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No drought relief in sight in winter forecasts

By Amy D. Fienen

Forecasters are in agreement that the Valley is in for a third winter of below-average precipitation, with no relief in sight for our drought-stricken state. It appears we're in for another winter of mild and dry conditions.

Both the Farmer's Almanac and Old Farmer's Almanac have released their 2021-22 winter weather predictions, and while they're in agreement that much of the country will be facing a "season of shivers" and a "frosty flip-flop winter," the West is looking at more of what we've seen the past two years with average temperatures and below-average rainfall.

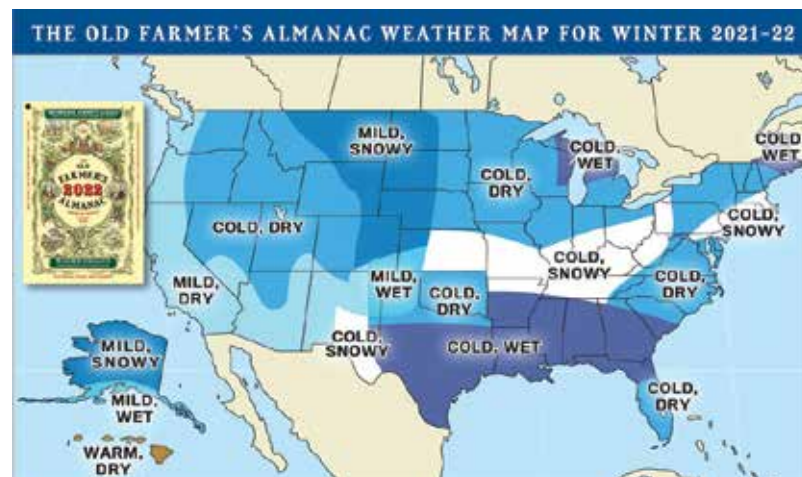
While there is a lot of speculation about the almanacs' reliability based on their use of secret formulas that rely on solar cycles, climatology and meteorology, both were sadly accurate in their predictions for a dry California winter last year.

The almanacs' predictions are in line with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) forecast as well. They're seeing a 70 percent chance of a La Niña winter for California between November and January.

We went to our local expert, meteorologist Brian Ochs with the National Weather Service in Hanford, for a regional winter forecast. For better or worse, his forecasts have proven to be quite reliable in recent years, and the bad news is that he's in agreement with the almanacs when looking at models for the upcoming winter.

"I don't anticipate much improvement in the current drought based on the forecast," he said. "There's a 60 percent chance that we'll see below-average precipitation for winter and spring."

"Drought" continued on page 10



Local forecasters and The Old Farmer's Almanac are in agreement that California is facing a mild and dry winter, with little hope for a break in the drought. Courtesy of the Old Farmer's Almanac

2020 Crop Report released Kings County sees slight decrease in crop values from previous year

By Amy D. Fienen

Kings County's 2020 Agricultural Crop Report was recently released, reflecting that agricultural crops and products produced a gross value of \$2.18 billion last year, down just 0.4 percent, or \$8.2 million from 2019.

Kings County Ag Commissioner Jimmy Hook reported that the crops which increased in value in 2020 include livestock and poultry products, vegetable crops, apiary products, and fruit and nut crops. Those that saw the largest decrease were field crops, livestock and poultry, and seed crops. Milk remains the county's top commodity with a value of \$7 million last year.



See page 11 for highlights of the 2020 Crop Report.

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It's Harvest Time!

By Dusty Ference, Executive Director



Dusty Ference

It's that time of year again when Kings County growers are reaping what they've sown. It is harvest time, and we are getting a break in the weather! That's not the only good news in the world today.

I'm talking to the growers that have finished tomato harvest and are near, if not done, with almonds. They can see the light at the end of the tree row with their walnuts and are copping silage and preparing for cotton harvest. Many things are going on right now, and as hectic as it is, we are at a great point in the year.

One of my favorite experiences each fall is seeing the optimism of growers. Even when they talk with a blue tone about the state of the industry, they all make plans for a new year. They are preparing fields, ordering trees, seeds, and transplants to do it again next year. If that isn't an example of eternal optimism, I don't know what is. More importantly,

it shows the resiliency and can-do attitude of the people that feed our world.

In the political arena, California agriculture experienced a significant win this month. AB 616, a bill that would have drastically changed voting requirements used to measure votes by laborers while considering unionizing, was vetoed last month. This veto was a win for California agriculture and the workforce, upholding the integrity of secret ballot voting

on one of our workers' most important issues.

With fall in the air, we are preparing for a reprieve in the on-farm workload and more time to spend with family and friends. With any luck, the Valley will get enough rain to keep tractors out of the field for December. One of our favorite ways to celebrate the changing season is by hosting the Harvest Classic Golf Tournament, which takes place on Oct. 11, a week earlier than in years past. A fun-filled day with great people and networking opportunities, this year's tournament is filling up fast, but we have room for a few more teams. If you would like to play, you can register online at kcfb.org or by calling our office at 584-3557.

Here's hoping that everyone's harvest comes to a fruitful and safe end and that planning for next year is joyous and exciting. 🍷

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Member to Member *People, Products, Prosperity*

Renewable Solar By Amy D. Fielen

Ninety percent of Renewable Solar's business comes from local farmers and dairymen, so their commitment to the ag industry runs deep. During a time when farming costs continue to rise, they are committed to helping customers reduce what they spend on electricity.

Since their founding in 2002, Renewable Solar has worked towards becoming a leader in the full-service development, construction, integration, installation and maintenance of solar electric systems, helping their customers achieve financially accessible energy independence.

President Dusty Howze partnered with Vice President Roland Stack after Stack met with Howze to pitch solar to his family. With his background as a general contractor, Howze had the skills to help expand the company beyond residential projects by taking on bigger jobs. They installed their first mega-watt project at Toss Farms, and while they still do residential and commercial solar projects, the majority of their installations are now for farmers and dairymen.

Howze said that their sales are doubling almost every year, which speaks to the adoption of the solar industry.

"Solar reduces electricity costs by 50 percent or more," Howze said. "An acre of solar will generate about \$50,000 a year in electrical value, so you're crazy not to plant some solar."

Renewable Solar is the only truly locally- and family-owned solar company in the area. From their office on

Grangeville Boulevard in Hanford, they employ local people who are accessible to their customers. They have their own team of installers, allowing them to offer competitive pricing as they're not marking up costs to pay for sub-contractors.

Howze said that while a competing solar business has to dispatch a technician out of Sacramento should a problem arise, Renewable Solar will have a local technician on the property the next day. When customers have questions about rate schedules and billing cycles, they can sit down with someone in the office and get the help they need. Once the installation of a project is completed, Renewable Solar maintains it by washing the panels and monitoring the reporting mechanisms.

"If there's a problem, there's a 98 percent chance we're going to know about it before the customer does," Howze said.

Renewable Solar has become one of the Valley's most trusted and respected solar companies because of their commitment to their customers.

"We have a competitive advantage in the way we run our business and how we do things," Howze said.

In September, Renewable Solar held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for their largest project to date. They installed an 11.6-acre system at Danell Brothers Dairy in Hanford that is estimated to generate more than \$650,000 in savings its first year. Over the life of the system, it's expected to produce more than \$20 million in savings over utility costs.

RENEWABLE SOLAR

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Renewable Solar held a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Danell Brothers Dairy last month to celebrate their largest project to date. Pictured left to right: President Dusty Howze, Danny Danell, Rance Danell, Denise Danell, Taylor Rewick, and RJ Danell.

Having spent most of his life in Hanford, Howze said that Renewable Solar supports Farm Bureau because Farm Bureau supports his biggest customers.

"I understand the value of this rural way of life and the value farmers and dairymen bring," Howze said. "Farm Bureau is out there working for our customers."

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. If your company would like to become a Friend of Farm Bureau, please call the KCFB office at (559) 584-3557. 🐾

KCFB AG NEWS IN BRIEF

Hurtado announces decision to hold SB 559

State Senator Melissa Hurtado (D-Sanger) was forced to pull SB 559 after deciding the bill didn't have a path forward during the current legislative session. The California State Assembly Appropriations Committee took action that rendered The State Water Resiliency Act of 2021 useless.

As introduced, SB 559 provided a blueprint for fully funding the repair of vital water delivery systems that provide drinking water to communities throughout California and water to sustain the state's leading agricultural economy.

KCFB supported SB 559 and shares Hurtado's disappointment that she had to hold the bill. We will continue to back her efforts to advocate for water infrastructure funding.

Ag organizations support veto of AB 616

KCFB joins other ag organizations in supporting Gov. Newsom's veto of AB 616, which would have eliminated the secret ballot process for voting on issues of union representation. CFBF rallied the farming community in opposition, and

protested the bill in a recent rally at the state capitol.

"The firm action taken by Gov. Newsom in vetoing 616 protects the sanctity of the secret ballot election. It means that strong-arm organizing tactics and coercion have no place in California agriculture," said CFBF President Jamie Johansson.

Californians lagging in water conservation efforts

As the state braces for a third year of drought, the State Water Resources Control Board announced last month that Californians have reduced their water usage by a paltry 1.8 percent. South Valley residents came in at an even lower 1.6 percent. This despite Gov. Newsom's request that residents reduce home water usage by 15 percent in July. With 90 percent of the state under drought conditions, warnings are sounding that south of Delta water providers could face an allocation of zero next year.

The State Water Resources Control Board is considering mandatory state-wide conservation orders if residents don't significantly improve their conservation efforts. 🐾





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Ag Commissioner's Compliance Report



Jimmy Hook,
Agricultural
Commissioner/
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Standardization Program: Ensuring quality fruits and vegetables make it to the consumer

Contributed by Steve Schweizer, Deputy Agricultural Commissioner-Sealer

In 1915, at the request of the fruit and vegetable industry, the California Legislature established minimum standards for all fresh fruits, nuts and vegetables to protect both consumers and industry from substandard commodities entering the channels of trade. Fast-forward more than 100 years, and over 30 commodities must now meet specific standards, while all others must meet the minimum standards established by the Food and Agricultural Code.

The goals of standardization include not only assuring that consumers are purchasing commodities that meet an acceptable quality, but also to protect and promote the fruit, nut and vegetable industries of California. The term "standards" in regards to fruit and vegetable inspection encompasses many things. Is the product of good quality? Is there bruising and/or damage from insects or disease? Is there other physical damage? Is it meeting the minimum size requirement? Is the product mature? Several commodities must be sampled, juiced and tested with a refractometer to determine if they are meeting the minimum sugar requirements specific to those commodities. Is the commodity packed in the legal containers required for shipping? Many commodities have standard containers as determined by the respective industry and prescribed in law. Finally, is the product properly labeled with the identity of the



Agricultural & Standards Inspector Shanna Robbins looks over freshly picked table grapes.
Contributed photo

product (common name), the responsible party, and the quantity (net weight or count).

What is the role of the agricultural commissioner in standardization? Annually in Kings County, approximately 15 commodities are inspected by agricultural and standards inspectors, either at the time of packing in the field, or at the various packing facilities located throughout the county. Commodities such as cantaloupes, cherries, table grapes, citrus, and broccoli, to name a few, are included in this list. The inspection work is now also year-round, with the addition of citrus now being packed in Kings County early fall through the spring.

Prior to 1992, the standardization program was entirely funded by the state general fund. Today, the program is funded entirely by industry, derived from a set container fee assessment. The revenue generated is distributed to the counties in the form of annual agreements.

In 1992, an advisory committee was established to provide recommendations and advice to the secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture on all matters pertaining to standardization. The committee is comprised of 13 voting members who have a financial interest in a commodity represented and meet twice a year.

If you have any questions regarding the standardization program, or are interested in becoming a member of the standardization advisory committee, please feel free to contact the Kings County Department of Agriculture at (559) 852-2830, or email us at agstaff@co.kings.ca.us.

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Kings County Rural Crime Report

Unit staying busy with theft investigations, marijuana grow eradications

Contributed by Task Force Supervisor Rod Shulman

The Kings County Rural Crime Unit stayed busy in August with several investigations. Additionally, we are receiving complaints of illegal marijuana grows and continue to eradicate them. We assisted our patrol division with several investigations, and took the initial report on several others. We also assisted Fresno County with the location of a diesel fuel suspect. This suspect, who resides in Kings County, was arrested for several fuel thefts in Fresno County. After receiving a complaint of an illegal marijuana grow in the Corcoran area, a search warrant was written and executed with the assistance of SWAT. The marijuana plants had been removed from the ground and were being processed. We were able to take all the marijuana being processed by the grower and he was arrested on drug-related charges.

Members of our unit received a call from JG Boswell regarding a homeless subject on one of their ranches in the area of 19th and Pueblo. Detectives Santos and Holt located the subject and he was removed without issue. We also assisted patrol with a stolen quad investigation at 14th and Hackett. Members of our unit talked to several homeowners in the area regarding the stolen quad. We received a phone call the next day about its location. It was returned to the owner and we are looking into a possible suspect that lives in the immediate area. We also located a trailer that was stolen out of Tulare County. This trailer was recovered by our unit and returned to the owner.

We are currently investigating the theft of a fertilizer trailer from Simplot. We have little to no investigative leads in this case. We are also investigating a forgery/fraud where suspects attempted to cash checks from Overland Stockyard. We have at least one suspect identified and are waiting on the banks for more information to complete the investigation. Our unit got a call from patrol to assist with a burglary to a shop at Mike Jackson Farms in Kettlemen City. Within



a couple of hours of arriving on the scene, we located the suspect vehicle and recovered all the stolen property. Three suspects were taken into custody, and admitted to the theft and possession of the stolen property.

If you see any suspicious activity or vehicles, please call our dispatch or one of us for assistance. The OAN program is still a service we provide to all farmers and ranchers. If you need equipment stamped, please call me or one of our detectives for an appointment. The Kings County Farm Bureau also has SmartWater CSI available for purchase. Contact Dusty at Farm Bureau for further information. Please also call us to report illegal marijuana grows. We can be contacted at the cell phone numbers to the left anytime for assistance. Thank you for your support. 🙌

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

Detective Carlos Santos:
559-904-6893

Detective Kody Holt:
559-362-8928

**Detective
Colten Verhoeven:**
559-469-6146



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ASSOCIATIONS

California Women for Agriculture	559-737-8899
Kings River Conservation District	559-237-5567

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Golden State Farm Credit	559-584-5401

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Tulare Lake Compost	559-840-4368

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Blair Ground Services	559-924-1276
Crop Production Services	559-584-5583
Diversified Crop Services	559-582-5644
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Lakeland Dusters	559-992-5716
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Renewable Solar	559-816-5088

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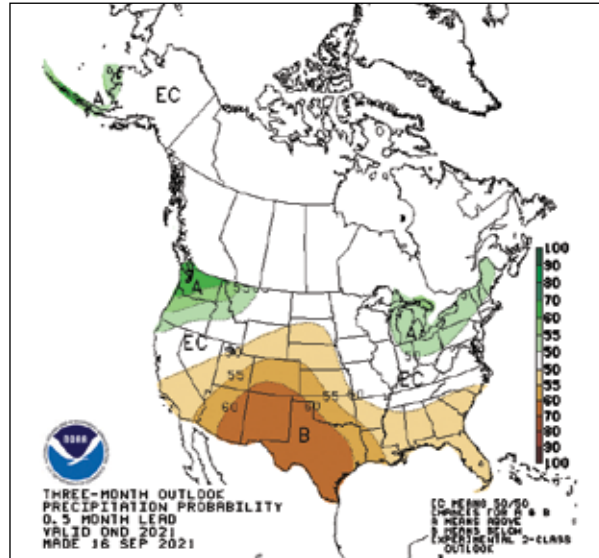
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Valley Ag Spraying

"Drought" continued from page 1

Since Jan. 1, Hanford has received only 3.62 inches of rain – 2.05 inches below average, and 2.36 inches were received in January alone. January is typically the Valley's wettest month, Ochs said, followed by December and March.

Ochs said models are showing that fall will remain warm and dry, with the first winter storm not expected until the second or third week of November. The arrival of cold temperatures prior to November is very unlikely, he said. Like the NOAA, Ochs predicts a 70 to 80 percent chance of a La Niña year, which means dry conditions for the southern half of the state.

During a time when 90 percent of the state is suffering from extreme drought conditions, this winter's forecast couldn't be any more discouraging. 🙄



This map from the Climate Prediction Center shows that California has a 50 to 60 percent chance of below-average precipitation from October through December of this year. The outlook is much the same through April 2022.

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2020 CROP REPORT

TOP 10 COMMODITIES in 2020

1. Milk \$7 million
2. Pistachios \$214 million
3. Cotton \$195 million
4. Cattle & Calves \$163 million
5. Almonds \$149 million
6. Tomatoes, processed \$126 million
7. Corn, Silage \$70 million
8. Livestock, Poultry \$60 million
9. Walnuts \$51 million
10. Alfalfa, Hay \$40 million

TOP 10 COMMODITIES 50 YEARS AGO, in 1970

1. Cotton Lint \$20 million
2. Milk \$18 million
3. Cattle & Calves \$15 million
4. Hay, Alfalfa \$14 million
5. Barley \$7 million
6. Cattle, Feed Yard Gain \$5 million
7. Cotton Seed \$5 million
8. Corn \$4 million
9. Sugar Beets \$3 million
10. Wheat, Grain \$3 million

COMMODITIES GROWN & EXPORTED FROM KINGS COUNTY IN 2020

Alfalfa, almonds, apricots, Asian pears, asparagus, blueberries, cherries, cotton, grapes, kiwifruit, nectarines, onions, oranges, peaches, pistachios, plums, pluots, pomegranates, sorghum, Sudan grass

KINGS COUNTY'S 2020 EXPORT TRADE PARTNERS

Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Fiji, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Vietnam

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KINGS COUNTY AG BY THE NUMBERS

- Kings County is home to **890,545** total acres. **817,372** of those acres are farmland, down from **818,082** in **2019**.
- The average length of the county's growing season is **296** days.
- Kings County has **50,000** acres registered as organic and **40** organically registered producers, processors and handlers.
- Since **1971**, Hanford has received an average annual rainfall total of **8.12** inches. The **2020** season produced a below-average **4.98** inches, making it one of the three driest year in the past decade.
- COVID-19 resulted in a huge hit for the local farmer's market, with the number of vendors falling from **100** to just **15**.

KINGS COUNTY AG *Hall of Fame*

Kings County is ranked:

- 1st among California counties in the production of cotton lint and cottonseed
- 2nd among California counties in tomato processing
- 3rd among California counties in the production nectarines and plums
- 4th among California counties in the production of milk, apricots, peaches and wheat
- 5th among California counties in the production of pistachios and silage
- 8th among California counties in overall agricultural production

THANK YOU

2020 will forever be remembered as the year of the "essential worker." Thank you to the Kings County farmers and ranchers who continued working to feed the world during a global pandemic. 🙏



COVID-19 Ag Employer Resources Forum

October 27, 2021
11:30AM - 1:00PM

Location: Kings County Farm Bureau
870 Greenfield Avenue
Hanford, CA 93230

FORUM TO INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING TOPICS

**COVID-19
UPDATES**

Testing & Vaccination Resources

**EMPLOYER
REQUIREMENTS**

Cal/OSHA Requirements

**BUSINESS
RESOURCES**

Business Loans
Grant Programs
Subsidies

FREE EVENT
INCLUDES LUNCH FOR PARTICIPANTS
To RSVP Please Call (559) 584-3557
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Funding is provided by Together Toward Health, a program of the Public Health Institute, through funding from a group of philanthropic organizations.

**TOGETHER
TOWARD HEALTH**

Photo credit: Hector Amezcua, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, UC Davis





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