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Join the next VFB S.H.A.R.E. event on irrigation system automation

By Dusty Ference, Executive Director

Like every part of our society, technology is a fast-growing component of agriculture. From G.P.S. and laser-guided tractors and implements, to irrigation valves and pumps controlled from a smartphone and integrated pest management, technology is as important to farmers and ranchers as any other industry.

Earlier this year, Kings, Madera and Tulare County Farm Bureaus created Valley Farm Bureau Specialty Crop Hub and Rural Education, or VFB S.H.A.R.E., to showcase the innovative technologies in use on South Valley farms and ranches. The first grower-led demonstration day, which was held April 29, highlighted pheromone disrupter systems

and orchard sanitation practices used to control navel orange worms in figs, almonds and pistachios. According to the grower interviewed, pesticide applications have been reduced by up to half using these systems. It only improves yields while decreasing costs, but this technology also limits exposure to pesticides for farm employees. If that weren't enough, the system increases connectivity to groves and fields with additional resources like temperature, wind speed, rainfall, and soil moisture sensors viewable on a smartphone or computer.

This was the first in a series of demonstrations VFB S.H.A.R.E. will be producing over the next 18 months. The next demonstration on irrigation system automation will take place on July 15 at 11:30 a.m., followed by a live Q&A at 12:15 p.m. It will be hosted by KCFB Director Dino Giacomazzi.

"VFB S.H.A.R.E." continued on page 10



Erik Herman with Specialty Crop Co. explains the use of pheromone disrupter technology in the first VFB S.H.A.R.E. demonstration.

Ericka Simas named District 7 Dairy Princess

Contributed by Jackie Giacomazzi

Ericka Simas has been named the 2021-22 District 7 Dairy Princess. Outgoing Princess Jenna Searcy will crown Simas at an invitation-only coronation ceremony at the Raven Barn in Selma on June 25.

Ericka is the 17-year-old daughter of Rick and Jennifer Simas of Hanford. In the fall, she will be a senior at Lemoore High School. She is following in the footsteps of her two sisters, Rebekah Simas Coelho and Jolene Simas, both who served as District 7 princesses.

For the past four years, Ericka has been a District 7 "Milk Maid," helping at the Kings Fair, the Salute to the Dairy Industry Market Place in downtown Hanford, and at the Dairy Princess coronation dinners. She has been involved with the dairy industry for a long time, growing up on her family's dairy. She shows replacement heifers through Lemoore FFA and is on the dairy judging team. She is also a member of the citrus and cotton judging teams, opening and closing ceremonies team, and Ag Leadership. She has received many awards, including FFA Greenhand, Chapter and State Degrees, and an Academic Scholar Award. Ericka has been a member of the California Scholarship Federation throughout her high school career.

"Dairy Princess" continued on page 5



2021-22 District 7 Dairy Princess Ericka Simas



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KCFB leadership moving organization in a positive direction

By Dusty Ference, Executive Director



Dusty Ference

It has been awhile since I have been so excited about Team KCFB. The staff has grown to accommodate a third full-time employee. Our Director of Government and Member Relations continues to surpass expectations. The Board of Directors seems to have found new passion for the organization. Our members have more positive input about our work, and the community seems to be more interested in what we do than ever before. I cannot identify the point when the pendulum began to swing in this direction, and I can't speculate how far it will swing. However, I can share my excitement for the shift and tell you why I think it is happening.

All good things in life start with leadership, from improving your personal life to a more effective Farm Bureau. Someone or, more likely, a group of people set a course to achieve a goal and put in the work to stay that course.

At KCFB, that leadership has come from our officers and Board of Directors.

Is there always a set of written goals and dedicated steps to achieve said goals? No. What always does exist is the desire to improve our industry and a willingness to try new things. I was once told "there is a lot of value in just showing up," and that is what KCFB does every day. The team shows up ready to work, tries new things when necessary, and always strives to enhance, preserve and protect agriculture. KCFB's desire to improve is commendable and the key to success.

Agriculture is a complex industry. The work is hard, the days are long, and the pay isn't always good. The people who depend on our product three times a day, 365 days a year, seem to have targeted producers instead of appreciating the bounty they create. It is too easy to feel defeated while facing these factors, but working hard and pivoting where necessary will allow you the opportunity to feel excited about your organization just as much as I do about KCFB's direction. Despite the challenging year on the horizon, good things are in our future. We have to look for them and be ready to seize the new opportunity. 🙌

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Get your free Kings County Farm Stands map

As part of our ongoing commitment to educate every consumer in Kings County about the local food production industry, we are providing Kings County Farm Stand Maps free of charge to anyone who would like one. Designed by the KCFB Cultivators program, the map includes 20 area farm stand sites that offer farm-fresh products like milk, eggs, cheese, pistachios, sweet corn, and a bounty of seasonal fruits and vegetables.

You can pick up a copy of the map at our office, 870 Greenfield Ave. in Hanford, or at any of the Chamber of Commerce offices in Kings County. The map can also be viewed online at kcfarmstands.com 🙌

Member to Member *People, Products, Prosperity*

Garton Tractor

By Amy D. Fienen

Garton Tractor has been serving the ag industry since 1954, with four generations of Gartons committed to carrying on the family business that runs on honesty, integrity and treating others with respect.

The New Holland farm equipment dealership has 10 locations across California, with one in Tulare to serve Kings County farmers. From hobby farms to large farming operations, Garton Tractor represents the full line of New Holland products.

George Pierce, general manager of the Tulare branch, said that in addition to selling New Holland products, a brand that is recognized worldwide, Garton Tractor's service and parts departments help customers fix and maintain their equipment. With seven available service trucks, Garton's certified mechanics provide on-site service and are available 24 hours a day. They also have an on-site shop and a semi to transport machinery as needed.

Thanks to their ability to shuttle parts between their 10 stores, Pierce said that if a farmer orders a part before noon, they offer same-day delivery to Kings County.

"We strive to get our customers up and running within 24 hours if they have a problem," Pierce said.

Pierce said he got his start at the dealership in the service department, as did Bill Garton, the dealership's current president. As a result, they understand the value of excellent service.

"Every machine made by man will break down, and it's the dealer's ability to get that vehicle back up and running that sets them apart from mediocre dealers," Pierce said.

All Garton Tractor dealerships are members of their county Farm Bureaus, Pierce said, because they support their political activism and other efforts to advocate for California farmers.

"If we support the farmers, the farmers support us," Pierce said. "We work together with Farm Bureau for the betterment of the farmer."

Garton Tractor is located at 4780 K St. in Tulare and can be reached at (559) 686-0054. For more information, visit them online at gartontractor.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.



The sales team at the Tulare Garton Tractor dealership.

KCFB welcomes Administrative Specialist Breanna Larman

By Amy D. Fienen

Breanna Larman has wanted to work in the ag industry since she got involved in FFA during high school. She sees her position as the new administrative specialist at Kings County Farm Bureau as the start to the career she's been working towards.

A 2016 graduate of Exeter High School, Larman was active in FFA, where she spent two years on the officer team, showed pigs, was a member of the state champion citrus judging team, and was named 2014 Ag Student of the Year.

"FFA sparked my love for the ag industry and that's what prompted me to study agriculture at COS," Larman said.

Larman studied agribusiness at College of the Sequoias while competing with the school's equestrian team. She ran for Springville Rodeo Queen, Miss Tulare County and Miss Exeter. She worked for a large animal vet and for an engineering and farming operation before moving to San Diego, but after two years, felt the pull to return to the Valley where she could pursue a career in agriculture.

In addition to handling KCFB's administrative duties, Larman's responsibilities include program and event planning and assisting with growing and supporting membership.

Larman was exposed to Farm Bureau and its mission as a member of the 2015



Breanna Larman, KCFB's new administrative specialist

"Administrative Specialist" continued on page 10

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Ag Commissioner's Compliance Report



Jimmy Hook,
Agricultural
Commissioner/
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U.S. Cherry Exports to Japan

The role the county's quarantine inspection program plays in cherry exports

Contributed by Lynda Schrupf, Deputy Agricultural Commissioner-Sealer

Kings County growers export approximately 21 different crops scattered across 47 countries worldwide. The Agricultural Commissioner's quarantine inspection program plays a vital role in facilitating the exporting of these commodities. Cherries produced and packed in Kings County are sometimes exported to countries such as Japan.

Growers and packers wanting to export cherries to Japan can only do so when they meet all the importing requirements that Japan has placed on cherries as a commodity. The Kings County Department of Agriculture works cooperatively with USDA to implement the two different methods to get cherries certified for export to Japan. USDA has negotiated a voluntary program with Japan called "The Systems Approach" which growers and packer/shippers can utilize to have their cherry exports certified. The other option for a certified export is fumigation.

In the System Approach, all varieties of cherries produced in California, Oregon,

Washington or Idaho are eligible. Each year, cherry growers who register with USDA to participate are required to implement a rather involved insect trapping survey in their cherry orchards. The surveys must meet the placement and servicing time frame requirements, and Codling Moth catch thresholds; both of which receive quality control inspections from county agricultural commissioner inspectors and USDA.

Participating orchards must be trapped for Codling Moth at prescribed density by the time the fruit is ½ in diameter and continue until the last variety is harvested. Traps must be monitored weekly by a commercial licensed pest control advisor, not the grower. Codling Moth catches are recorded on a form developed by U.S. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). In California, if the Codling Moth catch exceeds the threshold of 5 in any single trap during any week, the orchard is disqualified for the current season from the Systems Approach.

However, the fruit from that orchard may be fumigated and certified for export to Japan in accordance with the work plan for fumigation. APHIS or County Ag Inspectors provide oversight monitoring of the entire trapping program, and are subject to inspection visits from Japanese agricultural officials.

Packing facilities participating in the systems approach have extensive requirements such as: registration of their facility, inspection of the cherries upon arrival at their facility, sorting and grading, additional inspections, phytosanitary export inspections, and detection of pests. Only cherries qualified for export to Japan under the Systems Approach, or fumigated fruit, are allowed to be in the packing rooms. Packing lines for export to Japan are segregated from other packing lines by barriers impervious to flying insects. USDA provides a list of the pests Japan considers to be under quarantine. They include: Codling Moth, Western

Cherry Fruit Fly, Peach Twig Borer, Oblique Banded Leafroller, Navel Orangeworm, and Light Brown Apple Moth.

Every load of registered qualifying cherries receives an "arrival inspection" performed by a county ag inspector and an additional inspection conducted during packing, but before final weight adjustment. An arrival inspection consists of a minimum sample of 600 cherries from every load, where they are crushed and run through a sugar solution process to look for insects and larva. Trapping data from the grower will be reviewed by the packing facility to verify the lot qualifies for the Systems Approach.

Under the fumigation option, the cherries must be fumigated in accordance with the work plan for fumigation.

Cherries must be packed, labeled and sealed with tape according to the work plan approved with Japan. The final step in this process is for the shipper to obtain a phytosanitary export inspection from Authorized Certification

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Kings County Dairywomen announce scholarship recipients

Contributed by Jackie Giacomazzi



Jenna Searcy

Each year, the Kings County Dairywomen award a scholarship to the retiring District 7 Dairy Princess for her dedication in promoting the Kings County dairy industry through appearances, classroom visits and other community events. This year was quite different for Princess Jenna Searcy since all events were cancelled and classes were taught remotely. However, Jenna still managed to spotlight the dairy industry through many parade appearances and video presentations to remote classrooms.

We thank her for her service through adversities and wish her good luck as she furthers her education at California State University, Fresno.

Additionally, the Kings County Dairywomen awarded scholarships to three Hanford High students. Congratulations to Isabella Cawley, Curtis Lefler and Joseph Pimentel. 🙌



Isabella Cawley



Curtis Lefler



Joseph Pimentel

"Dairy Princess" continued from page 1

She is community-minded and has been an active member of the Kings County Junior Fair Board, serving at the Kings Fair each year. She has participated in the California Ag Day in Sacramento and Kings County Farm Day.

Her goals for the future include attending college to major in ag business in preparation for a career in ag marketing.

When asked why she wants to be Dairy Princess, Ericka said, "I love the

dairy industry...I have seen first-hand the energy and hard work put into this industry and it inspires me. It is a dream of mine to be able to be their voice and not only advocate for them, but also be an educator and make a positive impact in my community."

The District 7 Dairy Princess Program is sponsored by the California Milk Advisory Board, as well as the District 7 Dairy Princess Committee and the Kings County Dairywomen.

For further information, you may contact Debbie Raven, Committee Chair, debiraven1@aol.com or Jackie Giacomazzi, Co-chair, jackiegiacomazzi@gmail.com. 🙌

"Ag Report" continued from page 4

Official and be issued a USDA Phytosanitary Export Certificate. In Kings County, we currently have 16 staff that are certified as ACOs.

County quarantine inspectors are extensively trained. They must first be licensed by the California Department of Food and Agriculture and have worked in the area of quarantine for a year, under the supervision of a senior quarantine inspector. Upon completion of that year, they are eligible to attend a week-long USDA training session culminating in an exam. Upon passing the exam, the inspectors are recognized as ACOs. This means that they have met the USDA qualifications to inspect commodities, identify pests, and interpret and apply phytosanitary ("phyto" meaning plant and "sanitary" meaning clean) rules and regulations. The ACO has the responsibility of inspecting the commodities being exported to assure that they have met the requirements of the importing country. Upon passing inspection, the ACO issues a phytosan-

itary certificate attesting to the compliance of the plant products' eligibility for export. At this point, the commodities can now be shipped abroad.

The words "California Grown" are a point of pride for growers throughout the state of California. These words, emblazoned across containers, packaging, and the fresh product itself, invoke the image of hard working growers producing the highest quality product possible. The Agricultural Commissioner's quarantine inspection program continues to play a major role in helping Kings County maintain its presence in the world market, helping the county provide the world with locally produced "California Grown" commodities, of which Kings County cherries are among the finest.

If you have questions about exporting your commodities or would like more information, please feel free to contact the Kings County Department of Agriculture, agstaff@co.kings.ca.us or (559) 852-2830. 🙌

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Kings County Rural Crime Report

Unit is eradicating multiple marijuana grows

Contributed by Task Force Supervisor Rod Shulman

The Kings County Rural Crime Unit has been busy with several investigations. In May, our assistance was requested by other agencies and units within our own agency. Members of our unit located the stolen trailer taken from Kwik Break after the initial investigation was conducted by CHP. With information sharing, we were able to identify the suspect and locate the trailer. The information we gathered was given to CHP to assist them in their investigation. Our unit also assisted our detective division with an investigation involving a suspect shooting at one of our patrol deputies. Our unit members were able to locate the firearm utilized by the suspect which he had dumped while fleeing. Finding the firearm was the missing piece to get a maximum sentence for the suspect.

Our unit assisted FSO with a homicide investigation where a suspect vehicle was identified leaving the crime scene. Rural Crime detectives located the vehicle after receiving a call from one of our local farmers. We were able to secure this vehicle and searched for the suspects in the immediate area. We didn't locate the suspects, but they were identified and evidence was collected from the vehicle to further the investigation. We received a call from one of our victims about a trailer that was stolen last year. We went with the victim to identify the trailer and it was one of two that were stolen from the same location.

Our unit has been busy with illegal marijuana grows as well. There are numerous grows throughout the county and we have yet to locate all of them. Three more illegal grows were located this month and will be eradicated.

If you know of or suspect an illegal marijuana grow in or around your area, please give any of us a call. We are only able to locate what we can and we need your assistance to find all of them. We have been fortunate to locate stolen property, suspects and illegal grows with your assistance. Thank you all for your help and continued support.

I would like to remind everyone to call our dispatch or one of us for assistance if you see any suspicious activity or vehicles. Please call any of our detectives if you have questions or need equipment stamped or a number assigned to you as part of our OAN program. SmartWater CSI is still available through the Kings County Farm Bureau. Call Dusty if you have any questions regarding this product. Once again, thank you for your support. 🙌



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Kings County asks Gov. Newsom to regulate pay for herders

With the support of Kings County Farm Bureau, the Kings County Board of Supervisors has voted to adopt a resolution asking Gov. Newsom to adopt a federal weekly hours work standard for sheep and goat herders in California.

With the passage of the ag overtime bill, AB 1066 in 2016, sheep and goat herder pay has increased by an economically unsustainable 50 percent. In 2015, the federal Department of Labor determined that herder work hours cannot be tracked because of the remoteness of the job, that 48 hours of work per week was a reasonable estimate, and that federal courts have upheld this determination as both reasonable and well supported by available evidence.

The production of sheep and wool are important to the economy of California with the state's wool production ranking first and sheep inventory ranking second in the U.S., and more than 3,500 family farms raising sheep and goats. In Kings County, sheep and goats are used for the important jobs of weed control and fire prevention.

"Farm Life" will update members as to possible action by Gov. Newsom on the resolution. 📩

"VFB S.H.A.R.E" continued from page 1

Like everyone else, agriculture producers are hungry for data, increased efficiency and safety. Farm Bureau is committed to helping educate our members about real-world technologies that can benefit their operations by introducing programs like VFB S.H.A.R.E.

You can watch the pheromone disrupter and orchard sanitation field demonstration, along with the question and answer portion, by visiting vfshare.org. If you have questions about what you've seen, they can be submitted via email and will be answered by the grower. More information about the July 15 demonstration is also available at vfshare.org. 📩

"Administrative Specialist" continued from page 3

Tulare County Farm Bureau Youth Leadership Class, where she had the opportunity to lobby in Sacramento, visit Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and attend various ag tours.

The experience Larman has had in the ag industry thus far has revealed a need for advocates to support its work, she said, and she's looking forward to being a part of KCFB's efforts.

"I see this job as an opportunity to share ideas, network and meet new people, and to feel like I'm making a difference," she said. 📩

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