

By The
Numbers

2023 ANNUAL REPORT





Facing challenges

from drought to drenching storms

Extraordinary events that California farmers, ranchers and agricultural communities faced in 2023 underscored what the **nearly 29,000 members** of the California Farm Bureau already knew: Our farmers and ranchers will rise to any challenge to produce the food and fiber that America needs, even as those challenges may change dramatically.

After three years of withering drought conditions, California's farming regions faced a deluge of rain and catastrophic flooding in 2023. While welcome storms filled reservoirs, they also breached levees, flooded farm fields, damaged crops and inundated dairies. In scenes of courage and resiliency, farmers and ranchers helped their neighbors, rallying to protect lives and property and rescue livestock.

California Farm Bureau, which has long fought for

building and upgrading water-storage and flood-control infrastructure, let state officials know about the consequences of delaying critical projects that could have protected communities and captured more water for dry years. The governor was convinced to sign an executive order to cut through red tape and allow farmers and ranchers to direct floodwaters to replenish groundwater supplies. Infrastructure projects, including Sites Reservoir north of Sacramento, pushed closer to fruition. And our farmers and ranchers kept working, producing the bounty that makes California America's most important agricultural sector.

Farm Bureau fought for our agricultural communities and way of life, while providing our members with our full range of services in 2023. These numbers tell the story.

Being resilient

and working for solutions

As the end of 2022 neared, California was still in the grips of a devastating three-year drought that resulted in the fallowing of an estimated **1.3 million acres of farmland**.

Then, 2023 brought the state a deluge including **31 atmospheric storms** and **1 tropical storm**. Statewide precipitation was **141% of normal**. The Sierra Nevada snowpack peaked at **237% of normal** in April. While suddenly blessed with ample water supplies for the season, farmers and ranchers faced starkly different challenges.

Heavy rains in January and March caused massive flood damage in agricultural regions. In Monterey County alone, the famed vegetable-growing Salad Bowl reported **\$600 million in damages to crops and farm infrastructure**. In the San Joaquin Valley, **hundreds of millions of dollars in losses** were reported as the former Tulare Lake filled with floodwaters that inundated farms and dairies. Damages in Kings and Tulare counties from March and January atmospheric storms were respectively estimated at \$168 million and \$76 million.

In August, the freakish Tropical Storm Hilary caused severe damage to the San Joaquin Valley's annual grape growing industry, valued at **\$2 billion**. Wind and rain **damaged 35% of grapes that remained on vines** when the storm struck.

In Sacramento, Farm Bureau's Government Affairs Division worked with lawmakers, Gov. Gavin Newsom and state agencies to secure relief. Our policy advocates helped bring in **\$160 million in emergency aid** that was added to the state budget. It included **\$20 million for agricultural business impacted by the storms**. **Another \$20 million went to Monterey County for direct relief for residents in Pajaro**, a farming community inundated after levee breaks on the Pajaro River. **\$20 million was delivered to Merced County** to help residents in the flooded town of Planada. In addition, **\$95 million was allocated in statewide support**, including for storm preparedness, response and direct relief. And **\$5 million was provided to the California Underserved and Small Producer Program**. That included grants of up to **\$100,000 for small organic dairies** that suffered either flooding or drought impacts.

In Washington, D.C., our Federal Policy Division worked on long-term disaster assistance for multiple events in recent years. Our team worked on legislation that helped secure **\$16 billion from the Federal Emergency Management Agency** to distribute for numerous recovery efforts nationally, including disasters experienced in California.

In addition, **\$549 million was distributed to California agricultural producers** under the Emergency Relief Program for catastrophic events, to help recover from disasters such as the devastating wildfires in 2020 and 2021. Funding included **\$171 million for specialty crop growers** impacted by disasters. In addition, **millions of Californians in 44 counties affected by 2023 flooding** were offered extensions until November to submit individual and business tax returns to the Internal Revenue Service.



31 atmospheric storms | **1** tropical storm | **141%** precipitation statewide



\$160 MILLION

in emergency aid



\$20 MILLION

for agricultural businesses impacted by the storms



\$95 MILLION

allocated in statewide support

Staying committed

to our agricultural future

As the Farm Bureau team responded to dramatic events of 2023, the steady, day-to-day work of sustaining California's critical agriculture economy and livelihoods of our farmers, ranchers and agricultural workforce continued, with Farm Bureau actions producing results.

In Sacramento, Farm Bureau's Government Affairs Division staff **attended 123 committee meetings** and **71 regulatory hearings, made 14 conference presentations** and **wrote 76 letters** involving legislative matters. In Washington D.C., Farm Bureau's Federal Policy Division **organized 20 group meetings** at offices of members of Congress through our "County Leaders" program, which connects agricultural producers in California counties with lawmakers and federal agency officials. The federal team also had **hundreds of calls, virtual and in-person meetings** and helped arrange testimony and attendance at **3 Congressional hearings** in California—including 2023 Farm Bill sessions with the House Agricultural Committee at Yosemite National Park, in Red Bluff and at the World Ag Expo in Tulare.

In addition, Farm Bureau and California Bountiful Foundation staff led **5 California farm tours** and **3 cattle and dairy tours** for state lawmakers and legislative staffers. Farm Bureau's Farm Employers Labor Service (FELS) focused on new and innovative approaches to help California agricultural employers navigate tight labor markets, safety regulations and other challenges during 2023. FELS labor management consultants made **some 2,000 worksite visits**, providing training on safety, workplace harassment prevention, good management practices and positive relationships between supervisors and employees.

Our actions produced results. At the California Capitol, the governor signed **3 Farm Bureau sponsored bills**. The first, **Senate Bill 505**, expanded commercial insurance coverage options, including for farms and ranches. The legislation was a follow-up to Farm Bureau-sponsored **SB 11** in 2021, which allowed farmers and ranchers denied insurance market renewals after wildfires to obtain coverage under the California Fair Access to Insurance Requirements Plan. Second, Gov. Newsom signed Farm Bureau's agricultural drone bill, **Assembly Bill 1016**, to modernize the certification process for farmers to use drones when applying pesticides and beneficial biological treatments on farms. Lastly, the governor signed AB 606, which extended the sunset on accidental take provisions of the California Endangered Species Act. Without this extension, many ag operations would grind to a halt.

For **13 years**, the California Farm Bureau has been pushing the State Water Resources Control Board to allow our farmers to use their land to recharge aquifers. This year, our efforts finally bore fruit as the governor signed executive orders easing permit requirements to allow farmers to use floodwater diversions to recharge groundwater, resulting in **40,000 acre-feet of additional recharge** in the San Joaquin Valley during the spring and summer. This was later enshrined into law as part of the budget process.

Farm Bureau also persuaded the governor to **veto 2 bills: SB 799**, which would have allowed striking workers to collect unemployment benefits, and **AB 524**, which would have exposed agricultural employees with family caregiver

responsibilities to potential litigation. Additionally, Farm Bureau helped lead a **200-member agriculture, water and business coalition** in defeating **2 bills** that would have given state officials new powers to halt water diversions for farming while depriving water-rights holders of due process.



Our advocacy also helped generate returns. In Washington, D.C., **\$508 million** in funding was approved for 24 water infrastructure projects in California under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. An additional **\$250 million** was allocated for rice producers, including hard-hit California growers who fallowed fields during drought, under the Farm Service Agency's Rice Production Program based on planted and "prevented-planted" acres.

Another **\$95 million** was provided in **34 California grants** for federal wildfire defense initiatives. Some **\$140 million** was allocated for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART program for water-conservation and efficiency projects in the West, including for **31 California projects**. An additional **\$88 million** was secured for expanded fertilizer production and **\$25 million** for California under the Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program. Additionally, **127,000 California homes and businesses** were provided the chance to receive expanded broadband access through the Treasury Department's Capital Projects Fund.

This year's state budget included **\$75 million in grants and rebates** for reducing emissions, with the money going to help farmers and ranchers purchase low-emission harvesting equipment, tractors, heavy-duty trucks and other equipment. Another **\$50 million** was allocated to support the Healthy Soils Program for farmers. **\$40 million** was provided to the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program. **\$25 million** was budgeted to support strategies, such as feed additives, for enteric emissions reduction in the livestock sectors. **\$14.5 million** was provided to support the Pollinator Habitat Program. Meanwhile, **\$2.5 million** was secured for farmworker housing development in San Mateo County and the City of Half Moon Bay. The state also invested **\$180 million** to promote recovery of native fish species in the Sacramento-San Joaquin watershed.



Advocating for farmers

in courts and hearing rooms

California Farm Bureau's Legal Services Division lawyers and staff made **44 courtroom appearances** and testified or participated in **90 regulatory sessions, workshops or legislative hearings** on behalf of California agriculture and Farm Bureau members.

Farm Bureau's legal team attended **2,300 hours of regulatory hearings and meetings**, wrote **1,700 pages of briefs, letters and other documents**, and reviewed **26,000 pages of legal materials and state and federal legislation**.

Our legal advocacy before the California Public Utilities Commission, the Legislature and other agencies helped generate **tens of millions of dollars in electricity cost savings** for agricultural customers.

Farm Bureau also joined in **several amicus curiae (friend-of-the-court) briefs** in state and federal courts addressing environmental and water-rights issues. Our legal team additionally brought successful litigation before the state **3rd District Court of Appeal**, prevailing with a ruling that established a favorable legal precedent for water-quality regulations.



6000 new advocates were brought on to Farm Bureau's political action network, FarmTeam, to lend their voice to critical issues. FarmTeam members sent **22,729 letters** to state lawmakers and agency officials from **23 FarmTeam Alerts**, a **23% increase** over 2022. FarmPac generated financial contributions from **1,280 donors**, an **18% increase** over 2022.



Sowing seeds *for science and research*

In the second year after its relaunch, the **California Bountiful Foundation**, the 501(c)(3) nonprofit scientific, research and education arm of the California Farm Bureau, built on its research initiatives and outreach programs to support farmers, ranchers and timber producers.

In 2023, the Foundation secured over

\$6 MILLION

in grants and applied for additional funding for new endeavors.



One of the programs receiving funds through Foundation-generated grants is Expanding Our Roots—Farm Bureau’s Beginning Farmer & Rancher program that connects farmers and ranchers with fewer than 10 years’ experience with mentors in agriculture.

Grant funds will also support a pilot program, backed by Farm Bureau, to enroll a select number of farms in a program designed to quantify carbon stored in orchard and grapevine crops in California. Other grant funds awarded from the Healthy Soils Program will support carbon-sequestration management practices on **20 to 45 citrus orchards in 10 California counties**.

The Foundation continues to partner with Californians for Smart Pesticide Policy in supporting economic studies and analyses of agriculture and water resources in California.

In addition, the California Bountiful Foundation supported **2 new studies** in 2023. It **awarded over \$500,000** to a scientific team at California Polytechnic University, Humboldt for a five-year research project on the benefits of grazing in wetlands. The Foundation also initiated a data-based analysis of water use in California agriculture, which showed that farmers and ranchers use only **15% of total water** that the state receives. It is working to publish the research findings, which contradict oft-repeated stereotypes for agricultural use.

Sharing knowledge

and providing services

Farm Bureau in 2023 provided educational opportunities for members and aspiring farmers and ranchers and supported school agriculture programs. Along the way, we made benefits available to our members and helped celebrate agriculture—from honoring farmland scenes to saluting the quintessential farm dog.

Farm Bureau Extension's 2023 series attracted **1,901 class registrations** from **313 participants** for **10 continuing education sessions**. Meanwhile, Farm Bureau held **4 retirement plan webinars** and conducted **27 farm and ranch health and safety seminars** in English and Spanish.

The California Farm Bureau Scholarship Foundation awarded **\$195,000 in scholarships** to **40 students** who intend to pursue careers as farmers, ranchers or in occupations related to agriculture. Farm Bureau also awarded **75 collegiate memberships** to California FFA members who attended the Sacramento Leadership Experience conference. Our Young Farmers & Ranchers organization hosted **32 attendees** at the YF&F Leaders Meeting in Fresno in July, which included farm tours, leadership development sessions, networking and program planning.

In a partnership with Nationwide, Farm Bureau members **raised nearly \$34,000** for the Blue Jacket Bonanza program. Throughout the year, Farm Bureau **awarded over 200 FFA jackets** to regional and sectional officers in California.

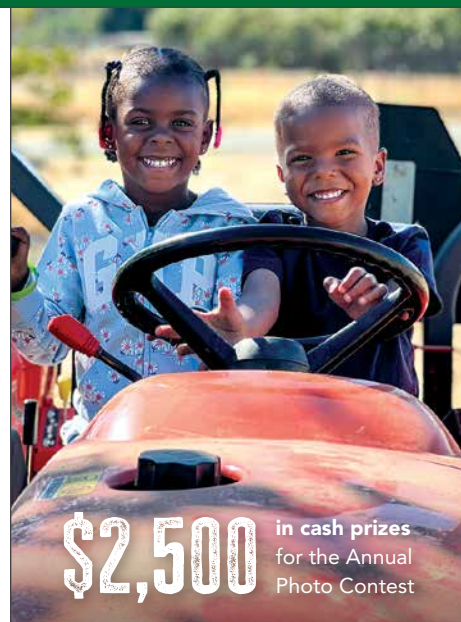
The California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom program, supported by Farm Bureau, attracted **20,000 students throughout California** to tune into California Farm Day presentations to celebrate agriculture and learn how the weather impacts California agriculture. **213 agriculture teachers** attended the state Ag in the Classroom Conference in Sacramento, **65% being first-time attendees**.

Ag in the Classroom awarded **\$52,500** to **425 educators** throughout California through grants to expand agricultural literacy efforts in 2023. **25 teachers** were awarded Literacy for Life grants, and **400 teachers** received Taste and Teach Grants. **12,031 teachers** viewed Ag in the Classroom resources on the Teachers Pay Teachers online marketplace, downloading more than **15,723 resources and lesson plans**.

More than 100,000 copies of Agriculture in the Classroom's **16-page** educational newspaper *What's Growin' On?* were distributed.

Meanwhile, Farm Bureau hosted its **42nd annual** photo contest, awarding **\$2,500 in cash prizes**. The contest drew **64 participants**, including **4 budding artist contestants**, with **183 photos** submitted, **double** the number of submissions from 2022. The 4th Annual Farm Dog of the Year contest drew **45 canine contenders**, with **\$1,000 awarded** to the grand prize winner.

In 2023, Farm Bureau provided **32 benefit offerings** for members. They included Farm Bureau Retirement Plan benefits administered by Nationwide, citizenship services through the National Immigration Forum for employees of Farm Bureau members, plus home, auto, apparel and travel discounts, including **savings up to 30%** at Great Wolf Lodge resorts.



\$2,500 in cash prizes
for the Annual
Photo Contest



1901 Farm Bureau
Extension's series
class registrations



45
canine contenders
for the 4th Annual
Farm Dog contest



Elevating the story

of our farmers, ranchers

Farm Bureau's marketing, communications and publications teams chronicled contributions of California farmers and ranchers and helped generate attention to critical issues affecting America's most productive agricultural sector.

Communications staff fielded **more than 125 media inquiries** from **more than 60 news organizations**. In addition, the marketing and communications team distributed **34 news releases** and uploaded **1,895 social media posts** to **52,594 followers** on California Farm Bureau and *California Bountiful* channels.

Farm Bureau media products won **4 top awards** in a national competition sponsored by the American Farm Bureau Federation, bringing home prizes for best newspaper for *Ag Alert*, best magazine for *California Bountiful*, best video news story for *California Bountiful TV* and best website for Farm Bureau's marketing and communications team.

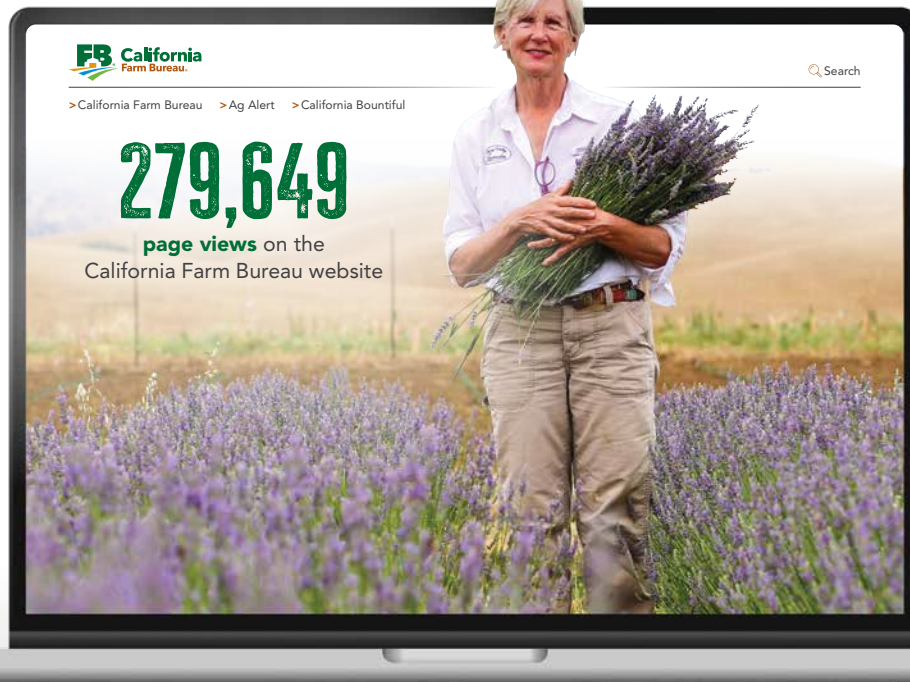
Our *Ag Alert* newspaper published **46 issues**, including **980 pages**, **728 articles** and **651 photographs**.

The **six issues** of *California Bountiful* magazine featured **92 stories** for our non-farm readers and **31 recipes** using California

farm products. Additionally, the Farm Bureau logo was included on **24 of the stories** to designate Farm Bureau members. The marketing and sales teams joined to enhance exposure for the magazine and the TV show at the Capitol Mall Farmers Market in Sacramento, distributing free magazines and presenting **2 raffle winners** with *California Bountiful* subscriptions.

An **estimated 2.5 million viewers** turned in for episodes of the *California Bountiful* television program, which was broadcast in **14 "over the air" media outlets** in California and nationally via RFD TV. *California Bountiful TV* produced **20 brand-new episodes**, featuring **108 new segments**, totaling **486 minutes of content**.

The **California Farm Bureau website** drew **279,649 page views**. The *Ag Alert* website had **161,908 page views** and the *California Bountiful* site had **106,866 page views**. Combined, our websites totaled **548,423 views**.



20

new episodes
of *California
Bountiful TV*



92

stories in
*California
Bountiful*



728

articles
published
in *Ag Alert*

