

California Democrats divided over carbon sequestration goals for agriculture

A proposal under [Assembly Bill 2954](#) would set a goal for sequestering carbon and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in natural and working lands—a sector spanning 90% of the California landscape. It would add to the state’s existing climate goals under a scoping plan established through AB 32 in 2006.

While some Democratic lawmakers have raised concerns about granting regulatory authority for such a broad goal to a single agency, the Air Resources Board (CARB), the Legislature has advanced the measure through several committees. Proponents highlight the promising ability for natural lands and farms to pull carbon from the atmosphere to store in the soil, acting as a filter for pollution and the greenhouse gases causing global warming.



Asm. Robert Rivas, D-Hollister

“We have to maximize methods to capture carbon, utilizing our natural working lands, if we are going to fend off the worst impacts of climate change,” said the bill’s author, Assemblymember Robert Rivas of the Salinas Valley, during a committee hearing on Friday.

Groups for sustainable farming and conservation [support the bill](#), while several prominent business and agricultural trade groups oppose the measure.

“We don't dispute that our lands, many of which are in production agriculture, are one of the solutions to climate change,” said Taylor Roschen, a policy advocate for the California Farm Bureau Federation. “But we also know if we're going to be successful, we need to take a thoughtful approach that really considers the diversity of farm capacity and also prioritizes sustained funding.”

Roschen explained that to invest in the on-farm practices for carbon sequestration, the bill calls for, **farmers must see “demonstrable increases in yield or quality.”** She pointed out that the state has provided some incentives dollars for these climate-smart practices through programs at CDFA and CARB, but the funding has been inconsistent.

Roschen further argued AB 2954 would create winners and losers among farmers. Some commodities naturally have a greater capacity to sequester carbon, and small farmers have less capital to invest, leaving them at a disadvantage. She has also said the measure leaves out thousands of existing on-farm sequestration projects.

In her testimony supporting the bill, Jeanne Merrill, the policy director for the California Climate and Agriculture Network, countered that the measure preserves a farmer’s flexibility and diversity in determining agricultural practices.

“Nothing in AB 2954 would require the state to impose regulations on agriculture to limit or change the types of crops grown in California,” she said, adding the bill would instead scale up CDFA’s successful efforts with the Healthy Soils Program.

Democratic Senator Bob Wieckowski of Fremont dug deeper into the funding issue with incentives programs. **He said the Senate Budget Committee did direct \$100 million within the budget to natural and working lands, but the governor and Assembly removed it during final negotiations.**

During the Brown administration, the Legislature began funding the programs with revenues from the state’s cap-and-trade program. **The most recent quarterly auction, however, delivered just \$25 million. That will be split among emissions reduction programs as well as a safe drinking water initiative and wildfire management efforts.**

In the same budget proposal, Wieckowski had proposed granting CARB the authority to change the price for pollution credits in auctions. Ag groups and fellow Democrats felt that would unfairly raise fees on industries just to generate more revenues for the budget. The administration agreed to remove the item from the budget bill, calling for the Legislature to take up the measure separately.

“I am concerned that the Air Board, certainly right now in cap-and-trade, hasn't corrected the inefficiencies,” said Wieckowski on Friday.

He argued the bill, by factoring in the amount of carbon already being sequestered within natural and working lands, would let CARB “off the hook” for addressing the current inadequacies in the cap-and-trade market and the Climate Scoping Plan.

He called AB 2954 “irrelevant” to the state’s climate goals because the Climate Scoping Plan did not include natural and working lands within the greenhouse gas inventories. **He said the bill**

should instead require CARB to inventory such emissions and for farmers to either lower their own emissions or purchase carbon offset credits.

Critics also took issue with the bill's provision that the carbon sequestration goal would support the state's efforts to achieve carbon neutrality. **Leah Silverthorn, a policy advocate for the California Chamber of Commerce, said this would be the first time that "carbon neutrality" has been codified into state law and argued the Legislature should first decide what that term means before assigning goals for it.**

Silverthorn also argued CARB is already focused on this area, having released a draft natural and working lands climate plan in 2019. In an earlier hearing, she said the bill focuses too heavily on an industry that contributes just 8% of the greenhouse gas emissions in the state.



Sen. Henry Stern, D-Canoga Park

Wieckowski argued the carbon sequestration goal is too broad for just CARB and the bill should include the Natural Resources Agency. Republican Sen. Brian Dahle of Lassen County said CDFA needed to be at the table as well.

Dahle was also frustrated AB 2954 was not related to COVID-19 and said it should not be considered an urgent measure for this legislative session. Stockton Assemblymember Susan Eggman, a moderate Democrat who chairs the Assembly Agriculture Committee,

abstained from an earlier vote on AB 2954 for the same reason.

Sen. Henry Stern of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, a former environmental attorney, countered that the bill would not leave sole authority with CARB, adding that **many farmers he had spoken with have had an "incredibly creative and entrepreneurial spirit" when it comes to climate-smart practices.**

"The only way for the California farmer to be able to compete in the future of agriculture is by embracing this regime," he said.

Stern argued this is the time to consider the measure, ahead of CARB's update to the Scoping Plan that is scheduled to begin in 2021. He said AB 2954 would give the state the tools to inject new forms of capital into the sector, boosting working lands as California's largest investment for climate mitigation and sequestration.

In response to the many concerns, Rivas said the bill simply asks CARB to explore possible sequestration options and policy incentives that it would then bring back to the Legislature later for adoption and for considering in future budgets.

Despite Wieckowski abstaining and two Republicans voting against the bill, the committee passed it, moving the measure to the Senate Appropriations Committee, which will make its decision on Thursday. The bill has already passed Assembly Appropriations, with a legislative analyst estimating the costs to CARB for implementing AB 2954 to be “minor and absorbable.”

State raises alarms over proposed regulations on neonics

The Department of Pesticide Regulation has released a list of proposed mitigation measures to limit the use of four controversial and widely used neonicotinoid pesticides in California. The response from a CDFA economic analysis as well as trade groups has been that these cutbacks could be devastating for citrus, winegrape and cotton growers.

While it is still early in the regulatory process and changes are likely to come for the draft regulation, the proposal renews skepticism over the administration’s agenda in limiting valuable crop protection tools. Farmers have not yet had a full season to begin to understand the impacts from a recent state ban on another critical insecticide, chlorpyrifos.

DPR presented the draft regulation just days after news that citrus greening has been making inroads in commercial groves. Researchers detected the first sample in a commercial grove of an Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) that tested positive for the bacteria that causes the disease, known as Huanglongbing (HLB). Neonics have played a critical role in keeping the pest at bay, which means dramatic restrictions on use would have deep impacts for citrus.

“If you add on the neonicotinoids, it’s really a death sentence to the California industry,” said Casey Creamer, president and CEO of California Citrus Mutual (CCM), **in an interview.** The industry would slowly erode over time, as happened in Florida, he explained.



Beekeepers inspect a hive of honeybees

An economic analysis performed by CDFA and released on Monday found that the regulation would cut the number of acres treated with neonics by nearly 70%. The available alternatives to the products would increase costs for citrus growers by more than 50%, adding up to as much as \$3 million for the industry each year. HLB would then “spread at a faster rate in the state, jeopardizing the entire industry,” according to the study. It would also leave growers vulnerable to future invasive species yet to arrive in California.

Cotton would experience a similar fate, according to the report, with only about 40% or less of its acres able to be treated with neonics. The amount applied would be reduced just as much.

California leads the nation in processed tomatoes. Yet under this regulation, treatment costs would rise as much as 130%, adding up to an additional \$7.8 million each year.

Overall, about 60% of California’s fruit, nut and vegetable production currently depends on the neonics, along with more than half of the state’s agricultural exports. Chlorpyrifos would have been considered an alternative “for multiple crop/pest combinations” covered in the report.

DPR released its risk evaluation for the neonics in 2018 and Citrus Mutual has been working closely with the department’s staff on the potential regulations. Creamer remains optimistic the proposal will evolve over time to address the many issues being raised. CCM’s biggest concern, he said, is that the mitigation measures, particularly for imidacloprid, do not correlate with the 2018 risk evaluation.



California Citrus Mutual CEO and President Casey Creamer

“The reaction in the mitigation is to drop the (application) rate down significantly to below efficacy for citrus,” he said. “It basically prohibits the use.”

Creamer also took issue with an emergency provision in the regulation that would allow for exemptions during ACP outbreaks.

“We’re trying to prevent an emergency, not wait till we get one and then be able to use imidacloprid,” he said.

With restrictions of just one application per season and at such low rates, many stakeholders raised concerns during workshops last week that the mitigations would build resistance in pests to the neonics as well as to alternatives.

“For all intents and purposes, they cut the rate in half to protect pollinators,” said Ruben Arroyo, the agricultural commissioner for Riverside County, where the ACP detection took place.

The DPR proposal raised a number of questions for Arroyo over enforcement.

“If you’ve got a grower that can only use it once in a one-and-done type of thing, how would we know if he used it again?” he said.

Arroyo explained that the reporting system for monitoring pesticide use does not have the capability for tracking the many scenarios DPR seeks to enforce. The regulation still allows for some crops to have multiple applications of a neonic instead of just one. A new software system would be needed for the monthly reports. It would have to trigger alerts, for example, when an applicator might use two different neonics on the same field in one season.

This would require DPR to implement a new funding mechanism, pulling resources from other DPR duties. Another route the department could pursue is to make the four neonic ingredients restricted materials. But that would require a separate regulatory path and present other problems.

“I’ve never been in this situation where we’ve had a chemical that is in the middle of a reevaluation and mitigation and then switch gears into making it restricted,” said Arroyo.

DPR staff mentioned during the workshops that the agency is also pursuing a human health assessment for the neonics. Arroyo said an impact on human health would be enough cause to consider regulating the products as restricted material, with the known risks to pollinators adding further momentum. Yet U.S. EPA has already performed a risk assessment that found the neonics to be safe for human health. CalEPA would have to present new scientific information to counter the federal government’s findings—the path it pursued in banning chlorpyrifos last year.

At that point, banning the neonics or mitigating them out of practice would create other risks.



CAPCA CEO and President Ruthann Anderson

“The alternative isn’t nothing,” said Ruthann Anderson, CEO and president of the California Association of Pesticide Control Advisers. “You’re looking at a whole different slew of potential environmental and human impacts.”

As with chlorpyrifos, industry stakeholders, along with environmental advocates and DPR, are reluctant to endorse alternatives that could present unintended consequences, perhaps by requiring more applications or a broad combination of pesticides to achieve the same result.

John Aguirre, president of the California Association of Winegrape Growers, said the neonics have actually been the new and safe replacement for older pesticides like carbamates and organophosphates.

“This was a new class of chemistry that represented a substantial improvement in terms of risk,” he said. “It’s not clear to me how the current evidence is lacking the current studies and analysis to date in terms of human health risk.”

Aguirre was concerned over the regulation’s impacts for controlling vine mealy bug, which is a vector for leaf curl virus. The CDFA report notes the mitigations could also present unforeseen setbacks in combatting the glassy winged sharpshooter in citrus groves near vineyards, since the pest can then spread the devastating Pierce’s disease to wine grapes.

Aguirre pointed out that grapes make a very poor forage crop for pollinators, which the regulations seek to protect.

Anderson hopes DPR will make more informed decisions for protecting pollinators based on data already at hand. This is the first year for the state’s BeeWhere platform to be fully operational. The online pesticide notification tool aims to prevent accidental colony exposures during applications. This year beekeepers registered more than 1.5 million honeybee colonies with the program.

“BeeWhere is basically tied into the pesticide use reporting,” she explained. “If there were bee kills or if there were reported issues, then all of that could be investigated and tied together through the two systems.”

This would allow DPR to track colony losses back to a specific pesticide application or to other potential causes, such as pesticides a beekeeper applied to control deadly varroa mites. This would give DPR a more realistic reporting of the actual issues, rather than depend on results performed in a confined lab space, she said.

Since the ban on chlorpyrifos, a number of farmers and other stakeholders have taken issue with how the administration is limiting the tools as well as the opportunity for applicators and pest control advisors to choose the best practice. The administration has said that both the ban and the proposed neonic regulations are part of what DPR Director Val Dolcini describes as sustainable integrated pest management (IPM).

“More broadly, what we're trying to do as a department is to shift the paradigm, in many ways, from our reliance on synthetic chemical pesticides to one that focuses more on safe, sustainable pest management techniques and tools and practices and protocols,” he said during one of the workshops.

Before joining the administration in 2019, Dolcini was CEO of the Pollinator Partnership, a group that has worked with the agriculture industry on bee protection practices, including a high-profile partnership with the Almond Board of California earlier this year. But many are skeptical of Dolcini’s sustainable IPM approach.

“An IPM program doesn't mean you're using organic products or you're not using any products at all,” said Arroyo. “To transition away from IPM to an organic program and not use synthetic materials—until that becomes law, that's like telling me I need to drive an electric car when I want to use a diesel truck. I have that right to choose.”



Riverside County Agricultural Commissioner Ruben Arroyo

Aguirre called the sustainable IPM approach bias, saying it broadly discriminates a category of pest control products and pushes farmers away rather than opening up new opportunities for them.

“That just plays into this canard that if it's synthetic it must be risky, and that non-synthetic organic products are inherently safer, which is not the case,” he said.

A “more appropriate” approach would be to use the regulatory system to drive innovation in the industry to bring lower risk products to the marketplace.

Despite these concerns, Creamer remains optimistic, knowing that DPR as a regulatory agency is guided by a scientific process and that Dolcini, who understands the complexity at hand, has pledged to personally work with stakeholders on the issue.

“DPR, to be a credible entity now and in the future, is really going to be based upon science,” he said. “I would be very concerned if they didn't make changes based upon due knowledge or science that’s made available.”

Democrats use state roll call to put focus on ag, rural issues

Ag and rural issues got several mentions during the roll call of the states where Joe Biden was officially nominated for president at the Democratic National Convention Tuesday night.

Before announcing that Democrats in Kansas were casting 35 votes for Biden and 10 votes for Sen. Bernie Sanders, fourth-generation farmer Mark Pringle said that Biden’s agriculture and rural development proposals would help stem the exodus of young people from the countryside.

Biden “has a plan to help new farmers get a good start, and by funding schools and health care he’ll make sure that rural communities remain great places to live, work and raise a family for generations to come,” Pringle said.



Rural broadband was an issue that came up, too, during the roll call.

Speaking in front of a group of cattle in Montana, Rachel Prevost, (shown at left) talked about the importance of rural broadband and having to finish her senior year studying remotely from her family’s ranch.

“Some days I can’t even get a video to load or an email attachment to send. Without reliable internet, there's no remote

learning, no virtual doctor's appointments and just try starting a small business. Rural broadband can be a game changer for rural communities like mine, and Joe Biden has a plan to make it happen," she said.

African-American state legislator Craig Hickman, who cast Maine’s votes, said he and his husband had realized “my American dream” - a 25-acre organic farm, a roadside farm stand, and a bed-and-breakfast.

“Small businesses are the backbone of the rural economies across America,” he said. “Joe Biden has a plan to help more Americans, especially people of color, to start their own businesses.”

Iowa’s vote was announced by former Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, standing near a corn field with his wife, Christie. Vilsack said he had planned to talk about biofuel policy, but instead

he called attention to last week's derecho, which destroyed crops and many buildings across the state.

A meatpacking plant worker from Nebraska, Geraldine Waller, announced her state's vote after talking about how her fellow employees are "treated like we're expendable."

She went on, "Workers are dying from COVID. A lot of us don't have paid sick leave or even all the protective equipment. We are human beings, not robots. ... We want to keep helping you feed your family. We need a president who will have our backs."

Rice farmers hope cash infusion spurs Iraqi imports

American rice farmers are counting on a recent \$450 million loan from the U.S. Export-Import bank to Iraq to restart the country's rice imports.

Iraq has not purchased any rice yet this year, a stark contrast to 2019. Last year Iraq imported about \$15.5 million worth from the U.S. from January through June, according to USDA data. And the U.S. could really use that business now because exports are down from last year.

Iraq has long been a big importer of U.S. rice, but the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown a wrench into the finances of a country that buys grain through government-run tenders.

The steep decline in oil prices has hit Iraq particularly hard, says Peter Bachmann, vice president of international affairs for the USA Rice Federation, and it's the oil revenues that enable the Iraqi Grain Board to import rice and wheat.

"Over the past several years, Iraq has been an important destination for U.S. rice, averaging over 100,000 MT per year," said Bobby Hanks, chairman of the USA Rice Federation and head of the group's international trade committee. "With exports down significantly in 2020, the rice industry welcomes the news of the EXIM loan and looks forward to reestablishing trade with Iraq."

EXIM President and Chairman Kimberly Reed says the loan is expected to directly benefit U.S. farmers who will sell more to Iraq now that it has the funds. The loan is part of an overall \$5 billion memorandum of understanding signed last year to facilitate long-term efforts "to identify potential projects in Iraq for procurement of U.S.-produced goods and services."

"Building on the \$5 billion Memorandum of Understanding that I signed with the Republic of Iraq Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance ... today's unanimous board action underscores EXIM's commitment to strengthening and expanding our relationship with Iraq while supporting U.S. jobs — including in American agriculture — here at home," said Reed in a statement released last week.

And this week an Iraqi delegation that includes the country's prime minister and deputy trade minister is in Washington to forge closer ties with the Trump administration. Sources tell *Agri-Pulse* that the Iraqi officials will be meeting with high-level officials, including leaders at USDA.

A bright spot for U.S. rice farmers this year has been food aid. The U.S., through its three main food aid programs, has bought and shipped a record amount of U.S. rice to needy people around the world.

Through July the U.S. government donated more than 100,000 metric tons of rice through its Food for Progress, Food for Peace and Food for Education programs. On top of that, USDA tendered last month for 31,500 tons of rice to benefit West Africa and another, similar tender is expected soon.

Mexico phasing out use of glyphosate

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has agreed to a phaseout of glyphosate by the end of 2024, according to news reports.

The announcement comes two months after the country's secretary of environment and natural resources told the Mexican press the herbicide would be gradually removed from the market.

The country has been banning shipments, which a national agricultural organization has warned would cost farmers \$3.4 billion this year.

“The inventories are running out,” National Agricultural Council President Bosco de la Vega said, according to Mexico News Daily. “We as farmers don't have glyphosate for the ... fall-winter cycle. If [the government] doesn't lift restrictions so that imports can continue, the only thing it's going to achieve is a major drop in the production of foodstuffs in the country.”



Reuters said the president made the announcement following the leaking of an audio of Environment Minister Victor Manuel Toledo "criticizing the government for internal contradictions during a private meeting."

Novak: Mexico heading down EU path on ag restrictions

Mexico isn't just banning the herbicide glyphosate. It's also violating agreements under the newly enacted U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement and showing signs that the government is following in the footsteps of the European Union and its restrictions on U.S. farm commodities, CropLife America President and CEO Christopher Novak tells *Agri-Pulse*.

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's confirmation this week that he would outright ban glyphosate by 2024, together with the country's ongoing failure to approve new pesticide products – some of which have been waiting as long as six years – is ominous for the future of U.S.-Mexico ag trade, Novak said in an interview Friday.

“This is a change in the regulatory philosophy of Mexico at a point in time when we’ve just negotiated a free trade agreement and there’s excitement about working together to ensure the safety of products and a consistent approach to sanitary and phytosanitary measures,” Novak said about proposed ban. “That decision moves us in the wrong direction.”

And it breaks commitments Mexico made under USMCA, Novak said.

“We certainly think the import ban does cross that threshold as violating the sanitary and phytosanitary provisions (of USMCA),” he said.

There are 156 new pesticide products in line for Mexican approval and many more waiting to renew registrations, but the government has been dragging its feet and U.S. companies say they have lost about \$269 million from 2015 through 2019 as their applications languish, said Novak.

“Unfortunately, (Mexico’s Federal Commission for Protection against Sanitary Risk) has virtually ceased processing registrations of new pesticide products and the routine renewal of existing product registrations and has cut off communication with stakeholders,”

CropLife America told USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler in an Aug. 7 letter.

But it’s not just the hundreds of millions of dollars of trade in pesticides that’s threatened by Mexico’s move towards a European-style “precautionary principle,” the CEO said. It’s also the billions of dollars of U.S. corn, wheat and soybeans that cross the southern border every year.

Glyphosate herbicides like Bayer’s Roundup are popular with U.S. farmers and if Mexico were to begin erecting new restrictions on crops grown with the weed-destroying chemical, the impact would be significant on the U.S. ag sector.

“Our biggest concern, and the reason we’ve pushed this issue so hard, is we want to ensure it does not have an impact on commodity exports to Mexico, like we’re seeing in Europe,” Novak said.

U.S. soybean farmers have used glyphosate herbicides for 40 years, according to the American Soybean Association.

“Glyphosate-tolerant soybeans have enabled soybean farmers to better control weeds and implement no-till and conservation tillage practices that save fuel, reduce erosion, and protect the environment,” ASA said in comments submitted to the EPA in 2018.

The U.S. exported \$2.7 billion worth of corn, \$1.9 billion worth of soybeans and \$811 million worth of wheat to Mexico last year, according to USDA data.

It’s just one of the reasons that the U.S. government is working hard to counter Mexico’s new trajectory. Both the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and the USDA have been reaching out at the highest levels in Mexican government to convey their concerns, Novak said.

Appeals court turns down request to rehear dicamba decision

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has denied requests to rehear its decision vacating registrations for Xtendimax, FeXapan and Engenia, leaving the Supreme Court as the last stop for dicamba manufacturers seeking to overturn the ruling.

In a brief order Monday, the court reported that two of the judges on the panel that issued the decision opposed granting rehearing *en banc*, which takes place before a panel of 11 judges. One of the judges on the panel also recommended denial. But none of the other judges on the court expressed any interest in hearing the case *en banc*.

The decision to reject the rehearing request leaves the court's June 3 ruling in place and means Bayer, Corteva and BASF will have to go to the Supreme Court to seek review of the June 3 decision. The Environmental Protection Agency could do so as well, but unlike the companies, EPA did not seek rehearing of the decision and did not raise the same objections to the petitioners' case as the companies did.

In a statement, Bayer said it thought the rehearing request should have been granted “for several reasons, including that the court disregarded the EPA’s expert scientific judgments.” The company said it is “assessing our options to still address the court’s ruling and set the record straight.”

“Bayer stands fully behind XtendiMax, and we are proud of our role in bringing innovations like XtendiMax forward to help growers safely, successfully, and sustainably protect their crops from weeds,” the company said. “We will continue working with the EPA, growers, academics, and others to provide long-term access to this important tool.”

BASF also said, “We are assessing additional legal options, including a challenge to the U.S. Supreme Court.” And Corteva noted that “the parties in the case retain the right to appeal to the United States Supreme Court,” but that it is “too early to comment on that potential action.”

Hailed by the petitioner groups that brought the case in the first place, the 9th Circuit’s decision found that EPA had understated or not properly considered the economic and social costs of approving the dicamba products for “over-the-top” use on soybeans.

But controversy has dogged the products since they were approved for use in 2016, with millions of acres of off-target damage to soybeans and other crops reported. Bayer has agreed to a \$400 million settlement for growers who experienced damage.

The court’s decision caused confusion and alarm in farm country, where the growing season was in full swing. On June 8, EPA issued a cancellation order allowing the use through July 31 of existing stocks in the hand of growers and applicators. The 9th Circuit rejected the petitioner groups’ — the National Family Farm Coalition, Center for Food Safety, Center for Biological Diversity and Pesticide Action North America — motion to enforce the court’s order and prohibit continuing use of dicamba.

EPA has been working on making a re-registration decision this fall on the three herbicides, so farmers have time to make 2021 purchasing decisions well ahead of the 2021 season.

The companies' petitions attacked the decision for not properly deferring to EPA's expertise. Both BASF and Corteva contended that rehearing was necessary because they were not aware the case involved their herbicides, though the petitioners say they clearly stated they were challenging all three registrations.

George Kimbrell, the Center for Food Safety's legal director and the petitioners' lead attorney, said the groups are "gratified that the whole court agrees that the requests were without merit."

And attorney and co-counsel Stephanie Parent of the Center for Biological Diversity called the decision "of primary importance to whether EPA can lawfully approve any future dicamba products."

A senior analyst with Bernstein Research said on an investor call with Corteva CEO Jim Collins Monday that "there's a pretty decent chance" that Xtendimax will not be on the market past 2020.

Asked by *Agri-Pulse* to expand on that remark, Jonas Oxgaard said, "**I genuinely don't see any way for this to be re-registered. The court was quite scathing in its criticism of the EPA, and the big concern in my view is the restrictions.** The court highlighted how the current amount of damage is not acceptable, but the restrictions that are currently in place practically make it impossible for a farmer to apply it legally. So, giving Xtendimax a more restrictive label is likely to not survive the court's review, and without a more restrictive label it's too harmful."

Oxgaard also emphasized an aspect of the decision he thinks has been overlooked. "The court didn't think it was worth returning the decision to EPA for a fix — the court is effectively telling the EPA that it's unfixable," the analyst said.

News Briefs:

California Democrats introduce bill to improve snowpack measurements. Several Democratic senators and representatives from California introduced a bill on Friday that would create an airborne snow observatory and measurement program within the Department of the Interior that would provide water managers with more accurate readings to make better water control decisions. The Snow Water Supply Forecasting Program Authorization Act was introduced by Senators Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris and Representatives Josh Harder, John Garamendi, Jerry McNerney, TJ Cox, Grace Napolitano, Ami Bera and Jim Costa. Reps. Joe Neguse and Diana DeGette, Democrats from Colorado, also cosponsored the bill. "This will help improve water conservation, supply and delivery forecasts across the Western United States," Feinstein said in a [release](#). "This will help improve water conservation, supply and delivery forecasts across the Western United States." The act would replace the NASA ASO program that used an airplane-mounted light detection instrument and imaging spectrometer to measure snowpack depth and water content. The bill provides \$15 million in funding for the Department of the Interior to measure snowpacks from fiscal year 2022 to 2026. According to the release, the typical survey techniques for snowpack measurements can only achieve 50 to 90% accuracy, while ASO technology can achieve 96 to 99%. The bill won support from water associations and districts across California, including the Association of California Water Agencies, Turlock Irrigation District, Modesto Irrigation District, South Valley Water Association, Friant Water Authority, Family Farm Alliance, Kings River Conservation District, San Juan Water District, City of Folsom and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission.

CDFA plans listening sessions on Specialty Crop Block Grants. CDFA is seeking public comments on the program priorities for the 2021 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Through a two-phase competitive solicitation process, the program awards funds to projects that solely enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops. The priorities are intended to address the current needs of California's specialty crop industry and help guide prospective applicants to submit projects that address the most significant issues affecting the industry. For 2021, CDFA is proposing changes to the priorities to respond to challenges related to COVID-19 and address issues of farmer equity. Interested parties should review the [Proposed Program Priorities](#) and may attend a web based public listening session or submit emailed comments. Two listening session webinars are scheduled: August 20, 2020 1:00-3:00 pm PDT and August 26, 2020 10:00 am - 12:00 noon PDT. To register for a webinar, email grants@cdfa.ca.gov. Public comments may also be submitted directly to grants@cdfa.ca.gov beginning August 17, 2020 at 5:00 pm until August 31, 2020 at 5:00 pm. The input received will be published on the [CDFA SCBGP website](#) and considered during the development of the final program priorities for 2021.

Bee industry groups work together to create new "Bee Health Collective" website. The National Honey Board and Project Apis M. announced that they have created a "Bee Health Collective" website after collaborating with several industry organizations. The [website](#) will contain information compiled by the organizations about honey bee health, scientific research, the beekeeping industry and how bees relate to agriculture and food. "We're thrilled to partner with several like-minded organizations on this important initiative," Margaret Lombard, National Honey Board CEO, said in a [release](#). "By joining together as a community, we have the ability to make a real impact on the accessibility of data about the health and sustainability of honey bees and their impacts on the nation's food supply." The site will specifically feature databases of scientific research projects dating back to 2009 and a list of researchers that are studying bees. It will also feature bee health metrics in the form of infographics, images and writing, as well as a bee bulletin board that shows job postings and funding opportunities in the industry.

Environmental groups sue over California Spotted Owl. Three environmental groups filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Tuesday challenging the agency's decision to deny endangered species protection to California spotted owls. The lawsuit—filed by the Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Forest Legacy and Defenders of Wildlife—is the latest in a 20-year fight over the status of the subspecies of spotted owls, which live in old-growth forest in the Sierra Nevada and the mountains of coastal and Southern California. The Center For Biological Diversity and the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign filed their first petition to list the owl in 2000. "We've been working to get the California Spotted Owl listed 20 years now and during that whole time, population studies have shown them to be declining and threats have only increased," Noah Greenwald, the endangered species director at the Center for Biological Diversity told *Agri-Pulse*. "This is a species that is very much in peril and needs protection." The three groups claim that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decision to deny protection in November of 2019 was "unlawful and not supported by the service's own scientific assessment." In the lawsuit, the groups state that the assessment found a 44% population decline in the Lassen region of the owl's Sierra Nevada range, a 50% decline in the Eldorado region, a 31% in the Sierra region and a 9% decline in the San Bernardino region.

Farm Hands West: Senate confirms Dolcini

The California Senate has confirmed the nomination of **Val Dolcini** as director of the Department of Pesticide Regulation. CalEPA hired Dolcini in 2019 for the new ag liaison position, but he soon took over as DPR acting director following the resignation of acting director **Teresa Marks**. Before joining CalEPA, Dolcini served as president and CEO of the Pollinator Partnership. From 2009 to 2017, Dolcini served in leadership positions at the USDA, first as the state executive director of the USDA Farm Service Agency in California and then as the Administrator of the Farm Service Agency in Washington, D.C.



Val Dolcini

The Kraft Heinz Company has named three individuals to its U.S. leadership team. **Cory Onell** has been hired as the new president of U.S. sales, **Sanjiv Gajiwala** is now the U.S. chief growth officer, and **Stephanie Peterson** has been tapped as the head of U.S. communications. Onell comes to Kraft Heinz after most recently serving as senior vice president of sales and the head of U.S. retail and customer and commercial teams for the J.M. Smucker Company. Before that, he worked for Campbell Soup Company, Kimberly-Clark Corporation, Mondelez International and Kraft Foods. Gajiwala most recently served as senior vice president of marketing for Mike's Hard Lemonade Co. Before joining Kraft Heinz, Peterson served in senior-level communications roles at PepsiCo, KIND Snacks, and, most recently, IHOP Restaurants.

Terramera has added **Dr. Santa Ono**, president and vice-chancellor of the University of British Columbia (UBC), to its Strategic Advisory Board. Ono is a molecular biologist and has advised many startups and Fortune 500 companies. On the board, Ono will advise on short and long-term business strategies alongside **Greg D'Avignon**, **Stewart Beck** and **Nancy Roman**. Before his appointment at UBC, Ono served as president of the University of Cincinnati and senior vice-provost and deputy to the provost at Emory University.

Calavo Growers has promoted **Robert Wedin** to executive vice president of fresh sales and **Mark Lodge** to chief operations officer with the responsibilities of overseeing all of Calavo's production facilities in the U.S. and Mexico. Wedin joined Calavo in 1973 and has served as vice president of sales and fresh marketing since 1993. Lodge joined Calavo in 2019 as executive vice president of RFG business operations. Before that, he had over 25 years of experience leading large scale manufacturing and logistics businesses. Before joining Calavo Growers, Lodge was president at True Fresh HPP and True Food Innovations.

The World Food Program USA named **Gabriella Morris** as the new chief philanthropy officer, effective Sept. 8. Morris currently serves as senior vice president of strategic partnerships and interim chief development officer at UNICEF USA. Before that, she served as senior vice president of the UNICEF USA Bridge Fund, an investment fund which fast-tracks lifesaving assistance to children in need.



Gabriella Morris

The Board of Directors of Mercy Corps has selected **Tjada D'Oyen McKenna** as the new chief executive officer, effective Oct. 15. McKenna previously served as the chief operating officer for two international nonprofits: CARE and Habitat for Humanity International. McKenna has also served in roles with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the U.S. government, specializing in food security.

Martha Stewart, Impossible Foods chief financial officer **David Lee** and **J.D. Vance** have been added to AppHarvest's board of directors. These additions were made as the company prepares to open a 2.76-million-square-foot indoor farm in Morehead, Ky., this fall. AppHarvest has also hired **Marcella Butler** as chief people officer, formerly at Impossible Foods and

Google; **Jackie Roberts** as chief sustainability officer, most recently working at The Carlyle Group and the Environmental Defense Fund; and **Geof Rochester** as chief marketing officer, previously working at The Nature Conservancy, WWE, Showtime, Comcast and Procter & Gamble.

Awe Sum Organics has brought on **Jon Kiley** as a sales account manager. Bringing over 25 years of experience in retail and food service, Kiley previously was the director of value-added sales and business development for the Ippolito Group and also served over 20 years of experience as senior manager of customer service at Earthbound Farm.

Best regards,

Sara Wyant
Editor

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