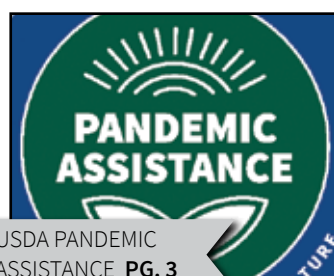


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KCFB hosts ag round table with State Senator Melissa Hurtado

By Amy D. Fienen

Kings County Farm Bureau hosted an ag round table with State Senator Melissa Hurtado (D-Sanger) last month. The invitation-only event included members of our board of directors, ag industry representatives and elected officials. Agriculture Commissioner Jimmy Hook and Sheriff Dave Robinson were among those in attendance.

Paula Vinzant, KCFB director of government and member relations, coordinated the discussion to allow those in the ag industry to hear how the senator is working on their behalf

and to allow them to express concerns on issues like water. As the Valley faces another dry year with disappointingly low water allocations, water continues to be at the forefront of growers' minds.

Hurtado said her first two years in office have been tough as she's struggled to articulate the importance of the work being done here in the Valley. Valley residents have long felt overlooked by state lawmakers, and Hurtado said that advocating for agriculture is difficult in both Sacramento and Washington, D.C. When it comes to the state's water crisis, her pleas go in one ear and out the other, she said.

"I'm afraid it's going to get to a point where it becomes a disaster before anything will be done," she said.

One of the ways Hurtado is trying to evade that disaster is with the introduction of Senate Bill 559, the State Water

"Hurtado" continued on page 5



L to R: State Senator Melissa Hurtado with KCFB Executive Director Dusty Ference and Kings County Sheriff Dave Robinson at the ag round table hosted by KCFB.

Register now for first VFB SHARE demonstration on April 29

By Amy D. Fienen

The first farm demonstration presented by the newly formed VFB SHARE outreach program will take place on Thursday, April 29. The virtual demonstration will feature the Specialty Crop Company discussing pheromone disruption and orchard sanitation. It will feature advantages and disadvantages of these practices, along with the techniques and application methods that promote quality crop production.

This workshop will be the first in a series that will take place over the next 18 months thanks to the Valley Farm Bureau Specialty Crop Hub and Rural Education outreach program (VFB SHARE). The program is funded

"VFB SHARE" continued on page 11



Preparations are underway for VFB SHARE's first farm demonstration, coming up on April 29. The video being filmed is about pheromone disruption and orchard sanitation.



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Positive change can happen when politics are set aside

By Dusty Ference, Executive Director



Dusty Ference

Agriculture has a rich history of working together on the farm. We all have stories of calling the neighbor to borrow a piece of equipment or for an extra set of hands, even when we don't know the neighbor well or have differences of opinion. So what happens to the "set our differences aside to get something accomplished" attitude when it comes to politics?

In today's culture, political affiliations have become the majority of our identities. And as a society, we are quick to dismiss each other over a political ideology rather than agreeing to disagree. Even worse, we now are virtually incapable of working together to solve a problem because ideology, perceived or actual, won't allow people to work together. Now add to the mix the media's exacerbation of political parties by only highlighting extremists on each side, and the divide only grows.

Move into the realm of politics, and the effects of this phenomenon multiply. Rather than asking a neighbor for help and perspective to solve a problem, people make decisions independently without considering the impacts from all sides. There are many theories to explain why we are here as a society, but those don't matter. What does matter is how we are going to resolve the issue.

We cannot continue to converse only amongst ourselves and with those leaders known as "friendly." For example, if you were to call a State Assembly member to express concerns over a bill, it would be a wasted call if you know that member will agree with you. Now imagine calling a member who doesn't know you or your thoughts and telling them how this decision will impact you.

Last month, Kings County Farm Bureau organized an agricultural round-table with State Senator Melissa Hurtado. In attendance were several members of the Kings County ag community. Discussion around water, food security, drought, and COVID-19 are only a shortlist of the day's topics. Although the meeting did not immediately solve any issues, something more important came from it. Differing points of view and ideas were shared, thought-provoking questions were asked, and relationships blossomed.

Most important were the things not discussed. Not once was anyone's political ideology considered. Participants knew

the Senator's party preference before she arrived, and it had no impact on the quality of the conversations. She kept an open mind to learning about issues affecting Kings County agriculture, and the industry was pleased she was interested to learn and happily shared their perspective.

Last month's round-table is a shining example of the industry's need to reach out to consumers and elected officials to educate them on the challenges the industry faces today. Fewer and fewer people have direct ties to production agriculture, and without that connection, it is easy to be dismissive.

KCFB is excited to offer more opportunities to connect the industry with elected officials and consumers. We understand that it won't immediately solve our issues, but it will make a difference, and all positive change happens slowly. 🌱

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Member to Member *People, Products, Prosperity***Duarte Nursery** By Amy D. Fienen

Duarte Nursery, Inc. is Kings County Farm Bureau's new platinum level Friend of Farm Bureau. Family owned and operated out of the North Valley since 1988, Duarte Nursery is the largest permanent crop nursery in the U.S.

The Duarte family prides themselves on a history of innovative products and exceptional customer service. If you're looking to plant grapevines, almonds, pistachios or walnuts, they are well-stocked and have field reps who are experienced growers ready to help.

Jim and Anita Duarte founded the nursery in 1988. Although still involved in the company's operations, it's now run by their sons, John and Jeff. John serves as president, and Jeff is vice president and director of operations. The family has been in the nursery business since 1969, when Jim and Anita left the Valley to start a house plant nursery in the San Diego area. When they returned to the Valley in the late '80s to start Duarte Nursery, John had just graduated from San Diego State with finance degree. Jim and Anita invited John and Jeff to become shareholders and go into business with them, and a family business was born.

John Duarte said that the advanced technology used by Duarte Nursery sets them apart from their

competitors. They utilize 100 percent containerized production, which allows them to provide farmers with clean, high-quality products. The advantages of containerized products are an intact root system and the ability for farmers to take delivery of the plants any time of year. Since the plants are greenhouse grown, they've never been planted in the ground, thereby minimizing exposure to soil-borne pathogens and nematodes.

Duarte Nursery works with Dry Creek Laboratory to use clonal technology to produce clonal rootstocks. By cloning a carefully selected mother tree, the cloned trees are high producing, suited to a certain soil type, and are resistant to root pathogens and nematodes.

John Duarte said their nursery has led the way in creating clean, disease-free nursery stock.

"One of the things we're really proud of is the state of technology the nursery industry has now," he said.

Additionally, Duarte Nursery is committed to giving back to the community, particularly by supporting organizations like Farm Bureau as it represents the longevity of California agriculture.

John Duarte said that the family business has a long history of serving Valley farmers, and it's their com-

mitment to seeing customers return over and over again that sets them apart.

"We've got the best products, the best root stocks, great genetics, clean production systems, and we back it up with excellent service," he said. "We take a long-term view of what we do."

For more information on Duarte Nursery, call 1-800-GRAFTED or visit duartenursery.com.

The "Member to Member" feature is our way of promoting the members that help make our work possible through their financial support. Please consider doing business with companies who show their commitment to the local ag industry through their support of Farm Bureau. 🙌



John Duarte

USDA announces expanded, more equitable pandemic assistance for farmers



The USDA is establishing new programs and efforts to bring financial assistance to farmers, ranchers and producers who felt the impact of COVID-19 market disruptions. The new initiative—USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers—will reach a broader set of producers than in previous COVID-19 aid programs.

USDA is dedicating at least \$6 billion toward the initiative, which will include existing programs like the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). New programs will focus on small and socially disadvantaged farmers, organic and specialty crop farmers and timber harvesters, and will support the food supply chain and renewable fuel producers.

USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers was needed, said Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, after a review of previous COVID-19 assistance programs targeting farmers identified a number of gaps and disparities in how assistance was distributed as well as inadequate outreach to underserved producers and smaller and medium operations.

USDA will reopen sign-up for CFAP 2 for at least 60 days beginning on April 5, 2021. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has committed at least \$2.5 million to improve outreach for the program, and will establish partnerships with organizations with strong connections to socially disadvantaged communities to ensure they are informed and aware of the application process.

The payments announced will go out under the existing CFAP rules; however, future opportunities for USDA Pandemic Assistance will be reviewed for verified need and during the rulemaking process, USDA will look to make eligibility more consistent with the Farm Bill.

Moving forward, USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers will utilize existing programs, such as the Local Agricultural Marketing Program, Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach, and Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, and others to enhance educational and market opportunities for agricultural producers.

Please visit farmers.gov for more information on this new program. 🙌

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Ag Commissioner's Compliance Report



Jimmy Hook,
Agricultural
Commissioner/Sealer

Protecting the consumer at the gas pump

Contributed by Steve Schweizer, Deputy Ag Commissioner-Sealer

Every year, the Kings County Department of Measurement Standards (Department) performs unannounced inspections at all retail motor fuel locations (gas stations) in the county, checking the accuracy of the gas and diesel dispensers, as well as making sure the petroleum signage meets the requirements of the State of California. We are often asked by customers we meet in the field "How accurate are the pumps and am I getting what I paid for?" Normally, the results of our inspections are noted as pass or fail. In 2020, we recorded additional information, including the actual readings, and the results may surprise you.

As mentioned, the test results of each meter inspected is documented simply as pass or fail, based on the allowed tolerance for a five-gallon test draft. The allowed tolerance for every five gallons dispensed is six cubic inches, over or under. This is about 3.3 fluid ounces, or between one-third to one-half cup. Therefore, for every five gallons of fuel pumped, as long as the dispensers are within 3.3 ounces either way, they pass.

Last year, 1,418 gas pumps were tested. Our test equipment consists of five gallon test measure units certified by the California Department of Measurement Standards. Of those meters tested, 1,412 (99.6%) were within the tolerance allowed. This means the stations were properly maintaining the pumps and providing customers the amount of product they paid for. There were only six pumps found that were below the tolerance allowed. These out-of-tolerance nozzles were immediately taken out of service (red-tagged) and sealed with a lead and wire seal to prevent use until repaired by a licensed service agent.

Looking deeper into the numbers, of the 1,412 meters that passed inspection, 1,153 (81.3%) were either right on the zero mark or on the plus side. The remaining numbers, while within the allowed tolerance, were just slightly under the mark. These numbers are consistent in gasoline from grade to grade, as well as diesel.



This test shows two cubic inches on the plus side

These inspections not only protect the consumer, but the business owner as well. For example, at one station all but one meter was significantly giving away more than the allowed tolerance. In this case, the owner was losing money with each gallon pumped, and immediately made repairs to bring the meters within tolerance.

The next time you purchase fuel in Kings County, rest assure you are getting the quantity paid for. If you happen upon our Department inspection staff performing these inspections at gas stations, feel free to stop and ask about their work. They are always willing to help you understand the role our Department fills in protecting the consumer.

If you have any questions on the services we perform or if you have a complaint regarding the quantity of gas you purchased, please contact our office at (559) 852-2830. 📞



Dispensing into a five-gallon test measure mounted on a prover trailer



Dispensing into a five-gallon test measure



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Spotlight on Hanford FFA Thanks to GAR Bennett for supporting ag mechanics classes

Contributed by Rory Valov, Hanford FFA Chapter Reporter

The community is always helping Hanford FFA in one way or another, for which we are so grateful.

This help comes in different forms for all our ag classes, especially for the ag mechanics classes. We were struggling to come up with the materials and plans to make a hands-on project during distance learning, but we received an answer when GAR Bennett donated 1,300 feet of half-inch PVC pipe along with all the fittings required to complete a distance learning plumbing project.

This project will be done in the Introduction to Ag Mechanics and Intermediate Ag Mechanics courses, which have roughly 550 students amongst all three high schools. GAR Bennett also outfitted each of those students with a hat. Additionally, they interviewed the teachers, discussing what this means for the ag mechanics department and why/how ag education is such an important part of a student's education.

In the future, GAR Bennett wants to work with the ag mechanics department to set up industry tours for students during distance learning, and offered to be guest speakers in the ag mechanics classes. We are so grateful for this opportunity provided by GAR Bennett and for the support from the community. 📞



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Kings County Farm Bureau and the Central California Intelligence Center present

Behavioral Threat Assessment: Preventing the Active Shooter

Wednesday, April 14, 2021, 8am - 5pm

Kings County Farm Bureau, 870 Greenfield Ave., Hanford

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to teach an evidence and research based behavioral threat assessment methodology to equip law enforcement and security stakeholders with the skills and tools necessary to identify potentially violent individuals, assess the risks they pose of engaging in targeted violence, proactively manage the risk, and prevent violent attacks that include active shooter and mass casualty events.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Fundamentals of behavioral threat assessment;
- Threat identification, including warning behaviors which potentially indicate a subject is on the pathway to violence to carry out a targeted violent attack; and
- Application of behavioral threat assessment techniques in a variety of contexts and environments, including, but not limited to, the workplace, schools, places of worship, public spaces, and other potentially vulnerable areas in the community.

REGISTRATION:

There is no registration fee. Travel/per diem expenses are the responsibility of the attendee. Register by calling the KCFB office at (559) 584-3557, or email kcfb@kcfb.org.

CERTIFICATE:

This course is POST certified under plan N/A, 1279-22316-20-009. STC# 10322-82703. CCIC/SACRTAC will supply a certificate of completion at the end of the course. This course is eligible for 8 EMS (EMT's & Paramedics) Continuing Education Units (CEU's) at no charge. CEUs are also available for RNs, LVNs and CNAs.

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Ed Needham 559-977-7282

"Hurtado" continued from page 1

Resiliency Act of 2021. KCFB supports the proposed legislation that would help restore the state's water delivery infrastructure. Up to \$785 million would fund repairs to the Friant-Kern, Delta-Mendota and San Luis canals, as well as the California Aqueduct – California's main state and regional water conveyance infrastructure.

Last year, Gov. Newsom vetoed Hurtado's first draft of the bill, but she vowed during the round table discussion not to give up on getting the revised version passed. She encouraged those in attendance to step up their efforts by being vocal proponents of the needs of local farmers.

"The bottom line is that we, as a region, need to be more effective at communicating with Sacramento," she said. "We need advocates for the Valley at the statewide level. We need representation. The political courage isn't there for people to do the right thing and solve the problems."

Referring to the years-long fight over water being prioritized to save the Delta smelt rather than irrigate Valley crops, she said the prevalent attitude held by too many in Sacramento towards what they call "big ag" makes her angry.

"We forget about the most important species of all, and that's the human species – the humans that live here in the Central Valley and that feed the state," Hurtado said. "We feed the people who are complaining about us." 🐦

If passed, SB 559 will help to:

- Provide affordable, clean water to at least 31 million people in the state, including approximately 1.25 million people living in disadvantaged communities served by the Central Valley Project (CVP) and 3/4 of all disadvantaged communities that receive some or all of their water from the State Water Project (SWP).
- Irrigate nearly 2.5 million acres of farmland that receive water from the CVP and over 750,000 acres of farmland that receive water from the SWP.
- Maintain the state's \$3 trillion (2019) economy, protect thousands of jobs annually and create hundreds of new state jobs each year.
- Bolster California's resilience to the impacts of climate change by helping local public water agencies to develop additional sources of water supplies, recharge groundwater basins, generate renewable energy and reduce reliance on water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta in dry years.
- Support critical habitat and ecosystem restoration efforts already underway to protect California's threatened and endangered species.

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Kings County Rural Crime Report

Rural Crime Unit investigating copper wire and chemical thefts

Contributed by Task Force Supervisor Rod Shulman

The Kings County Rural Crime Unit has seen a rise in copper wire theft this month. We have either taken the initial report or followed up on reports taken by our patrol staff. During most of these investigations, we have found the wire stolen was from pumps which weren't utilized during the winter months. We have had little to no evidence in all of these investigations. Other than tire and shoe impressions, we have no other investigative leads. We have checked the local recycle yards in Kings, Tulare and Fresno counties with no luck identifying a suspect.

Our unit has also conducted a couple of chemical thefts this month. Stone Land was the victim of two separate chemical thefts for a loss of about \$3,000. Toor Farming had over \$ 56,000 dollars worth of chemicals stolen from a shop in the area of 15th and Kansas Avenue. We are not sure if the suspects are the same in these investigations. We do have a picture of the suspect from Toor Farming and will send this picture out to the farmers and ranchers on our email list. Once again, we have little to no evidence to assist us in locating the suspects other than video surveillance pictures.



Last month, I wrote about bee boxes that we took possession of while trying to find the owner. That article and the monthly email we sent out assisted in locating the owner. We were contacted by the owner who was asked about bee boxes from a local apiary owner. The bee keeper described the bee boxes and stated they were dropped in the wrong location. They were returned to the owner. I would like to thank Allen Carroll for his assistance with these boxes.

We want to remind everyone to call us or Kings County Dispatch if you see any suspicious activity. Also remember that Smart Water CSI can be purchased from the Kings County Farm Bureau, and OANs (owner applied numbers) are available to protect your property. If you need an OAN or equipment stamped, please give any one of us a call. Thank you for your assistance and continued support. 🐝

**Task Force Supervisor
Rod Shulman:**
559-469-4004

Detective Carlos Santos:
559-904-6893

Detective Kody Holt:
559-362-8928

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 An advertisement for Pacific AG Insurance Agency, Inc. featuring a photograph of the agency's brick building. The text includes:

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What employers need to know about California's new COVID-19 paid sick leave law

Courtesy of Barsamian & Moody, the Employer's Law Firm

A new paid sick leave law relating to COVID-19 took effect in California on March 29. Senate Bill 95 seeks to bridge the gap between the various supplemental sick leave benefits enacted last year in response to COVID-19, the main ones which expired Dec. 31, 2020. In reality, the new law overly extends the expired supplemental sick leave laws applying retroactively to more employers and for broader qualifying reasons. Here is a summary of the most important information employers need to know about SB 95.

Do I have to comply if I run a small business?

Yes, employers with 25 or more employees are covered by SB 95. California's last supplemental paid sick leave law only applied to companies with more than 500 employees in the US. This is a huge expansion.

What reasons qualify an employee for leave under this law?

While many employers will be familiar with the

reasons for leave under last year's laws, this new bill expands the qualifying reasons for leave. An employee who is unable to work or telework for an employer is entitled to leave under this new law for any of the following reasons:

1. The employee is subject to a quarantine or isolation period related to COVID-19 as defined by an order or guideline of the California Department of Health (CDPH), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), or a local health officer with jurisdiction over the workplace.
2. The employee is advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19.
3. The employee is attending an appointment to receive a vaccine against COVID-19.
4. The employee is experiencing symptoms related to the COVID-19 vaccine that prevents the employee

from being able to work.

5. The employee is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and is seeking a medical diagnosis.
6. The employee is caring for a family member who is subject to quarantine or isolation order or guideline of the CDPH, CDC, local health officer or health care provider.
7. The employee is caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed or otherwise unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19 on the premises.

How much leave is available?

Employees that are considered "full time" or employees who worked or were scheduled to work on average, at least 40 hours per week during the two weeks preceding the date the employee began leave are entitled to 80 hours of COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave.

Employees who did not qualify for the full 80 hours

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are still entitled to leave in a pro rata amount to be determined using various calculations based upon the number of hours worked. An employee who has a normal weekly schedule is entitled to paid leave hours equaling the total number of hours they are normally scheduled to work over two weeks. An employee who works a variable number of hours is eligible for leave time equal to 14 times the average number of hours the employee worked each day in the six months before the leave date, or if having worked less than six months, using average hours worked each day over the entire period of employment.

Employees who used supplemental COVID-19 sick leave last year are entitled to a full new allotment of supplemental paid sick leave for 2021 under SB 95.

At what rate is the leave paid?

For exempt employees, supplemental paid sick leave should be calculated in the same manner as the employer calculates wages for other forms of paid leave time. For non-exempt employees, the paid sick leave shall be paid at the highest of the following rates:

1. The regular rate of pay for the workweek in which the employee uses COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave, whether or not the employee actually works overtime in that workweek;
2. The rate calculated by dividing the covered employee's total wages, not including overtime premium pay, by the employee's total hours worked in the full pay periods of the prior 90 days of employment;
3. The state minimum wage; or
4. The local minimum wage.

This supplemental paid sick leave is capped at \$511 per day and \$5,110 in the aggregate unless federal legislation increases these amounts. The leave bank must be shown on the check stub, separate and apart from regular paid sick days. This requirement starts on the next full pay period after the law takes effect. If the pay is based on variable hours or part-time hours, the employer can initially note that by indicating "variable" on the check stub. But, when an employee requests to use leave, the employer must update the calculation.

What about other paid sick time or Cal/OSHA exclusion pay?

An employer shall not require a covered employee to use any other paid or unpaid leave, paid time off, or vacation time provided by the employer to the covered employee before the covered employee uses COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave, or in lieu of COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave. However, employees who are excluded from the workplace due to COVID-19 exposure under the Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards may be required to exhaust their COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave under this new law prior to receiving any exclusion pay.

For what period of time does COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave apply?

The law will apply retroactively to Jan. 1, 2021 and will expire Sept. 20, 2021.

An employee may request (either orally or in writing) and be paid retroactive payment for qualifying leave taken between Jan. 1 and March 29, 2021, that was not compensated by the employer in an amount equal to or greater than required by this law. The number of hours paid retroactively count toward the total number of hours available to the employee.

Obviously, this creates an extreme burden on employers who did not meticulously track the reason for every employee absence since Jan. 1, 2021. Expect that many employees will be asking for retroactive pay, and that you will have to try to determine if they are eligible or not. In light of the fact that plaintiff's attorneys will be looking to file lawsuits over this issue, it will be better to err on the side of caution in this issue.

What this means for employers

Just like last year, employees must request to use their COVID-19 sick leave, either orally or in writing. Employers should have a policy in place for employees to request use of their COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave. Employers should familiarize themselves with the new qualifying reasons for leave. Employers should also ensure that they update their payroll software to include on the paystub the COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave separately from regular paid sick days.

Employers are required to post a notice to employees of the law and the availability of supplemental paid sick leave in a conspicuous place. We recommend the same location as your other required postings such as a breakroom or handwashing station.

For additional information, the full text of SB 95 can be read online. 📄

"VFB SHARE" continued from page 1

by a California Resource Conservation District grant awarded to Kings, Madera and Tulare county farm bureaus to develop farm demonstrations and an online resource hub for specialty crop producers in the South Valley.

"We're excited to provide this unique learning opportunity to our Farm Bureau members," said KCFB Executive Director Dusty Ference. "The workshops will educate growers about the latest technologies in specialty crop production through the use of virtual and live platforms, and will allow them to ask questions and share ideas."

The April 29 demonstration on pheromone disruption and orchard sanitation will focus on mating disruption using the technology of puffers, and other integrated pest management solutions being used on fig and almond orchards. The use of "puffers," or pressurized aerosol cans that dispense pheromones, can reduce insecticide sprays; using the technique on specialty crop acreage could make a big impact. Sex attractants called pheromones are chemicals that female moths give off to attract males for mating. The attractants confuse males so that they cannot find the real females, thereby reducing the codling moth population.

The demonstration will be followed by a live Q&A session.

The April 29 event will take place from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Please visit vfshare.org to register for this free workshop. 📄

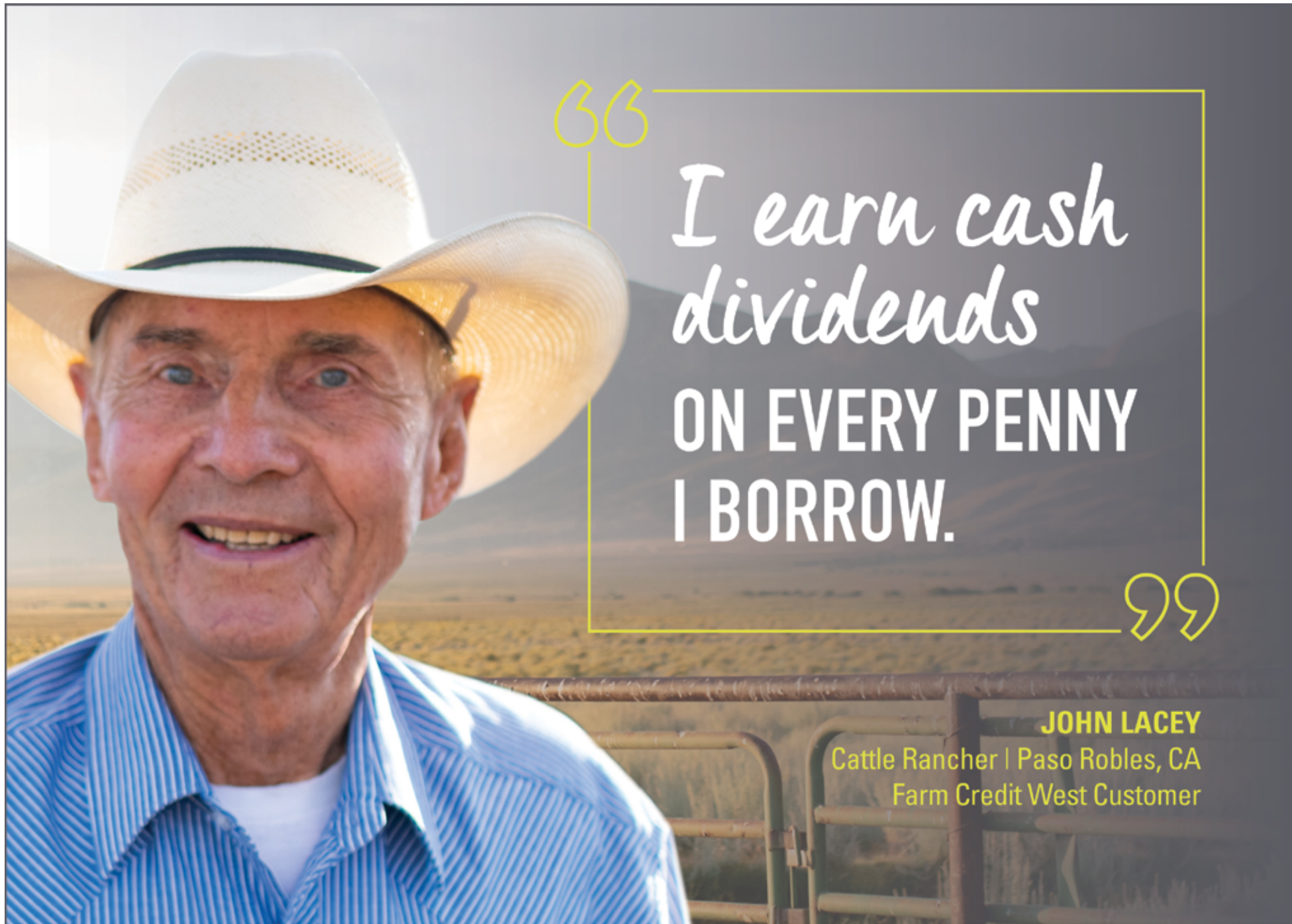
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