According to APHIS, dairy cattle can “appear to be normal” despite being infected with the disease. However, the animals will only consume about half of their regular feed intake, resulting in severe weight loss and a drop in milk production. The first case of the disease was confirmed June 21 in Kinney County, Texas.

Farm Hands:

Governor **Gavin Newsom** announced three new appointments last week. **Chris Corgas** has been appointed to serve on the 1a District Agricultural Association, Grand National Rodeo, Cow Palace Fair Board of Directors. Since 2016, Corgas has been a senior program manager working on the Community Benefit District Program with the San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development. **Leah Pimentel** has also been appointed to serve on the 1a District Agricultural Association, Grand National Rodeo, Cow Palace Fair Board of Directors. Since 2018, Pimentel has been an assistant director of community relations at the University of California, San Francisco. She also served as the chief customer officer at Credit Sesame from 2017 to 2018 and a global product manager at Skyroam from 2016 to 2017. **Sam Nejabat** has been tapped to serve on the 22nd District Agricultural Association, San Diego County Fair Board of Directors. Nejabat has been president of SJN Properties since 2013.

David Nelley joined Apeel Sciences as vice president of domestic buyer relations. Nelley previously worked for The Oppenheimer Group since 2001, where he began as a category manager for pip fruit and pineapples. He then moved to vice president of global exports.

Mike Rubidoux joins the staff of Pacific Organic Produce as the new sales manager. Rubidoux will oversee the sales support, commodity manager, and quality control teams for the company. Rubidoux came to the produce industry in 1986 as vice president of sales and marketing and commodity manager for Lee Brands/New Star. He most recently served as general manager at Crystal Valley Foods.

Megan McKenna has been promoted to senior director of marketing and foodservice at the National Watermelon Promotion Board. She previously served as the director of foodservice. McKenna joined the NWPB in 2014 and will now serve as the main point of contact



David Martinez

for consumer, retail, foodservice, nutrition and sustainability research. Before NWPB, she worked with the National Mango Board for seven years as the marketing manager and director of marketing.

River Fresh Farms hired **David Martinez** as senior vice president of business development. Martinez previously served as vice president of sales at D'Arrigo Bros. since 2011. Before that he worked at Merrill Farms in sales for five years.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service swore in 12 employees to serve as Foreign Service Officers. The new FSOs include: **Olutayo Akingbem**, who will serve in Cairo; Daniel Alvarado and **Andre Bradley**, Mexico City; **Ben Boroughs**, Buenos Aires; **Sarah Gilleski**, Hanoi; **Mark Hanzel**, Shanghai; **Chase McGrath**, Beijing; **Tymothy McGuire**, Seoul; **Eric Mullis**, Bangkok; **Christine Mumma**, Ankara; and **Maria Rakhovskaya** and **Zeke Spears**, who will be based in Tokyo. They will begin their

careers as agricultural diplomats at U.S. embassies where they will go on diplomatic missions and monitor global agricultural production and trade. They will also identify export opportunities and work to enhance food security.

Chad Whiteman joined the U.S. Chamber's Global Energy Institute as the new vice president of environment and regulatory affairs. Whiteman's previous experience includes working for the Environmental Protection Agency on the Clean Air Act. He most recently served as the deputy chief of the Natural Resources and Environment Branch in the White House Office of Information and Regulatory affairs. There, he was the executive branch lead for the review of regulatory policy priorities. Before this role, he was the deputy director of the Institute of Clean Air Companies.

American Farmland Trust hired **Robbin Marks** as the new director of institutional partnerships. Marks will spearhead securing grants and contributions from foundations and government sources. She previously worked for the Environmental Law Institute, where she was vice president of development and membership. She also directed foundation relations at the World Resources Institute, where she served as the vice president for development operations and as senior director of foundation relations at American Rivers. She also served as an agriculture policy specialist at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The International Dairy Foods Association brought on **Jennifer Martin** to serve as the director of external and member communications and **Michael Goodin** to serve as manager of multimedia and digital content. Each position is new and focuses on promoting and extending IDFA's communications and reputation management activities. Martin was previously at The Fertilizer Institute (TFI) where she managed communications for TFI's nutrient stewardship and security and safety programs, and Goodin previously worked at the Heritage Foundation where he served as the manager of the video production team.



Jennifer Martin

The American Wind Energy Association hired **Laura Smith Morton** as the new senior director of policy and regulatory affairs of offshore wind. In Morton's career, she has more than 10 years of experience in offshore wind policy as an attorney through roles at the Department of Energy (DOE), Council on Environmental Quality, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. She has worked on the National Offshore Wind Strategy, which was published by the DOE and the Department of the Interior. Most recently she served as a consultant to companies on renewable energy, environment, and water resources issues.

The Food Marketing Institute has promoted four staff members to new positions. **Andrew Harig** serves as vice president of tax, trade sustainability and policy development and will now handle the responsibilities for government relations activities regarding labor and transportation. He has been with the organization for 16 years, and also serves as the Retail Association Lead to the Food Waste Reduction Alliance. **Hannah Walker** has been with the institute for seven years, and has been promoted to vice president of political affairs. She will now manage FMI's political programs, including FMI's Political Action Committee (FOODPAC) and LEAD (Leadership, Education, Advocacy, Development Fund). **Ashley Eisenbeiser** serves as senior director of food and product safety programs, and in this elevated role she expands her responsibilities to the FMI product supplier members and provides technical support for retail and wholesale members. **Kristie Grzywinski** was promoted to technical director of Safe Quality Food Institute, a division of FMI. She has been with FMI for eight years and has spearheaded SQFI's food safety and quality training functions.



Janell Hendren

Janell Hendren has left the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), where she served as the associate director of public policy and food safety programs for the past two years. Before this role, she served as the national affairs coordinator at the Florida Farm Bureau Federation. For the time being, **Aline DeLucia** will cover policy issues, and **Bob Ehart** and **Felicity Mejeris** will cover produce and animal feed issues. NASDA has not yet announced Hendren's replacement.

The American Seed Trade Association (ASTA) has elected a new officer team during the association's Policy and Leadership Development Conference in Denver. **Wayne Gale** from

Stokes Seed will chair the team, and **John Latham** from Latham Hi-tech Seeds will be first vice chair. **Brad May** with BASF was elected second vice chair.

John Giumarra, Jr., president and CEO of Giumarra Vineyards, has died at the age of 78 of natural causes. Giumarra Vineyards is one of California's leading producers of table grapes. Giumarra began his career practicing law in Southern California before moving to Bakersfield to join his family's farming operation to help out with legal matters. He was elected president and CEO of the business by company shareholders in 2015. A visitation is scheduled to take place Thursday, July 11, 2019 from 6 to 8 p.m. A celebration of his life is scheduled on Friday, July 12, 2019 at 10 a.m. Both will be held at St. Francis of Assisi Parish, 900 H St., Bakersfield, CA 93304.



Wayne Gale

Best regards,

Sara Wyant

Editor

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