

INSIDECROP REPORT
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Strong Milk Prices Drive Kings County to Higher Farm Value in 2022

The latest county agricultural crop report reveals a diversified but challenged agricultural sector

By Catherine Merlo

Milk held its place as the top-dollar agricultural commodity in Kings County last year, while fruit and nut crops saw the largest decline in value.

Higher prices lifted milk's value to almost \$1 billion for 2022, helping push Kings County to a 10.7% increase in the gross value of all agricultural crops and products over 2021.

That update comes from the 2022 Annual Agricultural Crop Report for the County of Kings, released Sept. 19, 2023, by County Agricultural Commissioner Jimmy Hook.

Overall, Kings County's ag value – supported by more than 90 crops and ag products -- rose to nearly \$2.6 billion.

The local dairy industry saw 2022 milk prices average \$26.30 per cwt. compared to \$19.10 the previous year. Milk has been Kings County's No. 1 ag commodity since 1996, when it surpassed cotton as the top farm product.

At the same time, lower production and weaker prices among fruit and nut crops, especially tree nuts, contributed to the county's largest farm-value



decrease in 2022. This sector's value fell 16.4% to just over \$612 million, a sizable reduction from 2021's \$732 million.

While 2022's total gross value of \$2.6 billion exceeded the previous year's by some \$250 million, Hook expects to see a drop in values for 2023.

"It's important to note that, although gross values are up, growers are seeing increased costs across the board, from fertilizers and chemicals to labor and machinery," said Hook, Kings County Ag Commissioner since 2017. "We expect to see a decrease in the next report, driven by lower commodity

"Crop Report" continued on page 3

Ag Commissioner's Compliance Report



Jimmy Hook,
Agricultural
Commissioner/Sealer

How the Inspectors Get Inspected

By Janet Eckles

Pesticide Regulation in California is not a new concept, and in 1972 it became a joint responsibility of the Director of the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) and County Agricultural Commissioners (CACs). DPR works closely with CACs, who are the primary local enforcement



agents for pesticide laws and regulations. One way the Kings CAC provides this enforcement is by conducting different types of inspections relating to the use of pesticides. Our inspectors are out daily all over the county performing such inspections. When you as a grower obtain either a Restricted Materials or Operator Identification Permit you are authorizing the Kings CAC staff access to your permitted sites for inspection or evaluation for applications. Most of you have had some type

"Inspectors" continued on page 8



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Executive Director

Dusty Ference
dusty.ference@kcfb.org

Farm Life Advertising

Breanna Larman
blarman@kcfb.org
(559) 584-3557

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Beth Greene

CFBF District Representative

Brian Medeiros

Contact

870 Greenfield Ave., Hanford, CA 93230
Phone: (559) 584-3557
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2022 CROP REPORT



“Crop Report” continued from page 1

prices, fallowed land due to uncertainty of water and the natural disasters of rain and flooding that occurred earlier this year.”

The crop report also confirmed the importance of exports to the local farm industry. Kings County ag commodities made their way to 50 countries last year. Among the top destinations were China, India, Japan, Australia and Saudi Arabia. The county’s leading farm exports were pistachios, alfalfa, plums, almonds and cherries, Hook said.

With the 2022 numbers, Kings County holds these rankings in farm-related output among California counties:

- #8 in overall agricultural production;
- #1 in cotton lint, cottonseed production and wheat production;
- #3 in apricot, peach, plum and tomato production;
- #4 in corn, milk, cream, pistachio and silage production;
- #5 in cherry production.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Despite the overall decline in value among nut crops, **pistachios** held the No. 2 spot among the county’s ag commodities for the third consecutive year. The green-nut crop brought in nearly \$229 million for 2022.
- **Livestock and poultry** products gained the largest value increase among the county’s various ag sectors. Due to increased milk prices, Hook said, this sector rose an impressive 36.8% to total more than \$270 million in value.
- **Field crops** grew by nearly 27% to reach a total value of nearly \$543 million. That was due to higher per-unit values for many commodities in this sector. In all, field crops were harvested on 598,085 acres. Among the field-crop standouts:
 - **Alfalfa hay**, which totaled over \$67.5 million in value, well above 2021’s \$46 million. Although Kings County growers harvested 1,554 fewer acres of

the crop than in 2021, alfalfa hay’s value soared with an average per-ton price of \$372 last year. That compares to just \$248 per ton during 2021.

- **Corn silage**, another crop that benefitted from higher per-ton prices, which reached an average \$103.60 compared to \$69.60 the previous year.
- **Pima cotton**, whose harvested acres expanded to 42,388, well above the 37,561 acres picked in 2021. The long-staple fiber accounted for \$156.69 million in value for Kings County last year. Overall, cotton –including Pima and Acala lint and seed -- rose to the No. 3 spot among Kings County ag commodities, with a dollar value of nearly \$193 million.
- **Sorghum silage**, which saw a \$5.343 million rise in value over 2021. Totaling \$16.164 million, this field crop saw an improved year. That was partly due to an increase in harvested acres, to 10,088, and a significant rise in prices, which averaged \$79.60 per ton. That compared to the \$56 average price received in 2021.
- **Wheat for grain**, which more than tripled its value from the prior year. Kings County producers harvested 14,766 acres of the grain, an increase of 8,066 from 2021. Moreover, they saw higher average prices of \$341 per ton, a sharp jump from \$233 the prior year. Wheat’s total value skyrocketed to \$18.530 million last year, well above 2021’s \$5.932 million.

- **Vegetable crops** also saw an upturn in value. Driven largely by increases in per-acre production of processing tomatoes and higher prices, this sector’s value rose by nearly 14% to reach almost \$215 million. Processing tomatoes alone accounted for \$177.5 million of that.
- **Seed-crop** value more than doubled to reach over \$12.5 million, spurred by increased production acreage. Harvested acres reached 8,591 from crops that included asparagus, non-certified barley, certified cotton, lettuce, onions, certified triticale and certified wheat.
- **Plums and apricots** showed some of the strongest performances among fruit and nut crops. Plums accounted for over \$55 million, pushed higher by prices of \$3,100 per ton. That was a sharp increase over 2021’s \$1,400 price. Apricots rose to nearly \$11.7 million in value, largely on higher per-ton prices of \$2,180, well above the \$1,440 average in 2021.
- **Tree nuts**, while still among Kings County’s highest-valued crops, reflected the impact of expanded acreage, greater bearing production of recent years and pressure of larger supplies. Those factors helped lead to lower prices.
 - **Almonds**, including nuts, hulls and shells, declined in value across the board. Harvested acres rose 1,607 to reach 38,754. Most noticeable was the per-ton drop in almond nut prices to \$3,080, down \$930 from year-earlier levels. That led to a final value of \$121.7 million



Turkey Inventory

Dec. 2022 Number of Head: **64,387**
 Dec. 2021 Number of Head: **493,630**

TOP 10 COMMODITIES in 2022

1. Milk \$999,866,000
2. Pistachios \$228,785,000
3. Cotton \$192,811,000
4. Tomatoes \$177,492,000
5. Cattle & Calves \$151,274,000
6. Almonds \$132,323,000
7. Corn, Silage \$123,941,000
8. Alfalfa, Hay \$67,540,000
9. Wheat, Silage \$60,112,000
10. Plums \$55,245,000

TOP 10 COMMODITIES 50 YEARS AGO, in 1973

1. Cotton \$85,998,000
2. Cattle & Calves \$39,238,000
3. Milk \$35,390,000
4. Alfalfa, Hay \$20,227,000
5. Barley \$15,708,000
6. Turkeys \$9,287,000
7. Lettuce \$7,334,000
8. Wheat \$6,004,000
9. Safflower \$5,573,000
10. Corn, Silage \$5,028,000

COMMODITIES GROWN & EXPORTED FROM KINGS COUNTY IN 2022



Alfalfa, Allium cepa, Almond, Apricot, Asian pear, Asparagus, Blueberry, Cherry, Clementine, Cotton, Garlic, Grape, Grapefruit, Kiwi, Lemon, Mandarine, Nectarine, Onion, Orange, Peach, Persimmon, Pistachio, Plum, Pluot, Pomegranate, Pummelo, Satsuma mandarin, Sudan grass, Yucca

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for the county’s almonds last year, a decrease of \$57 million.

- **Pistachios** didn’t fare quite as badly, although they too lost value, dropping more than \$39 million to total \$228.79 million for 2022. Harvested acreage for pistachios has surpassed almonds, with pistachios now accounting for 43,454 acres.
- **Walnut** production continued its painful decline. Per-ton prices fell to \$910 vs. \$1,740 in 2021. Harvested acreage shrank to 1,401. Total walnut value plummeted to \$29.8 million, a sharp drop from the previous year’s \$62 million.
- **Apiary products** saw a small increase of 2.2%, or \$425,000, to reach just over \$20 million in total value to Kings County.
- **Livestock and poultry** inventories saw their value decline by 19.4%, due primarily to fewer turkeys sold and lower cattle and calf prices.

You can find the full 2022 crop report here:

<https://www.countyofkings.com/home/showpublisheddocument/32164/638307941453970000>.

Exciting things happening this fall

By Breanna Larman



Breanna Larman

What do you call a running turkey? Fast Food.

On October 21st I put my decorating skills to the test at the Salute to Ag dinner. KCFB highlighted the top 10 crops in Kings County published in the 2022 Crop Report. Each of the top 10 commodities were displayed with pride filling our tablescape with the bounty of Kings County agriculture.

Although this was my third year of having a hand in planning our Harvest Classic golf tournament this is my first time completing the event from start to finish. We were able to sell out 35 teams, maxing the capacity of the course, a month before the event. A huge thank you to all of the players, sponsors, and committee members that made this year such a

success. We are lucky to have the support of a hands-on board of directors and committee. On October 12th, our membership committee met for the second round of our membership drive. These two mornings of calls resulted in new and renewed members working toward our annual membership goal of 101%.

Now that Harvest Classic 2023 is over, I have shifted focus to Annual Meeting. Happening Thursday November 16th at the Carnegie Museum, we are excited to spend the evening looking back on our achievements in 2023 and ahead to our plans for 2024. Also, that evening, we are thrilled to introduce our new President, Vice President, Secretary/ Treasurer, and Assistant Secretary/ Treasurer. These officers will play a vital role in leading Farm Bureau and our efforts from 2023-2025.

On December 1st I am headed to Reno, Nevada to attend my first California Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers State Conference. Here I will get to attend classes, workshops, speaker sessions and fellowship with Farm Bureau staff and volunteers from all over the state of California. 🙌

2024 Scholarship Applications are open

Kings County Farm Bureau has long been a proud supporter of agriculture education, and invests in the industry's future leaders by awarding



scholarships to graduating high school seniors each year. The window for the class of 2024 to apply for next year's scholarships is now open, and applications can be found at kcfb.org/scholarships. Since the start of KCFB's scholarship program in 2007, the organization has awarded more than \$100,000 to deserving students. Scholarships are awarded to qualified students who plan to further their education at a two- or four-year accredited college, university or vocational institute and pursue a career in agriculture. The recipients are selected based on academic achievement, extracurricular activities, determination, leadership skills and a commitment to a career in agriculture.

Scholarship applications are being accepted until 4:30 p.m. on March 1, 2024. More information, qualifications and applications are available on our website, kcfb.org/scholarships. 🙌



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The first place winners of our 2023 tournament with a score of 47.59 were from UPL. Pictured from left to right: Shane Bickner, Robert Smith, Jordan Bickner, Zach Bickner.

Thank You

to everyone who participated in last month's Harvest Classic Golf Tournament. We would like to give a special thanks to **J.C. Lansdowne**, our Presenting Sponsor, and to all the sponsors and golfers that helped make this year's tournament a success. We had the biggest tournament to date with 138 players!

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The second-place winners of our 2023 tournament were from 4C Global. Pictured from left to right: Anthony Sousa and Drew Domres. Also on the team but not pictured, Johnny Rivera and Julian Sandoval.



The third-place winners of our 2023 tournament were from Stoneland Company. Ron Barba, Dominic Peluso, James Patton, Jerred Barba.





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AG NEWS IN BRIEF

FIVE CANDIDATES FOR KINGS COUNTY DISTRICT 5 SUPERVISOR RACE

As Kings County prepares for the Presidential Primary election on March 5, 2024, a spotlight has found the District 5 Supervisors race. Long-time incumbent Richard Fagundes will have his hands full this election as four challengers have pulled papers to run for his seat. Those candidates are David Ayers, Adam Medeiros, Tyler Pepe, and Robert Thayer. Kings County District 5 covers the northeast portion of Hanford and continues North and East to the County line. Also up for election this year is the District 2 Supervisor. Incumbent Richard Valle is unopposed in 2024 for that seat. District 2 covers Southern Kings, including Avenal, Kettleman City, Corcoran, and as far North as Home Garden.

CALIFORNIA TAKES STEPS TO GRANT RESIDENCY TO CURRENTLY UNDOCUMENTED FARMWORKERS

Signed by Newsom on October 8, 2023, SB 831 lays the groundwork for California to enter into an agreement with the U.S. Attorney General to create a pilot program designed to grant residency to undocumented farm workers. Taking effect in January 2024, negotiations between California and the Attorney General's office are expected to go on for an extended period before the program is formally initiated.

WATER CONCERNS PROMPT NEW LIMITS ON GROWTH IN ARIZONA [LOS ANGELES TIMES]

Arizona's governor has announced plans to limit new construction in parts of the Phoenix area after a state analysis found there isn't enough groundwater to support all the planned growth in the coming decades. The announcement Thursday

by Gov. Katie Hobbs represents a significant shift for one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the country. It is expected to hinder development in some suburbs that have been springing up in the desert around Phoenix. State officials analyzed groundwater in the Phoenix area. They determined that the area's groundwater wasn't sufficient to supply all the projected water needs over the next 100 years. As a result, Arizona water regulators plan to stop issuing approvals for new developments in areas that depend entirely on groundwater pumping. The announcement comes as Arizona also deals with cuts in water supplies from the Colorado River, which is over-allocated and has been sapped by more than two decades of drought worsened by climate change.

CDFA'S UPDATE ON VSV

According to an October 20, 2023 report, CDFA has confirmed 12 Vesicular Stomatitis Virus (VSV) cases in the South Valley. 9 cases in Fresno, 2 in Tulare, and the newest in Madera County. Since the outbreak's start (5/17/2023), 228 VSV-affected premises have been identified (74 confirmed positive, 154 suspect) in 3 states: California, Nevada, and Texas. Two hundred twenty-four (224) of these premises have had only equine species clinically affected, three (3) premises have had clinically affected cattle (San Diego County and Santa Barbara County, California), and one (1) premises has had clinically affected rhinoceros (San Diego County, California). 🐾

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“Inspectors” continued from page 1

of interaction with our inspectors during this process.

Kings CAC inspectors conduct many different types of pesticide inspections and not all of them have the same requirements, however they are all bound by pesticide laws and regulations. The types of inspections done on the agricultural side are Pesticide Use Monitoring Inspections (which may or may not include mix & load inspections), Field Fumigation Inspections, Commodity Fumigation Inspections, and Field Worker Inspections. On the non-ag side, we conduct Structural Use Monitoring Inspections and Structural Fumigation Use Monitoring Inspections. We also perform an audit of the records that are required to be maintained. We perform these inspections as a follow-up on a violation or if a pesticide incident has occurred. Otherwise, the Department will inspect record audits on a 2-to-3-year rotation. Those audits are Pesticide Dealer Audits, Pest Control Advisor Audits, Pest Control Headquarter Inspections and Pest Control Headquarter Business Inspections.

Our inspectors are occasionally accompanied by DPR Enforcement Branch Liaison (EBL) while in the field. If you ever wonder why they are being accompanied by an EBL, it's because they are conducting oversight inspections on CAC staff. The purpose of the oversight inspection is to assess the CAC Pesticide Use Enforcement (PUE) program and to determine if CACs are conducting inspections correctly as well as properly enforcing pesticide laws and regulations. The oversight inspection will also assess the individual CAC inspector's knowledge of inspection criteria and how well they perform inspections. The information collected through oversight inspections will be used for the purpose of improving the CAC inspection program. The EBL is required to shadow the inspector and do a simultaneous inspection. However, they are not allowed to ask questions of the grower or business being inspected. They are only allowed to ask the inspector any questions that arise. They are looking to see how the inspector interprets the regulations.

Kings CAC offers compliance audits to assist growers and businesses with the requirements when any inspections are conducted. These audits help a grower/business to be aware and prepared for an inspection or pesticide incident that may occur on their property. They help to ensure that when our inspectors arrive at one of your sites with or without an EBL you will not have to be concerned about not being in compliance with pesticide laws or regulations. If you have any questions, please contact the Kings County Ag Commissioner at 559-852-2830. 🐾

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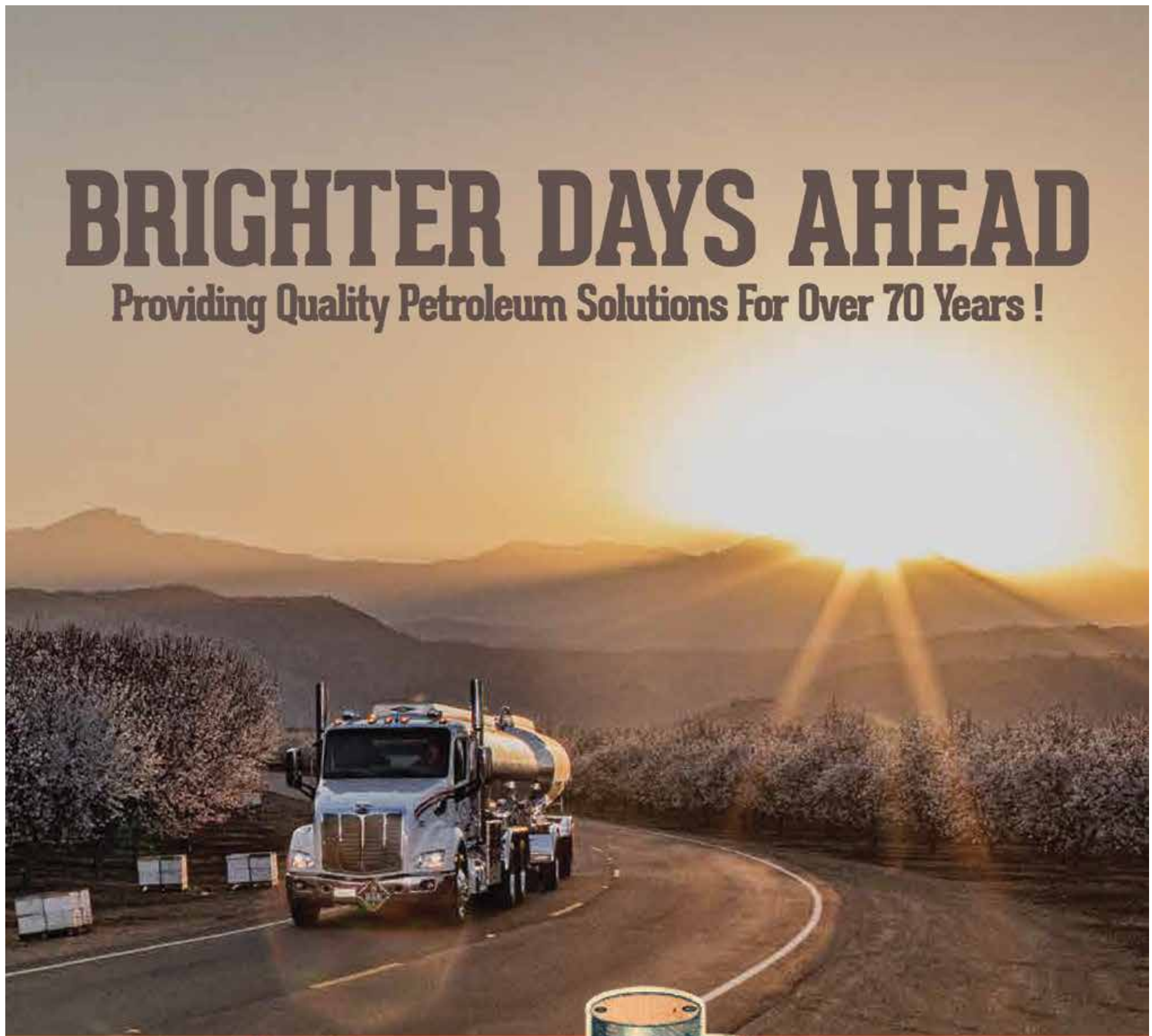
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Kings County Rural Crime Report

Contributed by Detective Dakotah Fausnett

Throughout the month of October, the Kings County Rural Crimes Task Force has been busy investigating several heavy equipment thefts, copper wire thefts, fuel thefts, hay thefts, trailer thefts and burglaries. We have identified and arrested a suspect responsible for numerous trailer thefts throughout the county. The suspect was found to be stealing different types of flatbed trailers from private properties and taking them to a recycle center and cashing them in for money. We were able to recover several trailers and return them to their rightful owners and have taken appropriate action with the recycling center. We also received information on several other possibly stolen trailers previously recycled by the suspect and have been actively working on finding the owners. If you have been victim of any trailer thefts over the last 6 months but have not made a police report, please feel free to contact us and we will help to identify if your trailer was stolen by our suspect.

We have been arresting looting suspects on a weekly basis in the Tulare Lake area. The water level has dropped significantly over the past few months and with it, lots of shops, equipment and homes that were flooded by the lake have now become accessible. If you are in the Tulare Lake area and see anything suspicious, feel free to report it to the Sheriff's Office.

There has been a rise in copper wire thefts in the last couple of weeks. Thieves are in a hurry to quickly try and turn a profit before the fields and dirt roads turn to mud and it becomes difficult to access the copper. Please report all thefts or vandalisms as soon as possible. It often takes multiple reports to come together to solve these kinds of cases and catch these thieves. It is imperative that if anyone knows of or hears of any buying or selling of obviously stolen equipment, to call the Sheriff's Office. If we do not receive calls from our members and community, we may not be away of certain crimes occurring in your area.

If you have any questions, feel free to call any of our unit members at any time. 📞



Detective Fausnett : (559) 639-8704

Detective Thomas: (559) 530-1701

Detective Holt: (559) 362-8928

Detective Coghlan: (559) 362-3078



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Hydro Jetting
Maintenance Schedules

Structures & Buildings
Overhead Barn Cooling
Soaker Systems
Ventilation
Sprinkler Systems
Premium Bedding Lime

