

From the Ground UP



A quarterly publication of
the Sacramento County
Farm Bureau

Agriculture news from around the County— coming to you from farmers and ranchers...

County Dairies to Produce Cow Power

Dairy farmers in Sacramento County are working with the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) to produce renewable energy from cow manure. This year, Cal-Denier Dairy and Tollenaar Holsteins are installing anaerobic digesters that will capture methane gas from cow manure. The methane is converted into biogas which is then converted to renewable electricity in a generator. Dairy digesters have numerous benefits to the environ-

ment and the economy. They help in the reduction of greenhouse gases, improve air quality, and increase energy independence. The electricity generated will be used to run the dairy operation, while excess will be sold to SMUD, an additional source of revenue for the dairy operation. Digesters are a great example of the commitments that agriculturalists are making to protect the environment.

Immigration Reform Still Needed

With the failure of the Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill, which included AgJOBS, California farmers will face yet another harvest season uncertain of the available labor supply and not knowing if the fruit of their labor will even be harvested. It is imperative that AgJOBS becomes a reality, not only for farm workers, farmers, and ranchers, but for the American consumers that rely on our domestic food supply. AgJOBS would provide the agriculture industry with a stable work force and would

reform the current H-2A program. Ken Oneto, President of the Sacramento County Farm Bureau and farmer in Sacramento County, relies heavily on a reliable work force to harvest the ten different crops that he produces, “we need immigrant farm labor, the American people simply will not do this kind of work.” Oneto added, “It is not only important to agriculture, but to consumer safety that we have a stable work force.”

Dairy Water Quality Regulations Increase

Central Valley dairy producers will be facing new dairy water quality rules as they have now received the regulations adopted by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board on May 3. The General Order Waste Discharge Requirements for Existing Milk Cow Dairies will require the approximately 1600 dairy producers in the Central Valley to comply with additional regulations on top of those that are already in place. California dairy farmers already face the most stringent environmental regulations and the implementation of the General Order will increase the regulatory burden and costs of operating a dairy in and increases the risk of driving

dairy production out of state. Jon Tollenaar, of Tollenaar Holsteins in Elk Grove, feels that “the increased costs, such as the mandatory installation of monitoring wells, and increased paperwork due to the new discharge requirements will have an effect on all dairy operations, especially smaller dairies. Those 300-400 cow dairies face the same requirements as large dairies and have to spread those costs across a smaller operation.” Tollenaar has already seen a few small dairies in the area go out of business and he feels that the increased regulations will cause this trend to continue.

