

## Ag economist: California will look much better in 30 years than in five

In a hearing for the California State Board of Food and Agriculture on Tuesday, Daniel Sumner, a University of California, Davis, professor and agricultural economist, painted an optimistic vision for California agriculture in 2050.

Sumner was presenting recent findings that he plans to later publish, a project that began as an informal ask from CDFA Secretary Karen Ross.

**“There will be lots of ups and downs, and some of them will be fundamental changes,” Sumner predicted. “But we’ve seen lots of fundamental changes over the last 30 years.”**

Overall, farm revenue and net incomes will continue to grow. By 2050, Sumner expects California will have incentives to address some of the problems currently facing the state's agricultural systems.

**Solving farm labor and water problems, however, will probably not happen in the next five years, he added.** As evidence, water scarcity during the drought has already been unleashing incentives. The state is moving toward laws that will enable farmers to own and trade the groundwater beneath them. Owning it is an incentivize to innovate.



UC Davis Professor and Ag Economist Daniel Sumner

**Future gains will be found by “treating California as the unique place it is.” It will not excel with crops grown in other states, such as cannabis and hemp. He offered chickpeas as a commodity that could see rapid growth in the Mediterranean climate of California.**

Climate change will impact production, he said, but “people are still going to eat.” Sumner believed state regulations will still be flexible enough to allow farmers to adapt to new climates. Ranching will actually benefit from a warming world, as less snowpack opens up mountain rangelands for more of the year.

Sumner called it a good sign that companies are investing in water. Some local aquifers may see a monopolizing of land with access to water. But in “the broad brush for the future of California agriculture,” he was not worried.

**He did have concerns over the lagging public investment in research and development. While this is a trend in rich countries, developing economies like China are maintaining their investments as they grow. Those investments will lead to more mechanized solutions to labor costs.**

Growers unable to adapt to California’s labor pressures will leave, he said, with another grower filling the space. Another response to labor has been the shift away from some field crops — though not rice. For some niche markets where the consumer is willing to pay more, high-priced labor will not be a problem.

For upscale winegrape operations, the labor costs have little impact, though rising land values are hurting revenues. Warming climates are also affecting the grape varieties available and the type of wine produced, which can cripple an established brand.



**“If you have spent 15 years convincing the world that you are the place to grow cabernet sauvignon,” he said, “how do you still convince them when it’s now something else?”**

Consolidation is another trend that will continue. **He said Wisconsin’s dairy market is strong because consolidated management systems allow a farmer to outcompete others by spending less time milking cows and more**

**time “thinking for a living.”** As other dairy farmers adopt “California-style innovations” in efficiency, those farmers also have the cheap feed, lower wages and other advantages not available in California.

On a similar note, he said the larger growers here are better suited to handle the rising demands from buyers. A farmer with a few dozen acres won’t have the time to deal with a number of certifiers coming by every month, he said.

With trade, the Asian market is peaking while most of the growth is in Africa, which may not benefit California growers until after 2050. Pointing to a rise in middle-income consumers across the planet, Sumner surmised that farmers will see resource constraints, particularly with land and water availability, before consumer demand would drop. The greatest source of rising incomes is India – which is why Indian walnut tariffs are such bad news.

**“You don’t want them to get used to doing that kind of stuff,” Sumner explained. “You’ve got to have the market access.”**

Australia, a competitor in tree nuts, has already maxed out its available resources. Chile certainly will rise to compete with California and South Africa will “if it can get its act together,” said Sumner. Countries in the middle east are also a possibility.

Having launched a barrage of economic forecasts at the board, Sumner finished with one suggestion: Encourage the investment into research and development that firms and farms cannot do alone.

## **A conversation with the CDFA undersecretary Moffitt**

Undersecretary Jenny Lester Moffitt has shepherded the evolution of climate-smart programs within the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

Joining CDFA in 2015, Moffitt applied the whole-system approach she had crafted as a fifth-generation farmer in Winters, an operation that has also evolved over decades. Her family’s previous farmland in the Santa Clara Valley is now at the heart of Silicon Valley and is home to a Hewlett-Packard complex.

Rising to undersecretary in 2018, Moffitt is now the liaison to members of Congress as they negotiate the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement as well as to international delegations sharing climate-smart practices and policy approaches.



Undersecretary Jenny Lester Moffitt

Moffitt spoke with *Agri-Pulse* recently on this as well as the governor’s upcoming Water Resilience Portfolio and on preparing farmers for an onslaught of new regulations.

### **1. How has your farming background influenced your role at CDFA?**

As farmers, we very much take a systems approach. It's not just water quality or air quality or harvest in silos. They're very much integrated and integral throughout. I have been able to bring to the policy arena in Sacramento my systems approach thinking, whether it's incentive programs or regulations that are being discussed. If we are thinking about what it means for water quality, what does it also mean for food safety, for instance?

### **2. Can you describe the transition in moving from deputy secretary to undersecretary?**

As deputy secretary, I was really focused on climate-smart agriculture, water and other resource issues. I still have that portfolio. But as undersecretary, that has definitely expanded to our animal division, with Newcastle or other animal-related issues or policies and programs. It's really broadened the portfolio.

A lot of my job is serving as a liaison between the governor's office, the administration as a whole and industry oftentimes.

### 3. Having worked under two administrations, what differences have you noticed?

Both governors are extremely well-versed on the issues in California and want to know the details. It's something I really relish.

They're different in some ways. Gov. Newsom is new and he's got new policies he campaigned on and is working vigorously to implement. It's been busy yet really fun and rewarding. We're trying to change the needle fast and do it in a way that is meaningful for all Californians, not just one subset.

### 4. When you started, the Healthy Soils Program was just getting off the ground. Can you describe the evolution of CDFA's suite of climate-smart programs?

Actually, that was one of the reasons why I came to the department. I knew firsthand from the work we did on our farm that it was all about how we were managing our soils that led to our crop yields and how we're managing our water.



It was already formed well before I got here. It's really grown. It takes the systems approach that I come from and the secretary as well from her farming background. We need an all-of-the-above suite of solutions for agriculture, for climate change.

A big part of what we've been working on is dairy and livestock methane reduction through digesters and through manure management. That really got supercharged in 2016, when [SB 1383](#) was passed. That landmark legislation really put the pressure on the dairy and livestock industry to find solutions. What I am so proud of is the fact that the industry stepped up. They have been bringing so many projects to the table that we are oversubscribed by at least double, if not triple sometimes in our grant funding.

Moffitt speaking to a German delegation in September.

There is just so much innovation – through technology, through partnerships, through different markets to tap into, whether that's low-carbon fuel or pelletized manure. They're really starting to think out of the box in a big way, in a holistic way. I'm very proud of just how much we've been able to move that needle in a very meaningful way on methane in this amount of time.

We're also now really starting to look at pest management. This spring when the governor made it very clear that he wanted to end the use of chlorpyrifos here in the state, we partnered with the Department of Pesticide Regulation. We wanted the most meaningful way to implement this, with funding for research, technical assistance and a work group to talk about the solutions for the future.

## **5. Aside from mitigation, is CDFA helping farmers adapt to climate change and, on that note, to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)?**

Both pest management and Healthy Soils are going to be huge adaptation tools. Building soil organic matter helps hold water in the soil longer. A report that came out last year said a 1% increase in soil organic matter in agricultural soils would lead to 1.5 million acre-feet of water holding capacity just within the soil profile. That's a lot of water growers can hold within their soils. It helps with flood management and drought management, which are key adaptation tools.

With SGMA, CV-SALTS and a lot of the water regulations that we have coming down the pike fast and furious, we are looking at tools and resources we have at the department and at the state. A lot of what we do in the department is really just partner with sister agencies on their implementation of their rules and regs as well.

We're working right now on the Water Resilience Portfolio, which is modeling what water will look like in the future. Then we are looking at how we can shift our state to adapt to those water models, with opportunities like groundwater recharge. It's a great opportunity to take that water that we get and put it into reserves for the future.

Water is going to be a huge thing. It always has been in California and it definitely will into the future.

## **6. How is this different from past water policy?**

I was part of the Water Action Plan update that we did in 2016. That was an integrated approach. It was the Department of Food and Ag, the Resources Agency and all their boards and departments, and the same with CalEPA – the resources trio.

This one really starts to integrate some of the new models we have. There's a lot more that we have funded through our 4<sup>th</sup> Climate Assessment water modeling.

It has to happen at a regional scale. Whether you're down in the South Coast region or the North Coast, it is absolutely a different climate and a different way they're going to be adapting. As a state, we're looking at the policies and programs to support regional approaches.

## **7. Can you explain how you engage with policymakers on the federal level and with international partnerships?**

First and foremost is the Farm Bill. We hosted some listening sessions throughout the state as the 2018 Farm Bill was being considered and developed. Through those listening sessions, we gathered a series of recommendations that the state gave to our members of Congress here in California, who were part of the discussions.

We do partner with a lot of our organizations here in California and others on trade and supporting agriculture in markets. (This week) we'll be joining a trade mission down to Mexico that is hosted by USDA.

The climate-smart ag tours are really important. It's opening doors to cross-sharing information. Israel is coming to meet with us and talk about efficient irrigation systems, they've got some amazing technology on removing nitrates out of dairy manure. Our universities, the companies

here in California and farmers have a wealth of knowledge to share as well. We've done the same thing on biogas with Denmark.

## **8. What other priorities do you have for the next year?**

One big priority, especially on Healthy Soils, is landowner partnerships, industry partnerships and research and technical assistance. As someone who ran my family's farming operation, the times we reached out to our cooperative extension advisers, our ag commissioners or our local resource conservation districts for technical support was an important tool that farmers look to so much.

We have had generations of change in California and will have generations of change in the future.

## **Do we need a new Marshall Plan for agriculture?**

Events and advancements that made agriculture the envy of the world and encouraged more people to enter farming are being threatened as the industry looks to the future.

That was one of the key themes articulated by California Farm Bureau Federation President Jamie Johansson at the 45<sup>th</sup> annual California Association of Pest Control Advisers meeting in Reno, Nevada, this week.

Looking back to 1948 when the U.S. enacted the Marshall plan to help rebuild war-torn Europe after World War II, Johansson said the first things the Europeans wanted were food and fertilizer. Several events had to happen including removal of trade barriers between countries and states, review of regulatory barriers and encouragement of increased on-farm productivity.



California Farm Bureau Federation President  
Jamie Johansson

**“This changed the way the world viewed the American farmer,” Johansson recalled. “Without the Marshall plan, we would not have had the green revolution. We would not have seen the advancements in new equipment and technology, based on science.”**

“It makes me think we are in need of a Marshall Plan for agriculture,” he emphasized.

At about that same time, California became the top agricultural state in the nation in terms of revenue, with Los Angeles being the top county. And over the next few decades, agriculture changed and adapted, moving from 200 crops to now over 400, Johansson pointed out.

However, “with all of this success over the last 75 years, we failed to notice that cities were growing. Urban population exceeded rural in 2008. By 2030, 75% of the world’s population will be in cities. It is not going to be easier for us to explain what we do.”

**As a result, “we are being told by politicians and food activists what a consumer preference is. There is a big difference between a choice and a preference,” he explained.** For example,

he said consumers may prefer that all their energy comes from renewable sources, but when they find out it could cost more, they may change their mind and request a different choice.

Johansson says he's usually invited to two types of meetings – one focusing on how to get more people into agriculture and the other is about how do we get more fruits and vegetables into the classroom. **“Yet no one makes the connection that both are needed.”**

He also says he often hears people talking about the need to take care of rural California, but **“you can't take care of rural California unless you also take care of California agriculture.”**

He encouraged the CAPCA audience to “work the science” and be more involved in these types of discussions, starting at the local level and continuing with the California legislature and all the way to the Governor's mansion.

“If you don't get invited to the table, bring a folding chair. We have to have a seat.”

## **US unions and Mexico flex muscles on USMCA**

House Democrats and their demands to alter the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement are just one set of obstacles to ratification of the trade pact. Influential U.S. unions are becoming more vocal about their own concerns, and Mexico is letting the U.S. know that it's not prepared to simply accept any changes that are made to the deal that it already signed and approved.

Cathy Feingold, director of the AFL-CIO's international department, is telling lawmakers and their staff that the country's largest union is excited about the potential of improving labor conditions in Mexico, Canada and the U.S. through USMCA, but she's also warning them the labor organization is not ready to support it.

**“We want to see measurable progress in many areas before (USMCA) takes effect,”** Feingold told an audience on Capitol Hill last week. “Right now, early indications show we've not seen the progress or funding to say to Mexico that we trust this can move forward.”



*Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn. (Photo: Joy Philippi)*

Feingold, along with Benjamin Davis, Director of International Affairs for the United Steelworkers, and Communication Workers of America Director of Legislative Affairs Dan Mauer, were invited by Rep. Bill Pascrell, D-N.J., to brief lawmakers and staff on union demands for USMCA.

The labor officials were adamant that Mexico has not committed enough money in its budget to improve working conditions and wages for Mexican workers and enforce new laws that allow for the creation of private unions.

“We believe this is a tremendous opportunity right now to build a new trade model,” Feingold said.

That's why union leaders and House Democrats are stressing that it's more important to get a good deal on USMCA than ratify it quickly — something the Trump administration and much of the U.S. agriculture sector is pushing for.

**“We want to get this right,” said Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn. “Timing is not the issue. ... Working people cannot afford for us to get this wrong. Mexico’s labor reforms sound great on paper, but we need to make sure that they are enforced.”**

Even House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who has repeatedly assured reporters that a deal can be struck with the White House and that she wants the House to vote on USMCA, is now saying that might not happen until 2020.

“We’re on a path to yes, and I think every day brings us closer to agreement,” Pelosi told [Bloomberg](#). “I’d like to have it done as soon as it’s ready. I wouldn’t rule it out next year. Hopefully we can do it sooner, but I said when it’s ready we’ll do it.”

One thing seems clear: House Democrats are giving substantial weight to demands from the unions. AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka was on Capitol Hill last week, and House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal proposed that the union take a more active role in the talks between the Democrats and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, the White House’s point man in the negotiations.

**“We want labor to come along and help build a template for future agreements,” said Neal, who met with Lighthizer Wednesday. “I do think it would be a good idea if ... the AFL-CIO and trade staff here at the House and at USTR would get together during the next 10 or 12 days.”**

Rep. John Larson, D-Conn., suggested there might not be a USMCA deal unless Trumka meets directly with Lighthizer and Pelosi.

One potentially controversial proposal supported by the AFL-CIO is an enforcement mechanism that would block exports from any Mexican company that did not adhere to Mexico’s new labor standards.

It’s a proposal that is seriously being considered, Neal told reporters, but Mexico is not certain to agree to it and the foreign inspectors required to check on conditions in Mexican facilities, said Jesús Seade, Mexico’s top North American negotiator.

**“We are very willing to find mechanisms ... provided it’s all done in a manner that is consistent with our constitution and laws and our sovereignty,” Seade said.**



*House Ways and Means Chair Richard Neal, D-Mass.*

Mexico and Canada will both have veto power over the changes that House Democrats and the White House agree to for USMCA, but the new labor standards and enforcement mechanisms



would be primarily aimed at Mexico. That's why, Seade says, he has been in constant contact with Lighthizer and his staff.

Mexico wants to know exactly what the House Democrats are proposing and what the White House is considering agreeing to because of the potential impact on Mexico's government, industry sector and workers.

**“They have not come to a final resolution of the issues they are discussing,” Seade told reporters Thursday at the Mexican embassy after a two-hour meeting with Lighthizer and a brief private conversation with Pelosi. “At the same time, whatever resolution they come to, it’s in the nature of a proposal for Canada’s and Mexico’s consideration.”**

Seade hammered home to reporters that Mexico, which has already ratified USMCA, has a veto in the process.

Getting Mexico to agree to any deals struck between House Democrats and Lighthizer might be easy and take only a few days, Seade said. But it could also be difficult or even impossible. It all depends on the proposed changes to USMCA.

**“We cannot just reopen anything that may not be acceptable,” Seade said. “We don’t want to create expectations that everything is going to happen in a few days.”**

There is one proposal from House Democrats that Mexico has come around on and now fully supports, Seade said. Panels can be convened under USMCA to consider alleged violations of the pact, but Democrats still say there are too many ways in which a country can block the dispute resolution.

“I think there’s a general sentiment that we should tighten the dispute resolution system in a way that there’s no panel-blocking,” Seade said.

It’s unclear if the Trump and Trudeau administrations will agree, although Neal assured reporters last week that he believes the Canadian Prime Minister approves of Democrats’ reform efforts.

**“I believe (the Canadians) are in full accord in terms of support for the enforcement mechanisms that we are insisting on,” Neal said.**

More will likely be known this week; Neal arrived in Canada Tuesday night and is expected to meet with Trudeau on Wednesday.

## **Ag labor reforms face House test, uncertain Senate future**

House Democrats are about to attempt something that Washington hasn’t done in over three decades: Enact immigration reforms that would give farmers better access to foreign workers while offering legal status to their existing employees.

The House Judiciary Committee is expected next week to take up the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, a bipartisan bill that would expand the H-2A visa program and allow farms to import workers for year-round jobs while also providing growers some relief on wage rates. The full House could take up the bill as soon as the following week, sending it to the Republican-controlled Senate.

The White House has yet to take a position on the bill, which will be opposed by some conservatives because it allows undocumented immigrants to get legal status if they have been working on farms. The conservative Federation for American Immigration Reform said the bill does nothing to encourage farms to adopt new technology to reduce their labor needs and instead “focuses on amnestying millions of alien farmworkers and giving them a path to citizenship.”

**Another big question mark is the American Farm Bureau Federation, the nation’s largest farm group, which has yet to endorse the bill because of concerns with some of the H-2A provisions. But the bill, which was introduced with 24 Democratic and 20 Republican co-sponsors, has the potential to be historic, given that Congress hasn’t passed immigration reform since 1986, when the H-2A program was created.**

The United Farm Workers and many major farm groups support the legislation, including the National Council of Agricultural Employers, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, National Farmers Union, National Milk Producers Federation, United Fresh Produce Federation and Western Growers Association.

Sara Neagu-Reed, associate director of federal policy for the California Farm Bureau Federation, which broke from AFBF to support the legislation, said while it could be improved from agriculture’s perspective, “it struck a pretty good balance” between labor and farm interests.

The American Farm Bureau Federation, meanwhile, is seeking support for amendments to address its concerns with the bill. AFBF has three main objections: One is the cap on the number of year-round H-2A visas. The bill initially provides just 20,000 visas. Another concern is that the bill would make H-2A workers eligible for coverage under the Migrant and Seasonal Worker Protection Act, allowing those employees to sue farms in federal court for allegedly unfair treatment.

AFBF’s third objection is that the bill would continue to base H-2A wage requirements on a survey of farm labor earnings. The bill would freeze wage rates for one year and then cap the increases in following years, but AFBF believes the 2019 wage levels are excessive and the survey skews the rates.

The program’s “adverse effect wage rates,” or AEWR, set a floor for what farms must pay the workers based on prevailing regional wages for farm labor. The rates are adjusted annually based on the gross hourly rate for field and livestock workers, based on the semiannual farm labor survey compiled by USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service.

The bill borrows from a proposed rule that the Labor Department issued this summer that would set differing AEWR wage rates for various occupations. Some workers such as machine operators would see higher wages, while field workers could see decreases.

But that proposal is still a concern because workers with multiple tasks would likely be paid the rate for the task that corresponds with the highest wage rate, said Allison Crittenden, a congressional relations director with AFBF.

AFBF’s overarching concern is that the group wants to make sure that the H-2A program would provide a sufficient number of workers, given that the bill would make it mandatory for growers to start verifying the eligibility of employees using the E-Verify system, said Crittenden.

**“For us it’s a matter of making sure that any farmer engaged in any kind of agriculture will have access to labor and also all not be put out of business because of wage mandates,” she said.**

AFBF is neither opposed to the bill, nor neutral at this point, she said. “We’re actively working to improve it. We want to make sure that that door remains open to improve it.”

The bill’s leading GOP sponsor, Rep. Dan Newhouse, a farmer and AFBF member from Washington state, is optimistic about getting the organization’s support. “I think we’ve been making a lot of good progress there,” he said.

During the last Congress, AFBF supported a Republican bill that would have replaced H-2A without addressing the status of existing workers. The California Farm Bureau and the Western Growers both opposed that legislation, making it impossible for the GOP leadership to get the bill out of a House then controlled by Republicans.

Supporters of the bill say they will work to improve it as it moves through Congress. The cap on year-round visas poses a challenge for several sectors, including the livestock industry, mushroom producers and greenhouse operations.

**“Everyone on the employer side would love higher numbers,” said Craig Regelbrugge, senior vice president of public policy and government relations for AmericanHort, which represents greenhouse growers.**

“In fact, we don’t support the notion of artificial caps anyway,” he added. “When you have a labor market test and elevated standards, caps are a redundant policy mechanism that stifles employment.”

But he noted that the cap isn’t permanent and that it increases the number of green cards available each year for permanent U.S. positions and gives agriculture first preference for them. The bill also would allow H-2A workers to apply directly for green cards after completing 10 years of H-2A work.

The National Pork Producers Council, meanwhile, has welcomed the bill despite the cap on year-round visas.

“Without visa reform to support a sustainable workforce, production costs will increase, leading to higher food prices for consumers,” said NPPC Vice President Jen Sorenson, who is the communications director with Iowa Select Farms. The group looks forward “to working with Congress in enacting visa reform that addresses the serious labor shortfall facing the pork industry,” she said.

The bill’s future beyond the House isn’t at all clear.

**Sen. Thom Tillis, a North Carolina Republican who serves on the Senate Judiciary Committee, has been in communication with farm groups about the bill, which he calls a**



*Rep. Dan Newhouse, R-Wash.*

**“good first step.” But he told *Agri-Pulse* on Tuesday that he’s not certain that the Senate will take it up, in part because of the focus on impeachment. “Hopefully we can because I know the farmers need relief,” he said.**



*Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C.*

It’s also not clear that the bill can move without being attached to other immigration issues to attract sufficient support.

And unless the ag labor bill has substantial bipartisan support, it probably can’t pass the Senate on its own, but would have to be added to some other legislative vehicle, Tillis said. He noted also that there are still "concerns in the ag community" about the House bill, a reference to the fact that AFBF isn't on board yet.

Crittenden said from AFBF’s perspective, it’s good that the bill is not tied to other immigration issues. “One promising thing about this legislation is that it’s not getting bogged down in a broader immigration bill,” she said.

A spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., had no comment on the issue.

*Download a summary of the bill [here](#). Download the bill text [here](#).*

## **Metrics needed to measure farmers' potential to curb climate change**

Agriculture can play a key role in mitigating climate change, but more work is needed on methods of measuring the impact of changing farming practices.

**“If we’re going to really make a difference” in combating climate change, “we need to have a metric we can count on,”** said Fred Yoder, a former president of the National Corn Growers Association who grows corn, soybeans in Ohio. The difficulty, however, is coming up with reliable numbers for the wide variety of growing systems throughout the country.

“We have to understand each and every soil type,” said Yoder, co-chair of a group called Solutions from the Land. What works to sequester carbon in one type of soil won’t work the same way in a different one, he said.

“The quantification and verification steps with soil carbon are very critical, and a lot more research needs to go in that direction,” American Farmland Trust scientist Jennifer Moore-Kucera says.

Yoder’s and Moore-Kucera’s comments came at a recent [hearing](#) held by the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis, a special panel created by the Democratic House majority to craft policy prescriptions for other congressional committees.

The committee is accepting comments until Nov. 22 as it prepares policy recommendations by a March 31 deadline. The hearing was held to get an idea how much agriculture can contribute to mitigating climate change.

Committee members wanted to be able to put a number on potential reductions to greenhouse emissions from agriculture, which are estimated to comprise about 9% of all GHGs in the U.S., according to a recent [EPA report](#). The top emitting sectors were transportation (28.9%) and electric power generation (27.5%).



*Jennifer Moore-Kucera, American Farmland Trust*

Democratic Rep. Sean Casten of Illinois, who had been a [clean energy executive](#) before unseating a longtime Republican last year, told the witnesses, “We have to ultimately figure out how to prioritize the things we could do. ... It would be helpful to understand, in the best possible scenario, how big an opportunity is this?”

**Moore-Kucera, the Climate Initiative Director for AFT, said combining the adoption of cover crops on 25% of ag acres with 100% adoption of no-till or reduced-till practices could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 148.5 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions per year, or approximately a quarter of all ag GHG emissions annually.**

Those figures don’t include reductions from the use of best practices on grazing lands and livestock/manure management, Moore-Kucera said.

Yoder cited a prediction from Ohio State University Nobel Prize recipient Rattan Lal that “properly managed soil, vegetation and animal systems worldwide could achieve 157 parts per million of CO<sub>2</sub> drawdown per year by the next century — nearly 40% of 2018’s global atmospheric carbon levels.”

**“It is impossible to overstate how important land-based solutions ... will be to address global climate change going forward into the future,” Yoder said. “This is a massive undertaking, but the potential is just enormous.”**

Large corporations have a big role to play as well, said Danone North America’s head of agriculture, Tina Owens. Her company has launched a 5-year, \$6 million soil health initiative to work with the more than 700 dairy farms it buys milk from.

The company, which produces and sells yogurt brands such as Dannon, Oikos and Wallaby, has a goal of reducing GHGs by 30% by 2030.

Danone is working with Sustainable Environmental Consultants and its EcoPractices platform “to help us and our farmer partners understand two main issues: the economic return on investment for the farms of improving the health of their soil, and the environmental impacts of soil health practices using a variety of measurement tools,” she said.

The company is trying to give farmers a clear sense of how improved soil health contributes to their bottom line and ability to continue to operate as the effects of climate change become more severe.

It has been relying on EcoPractices "to establish application program interfaces (APIs) with various measurement tools such as Field to Market, COMET-Farm, and Cool Farm Tool." All three seek to gauge greenhouse emissions, but both Field to Market and Cool Farm Alliance go further—Field to Market's Fieldprint platform also looks at water quality and biodiversity, among other indicators, and the Cool Farm Tool assesses water quantity and biodiversity.



*Tina Owens, Danone North America*

COMET-Farm is a Natural Resources Conservation Service tool that seeks to measure the impact of adopting NRCS conservation practices on GHGs.

**Like the other witnesses, Owens said farmers need financial incentives to adopt soil-conserving practices. Such practices must be “simple, straightforward and have low transaction costs with clear paths of access for the farms,” she said.**

Yoder, too, kept coming back to the economics for farmers, which he said are favorable with cover crop adoption. He plants cover crops and uses no-till or minimum-till on all of his 1,500-acre farm in Ohio, and says the cover crops have more than paid for themselves.

An Environmental Defense Fund study released last year found that cost savings per acre combined with increased yields for corn and soybeans resulted in net benefits of \$40 to \$47 an acre in corn and \$38 to \$48 an acre in soybeans.

There are also “co-benefits,” Moore-Kucera said, citing myriad benefits of improved soil health through cover crops and other methods. Increased levels of soil organic matter improve water retention and reduce the need for fertilizer and herbicides, for example.

**She advocated for expansion of existing USDA conservation programs so “any farmer or rancher who wants to improve their soil health and reduce GHG emissions [can] get the support they need.” She also pointed to pilot programs in Iowa and Illinois this year offering discounts on crop insurance for farmers who plant cover crops.**

More technical help is needed, however. “There are some really good programs. ... We just don’t have enough boots on the ground,” Yoder said.

## **News Briefs:**

**Bayer: Glyphosate cases have more than doubled.** Legal challenges facing Bayer for health concerns allegedly caused by the use of glyphosate more than doubled in the last quarter, the company has disclosed to investors. Bayer CEO Werner Baumann said the number of lawsuits rose from 18,400 in the second quarter to 42,700 in the third quarter, a 132% increase over a three-month time period. But he also said the increase “is actually not that surprising” when considering an increase in advertising by attorneys in order to attract new plaintiffs. Their ad spending jumped from \$6 million in the second quarter to \$51 million in the third. So far, three lawsuits in California have resulted in jury awards of more than \$2 billion to plaintiffs claiming glyphosate — sold commercially as Roundup — caused their non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Those totals were later reduced by judges to about \$200 million. Baumann said Bayer is

currently “constructively engaging in the mediation process” and the company is “planning for litigation of further cases in 2020.” In the meantime, he says the company “would only consider a settlement if it is financially reasonable and will bring reasonable closure to the overall litigation.”

**Equipment companies prepare new data sharing solution.** If you own machinery from more than one of the leading "colors" or brands, how do you easily track your performance data? A solution may be coming your way in 2020 as leading farm and construction equipment manufacturers prepare to launch a common data interface. DataConnect is “the first direct, manufacturer-independent solution that enables the seamless, automatic and real-time exchange of important machine data between the various machine brand platforms,” according to the companies behind this effort: John Deere, CLAAS, CNH Industrial and 356FarmNet. Operators will be able to view basic machine data elements including current and historical machine location, current fuel tank level, working status and forward speed from these connected machines via the portal of their choice. These include the John Deere Operations Center, AFS Connect, MyPLM Connect, CLAAS TELEMATICS or 365FarmNet portals. The four companies are members and supporters of the Agricultural Industry Electronics Foundation, and they said they will share their experiences with the foundation in an effort to support a standardized data interface architecture, similar to ISOBUS, across the entire ag equipment industry. The companies are also inviting other equipment manufacturers, software providers, associations and standardizations committees to help develop and participate in the interface.

## Farm Hands West

The Almond Board of California (ABC) hired **Tom Devol** to serve as its new senior manager of field outreach and education. Devol has over 20 years of experience in irrigation technology. Before joining ABC, Devol worked as director of grower services in field monitoring and control for Jain Irrigation, Inc. **Ashley Correia** also joined ABC this past year working as the field outreach and education specialist. Devol will lead the team from Chico, and Correia will focus her efforts in the southern part of the valley from her home near the Tulare area.

**Monica Arnett** has been promoted to vice president of finance and administration for the California Avocado Commission. Arnett joined the commission in 2012 as finance and accounting manager then was promoted to director of finance and administration in 2016. Before she joined the avocado commission, Arnett was in public accounting as an audit associate for KPMG.



Monica Arnett

Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture, an international agricultural development organization, has brought on **Eleni Gabre-Madhin** to serve on the CNFA board of directors. Gabre-Madhin is the founder and chief executive of blueMoon, Ethiopia’s first youth agribusiness/agritech incubator and seed investor. She also founded and served as CEO of the Ethiopia Commodity Exchange from 2008 to 2012.

**Carissa Mace**, president of the Anaheim-based Fresh Produce & Floral Council for the past 12 years, has been terminated by

the council's board of directors. No reason was given for her termination, which was effective Oct. 25.

President **Donald Trump** announced his intent to nominate **Stephen Hahn** of Texas, to serve as Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration. Hahn currently serves as the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center's chief medical executive. In addition, the president announced his intent to nominate **Stephen Biegun** to serve as deputy secretary of state. Biegun currently serves as the Special Representative for North Korea at the Department of State. Before returning to government service in 2018, Biegun served as vice president of international governmental relations for Ford Motor Company.

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) has named **Gina McCarthy** as its new president and CEO. McCarthy previously served as the EPA administrator during the Obama Administration from 2013-2017. McCarthy starts at NRDC Jan. 6.

The National FFA Organization elected new officers to serve on the 2019-2020 national officer team. **Kolesen McCoy** of Ohio has been elected to serve as the national president. Serving as the national secretary is **Kourtney Lehman** from Oregon. Serving as the western region vice president is **Lyle Logemann** from New Mexico. Serving as the eastern region vice president is **Tess Seibel** of Virginia. **Mamie Hertel** of Montana is serving as the central region vice president. And the new southern region vice president is **Yomar Roman** of Puerto Rico.

**Christopher Kempczinski** has been named president and CEO of McDonald's Corp. He replaces **Stephen Easterbrook**. Kempczinski joined McDonald's in 2015; he most recently served as president of McDonald's USA. Before joining McDonald's, Kempczinski worked for Kraft Foods, serving as executive vice president of growth initiatives and president of Kraft International. **Joseph Erlinger** will replace Kempczinski as president of McDonald's USA. business. Before this, Erlinger served as president of the company's international business.

The Kroger Co. announced the retirement of **Jerry Clontz**, president of the mid-Atlantic division, after more than 48 years of service. **Paula Ginnett** assumed the role effective Nov. 1. Clontz joined Harris Teeter in 1971 as a bagger in North Carolina and since then has held various retail positions, including store manager, store director and field specialist. In 1997, he was named a regional vice president. He was then named senior vice president of operations in 2007. In 2017, Clontz was named to his current role. Ginnett joined Kroger after more than 25 years with Walmart Inc. For the past five years, she served as vice president, regional general manager for Walmart U.S., based in Phoenix.

**Rebekah Rodriguez** is now a legislative assistant covering the animal welfare, public lands, and natural resources portfolio for Rep. **John Curtis**, R-Utah. She previously served as a legislative aide to Curtis.

**Matt Dernoga** is now a senior legislative assistant for Rep. **Nanette Diaz Barragán**, D-Calif. He covers the portfolio for agriculture and food, energy, environmental protection, trade, natural resources, and transportation. Dernoga ran for a seat in the Maryland House of Delegates in 2018 but came in fourth in the Democratic primary.

**Robert Primus** has left the office of Rep. **Nanette Diaz Barragán**, D-Calif., where he served as chief of staff. Barragán's office has not yet hired a replacement but current district director **Francisco Carrillo** is currently filling the role as interim chief of staff.



**Malikha Daniels** has joined the staff at the House Agriculture Committee to serve as a legislative assistant for Rep. **Collin Peterson**, D-Minn. She previously served as a legislative fellow for Sen. **Kirsten Gillibrand**, D-N.Y.

**Flynn Rico-Johnson** has joined the staff of Rep. **Doris Matsui**, D-Calif., to serve as her new legislative director covering the portfolio of labor, trade, transportation, telecommunications, and science and technology. He also covers the Energy and Commerce Committee for Matsui. He previously served as a government affairs manager for the First Responder Network Authority.

**Cynthia Patton** is now the deputy chief of staff for Rep. **Susan Davis**, D-Calif. She previously served as a scheduler for Davis.

**Maddy Russak** is now a communications aide for Sen. **Patty Murray**, D-Wash. She previously served as the deputy chief of staff for Rep. **Cindy Axne**, D-Iowa.

**Lee Cole**, president and CEO of Calavo Growers located in Santa Paula, Calif., plans to retire. Cole will stay on in the role of president and CEO until this successor begins.

**Best Regards,**

**Sara Wyant**

**Editor**

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