



September 9, 2020

Western Edition

Volume 2, Number 34

CEO salaries were on the rise. Then came COVID-19.

The agriculture industry was able to wrap up its annual early-year blitz of meetings and conventions before the onset of the coronavirus led to months-long event cancellations, but with next year’s crop of meetings in jeopardy, organizations are taking a nervous look at their balance sheets — including what they pay their CEOs.

“A key driver for a lot of organizations is going to be how are they now going to measure success?” asked Bob Skelton, the chief administrative officer at the American Society of Association Executives.

Financial indicators have been an easy metric to follow in recent years; an organization with good cash flow generally means a CEO receives a healthy bonus or raise. In fact, Skelton said a 5% bump in pay had become standard for association executives across many

different sectors. Now, with the lost revenue of canceled events, one area where there might be some savings is in payroll, specifically in the compensation of their top executives.

The numbers reported in this year’s *Agri-Pulse* CEO salary report just might represent a peak of sorts, and the financial hit of COVID-19 could deal a blow to organizations that will require years of recovery.

“The whole landscape right now is murky, and there’s going to be changes,” Skelton said. “We’re not going to know all the details about those changes for another year, but things are definitely going to look different.”

Top 10 CEO Salaries		
Name	Organization	Total Compensation
Jack N. Gerard*	American Petroleum Institute	\$10,669,493.00
Dawn M. Sweeney*	National Restaurant Assn.	\$5,731,399.00
Pamela Bailey*	Grocery Manufacturers Assn.	\$5,225,004.00
Susan K. Neely*	American Beverage Assn.	\$3,375,648.00
Rob Nichols	American Bankers Assn.	\$2,785,380.00
Leslie G. Sarasin	Food Marketing Institute	\$2,460,188.00
Michael J. Sommers	American Petroleum Institute	\$2,242,914.00
Jim Matheson	National Rural Electric Cooperative Assn.	\$1,184,520.00
Camden Fine*	Independent Community Bankers of America	\$1,520,100.00
John H. Downs Jr.	National Confectioners Assn.	\$1,244,112.00

*: Denotes no longer CEO

Source: Agri-Pulse Analysis

But prior to COVID-19, CEO salaries were on a predictable upward trajectory.

According to an *Agri-Pulse* analysis of tax documents for calendar or fiscal years ending in 2018 or 2019, the average CEO compensation shot up almost 13% over the figures we reported in last year's survey. Then, the average compensation came in at a little over \$566,000; this average figure in this year's report tops \$630,000.

As usual, Jack Gerard — the departed CEO of the American Petroleum Institute — led the way in compensation for this year's report with a total package nearing \$10.7 million. The next highest executive is Dawn Sweeney, who has since left her position as the CEO of the National Restaurant Association, who brought in \$5.7 million on her own.

This year's report also shows an increase in top executives making more than \$1 million in total compensation, which includes base salary as well as bonuses, retirement benefits, and other forms of payment. **Last year, 11 people in our report topped a seven-figure package; this year, the number crept up to 17**, seven of whom are no longer with their respective organizations. However, the \$1 million club also boasts new members like Jim Mulhern, the CEO of the National Milk Producers Federation, and Andy LaVigne, the current leader of the American Seed Trade Association.

A keen observer may notice several organizations are listing the same figures we reported in last year's survey; **a number of groups were unable to provide more recent info in part due to filing extensions and staffing challenges caused by the coronavirus pandemic.**

CEOs will now be charged with navigating their organizations through uncharted territory, steering through a pandemic and continued financial hardship in rural America that could force some producers to rethink paying dues. Skelton said the steps organizations might take — virtual events, reducing office space, or laying off workers, to name a few — won't be universal in nature. Organizations will have to decide what they can do, and they'll be turning to their leaders to figure out what that will be.

“They need to really lead,” he said. Many organizations, his own included, are experimenting with new ways to provide value to their members and generate revenue with an acknowledgment that previous financial plans may have been too reliant on in-person gatherings.

So far, the 2021 “meeting season” has shown a few cracks. The International Dairy Foods Association's Dairy Forum — slated for Jan. 25-28 — will be a virtual event, but the Cattle Industry Convention is still scheduled to take place Feb. 3-5 in Nashville. An email to potential attendees last week said convention planners “are busy working behind the scenes to create a safe, responsible way for producers to come together to enjoy this legendary event.”

There's been no news on other major events like the gathering of the American Farm Bureau Federation (scheduled Jan. 8-13 in San Diego) or Commodity Classic (March 4-6 in San Antonio).

Whether or not the events are able to take place — and what attendance looks like if they do — will likely have an outsized impact on the financial status of many organizations and the amount of money they can afford to pay their top executives.

Name of Organization	President/CEO/ Executive Director or VP	Position	Base Compensation	Potential Bonus	Other Compensation	Retirement/ Deferred Payment	Tax-Free Benefits	Total Compensation	Filing Year
Agricultural Retailers Assoc.	William Daren Coppock	President & CEO	\$351,843.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$16,200.00	\$25,589.00	\$393,632.00	2018
Almond Alliance of California	Kelly Covello (8/17-12/18)	President	\$61,161.00					\$61,161.00	2018
Almond Alliance of California	Elaine Trevino (3/18 -8/18)	President	\$48,798.00					\$48,798.00	2018
American Angus Association	Allen Moczygemba*	CEO	\$241,315.00	\$60,000.00	\$18,605.00	\$13,498.00	\$18,093.00	\$351,511.00	2018
American Bakers Assoc.	Robb Mackie	President & CEO	\$355,110.00	\$105,000.00	\$8,324.00	\$21,600.00	\$32,875.00	\$522,909.00	2018
American Bankers Assoc.	Robert S. Nichols	President & CEO	\$1,656,780.00	\$825,000.00	\$38,813.00	\$232,500.00	\$32,287.00	\$2,785,380.00	2018
American Beverage Assoc.	Susan K. Neely* (01/18-09/18)	President & CEO	\$1,718,920.00		\$1,645,537.00		\$11,191.00	\$3,375,648.00	2018
American Beverage Assoc.	Katherine Lugar (09/18-12/18)	President & CEO		\$531,945.00				\$531,945.00	2018
American Coalition for Ethanol	Brian Jennings	CEO	\$129,703.00		\$4,340.00			\$134,043.00	2018
American Cotton Shippers	William E. May*	President	\$218,323.00	\$0.00	\$15,486.00	\$13,020.00	\$23,355.00	\$270,184.00	2018
American Dairy Coalition	Laurie Fischer	CEO	\$59,982.00		\$8,151.00			\$68,133.00	2018
American Egg Board	Anne Alonzo*	CEO	\$358,864.00	\$53,830.00	\$35,482.00	\$36,096.00	\$11,222.00	\$495,494.00	2019
American Farm Bureau Federation	Zippy Duvall	President	\$518,334.00	\$0.00	\$3,564.00	\$23,178.00	\$29,032.00	\$574,108.00	2018
American Farmland Trust	John Piotti	President & CEO	\$294,973.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,304.00	\$11,113.00	\$310,390.00	2018
American Feed Industry Association	Joel G Newman*	President & CEO	\$463,401.00	\$66,000.00	\$0.00	\$99,200.00	\$27,270.00	\$655,871.00	2019
American Frozen Food Institute	Alison Bodor	President & CEO	\$385,632.00	\$77,200.00		\$60,642.00	\$22,933.00	\$546,407.00	2018
American Hereford Association	Jack Ward	Executive Vice President	\$229,406.00	\$25,840.00	\$0.00	\$10,429.00	\$4,725.00	\$270,400.00	2019
American Jersey Cattle Association	C Neal Smith	Executive Secretary & CEO	\$62,425.00		\$11,750.00			\$74,175.00	2018
American Lamb Board	Megan Wortman	Executive Director	\$133,900.00		\$3,000.00			\$136,900.00	2019
American Petroleum Institute	Jack N. Gerard* (1/18-7/18)	President & CEO	\$1,954,232.00	\$716,867.00	\$7,933,708.00	\$44,856.00	\$19,830.00	\$10,669,493.00	2018
American Petroleum Institute	Michael J. Sommers (8/18-12/18)	President & CEO	\$764,360.00	\$983,333.00	\$42,711.00	\$439,274.00	\$13,236.00	\$2,242,914.00	2018
American Seed Trade Assoc.	Andrew LaVigne	President, CEO, & Treasurer	\$715,206.00	\$151,250.00	\$0.00	\$136,630.00	\$33,617.00	\$1,036,703.00	2018

Name of Organization	President/CEO/ Executive Director or VP	Position	Base Compensation	Potential Bonus	Other Compensation	Retirement/Deferred Payment	Tax-Free Benefits	Total Compensation	Filing Year
American Shorthorn Breeders Association	Montie Soules	Executive Secretary	\$122,451.00					\$122,451.00	2018
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals	Matthew Bershadker	President & CEO	\$511,587.00	\$200,000.00	\$810.00	\$22,000.00	\$35,129.00	\$769,526.00	2018
American Soybean Association	Ryan Findlay	CEO	\$252,365.00	\$5,400.00	\$0.00	\$7,735.00	\$27,464.00	\$292,964.00	2019
American Sugar Alliance	Vickie Rideout Myers	Executive Director	\$184,650.00			\$27,842.00		\$212,492.00	2018
American Sugarbeet Growers Assoc.	Luther Markwart	Executive Vice President	\$362,525.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$41,250.00	\$58,930.00	\$462,705.00	2018
American Veterinary Medical Assoc.	Janet Donlin	Exec. VP	\$355,419.00	\$15,000.00	\$0.00	\$27,500.00	\$1,808.00	\$399,727.00	2018
American Wind Energy Assn.	Thomas C. Kiernan	CEO	\$564,710.00	\$107,000.00	\$0.00	\$70,649.00	\$0.00	\$742,359.00	2018
American-International Charolais Association	J Neil Orth	Executive Vice President	\$133,600.00					\$133,600.00	2018
Assoc. of Public and Land-Grant Universities	Peter McPherson	President	\$453,800.00	\$0.00	\$87,215.00	\$120,500.00	\$27,716.00	\$689,231.00	2018
CA Association of Wine Grape Growers	John Aguirre	President	\$200,125.00		\$11,484.00	\$10,006.00	\$23,874.00	\$245,489.00	2018
CA Citrus Mutual	Joel Nelson*	President	\$212,859.00					\$212,859.00	2018
CA Crop Improvement Association	John Palmer	Executive Director	\$152,799.00					\$152,799.00	2019
CA Fresh Fruit Association	George Radanvich*	President	\$208,383.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$13,856.00	\$19,600.00	\$241,839.00	2019
Cattlemen's Beef Board	Greg Hanes (6/19-12/19)	CEO	\$275,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$30,500.00	\$0.00	\$305,500.00	2019
Center for Food Safety	Andrew Kimbrell	Executive Director	\$187,425.00			\$11,083.00		\$198,508.00	2018
Center for Rural Affairs	Brian Depew	Executive Director	\$96,089.00		\$8,946.00			\$105,035.00	2018
Center for Science in the Public Interest	Peter Lurie	Non-Voting Executive Director	\$239,801.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,964.00	\$1,126.00	\$242,891.00	2019
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities	Robert Greenstein	President	\$212,036.00	\$500.00	\$2,472.00	\$15,353.00	\$30,015.00	\$260,376.00	2018
Christmas Tree Promotion Board	Marsha Gray	Executive Director	\$200,000.00					\$200,000.00	2019

Name of Organization	President/CE O/ Executive Director or VP	Position	Base Compensation	Potential Bonus	Other Compensation	Retirement/ Deferred Payment	Tax-Free Benefits	Total Compensation	Filing Year
Consumer Federation of America	Jack Gillis	Executive Director	\$123,902.00		\$3,024.00			\$126,926.00	2018
Consumer Federation of America	Steve Brobeck	Executive Director	\$44,045.00		\$2,202.00			\$46,247.00	2018
Consumer Reports Inc	Marta L. Tellado	President & CEO	\$632,563.00	\$0.00	\$18,912.00	\$45,886.00	\$3,180.00	\$700,541.00	2019
Corn Refiners Assoc. Inc	John Bode	President & CEO	\$625,210.00	\$125,042.00	\$2,063.00	\$28,875.00	\$32,497.00	\$813,687.00	2018
Cotton Board	William Gillon	CEO	\$303,005.00	\$39,351.00	\$3,564.00	\$36,400.00	\$3,000.00	\$385,320.00	2019
Cotton Council International	Bruce Atherley	Executive Director	\$248,853.00		\$4,635.00	\$20,461.00	\$11,565.00	\$285,514.00	2018
CropLife America	Jay Vroom (1/18-8/18)*	CEO	\$694,660.00		\$128,772.00	\$195,000.00	\$42,248.00	\$1,060,680.00	2018
CropLife America	Chris Novak (8/18-12/18)	President & CEO	\$243,421.00	\$47,917.00		\$8,385.00	\$40,719.00	\$340,442.00	2018
Dairy Management Inc.	Thomas P. Gallagher (1)	CEO	\$625,000.00	\$0.00	\$211,569.00	\$26,757.00	\$12,571.00	\$875,897.00	2018
Defenders of Wildlife	Jamie Rappaport Clark	President & CEO	\$453,797.00	\$25,000.00	\$3,563.00	\$33,603.00	\$6,837.00	\$522,800.00	2019
Ducks Unlimited Inc	H. Dale Hall*	CEO	\$367,192.00	\$127,650.00	\$8,382.00	\$20,297.00	\$19,119.00	\$542,640.00	2019
Environmental Defense Fund Inc.	Frederic D. Krupp	President	\$603,951.00	\$162,075.00	\$0.00	\$70,500.00	\$25,153.00	\$861,679.00	2019
Environmental Law & Policy Center of Midwest	Howard A Learner	President & Executive Director	\$408,131.00	\$10,480.00	\$2,080.00	\$19,037.00	\$28,834.00	\$468,562.00	2019
Environmental Working Group	Ken Cook	President	\$295,000.00	\$300.00	\$79,423.00	\$12,000.00	\$18,476.00	\$405,199.00	2018
Farm Credit Council	Todd Van Hoose	President & CEO	\$513,760.00	\$213,408.00	\$0.00	\$65,445.00	\$3,038.00	\$795,651.00	2018
Farm Foundation	Constance Cullman	President	\$222,933.00	\$33,000.00	\$0.00	\$33,660.00	\$7,551.00	\$297,144.00	2018
Feeding America	Claire Babineaux-Fontenot (10/18-6/19)	CEO	\$205,971.00	\$0.00	\$530.00	\$6,225.00	\$7,640.00	\$220,366.00	2019
Feeding America	Diana Aviv*	Former CEO	\$74,907.00		\$1,003,416.00	\$4,750.00	\$1,757.00	\$1,084,830.00	2019
Fertilizer Institute	Chris Jahn*	President & CEO	\$588,296.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$27,000.00	\$34,160.00	\$649,456.00	2018
FFA Foundation	Molly Ball	President	\$223,093.00	\$0.00	\$240.00	\$18,722.00	\$37,111.00	\$279,166.00	2019
FFA Organization	Mark Poeschl	CEO	\$246,357.00		\$1,584.00	\$20,885.00	\$41,496.00	\$310,322.00	2019
Florida Sugar Cane League	Ryan Weston	CEO	\$582,083.00	\$139,906.00				\$721,989.00	2018
Food and Water Watch	Wenonah Hauter	Executive Director	\$233,398.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$23,340.00	\$9,152.00	\$265,890.00	2018
Food Marketing Institute	Leslie G. Sarasin	President	\$1,442,827.00	\$942,500.00	\$28,986.00	\$22,000.00	\$23,875.00	\$2,460,188.00	2018
Food Policy Action	Monica Mills	Executive Director	\$32,447.00			\$6,766.00		\$39,213.00	2018
Food Research & Action Center	James Weill	President	\$195,811.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$23,972.00	\$11,650.00	\$231,433.00	2018
Friends of the Earth	Erich Pica	President	\$190,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$5,700.00	\$5,777.00	\$201,477.00	2019

Name of Organization	President/CEO/ Executive Director or VP	Position	Base Compensation	Potential Bonus	Other Compensation	Retirement/ Deferred Payment	Tax-Free Benefits	Total Compensation	Filing Year
Grocery Manufacturers Assn. (now Consumer Brands Association)	Pamela Bailey (1/18-7/18)*	President & CEO	\$800,809.00	\$0.00	\$3,888,461.00	\$511,584.00	\$24,150.00	\$5,225,004.00	2018
Grocery Manufacturers Assn.	Geoff Freeman (8/18-12/18)	President & CEO	\$480,551.00	\$50,000.00	\$0.00	\$442,468.00	\$8,301.00	\$981,320.00	2018
Growth Energy	Emily Skor	CEO	\$619,483.00	\$180,000.00	\$3,960.00	\$37,000.00	\$17,448.00	\$857,891.00	2018
Hass Avocado Board	Emiliano Escobedo	Executive Director	\$327,153.00	\$0.00	\$11,016.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$338,169.00	2019
Holstein Friesian Association of America	John M Meyer	CEO	\$287,602.00				\$30,962.00	\$318,564.00	2018
Humane Society of the U.S.	Wayne Pacelle* (1/18-2/18)	President & CEO	\$69,909.00		\$134,340.00	\$2,162.00	\$1,892.00	\$208,303.00	2018
Humane Society of the U.S.	Cristobel Block	Acting President & CEO, CIO	\$255,630.00			\$25,157.00	\$19,931.00	\$300,718.00	2018
Independent Community Bankers of America	Camden Fine (1/18-4/18)*	Past President & CEO	\$1,008,462.00	\$100,000.00	\$357,773.00	\$29,500.00	\$24,365.00	\$1,520,100.00	2018
Independent Community Bankers of America	Rebeca Romero Rainey (5/18-12/18)	President & CEO	\$913,333.00	\$120,000.00	\$34,026.00	\$3,258.00	\$24,949.00	\$1,095,566.00	2018
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy	Juliette Majot*	Executive Director	\$110,325.00		\$18,730.00			\$129,055.00	2019
International Dairy Foods Assoc.	Michael Dykes (1/18-6/18)	President & CEO	\$709,093.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$27,378.00	\$736,471.00	2018
International Dairy Foods Assoc.	Connie E. Tipton (7/17-1/18)	President & CEO	\$510,843.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$33,300.00	\$14,808.00	\$558,951.00	2018
Mushroom Council	Bart Minor	President and CEO	\$256,585.00	\$10,000.00	\$8,400.00			\$274,985.00	2019
National 4-H Council	Jennifer Sirangelo	CEO	\$435,615.00		\$810.00	\$54,821.00	\$21,586.00	\$512,832.00	2019
National Assoc. of Conservation Districts	Jeremy Peters	CEO	\$170,870.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$8,366.00	\$7,497.00	\$186,733.00	2018
National Assoc. of Counties	Matthew Chase	Executive Director	\$405,196.00	\$148,500.00	\$14,145.00	\$32,175.00	\$28,456.00	\$628,472.00	2018
National Assoc. of State Departments of Agriculture	Barbara Glenn	CEO	\$256,001.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10,800.00	\$6,416.00	\$273,217.00	2018
National Assoc. of Wheat Growers	Chandler Goule	CEO	\$261,814.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$9,700.00	\$16,975.00	\$288,489.00	2018
National Audubon Society Inc.	David Yarnold	President & CEO	\$529,253.00	\$94,000.00	\$29,168.00	\$22,000.00	\$19,607.00	\$694,028.00	2019
National Biodiesel Board	Donnell Rehagn	CEO	\$306,772.00	\$32,000.00	\$0.00	\$16,355.00	\$21,893.00	\$377,020.00	2019

Name of Organization	President/CEO/ Executive Director or VP	Position	Base Compensation	Potential Bonus	Other Compensation	Retirement/ Deferred Payment	Tax-Free Benefits	Total Compensation	Filing Year
National Bison Association	Dave Carter	Executive Director	\$79,791.00					\$79,791.00	2018
National Cattlemen's Beef Assoc.	Kendal Frazier*	CEO	\$450,517.00	\$75,000.00	\$6,990.00	\$21,600.00	\$16,478.00	\$570,585.00	2018
National Chicken Council	Michael J. Brown	President	\$468,000.00	\$90,000.00	\$5,392.00	\$66,500.00	\$16,046.00	\$645,938.00	2018
National Confectioners Assoc.	John H Downs Jr	President & CEO	\$959,849.00	\$154,359.00		\$109,375.00	\$20,529.00	\$1,244,112.00	2019
National Corn Growers Assoc.	Chris Novak*	Former CEO	\$284,229.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$27,500.00	\$18,586.00	\$330,315.00	2019
National Corn Growers Assoc.	Jon Doggett	CEO	\$352,735.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$27,500.00	\$20,878.00	\$401,113.00	2019
National Cotton Council	Gary Adams	President	\$352,392.00	\$46,447.00	\$2,023.00	\$33,039.00	\$29,850.00	\$463,751.00	2018
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives	Charles Conner	President	\$550,597.00	\$182,000.00	\$4,365.00	\$32,400.00	\$9,777.00	\$779,139.00	2018
National Dairy Promotion and Research Board	Thomas Gallagher (1)	CEO	\$625,000.00					\$625,000.00	2019
National Farmers Union	Roger Johnson*	President	\$318,715.00	\$30,000.00	\$0.00	\$16,500.00	\$8,028.00	\$373,243.00	2018
National Fluid Milk Processor Promotion Board/Milk PEP	Julia Kadison* (Retired 10/2019)	CEO	\$263,881.00	\$92,231.00	\$39,172.00			\$395,284.00	2019
National Grain and Feed Assoc.	Randall Gordon	President	\$356,058.00			\$47,153.00	\$29,260.00	\$432,471.00	2019
National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry	Betsy Huber	National President	\$54,677.00					\$54,677.00	2018
National Grocers Assoc.	Peter Larkin*	President & CEO	\$539,822.00	\$174,900.00	\$33,522.00	\$73,000.00	\$34,397.00	\$855,641.00	2018
National Honey Board	Margaret Lombard	CEO	\$226,800.00					\$226,800.00	2019
National Mango Board	Manuel Michel	Executive Director	\$160,000.00	\$16,000.00				\$176,000.00	2019
National Milk Producers Federation	Jim Mulhern	President & CEO	\$751,782.00	\$140,520.00	\$132,937.00	\$30,250.00	\$29,578.00	\$1,085,067.00	2018
National Oilseed Processors Association	Thomas Hammer	President	\$334,699.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$13,360.00	\$21,030.00	\$369,089.00	2018
National Peanut Board	Robert Parker	President & CEO	\$243,500.00	\$30,000.00	\$1,000.00			\$274,500.00	2019
National Pork Board	Bill Even	CEO	\$380,052.00	\$57,092.00				\$437,144.00	2019
National Pork Producers Council	Neil Dierks	CEO	\$339,380.00	\$57,430.00	\$0.00	\$22,669.00	\$15,055.00	\$434,534.00	2018

Name of Organization	President/CEO/ Executive Director or VP	Position	Base Compensation	Potential Bonus	Other Compensation	Retirement/ Deferred Payment	Tax-Free Benefits	Total Compensation	Filing Year
National Potato Council	John Keeling*	Executive VP & CEO	\$306,901.00	\$0.00	\$229.00	\$10,620.00	\$23,239.00	\$340,989.00	2019
National Potato Promotion Board	Blair Richardson	President, CEO	\$566,000.00		\$45,280.00			\$611,280.00	2019
National Renderers Assoc.	Nancy Foster	President & CEO	\$242,258.00			\$12,466.00	\$11,553.00	\$266,277.00	2018
National Restaurant Assoc.	Dawn M. Sweeney*	President & CEO	\$1,774,500.00	\$1,920,870.00	\$17,838.00	\$1,995,227.00	\$22,964.00	\$5,731,399.00	2018
National Rural Electric Cooperative Association	Jim Matheson	CEO	\$1,155,611.00	\$233,600.00	\$55,782.00	\$332,692.00	\$36,835.00	\$1,814,520.00	2018
National Save the Family Farm Coalition	Lisa Griffith	Interim Executive Director	\$51,745.00		\$1,552.00			\$53,297.00	2018
National Turkey Federation	Joel Brandenburger	President & CEO	\$335,692.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$34,383.00	\$370,075.00	2018
National Watermelon Board	Mark Arney	CEO	\$213,829.00	\$8,400.00	\$6,000.00		\$18,258.00	\$246,487.00	2019
National Wildlife Federation	Collin O'Mara	President & CEO	\$306,992.00	\$11,415.00	\$36,378.00	\$17,800.00	\$21,973.00	\$394,558.00	2018
Natural Resources Defense Council	Rhea Suh*	President	\$506,947.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$18,900.00	\$17,884.00	\$543,731.00	2018
North American Blueberry	Mark Villata	Executive Director	\$254,000.00			\$19,500.00	\$22,014.00	\$295,514.00	2018
North American Meat Institute	Barry Carpenter*	President & CEO	\$975,007.00	\$140,000.00	\$0.00	\$22,000.00	\$23,007.00	\$1,160,014.00	2018
North American Meat Institute	Julie Anna Potts (9/18-12/18)	President & CEO	\$124,253.00	\$38,070.00		\$11,673.00	\$9,360.00	\$183,356.00	
North American Millers Assoc.	James A. McCarthy*	President & CEO	\$250,696.00	\$23,437.00	\$0.00	\$28,597.00	\$27,907.00	\$330,637.00	2019
Organic Consumers Assoc.	Ronald Cummins	International Director	\$112,900.00					\$112,900.00	2018
Organic Trade Assoc.	Laura Batcha	CEO & Executive Director	\$240,311.00					\$240,311.00	2018
Paper and Packaging Board	Mary Anne Hansen	President	\$286,340.00					\$286,340.00	2019
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals	Ingrid Newkirk	President	\$26,182.00		\$989.00			\$27,171.00	2019
Pheasants Forever Inc.	Howard K. Vincent	President & CEO	\$294,421.00	\$18,200.00	\$27,318.00	\$16,143.00	\$15,530.00	\$371,612.00	2019
Ranchers Cattlemen Action Legal Fund; United Stockgrowers of America	William Bullard Jr.	CEO	\$175,190.00					\$175,190.00	2018
Renewable Fuels Assoc.	Robert Dinneen*	President & CEO	\$400,850.00	\$100,000.00		\$54,000.00	\$40,486.00	\$595,336.00	2018

Name of Organization	President/CE O/ Executive Director or VP	Position	Base Compensation	Potential Bonus	Other Compensation	Retirement/ Deferred Payment	Tax-Free Benefits	Total Compensation	Filing Year
Rural Advancement Foundation International - USA	Edna Rodrguez	Executive Director	\$93,382.00		\$28,241.00			\$121,623.00	2018
SNAC International (Snack food trade association)	Elizabeth Avery	President & CEO	\$330,343.00	\$40,000.00	\$0.00	\$11,257.00	\$6,917.00	\$388,517.00	2019
Softwood Lumber Board	Cees de Jager	CEO	\$350,000.00	\$150,000.00	\$122,500.00			\$622,500.00	2019
U.S. Beet Sugar Assoc.	Brian Baenig*	President	\$339,045.00	\$0.00	\$32,000.00	\$28,800.00	\$5,847.00	\$405,692.00	2018
U.S. Dairy Export Council	Thomas J. Vilsack	President & CEO	\$824,000.00	\$106,090.00	\$49,246.00	\$27,500.00	-\$7,415.00	\$999,421.00	2018
U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance	Randy P Krotz* (10/17-3/18)	CEO	\$246,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$9,600.00	\$14,278.00	\$269,878.00	2018
U.S. Grains Council	Tom Sleight*	President & CEO	\$383,820.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$45,330.00	\$7,424.00	\$436,574.00	2018
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council	Contracted Services (2)		\$213,891.00					\$213,891.00	2019
U.S. Meat Export Federation	Philip Seng (10/17-11/17)*	CEO	\$462,261.00			\$24,612.00	\$26,096.00	\$512,969.00	2018
U.S. Meat Export Federation	Dan Halstrom (12/17-9/18)	CEO	\$256,596.00			\$23,529.00	\$25,527.00	\$305,652.00	2018
U.S. Poultry and Egg Association	John Starkey	President	\$339,219.00			\$44,378.00		\$383,597.00	2018
U.S. Soybean Export Council	James Sutter	CEO	\$465,156.00	\$67,575.00	\$2,322.00	\$17,550.00	\$32,262.00	\$584,865.00	2018
U.S. Wheat Associates	Vince Peterson	President	\$252,571.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$25,257.00	\$30,483.00	\$308,311.00	2018
Union of Concerned Scientists	Kenneth Kimmell	President	\$312,030.00	\$0.00	\$1,428.00	\$22,000.00	\$22,851.00	\$358,309.00	2019
United Fresh Produce Assoc.	Thomas Stenzel	President & CEO	\$521,105.00	\$220,275.00	\$141,563.00	\$210,062.00	\$8,256.00	\$1,101,261.00	2019
United Sorghum Checkoff/National Sorghum Producers Assn.	Tim Lust (3)	CEO	\$220,000.00	\$20,000.00		\$11,000.00	\$7,250.00	\$258,250.00	2019
United Soybean Board	Polly Ruhland	CEO	\$500,000.00	\$50,000.00		\$38,100.00	\$6,100.00	\$594,200.00	2019
USA Rice Federation	Elizabeth C. Ward	President & CEO	\$354,698.00	\$50,000.00	\$0.00	\$40,500.00	\$18,055.00	\$463,253.00	2018
Waterkeeper Alliance	Marc Yaggi	Executive Director	\$219,623.00	\$33,440.00			\$37,363.00	\$290,426.00	2018
Waterways Council	Michael Toohey*	President & CEO	\$322,094.00	\$58,500.00	\$10,171.00	\$16,088.00	\$39,544.00	\$446,397.00	2018
Western Fairs Association Inc.	Sarah Cummings	Executive Director	\$118,980.00					\$118,980.00	2019

* Denotes no longer CEO

(1) Thomas Gallagher is compensated from both DMI and the National Dairy Promotion and Research Board

(2) USHBC contracts with the North American Blueberry Council for administrative services - USHBC portion of President's salary is reported.

(3) Tim Lust is the CEO of both the sorghum checkoff and producer group

Why the Legislature pulled broadband bills at the most critical time

As action ramped up in the final days of the legislative session, two bills expanding broadband access fell by the wayside without notice or explanation. Despite widespread support from the Newsom administration and leaders in both houses for a measure to address the issue, an urban senator and a rural assemblymember were unable to find a solution for all stakeholders.

The bills sought to address critical issues in high-speed internet access for both rural and low-income communities, from online schooling to enabling precision agriculture technologies, connecting fairgrounds during emergency operations, expanding telemedicine access and supporting small businesses when so much shopping has moved online during the pandemic.

“We have the number one ag university in the world almost, and we are generating global groundbreaking ag tech,” said Trish Kelly, managing director of the civic nonprofit Valley Vision. “But we can't deploy these technologies in our own region to help farmers compete and save environmental resources and support a rural community without the enabling technology of broadband.”

The measures, [Senate Bill 1130](#) and [Assembly Bill 570](#), would have extended a funding program run by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) for upgrading high-speed internet to rural and low-income regions. The lawmakers hoped the measure would help school children



Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon, D-Lakewood

with online learning while schools remain closed during the pandemic. Only 59% of rural homes with school-aged children in California have broadband.

“During this crisis, children are sitting outside Taco Bell so they can access the internet to do their homework,” said Sen. Lena Gonzalez of Long Beach, author of the Senate bill, in a statement. “But the Assembly chose to kill SB 1130, the only viable solution in the state Legislature to help close the digital divide and provide reliable broadband infrastructure for California students, parents, educators and first responders in our communities.”

Gonzalez blamed the leader of the Assembly, Speaker Anthony Rendon of Lakewood, for pulling the bill, calling it “a shortsighted action” that impacts Rendon’s own Los Angeles County communities.

“They deserve better—as do all of the communities throughout California, including our rural and remote areas, who need critical broadband infrastructure investments during wildfire outbreaks,” added Gonzalez.

On the last day of session, she called on Rendon to reverse his decision.

Rendon's office told *Agri-Pulse* in a statement that increasing broadband access remains a top priority for the Assembly and the speaker.

"Multiple members of my staff were hard at work on this legislation for weeks," said Rendon. "Unfortunately, a three-way deal was never reached, and amendments were never adopted."

The bill faced opposition from internet providers for proposing dramatic changes to the California Advanced Services Fund Program, which is scheduled to sunset in 2021. The California Cable & Telecommunications Association (CCTA) argued it would upend efforts to establish broadband infrastructure in remote rural regions, instead upgrading areas that already have service.

Gonzalez argued the fund was delivering grants for internet speeds that were too low. In supporting the bill, Tracy Rhine, a policy advocate for the Rural County Representatives of California, argued the state was subsidizing, "with millions of dollars, technology that will need to be replaced most likely with more public funds."

Gonzalez said the bill would continue to prioritize rural areas without any service but also expand the definition for what counts as underserved urban and suburban areas.

"There are likely no providers in the state of California that are currently providing service at that symmetrical speed level," countered CCTA policy advocate Carolyn McIntyre. "Those unserved areas, those rural communities in particular that have been identified, will likely continue to remain at the end of the line and likely not have those networks upgraded."

McIntyre added that all of the current funding for the program would probably be used for applications already submitted and the bill would not add any new funding for the effort. To this, Gonzalez said the program could collect up to an additional \$132 million in fees. She noted that AB 570 proposed to extend the fees further, but recognized paying for broadband beyond this fund would "be a discussion we're going to have for some time to come."

Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, who represents parts of the Sacramento Valley, said AB 570 complemented Gonzalez's bill by adding a funding mechanism. She believed the two lawmakers could work together to bridge their differences in approaches. Yet Aguiar-Curry pulled her measure several days before the Legislature would adjourn for the year, indicating that agreement was never found.

AB 570 faced criticism for setting a low bar by going with the federal guideline of what counts as high-speed internet. SB 1130 proposed a much higher upload speed. Gonzalez considered but never took amendments proposed in the Assembly to lower that number.

"Coming up with the speeds to me is not the entire focus of this bill," said Aguiar-Curry. "We need to remember that it really has a lot to do with the funding. If you don't have the money you can't build."

She said faster speeds did not mean anything to the members of her district who had no service.

During the negotiations over the measures, fault lines also erupted between the two houses over issues like housing and remote voting for lawmakers.

For Joy Sterling, who has been a longtime advocate for rural broadband as the CEO of Iron Horse Vineyards and a member of the State Board of Food and Agriculture, the failure to pass a measure at such a critical time was deeply disheartening but not surprising.

“I understand that these are trying times and there are those who would argue that, optically, broadband falls down to the bottom of the ladder of what's essential,” she told *Agri-Pulse*. “To me, broadband is the linchpin for so many of these real crises, and so it's extremely disappointing to me that acrimony between the houses got in the way of governance.”

The two bills fell in line with the governor’s Broadband for All initiative launched in 2019 and the efforts of his economic recovery task force. Despite her concerns that recent departures have left rural Californians with little representation in the governor’s office, Sterling pointed out that the governor has selected a point person from his office to spearhead the development of a state broadband plan at the Department of Technology.



Asm. Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, D-Winters

“That offers at least the hope of some vision and coordinated effort,” she said, adding that the budget situation has been the dominant concern. “It feels to me that, just like clean drinking water, the two houses and the governor's office should have been able to achieve a compromise funding position.”

Sterling believed the parties were close to resolving their differences before Aguiar-Curry and Rendon pulled the bills.

“I thought we were very close to finally getting broadband to where we need to be,” said Sterling. “It's to me just incomprehensible that the state of California can be lagging so far behind.”

On the national side, the Federal Communications Commission has been advancing a \$20 billion funding plan for rural broadband. Congress is also considering authorizing nearly \$9 billion to support access for low-income homes during the pandemic. Yet the FCC has been under fire for how it maps the broadband gaps across the country, leaving out large areas of California that do not meet the federal definition of rural.

For now Sterling is focusing her attention on the Legislature’s return to session in January. She hopes the governor’s executive order on broadband and a new state plan will be the impetus needed to drive new legislation, once the heated debate has cooled down.

“We cannot give up on this,” she said. “If we want our state and our agricultural community and our rural communities to thrive, we are going to need to do this.”

A bill to ban rodenticides stirs debate over scientific review process

The Legislature passed a bill last week that would ban most uses of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) following high-profile deaths linked to the pesticides of several Southern California mountain lions.

Assemblymember Richard Bloom of Santa Monica revived the measure, [Assembly Bill 1788](#), after it failed to pass in 2019. The bill began as a ban on SGARs for all state-owned property but is now a ban on all use with a number of exemptions, including for agricultural operations, food processing facilities and eradicating invasive species like nutria, as well as certain public health situations. A number of ag groups have dropped their opposition, though the Western Plant Health Association, Syngenta and pest control applicators remain opposed.



Asm. Steven Glazer, D-Orinda

The final arguments on the Senate floor focused on separating politics from the scientific review process of a regulatory agency — a debate rehashed from bills in 2019 that proposed bans on the herbicide glyphosate and the insecticide chlorpyrifos.

In opposing AB 1788, Sen. Steven Glazer of Orinda argued that decisions to restrict SGARs should be rooted in science, “not based on politics.”

“We have a situation — and we get these once every year to come before the Senate — where someone says this is bad and we need to circumvent the process that’s been established in law for having a thorough review based on science,” he said.

The current reevaluation process for SGARs began in 2019, following an investigation by the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) that found previous mitigation measures that limited use to certified applicators had not decreased rates of SGAR exposure to other nontarget wildlife. Sen. Henry Stern of Canoga Park pointed out that DPR has been restricting local governments, specifically the city of Malibu, from imposing their own bans on SGARs during the review process.

“We have already made efforts to take those products off the shelves, and yet the pest control applicators keep using it,” said Stern. “It’s cheap and it’s easy, and it’s easier in some ways than just cleaning up your garbage or doing the maintenance you need to make sure that there aren’t rats coming.”

Stern downplayed public health concerns tied to rodent problems, such as outbreaks of typhus in Los Angeles homeless populations, calling them excuses for addressing the problem and arguing that mountain lion groups were going extinct in the meantime. When used as rat poison, SGARs, which carry more potency than other classes of rodenticides, can be fatal to large predators. In 2019 Bloom and other lawmakers pointed to the death of P47, a mountain lion beloved by residents in the surrounding counties.

“Just last week we heard about the death of P76, the sixth collared mountain lion to die from anticoagulant rodenticides and the third to die in the last two years,” said Sen. Ben Allen of

Santa Monica. “Researchers at UCLA and the National Park Service have documented the presence of this rodenticide in 26 of 27 local mountain lions that have been tested in our area.”

Republican Brian Dahle of Lassen County acknowledged the need to protect wildlife, but worried further restricting the use of SGARs would not be effective.

“We have a lot of people who use these anticoagulants and they're using them the wrong way,” said Dahle, citing cases of water quality issues from illegal pot growers applying large amounts of SGARs. “We need to go after the people who are breaking the law.”

Allen countered that AB 1788 would simply limit the use of SGARs until DPR finishes its reevaluation and would not supersede the agency’s authority, adding that DPR had no timeline for completing the process.

Lawmakers and regulators have been pushing through SGAR restrictions on other fronts well. In February, Asm. Blanca Rubio of Baldwin Park introduced a bill requiring additional training for pest control operators who use SGARs. Republican Sen. Patricia Bates of Laguna Niguel had a bill that would have prohibited sales to anyone without a state applicator license. It focused on one specific anticoagulant at the center of the mountain lion deaths. Neither bill saw a committee hearing due to the shortened legislative calendar.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife then approved a contentious petition in April to list two subgroups of mountain lions as protected under the California Endangered Species Act.

AB 1788 is currently on the governor’s desk, where cabinet members like CalEPA Secretary Jared Blumenfeld will be guiding the decision making. In an interview with *Agri-Pulse* in February, DPR Director Val Dolcini, who was appointed by the secretary, recognized the importance of SGARs in controlling rats and public health issues.

“But there are many other things that you can do before that to deal with rat problems: exclusion, sanitation, snap traps,” said Dolcini. “The work that we're doing to identify ways of making sure that the second gens don't impact nontarget wildlife ... is high on our list as well. We want to make sure that these are used sparingly but used safely.”

Election outcome could shift focus of US farm support

President Donald Trump has proven that he’s willing to open USDA’s deep pockets to help farmers overcome the twin challenges of a trade war and pandemic. But if economists are correct, many farmers still face years of financial challenges ahead.

How the government responds will likely depend on who’s elected in November. Former Vice President Joe Biden is promising to "dramatically expand" the Conservation Stewardship Program with the twin goals of supporting farm income and addressing climate change by paying farmers for practices that cut greenhouse gas emissions. Biden's plan also promises to target additional aid, including loans, to new and beginning farms and to local and regional agriculture.

Former Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, who is advising Biden on ag policy, tells *Agri-Pulse* that he thinks conservation payments could be ramped up quickly, even without relying on a broader climate bill. He also suggests that a Biden administration could carry on with use of USDA’s Commodity Credit Corp. to provide aid to farmers.

Biden is offering "a strong, progressive, doable" farm policy with the "capacity to expand significantly the income capacity of our farms," Vilsack told Biden supporters on a recent online event.

As for what Trump would do in a second term, his campaign told the American Farm Bureau Federation in a survey released Wednesday that a new farm bill, due in 2023, "must do a better job of sustaining them through these tough times" while avoiding any "new regulatory or climate requirements on already struggling farmers." The Trump campaign didn't offer specific policy but said "future farm bills must focus on building on the key pillars of our domestic farm policy including a strong crop insurance system, voluntary conservation programs, and increased agricultural research."

Meanwhile, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue has repeatedly made clear that Trump is determined to protect farmers from the impact of policies they can't control.

Farmers "would much rather have ... checks coming through the scales at the elevator than coming through the mailbox," Perdue said, when asked if the ad hoc payments provided over the past three years could be continued.



Ag Secretary Sonny Perdue

"But I can tell you one thing, President Trump is committed to not let China through retaliation interfere with that. He's not going to allow COVID interfere with that's where these funds are coming from. I'm hopeful, he's hopeful, that we don't have to support farmers like that. And they're hopeful as well that we don't have to."

Citing large recent Chinese purchases of U.S. corn, soybeans and other commodities, Perdue also expressed optimism that China will meet its commitments under the "phase one" agreement with Trump to buy \$80 billion in U.S. farm exports over 2020 and 2021. "Exports are going really well in the phase one" deal, Perdue said.

China remains well short of its target, however. USDA currently is forecasting that U.S. ag exports to China at \$14 billion for fiscal 2020, which ends Sept. 30, and just \$18.5 billion in FY21.

USDA's latest farm income forecast estimated government payments would soar to \$37 billion this year, a 66% increase over 2019 and more than triple the average level of federal support from 2010 through 2017. Looked at another way, government payments will account for 40% of net farm income this year, the highest level since 2000, according to economist Nathan Kaufmann of the Kansas City Federal Reserve.

Economic forecasts don't promise much improvement in 2021. The University of Missouri's Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute projects farm cash receipts will rise modestly from \$357 million in 2020 to \$367 million in 2021, but that's still below the \$371 million farmers received in 2019, and much of that forecast improvement for 2021 is in just three sectors — oilseeds, cattle and poultry.

University of Illinois economists project growers will lose \$73 an acre on corn and \$18 an acre on soybeans in 2021 without the continuation of some form of ad hoc payments, such as the Market Facilitation Program payments provided in 2018 and 2019, or the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program payments Trump authorized this spring.

According to the University of Illinois projections, corn growers this year will qualify for \$50 an acre in CFAP payments to go with \$45 an acre in payments from the two major farm bill programs (Price Loss Coverage or Agriculture Risk Coverage) on this year's crop, ensuring that those farmers can almost break even.

For 2021, farm program payments are estimated to total only \$32 an acre, and there is no assurance of CFAP or MFP continuing into next year.



Former Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack

Joe Glauber, a former chief economist for USDA, says the biggest difference between Biden's and Trump's farm policy appears to be Biden's linkage to climate change and his pledge to make U.S. agriculture net-zero in greenhouse gas emissions.

His plan relies heavily on the expansion of the Conservation Stewardship Program, both through federal funding and through contributions from corporations, individuals and foundations interested in offsetting their emissions. "This will not only help combat climate change, which Vice President Biden has called an existential threat, but also create additional revenue sources for farmers at a time when many are struggling to make ends meet," the Biden plan says.

The plan doesn't specify a proposed level of funding, although it would sharply reverse the recent trajectory of CSP. The 2018 farm bill cut CSP by about \$12.4 billion over 10 years by shifting the program from an annual acreage cap to a funding limit, which was set at \$700 million in 2019, rising to \$1 billion in 2023.

Glauber says Biden would presumably need a new revenue source, such as a carbon tax, to fund his climate policies, including the expansion of CSP. Biden hasn't endorsed a carbon tax. Glauber also noted that "uptake on (conservation) programs has been slow in the past."

Vilsack tells *Agri-Pulse* that Biden has other options to fund his plan and get money in farmers' hands more quickly, possibly through a new stimulus bill.

"The Trump administration certainly showed the power of CCC if there are no arbitrary limits placed on it, as is currently the case," Vilsack said. "There is also a possibility of another coronavirus package that could either be passed in a new administration or could be implemented in whole or in part by a new administration."

The "arbitrary" CCC limit Vilsack is clearly referring to is the restriction that successive Congresses placed on his use of the account after he used it to make disaster assistance payments in 2010. Republicans, who saw the payments as politically motivated, agreed to lift the restriction after the Trump administration was preparing to mount the trade war with China.

Vilsack also emphasized the CSP funding would supplement, not replace, traditional commodity programs.

Other aspects of Biden’s plan focus on beginning farms and local and regional agriculture systems. His proposals include doubling the \$100,000 maximum loan amount under USDA’s microloan program for new and beginning farmers.

To help small-scale and medium-size producers, the plan also proposes helping them supply the Defense Department as well as other state and federal institutions and schools and hospitals.

“This will allow these farmers to negotiate their own prices. And it will help farmers identify markets for specialty crops and secondary products, like ice cream produced by dairy farmers to bring in additional revenue,” the Biden plan says.

AFBF survey highlights Biden, Trump policy differences

President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden responded to a survey by American Farm Bureau Federation with sharply different policy priorities on issues vital to farmers, from farm programs to labor rules.

The Trump campaign stopped short of detailing new proposals for a second term, but promised to protect producers from new regulations and said that a new farm bill “must do a better job of sustaining” farmers “through these tough times.” The 2018 farm bill expires in 2023.

The Biden campaign reiterated his plan to “dramatically expand” the Conservation Stewardship Program and to provide new aid to beginning farmers and local and regional agriculture while fostering ag research, and to direct new assistance to farmers aimed at helping them reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

On regulatory policy, the Biden campaign said his administration would provide an “open, transparent” process when considering new rules and “listen to those that might be impacted by a regulation before it is crafted.”



On trade, the Trump campaign said that his current policy would lead to new trade deals, including a new agreement with the United Kingdom, which could in turn pave the way for progress” with the European Union.

The Biden campaign made no promises on new trade deals, saying instead that his administration would “develop a comprehensive strategy to aggressively enforce our laws in an effective way whenever it is needed. Critically, we will also look at what new approaches and tools are needed

to combat unfair trade practices jeopardizing production and jobs here and to gain access for our products in other markets.”

Here are highlights of other survey responses:

Biofuels — The Biden campaign said it would make development of next-generation biofuels, which would be made from crop residue and other sources of cellulose, a "top priority." "The Biden-Harris Plan will invest in research to develop cellulosic biofuels in a manner that protects our soil and water and addresses the challenge of climate change, while turning grass, crop residues, and other biomass into fuel." The Biden campaign repeated its criticism of EPA's issuance of waivers from the Renewable Fuel Standard.

The Trump campaign reiterated his promise to ensure that at least 15 billion gallons of conventional ethanol is used domestically each year. The president also will seek to increase ethanol exports and expand the infrastructure for distributing higher blends of ethanol domestically.

Farm labor — The Biden campaign reiterated his support for legislation that would provide a path to citizenship for farmworkers who are in the country illegally. Biden also is promising to support overtime for farmworkers and to provide protections from pesticide and heat exposure.

The Trump campaign said he wants to pass immigration reform that would ensure farmers “have access to the labor they need. The Trump/Pence administration is eager to work with Congress to finally deal with all these issues, and we think there will be opportunity to do just that in a second term.”

Tax policy — Biden promised to use revenue from a corporate tax increase “to make investments in households and businesses around the country, including those that will help farmers and ranchers boost their productivity and better compete in world agricultural markets.”

The Trump campaign also suggested that Biden would seek to expand the estate tax, which currently applies only to assets exceeding \$11.58 million.

Biotechnology — The Biden campaign didn’t outline reform plans but **said he would “appoint officials who value and invoke scientific evidence to guide decision-making and the regulatory process.”**

The Trump campaign said he would “never regulate farmers based upon some hot trend on social media and he will continue to insist that our trading partners adopt these same rules in order to do business with the U.S.”

Neither campaign said whether it would change the way animal biotechnology is regulated, a major issue for the livestock sector, which would like to see regulatory oversight moved from the Food and Drug Administration to the Agriculture Department.

The Trump administration this year finalized changes to USDA's regulatory process for crops, and the Environmental Protection Agency proposed changes in the way it oversees plants that are engineered to protect themselves against pests.

Groups say climate should be key focus of ag innovation agenda

Government research into a wide range of areas, and standardization of data, will be needed if USDA is to implement its 30-year plan to increase U.S. agricultural production by 40% while cutting ag's environmental footprint in half.

That's according to comments on USDA's Agriculture Innovation Agenda from a broad cross-section of agricultural and environmental groups, companies, researchers and others, many of which emphasized the importance of tackling climate change and the need for better tools to measure carbon sequestration.

“Missing from the [AIA] is a clear goal related to the most pressing issue facing agriculture, namely the climate crisis,” said the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, which urged USDA to aim higher than simply a reduction in the environmental footprint by 2050. **The plan should include an “explicit goal” of reaching net-zero GHGs from ag “in the shortest time feasible,” the group said.**

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates agriculture contributed about 10% of GHGs in the U.S. in 2018. The AIA sets out goals of reducing nutrient loss by 30% nationally by 2050, and food loss and waste in half by 2030 (using 2010 as the bench mark).

“This agenda is a strategic, department-wide effort to better align USDA’s resources, programs, and research to provide farmers with the tools they need to be successful,” Ag Secretary Sony Perdue said in February in announcing the agenda. “We are also continually mindful of the need for America’s agriculture industry to be environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable to maintain our position as a leader in the global effort to meet demand.”

NSAC also said that a 40% increase in ag output “might perpetuate overproduction, low farm prices, unsustainable and unhealthful diets, an overreliance on export markets, and extreme food waste.”

“Can we optimize production and farming system diversity to achieve a more desirable outcome of sustainable diets, low food waste, and balanced supply and demand?” asked NSAC. In a listening session NSAC held to gather input on the AIA, one farmer said, “We are raising good food to nourish people, not commodities. The ‘commodities’ focus has driven half of my neighbors out of business and harmed our communities.”

The National Farmers Union also raised concern about the production target, saying U.S. ag policy in some cases encourages overproduction of certain products. “Many farmers have stocks of corn, soybeans, dairy, and other goods that they cannot sell, which has pushed prices below the cost of production,” NFU said.



Debbie Reed, Ecosystem Services Market Consortium

But the Ecosystem Services Market Consortium, which is developing a market for carbon and water credits, said **USDA twin goals are “broadly supported in the agriculture and food**

sector.” In order to achieve that, however, USDA needs to standardize the way it collects data, ESMC said.

Just within USDA, “there are multiple GHG quantification and water quality models preferred for different uses and by different agencies,” ESMC said. “Rather than making USDA data available for only certain USDA and other tools or models, USDA should make data available for all users and all quantification models, and should standardize the way the data is collected and publicly shared to ensure that publicly-funded actions benefit the broadest potential audience of users working to benefit the agricultural sector constituency.”

USDA acknowledged the importance of data-gathering when announcing the agenda, saying that while it closely tracks data on yield, “on the environmental side, there’s some catching up to do.”

Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture said that data on conservation practices is “collected only intermittently and not on a regular schedule, or often leave gaps in the cropping systems that are included,” the group said. “This has led to a patchwork of practice information for many crops that hinders research and understanding of actual adoption of practices on farm.”

Supporters of Agricultural Research agreed, saying that existing data collection efforts are “mostly dispersed and largely non-standardized, which hampers the development of integrated models for use in research and farm management.”

Agricultural scientific societies including agronomists, plant biologists, breeders and others urged USDA to put money into education. “USDA should invest heavily in K-12 programs, and the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative should double its budget for direct funding for graduate student research and programs from 1.5% to 3-5%, being sure to include underrepresented groups,” the groups said.

Addressing an area that received some recent attention with a report from the Environmental Defense Fund, agribusiness giant Cargill said growers need to be incentivized to adopt climate-friendly practices, urging the Federal Crop Insurance Program to provide incentives to growers “when they undertake risk-reducing conservation practices that sequester carbon and increase soil health.

“Reviewing farm lending and credit programs and looking at ways to extend financing to farmers who want to invest in technology and tools to enable their transition to more sustainable production systems” also are needed, Cargill said.

Some groups said farmers would be more willing to cooperate on addressing climate change through the use of voluntary approaches. “The entire agriculture industry, including beef producers, support the development of a free-market system that will compensate producers for the environmental benefit they create,” the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association said.

As to how agriculture can reduce its environmental footprint, many commenters mentioned both plant breeding and cover crops. The American Seed Trade Association said that with land for crop production becoming “progressively more limited,” there will be more pressure to increase yields, and “genetic gain for yield and yield stability will thus become more important with a growing global population.”

With food production increasingly occurring “on a more regionalized basis,” ASTA said “food crops will need to be adaptive to a varying range of land and soil.”

Cover crops, which have been growing in popularity throughout the country, received a lot of attention in the comments. Field to Market said that USDA could help strengthen their viability “by facilitating secondary markets as a new source of revenue for farmers.”

The American Soybean Association said “with the enormous diversity of cover crops available ... secondary markets could provide sources of revenue for growers and provide new sources of food and feed, fiber, or feedstocks for biofuels or other end uses.”

Biotechnology also was cited as a tool to meet USDA's goals. The Center for Science in the Public Interest, Environmental Defense Fund, National Wildlife Federation, and Consumer Federation of America said "USDA should establish government policies that promote the use of gene editing to develop products that provide broad societal benefits in a wide range of crops and traits."

News Briefs:

COVID-19 impacts ag and food tech investing. Venture capitalists are still investing in a broad range of new and improving technology to help farmers produce their crops and consumers get the food they want and need. The COVID-19 pandemic hasn't stopped investment, but it is impacting where many investors are putting their money, said Seana Day, partner in Better Food Ventures. Biotech innovators and companies looking to improve the way food is delivered and presented to consumers are just some of the sectors that investors are pouring more money into amid the COVID-19 pandemic, said Day, one of four speakers in a Farm Foundation webinar Tuesday. Cristina Rohr, principal of investments with S2G Ventures, predicted the market for online grocery delivery will quadruple by 2023. Alternative protein is another sector getting a boost after coronavirus infections shut down meatpacking plants earlier this year, exposing “challenges with the long production cycle and centralized processing facilities.” But capital venture operations like Data Collective are also very focused on new technology such as robotics and data collection to help farmers. “The days on just investing to improve yields for farmers ... has passed,” Managing Partner Kiersten Stead said during the webinar.

Foster Farms reopens California poultry plant. Foster Farms has reopened a poultry processing plant in Livingston, Calif., after shutting it for a week to conduct thousands of COVID-19 tests on employees and conduct “deep cleaning” of the facilities. The company said it decided to shut down the Livingston poultry plant — the largest operation in a complex there — after 392 positive cases were detected and eight people died of the virus. “Nowhere else in California has a testing program of this magnitude been so quickly and successfully conducted,” the company said in a statement released Tuesday. “Over the coming weeks, Foster Farms will be conducting regular testing throughout the Livingston complex, aimed at monitoring and resolving COVID-19 prevalence to reduce the risk to our employees.” Foster Farms said it conducted 4,800 additional COVID-19 tests during the shutdown and detected the virus in just 1% of the employees. “The few employees that did test positive have been advised to self-isolate and will receive all appropriate medical leave benefits; they have our hope for a quick recovery,” the company said.

Food processors, farms fined for COVID violations. California’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration has proposed to fine two meat companies about \$60,000 for failing to adequately protect workers from COVID-19. “D.L. Poultry Inc. in Monterey Park and Olson Meat Company in Orland put their workers at risk for serious illness because they did not ensure their workers were physically distanced at least six feet apart in the processing area, nor did they install Plexiglas or other barriers between the workers,” the agency said in announcing a proposed \$51,190 fine for D.L. Poultry and a \$9,000 fine for Olson. Cal/OSHA also proposed to fine Uni-Kool Partners in Salinas \$5,850 for not implementing procedures “to screen employees and visitors arriving at the facility,” and failing “to take appropriate measures for employees who exhibited COVID-19 symptoms at the facility.” The company is in food processing, the agency said. Also cited were six farms and farm labor companies, which are due to receive penalties ranging from \$4,050 and \$11,250. Five also were cited for illness prevention violations. Cal/OSHA has targeted food processing, meatpacking, health care, agriculture and retail as priorities in “strategic enforcement efforts to make sure employers have adequate COVID-19 infection prevention procedures in place,” Cal/OSHA Chief Doug Parker said.

Farm Hands West: Aslam joins Calavo Growers board

Calavo Growers, a global avocado-industry company, has appointed **Farha Aslam** to its board of directors, effective Jan. 3. She will also serve on the Calavo’s audit committee. Aslam is a founder and managing partner at Crescent House Capital, an investment and strategic advisory firm that focuses on the agriculture, energy and food processing industries. Before that, she was a managing director at Stephens Inc.

Ron Hovsepian has been tapped as the new CEO of Indigo Ag, effective immediately. He succeeds **David Perry**, who has stepped down after serving in the CEO position for the last five years. Hovsepian has spent the last eight months as acting chief operating officer. His career includes working 16 years for IBM, serving as the CEO for Novell and Intralinks. He also is an executive partner at Flagship Pioneering.



Ryan Quarles

Rep. **Troy Balderson**, R-Ohio, has been assigned to serve on the House Subcommittee of Commodity Exchanges, Energy, and Credit and the Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry.

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture has elected Kentucky Agriculture Commissioner **Ryan Quarles** as its new president. He succeeds North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner **Doug Goehring**.

Eric Kalasz has joined FMC as U.S. marketing director. He most recently worked in BASF's crop division as a brand manager. Kalasz has also held marketing, account management and sales positions with Dow AgroSciences and Bayer.

Alfredo Rivera is now the president of Coca-Cola North America, succeeding James Dinkins, who has served in that position since 2018. Rivera has been with the company since 1997, and since 2016 has led the company’s Latin America group.

The Industry Task Force II on 2,4-D Research Data has brought on **Lindsay Thompson** as new executive director. Thompson brings extensive experience in government and public relations, and association management in agricultural and science-based organizations.

The U.S. Hemp Growers Association has announced the organization's founding board of directors. **Michael Bowman** of Colorado will serve as chair of the board, with **Doug Edge** from Indiana as vice chair. Other members selected include: **Bethleen McCall**, Colorado; **Dion Oakes**, Colorado; **Harold Singletary**, South Carolina; **Inga Willis**, Alabama; **Jamie Campbell Petty**, Indiana; **John Strohfus**, Minnesota; **Josh Hendrix**, Kentucky; **Tim Gordon**, Colorado; **Egon Badart**, California; **Ron Conyey**, Kentucky; **Chris Adams**, North Dakota; and **Don Palmer**, South Carolina.

Cindy Hackman has left the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance where she served as the senior director of communications. She has joined CLUTCH as the director of content and reputation.

Monica Spaller is leaving CHS Inc., where she worked on the government affairs team. Spaller has not yet announced her next move.

Best regards,

Sara Wyant
Editor

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