

## Notes from the CEO

By John Krist

The Farm Bureau Board of Directors in March authorized litigation to overturn the Ventura County Board of Supervisors' adoption of an urgency ordinance prohibiting industrial hemp production within half a mile of residentially zoned land, schools, day care centers, colleges and universities – a

move that arbitrarily put a third of the suitable cropland in the county off-limits.

The FBVC board also authorized expenditure of \$10,000 to retain the Santa Barbara law firm Brownstein Farber Hyatt Schreck (BFHS), which has worked on hemp and cannabis cases statewide, to represent us and those members who have

suffered significant financial harm as a result of the county's action. Joining FBVC as plaintiffs are the Ventura County Agricultural Association (VCAA) and the Ventura County Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business (CoLAB), also acting on behalf of their hemp-growing members. Farm Bureau is also serving as fiscal agent for the local growers supporting the litigation, collecting their contributions and contracting with BFSH on the parties' behalf.

Our attorneys have been working for the past two months to draft our complaint, which cites numerous fatal legal deficiencies in the county's development and adoption of the urgency ordinance earlier this year. Before we could file it with the court, however, the county closed not just the physical courthouse but also its online document filing portal, allowing only criminal and emergency civil actions to proceed. That means we – and countless other parties with legitimate civil

cases requiring legal intervention – are in effect being denied access to the courts because of COVID-19 restrictions.

We're still planning to finalize the petition, and will file it with the court as soon as it reopens for business. In the meantime, however, the county's action has disrupted numerous contracts among growers, suppliers and buyers, potentially putting hundreds of thousands of dollars

of investment at risk. It's also set an alarming and dangerous precedent: For the first time, a local government body has declared a commercial agricultural crop – recognized as legal by state and federal law – to be a public nuisance. That alone compels us to act. This illegal action is all the more unsettling because it targets a crop that uses less water and fewer pesticides than the vegetable crops it replaces, and can be turned into a wide variety of useful and valuable products. It's a poster child for sustainable agriculture.

### FBVC cancels annual meeting

Normally at this time of year, the staff and directors of Farm Bureau of Ventura County would be preparing for the organization's annual meeting of its members, a rather complicated and fully enjoyable event we host each May that involves breakfast, speakers, and more than a hundred guests eating, chatting, shaking hands and exchanging hugs inside a crowded room.

But nothing is normal right now. And for perhaps the first time in its history, FBVC will not be hosting an annual meeting this year.

Under current circumstances, with the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to threaten, sicken and kill people in our community, our usual gathering would be an opportunity to share viral loads along with the meal, anxiety along with the conviviality, sickness and perhaps worse along with the usual gossip. It is impossible to predict when gatherings of so many people will again be allowed – or, even if allowed, when people will feel safe enough to come together again in such a way. But it is unlikely to be anytime this year, so we have cancelled our plans. The meeting was to have been on May 19 at the Museum of Ventura County but we now hope to resume our tradition in May 2021.

Meanwhile, we will conduct our vote-by-mail election of FBVC directors this year as usual. We just won't be able to announce the results during a physical meeting. You'll hear about the outcome instead in the next issue of this newsletter.

The pandemic, and the attendant business closures and stay-at-home orders, have affected how FBVC does its work, but we continue working nonetheless. We closed our office to the public on March 18, following the county's issuance of the first health order restricting business operations. Our staff began working from home on March 22, although we drop in

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... *The county's action [prohibiting industrial hemp production] has disrupted numerous contracts among growers, suppliers and buyers, potentially putting hundreds of thousands of dollars of investment at risk. It's also set an alarming and dangerous precedent.*

### What's Inside?

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- Member Benefits: Tickets & Discounts

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# What can happen with too much rain?

By Ben Faber

Rain is wonderful stuff. If it comes and washes the accumulated salts of the last several years out of the root zones of citrus and avocado, that's a good thing. But what happens if there is a little too much of the good stuff?

In the winter of 2005, Ventura got more than 40 inches of rain, which is 200 percent of what is normal. The last time big rains occurred prior to that was in the winter of 1997-98. That year the rains were evenly spaced on almost a weekly basis through the winter and into the late spring and more than 50 inches fell. That year we had major problems with both citrus and avocados collapsing from asphyxiation. The same occurred in 2005, but not so pronounced.

This April we have had a lot more rain than we normally see, and in some young trees with poorly developed root systems, we have seen some collapse from asphyxiation. Avocados tend to be more susceptible than citrus, and some rootstocks more than others.

Asphyxiation is a physiological problem that may affect certain branches, whole limbs or the entire tree. Leaves wilt and may fall, the fruit withers and drops, and the branches die back to a greater or lesser extent. The condition develops so rapidly that it may be regarded as a form of collapse. Usually, the larger stems and branches remain alive, and after a time, vigorous new growth is put out so that the tree tends to recover. Young trees can be harder hit, but sunburn damage from lack of leaves may be more of a problem.

Asphyxiation is related to the air and water conditions of the soil. The trouble appears mainly in fine-textured or shallow soils with impervious sub-soils. In 1997-98, this even occurred on slopes with normally good drainage because the rains were so frequent. When such soils are over-irrigated or wetted by rains, the water displaces the soil oxygen. The smaller roots die when deprived of oxygen. When the stress of water shortage develops, the impaired roots are unable to supply water to the leaves rapidly enough and the tree collapses. The condition is accentuated when rainy weather is followed by winds or warm conditions. These are exactly the conditions we have seen in the last two weeks, hence some of the problems in young orchards on heavier soils.

Canopy treatment in less severe instances of asphyxiation consists of cutting back the dead branches to live wood. If leaf drop has been excessive, the tree should be white-washed to prevent sunburn. Fruit, if mature, should be harvested as soon as possible to prevent loss. In the case of young trees, less than two years of age, recovery sometimes does not occur, and replanting should be considered if vigorous regrowth does not occur by July. As soon as defoliation is evident, whitewashing should be done to protect them to give them a chance for recovery.

Asphyxiation can be reduced by proper planting and grading. If an impervious layer is identified, it should be ripped prior to planting. The field should be graded so that water has somewhere to run off the field during high rainfall years. Heavier soils might require planting on berms or mounds so that

the crown roots have a better chance of being aerated.

Hindsight is always great. Post-plant, if an impervious layer can be identified and is shallow enough to break through, ripping alongside the tree or drilling 4-6 inch post holes at the corners of the tree canopy can improve drainage. It is important that the ripper blade or auger gets below the impervious layer for this technique to be effective. If there is a thick layer of mulch reducing soil evaporation, pulling it back to allow the sun to help dry it out faster will help. It's not a lot of work with small trees, but big time work if it's big trees with thick mulch.

— Ben Faber is a farm advisor in the University of California Cooperative Extension office in Ventura, specializing in soils, water, avocados and minor subtropicals. Contact him at [bafaber@ucanr.edu](mailto:bafaber@ucanr.edu).

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## Notes from the CEO

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at the office from time to time to do things that cannot be done remotely – payroll, gathering the mail, cutting checks to pay our bills, retrieving documents, accepting deliveries, filling orders for regulatory compliance materials. Occasionally we overlap with each other, but our office is large and the workstations widely spaced, so we're able to keep a safe distance. We conduct staff meetings by text and email, and board meetings and other business gatherings via Zoom.

And we answer questions. So many questions. Our email volume has increased considerably since in-person meetings vanished from everyone's calendar, and we have been inundated with daily inquiries from our members, as well as messages from trade organizations, commodity groups, industry sources and public agencies sharing information about COVID-19 resources, programs and protocols. Sorting through these and picking out those worth passing on to our members occupies a significant part of every day. I hope those of you who are on our email list have found these roundups useful. And if you are not currently on that list but would like to be, please send me an email and ask to be added.

As I am sure you all are aware, agriculture has been deemed an essential business by

federal, state and county authorities, including not just growers and processors but businesses that directly support agriculture, such as nurseries and other suppliers. Being essential, however, does not guarantee being profitable. And virtually every sector of agriculture has been financially pummeled by the market upheaval triggered by the shutdown of the food service industry, profound changes in consumer behavior, and the cancellation of celebrations and other gatherings. Everything from cut flowers to lemons and celery has been hit. Harvesting has slowed as production contracts are cancelled or prices drop below the break-even point, and many workers have seen their hours cut.

Nevertheless, thousands of agricultural workers remain on the job in Ventura County. And employers have adopted new procedures, policies and protocols to keep them safe while they work. Each Friday for the past month, I've participated in a Zoom meeting with numerous other agricultural stakeholders – growers, the county agricultural commissioner, and representatives of the county executive office, Farmworkers Resource Program, labor advocates such as CAUSE and MICOP, County Public Health and the Sheriff's Department. We share information about resources for employers and employees, identify workplace vulnerabilities and best management practices to address them, and

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brainstorm ideas for messaging and outreach channels, to ensure the farm labor force can continue to conduct its critical work safely.

Other Farm Bureau projects that remain active include development of the next iteration of the agriculture supervisor development program, which we helped coordinate for the past two years. Intended to provide front-line supervisors the managerial and interpersonal skills they need to be effective team leaders, the program this year is shifting to become a full-fledged certificate program offered by Ventura College.

Two courses will be offered this fall:

### **Course AGN 150: Human Resource Management for Agricultural Field Supervisors**

This course covers human resource management and laws regulating agricultural production and the use of labor in agriculture. Topics include basic human resource management, hiring, required labor documentation, applicable labor laws, wages, and the rights of agricultural laborers. Likewise, effective communication, conflict resolution, negotiation and leadership strategies will be discussed. The course is designed especially for agricultural field supervisors to provide a better understanding of effective management and leadership practices for successful oversight of labor within the production setting.

### **Course AGN 151: Agricultural Laws and Regulations for Agricultural Field Supervisors**

This course covers the laws regulating agricultural production and the use of labor in agriculture. Topics include agricultural exemptions from labor laws, the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act, and the rights of agricultural laborers. Likewise, specific regulations and laws governing agricultural production in California will be discussed. The course is designed especially for agricultural field supervisors to provide them with a better understanding of the issues involved in the regulation of agricultural production and labor within the production setting.

More information about the program and enrollment procedures will be distributed in coming weeks. As a member of the Ventura College Agriculture Program Advisory Committee, I'll continue to serve on the field supervisor program's oversight committee

with representatives of the Ventura County Community College District, several growers and representatives of labor advocacy groups. Our goal is make sure the program effectively meets the needs of the local ag community, empowering workers to make the most of their opportunities, increasing their productivity and bolstering the company's bottom line.

### **COVID-19 delays arrival of HLB dogs**

Another temporary casualty of the restrictions on travel and business resulting from the nationwide pandemic response has been the relocation of F1K9's bacteria-sniffing dogs from Florida to Ventura County. The team of eight dogs and two handlers was scheduled to arrive here on March 18, but was forced to postpone when bans on nonessential travel went into effect.

The local lockdown has also interfered with plans for the Ventura County ACP-HLB Task Force to host its spring citrus industry workshop, during which we had planned to present a summary of the canine detection team's three-visit survey of local orchards in 2019 and 2020, as well as recommendations from our science advisory team on how we should use the scouting data to guide the county's ACP-HLB management strategy.

We are now investigating options for a virtual workshop, utilizing one of the online meeting and presentation tools so many of us have now been forced to learn. When we figure that out, we will let you know.

Meanwhile, on behalf of Farm Bureau's directors and staff, I extend deepest sympathies for the emotional and financial hardships so many of you are encountering during this unprecedented time. And I hope for the continued health and safety of you and your loved ones in the coming weeks and months.

— John Krist is chief executive officer of the Farm Bureau of Ventura County. Contact him at [john@farmbureauvc.com](mailto:john@farmbureauvc.com).



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## Member Benefits

### TICKETS & DISCOUNTS

*Farm Bureau members qualify for savings on admission to many of Southern California's most popular theme parks and other attractions. To place an order or request a complete list of discounts, you may call our office at 805-289-0155 or send an email to [Cheri@farmbureauvc.com](mailto:Cheri@farmbureauvc.com). Please have your membership number available.*

#### **Aquarium of the Pacific** — Long Beach; One Day Ticket.

Adult (12 yrs+) \$25.95 (save \$9); Child (3-11 yrs) \$22.95 (save \$2). Valid thru 12/31/20.

**Cinemark Century & Rave Theatres** — All Cinemark, Century & Rave locations. Platinum Super Saver Ticket, valid any regular movie anytime. Regular price up to \$12, you pay \$10. Additional premiums may apply for specially priced films and/or events priced higher than normal box office. No expiration. Physical tickets only.

**Dinner Detective Murder Mystery** — Ventura County/ Thousand Oaks; Adult (13 years+) Dinner & Show \$58.95. Save up to \$12.50 with tax/gratuity. No expiration dates. E-Tickets only.

**Knott's Berry Farm** — Buena Park; General One Day Admission (3 yrs+) \$45.00 (save \$37.00) Valid thru 3/19/20.

**Legoland California Resort** — Carlsbad; Valid thru 3/31/20. E-Tickets Only. Resort Hopper — Includes 1 Day at Legoland, Including Seasonal Waterpark\* and Sea Life Aquarium, and Free 2nd Day. \$68.95 (3 Yrs+) Save \$52.04. Both visits must occur by 4/30/20. Water Park requires same-day admission to Legoland & is open seasonally between March & October.

**Medieval Times Dinner and Tournament** — Buena Park; Reservations Required. Dinner and Show. Adult \$45.75 (save \$22 w/tax). Child (12 yrs & under) \$34.50 (save \$7.20 w/tax). "BOGO Birthday Special" during your Birthday month. Valid thru 12/30/20.

**Pacific Park** — Santa Monica Pier; 1-Day Unlimited Ride Wristband Voucher \$23.95 (save \$9 per person over 7 years). Valid thru 12/31/20.

**Regal Entertainment Group** — All Edwards and Regal locations. Premiere Unrestricted Ticket, valid ANY showtime, \$9.75. (Surcharge for IMAX, RPX, 3-D films & 4DX films, premium or Luxury Seating locations or select theaters.). Ultimate Movie Pack-2 Premiere Unrestricted Ticket & \$10 Gift Card \$29.50. No expiration dates on physical tickets. Physical tickets only.

**San Diego Safari Park** — Escondido; Adult (12 yrs+) \$49.00 (save \$9); Child (3-11 yrs) \$41.00 (save \$7). Valid thru 5/25/20. E-Tickets Only.

**San Diego Sea World** — San Diego; E-Tickets Only. Single Day Tickets: (3 yrs+) \$67.95 (save \$24.04); Valid thru 12/31/20.

**San Diego Zoo** — San Diego; E-ticket 1. Day Pass Adult (12 yrs+) \$49 (save \$9); 1 Day Pass Child (3-11 yrs) \$41 (save \$7). Valid thru 05/25/20. E-Tickets Only.

**See's Candies** — One Pound Candy Gift Certificate & gift envelope \$18.50 (save \$2.50). No Expiration Date. Physical Tickets Only.

**Six Flags Magic Mountain** — Valencia; General Admission (3yrs+) \$63.95 (save \$29.04). Valid 1 operating day thru 9/13/20.

**Universal Studios Hollywood** — Universal City; E-tickets only. Season Pass (3yrs+) \$129 (save \$30). Unlimited visits thru 5/31/20. Valid 9 months after your first visit. View blackout dates apply after 1st visit.

# FARM BUREAU OF VENTURA COUNTY

5156 McGrath St., Suite #102  
Ventura, CA 93003-7305

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### MISSION STATEMENT

We represent the broad and dynamic interests of the agricultural industry through our diverse membership. We serve members by delivering services, promoting policies, developing coalitions, and fostering community action that will ensure the long-term success of agriculture in Ventura County.

### • FOUNDERS CIRCLE

Beardsley & Son  
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White Seed Co  
West Coast Berry Farms  
Yamamoto Farms  
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# FARM BUREAU OF VENTURA COUNTY

5156 McGrath St., Suite 102 • P.O. Box 3160 • Ventura, CA 93006  
Telephone 805-289-0155 • Fax 805-658-0295 • www.farmbureauvc.com