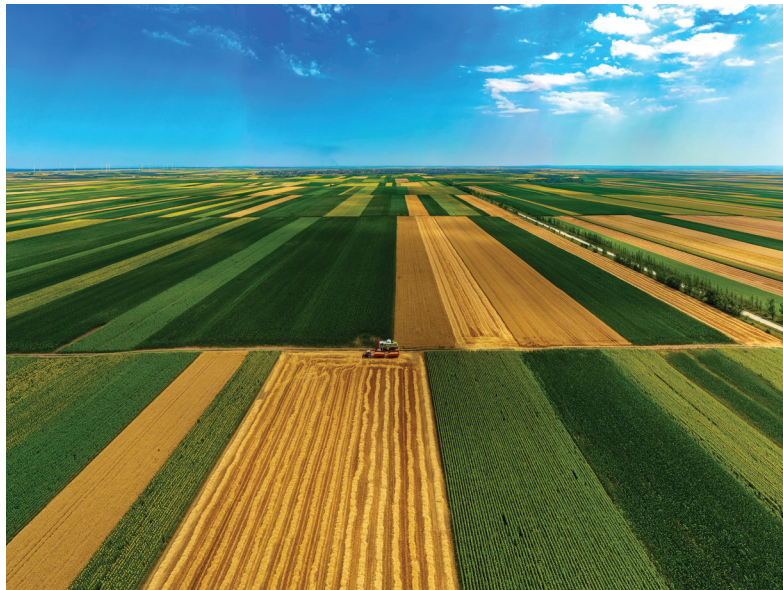


LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

2023

ESMERALDA SORIA, CHAIR



Assembly Committee on Agriculture

MEMBERS:

Hon. Devon J. Mathis, Vice Chair
Hon. Cecilia Aguiar-Curry
Hon. Juan Alanis
Hon. Jasmeet Kaur Bains
Hon. Damon Connelly
Hon. Heath Flora
Hon. Jacqui Irwin
Hon. Reginald B. Jones-Sawyer, Sr.
Hon. Carlos Villapudua
Hon. Jim Wood

STAFF:

Victor Francovich, Chief Consultant
Nicole Willis, Committee Secretary

MINORITY CONSULTANT:

Brent Finkel

ASSEMBLY AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

2023

ASSEMBLY BILLS

[AB 54 \(Aguiar-Curry\)](#) – Department of Food and Agriculture: research funding: winegrapes: smoke exposure. Held under submission in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This bill would have required the Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), upon appropriation by the Legislature in the Budget Act of 2023, to provide funding for research to investigate accurate measurement of smoke compounds in winegrapes and wine; methods to mitigate the damage to winegrapes and wine that can occur from exposure to smoke; and methods to prevent smoke damage to winegrapes and wine.

[AB 98 \(Aguiar-Curry\)](#) – Agriculture: cotton pests abatement districts: organization and establishment: authorized counties. On Senate Inactive File.

This bill would delete the authority to establish Cotton Pests Abatement Districts (CPAD) in the Counties of Orange, San Diego, and Ventura.

[AB 239 \(Wilson\)](#) – Avocado oil: regulations: standards of identity. Held under submission in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This bill would have required the Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), no later than January 1, 2025; promulgate regulations to adopt standards of identity for avocado oil, including, the quality and purity of the oil, requirements for labeling and packaging, and a method of measurement and analysis to ensure these standards are met.

[AB 240 \(Kalra\)](#) – Dogs and cats: California Spay and Neuter Fund. In Assembly Agriculture Committee.

This bill would have established the California Spay-Neuter Fund (CSN Fund) to offer competitive grants to specified organizations to increase or develop no cost or low cost spay-neuter programs. The CSN Fund allocation would come from a new tax on dog and cat food.

[AB 402 \(Aguiar-Curry\)](#) – Weeds: Broomrape Control Program. Chaptered by Secretary of State – Chapter 651, Statutes of 2023.

This bill will established the Broomrape Program (Program) within the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) for the purpose of funding research and control methods for the noxious weed Broomrape.

[AB 404 \(Connolly\)](#) – Department of Food and Agriculture: reporting requirements: small and mid-scale farmers. Vetoed by Governor.

This bill would have required the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to evaluate duplicative reporting requirements that affect Certified Organic operations.

To the Members of the California State Assembly

I am returning Assembly Bill 404 without my signature.

This bill requires the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), upon appropriation, to evaluate duplicative reporting requirements that affect certified organic grower operations, and to submit a report to the Legislature on its findings.

While I support the author's goal to reduce regulatory burdens on certified organic operations, this bill is duplicative of existing efforts. CDFA, in collaboration with the California Environmental Protection Agency and State Water Resources Control Board, is currently conducting a project to evaluate reporting requirements on agricultural producers as part of an effort to streamline the administrative processes and optimize information collected by the state. Additionally, the 2023 Budget included resources to continue CDFA's efforts to streamline licensing, permitting, certification, and registration processes to further reduce the burden of regulatory compliance. The evaluation and reporting required by this bill, however, were not accounted for in the annual budget process and would thus result in additional cost pressures on the General Fund.

In partnership with the Legislature, we enacted a budget that closed a shortfall of more than \$30 billion through balanced solutions that avoided deep program cuts and protected education, health care, climate, public safety, and social service programs that are relied on by millions of Californians. This year, however, the Legislature sent me bills outside of this budget process that, if all enacted, would add nearly \$19 billion of unaccounted costs in the budget, of which \$11 billion would be ongoing.

With our state facing continuing economic risk and revenue uncertainty, it is important to remain disciplined when considering bills with significant fiscal implications, such as this measure.

For these reasons, I cannot sign this bill.

Sincerely,

Gavin Newsom

[AB 405 \(Connolly\)](#) –Organic products. Held under submission in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

The bill would require the director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to create an online registration and payment option on or before January 1, 2026.

[AB 406 \(Connolly\)](#) – Agriculture: Healthy Soils Program and California Farmland Conservancy Program. Held in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This bill would have expanded the Healthy Soils Program (HSP) to include the funding of organic farming projects and provide grant to incentivize organic production, including transition to organic projects.

[AB 408 \(Wilson\)](#) – Food and Agriculture: Climate crisis. Held under submission in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This bill proposes the Climate-resilient Farms, Sustainable Healthy Food Access, and Farmworker Protection Bond Act of 2024 (CSF Bond) authorizes \$3.365 billion in general obligation bonds. The

CSF Bond would finance a variety of projects that focus on improving Agriculture resilience and sustainability, protecting the health of farmworkers, expanding health food access and combating hunger, improving regional food economies, supporting Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) planning, aid in pest management and reduce food waste.

[AB 454 \(Aguiar-Curry\)](#) – California Rice Commission: board membership. Chaptered by Secretary of State – Chapter 84, Statutes of 2023.

The bill will authorize the California Rice Commission (CRC) to issue a drought declaration that would allow a board member who is a rice producer or handler to continue on the board, even if they did not hand or produce rice recently due to drought conditions.

[AB 552 \(Bennett\)](#) – Agriculture: California Farmland Conservancy Program. Vetoed by Governor.

This bill would have established, upon appropriation by the Legislature, the Regional Farmer Equipment and Cooperative Resources Assistance Pilot Program (RFECR program) at the Department of Conservation (DOC) with the purpose of setting up farm equipment sharing programs across the state.

To the Members of the California State Assembly

I am returning Assembly Bill 552 without my signature.

This bill directs the California Department of Food and Agriculture, upon appropriation, to establish the Regional Farmer Equipment and Cooperative Resources Assistance Pilot Program and provide resource-limited farmers and ranchers with financial and technical assistance to share equipment.

While I support the author's goal to assist small-scale farmers and ranchers, this bill would create a new, unfunded grant program that should be considered as a part of the annual budget process.

In partnership with the Legislature, we enacted a budget that closed a shortfall of more than \$30 billion through balanced solutions that avoided deep program cuts and protected education, health care, climate, public safety, and social service programs that are relied on by millions of Californians. This year, however, the Legislature sent me bills outside of this budget process that, if all enacted, would add nearly \$19 billion of unaccounted costs in the budget, of which \$11 billion would be ongoing.

With our state facing continuing economic risk and revenue uncertainty, it is important to remain disciplined when considering bills with significant fiscal implications, such as this measure.

For these reasons, I cannot sign this bill.

Sincerely,

Gavin Newsom

[AB 605 \(Arambula\)](#) – California Fruit and Vegetable Supplemental Benefits Expansion Program. Held under submission in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This bill would established the CalFresh Fruit and Vegetable Supplemental Benefit Expansion Program and would have created the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Expansion Fund; additionally would have required the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to enroll authorized retailers to enable them to provide supplemental benefits to CalFresh recipients who purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, as specified.

[AB 660 \(Irwin\)](#) – Food labeling: quality dates, fresh by dates, use by dates. In Senate Agriculture Committee.

This bill would have required, on and after January 1, 2025, food manufacturers, processors, and retailers to label food products with the following quality and safety dates: “BEST if Used by” or “Best if Used or Frozen By” to indicate the quality date of a product; and/or “Use by” or “Use by or Freeze” to indicate the safety date of a product.

[AB 774 \(Mathis\)](#) – Invasive pests: lists. Held in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

The Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is required to develop and maintain a list of invasive pests, as specified, that would likely cause economic or environmental harm if they entered California. This bill would have required CDFA to post the invasive pest on CDFA’s public website.

[AB 865 \(E. Garcia\)](#) – Sale of agriculture products: requirements. Held in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This bill would have required that a grower or producer selling specified agricultural products use a self-attestation form developed by the California Food and Agriculture Department (CDFA) to demonstrate compliance with applicable California environmental, health, and labor laws. The bill names this the California Farmers and Farmworker Protection and Climate Mitigation Pilot Program Act (CFFCMP).

[AB 1016 \(Jones-Sawyer\)](#) – Pest control operations: aircraft operations: journeyman’s certificate. Chaptered by Secretary of State – Chapter 354, Statutes of 2023.

This bill would add the status of private applicator as a designation under the unmanned pest control aircraft (UPCA) pilot’s certificate, for the purpose of agriculture pesticide applications.

[AB 1141 \(M. Dahle\)](#) – Agricultural lands: farmers and producers: agricultural pass program: disaster access to farmlands. In Senate Agriculture Committee.

This bill would change the name of the livestock pass program to the agricultural (AG) pass program and make the following technical changes:

- 1) Changes livestock pass program to a more expansive AG pass program.
- 2) Defines qualified agricultural producers, for the purpose of the AG pass program to mean a commercial agricultural producer, as determined by the county agency, who has been certified as successfully completing the AG pass program curriculum.
- 3) Require the State Fire Marshal, with the involvement of the Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee, to develop a curriculum for AG producers eligible for the AG pass program by July 1, 2024.

[AB 1197 \(Hart\)](#) – Agricultural Protection Planning Grant Program: grant limits. Held under submission in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This bill, upon the appropriation from the Legislature, would authorize a nonprofit organization to apply to the Department of Conservation (DOC) for a grant under the Agricultural Protection Planning Grant Program (Program) to assist with identifying and mapping local food producers, as defined. This bill also increases the maximum grant amounts for the Program from \$500,000 to \$1 million to any applicant, and from \$750,000 to \$1.5 million if DOC determines an application is for collaborative planning activities proposed to include two or more adjacent local jurisdictions.

[AB 1232 \(Connolly\)](#) – Department of Food and Agriculture: resilient and higher-welfare grant program. Held under submission in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This bill would establish a resilient and higher welfare grant program (RHW) grant program, within the Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), to support the implementation of higher standards of care and more climate-smart farming practices as specified. Furthermore, require CDFA to establish a competitive grant application program that help producers and processors seeking to improve farm animal welfare.

[AB 1289 \(Mathis\)](#) – Agriculture Trust Fund: audit. Held in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This bill would provide that the Agriculture Trust Fund shall be audited at least once every year, instead of once every two years.

[AB 1583 \(Ag Committee\)](#) – California Seed Law: subvention payments: sunset extension. Chaptered by Secretary of State – Chapter 128, Statutes of 2023.

This bill extends the California Seed Law (CSL) Subvention program until July 1, 2027 and repeals, by January 1, 2031, the CSL Subvention program unless the legislature takes action to extend the program.

[AB 1603 \(Alvarez\)](#) – Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program: qualified entities: consumer cooperatives. Held under submission in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This bill would have added consumer cooperatives that sells California-grown fresh fruits, nuts, and vegetables and is authorized to accept specified nutrition benefits from nutrition benefit clients is a qualified entity under the Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program (NIMG) Program.

[AB 1733 \(Gipson\)](#) – Secretary of Food and Agriculture: license or registration: bonds. Held in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This bill would allow the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to continue the license or registration for a period not to exceed 60 days to enable the licensee or registrant to secure a new bond. Current laws only allows up to 30 days to secure a new bond.

[AB 1752 \(Ag Committee\)](#) – Bees: pesticides: civil penalties. Chaptered by Secretary of State – Chapter 854, Statutes of 2023.

The bill would authorize a county agricultural commissioner (CAC), in lieu of a civil prosecution by the secretary of the California Department of Agriculture (CDFA), to levy a civil penalty, up to \$3,000, against a person violating regulations related to minimize the hazard to bees, while still providing for the reasonable and necessary application of pesticides toxic to bees to blossoming plants.

[AB 1763 \(Ag Committee\)](#) – Food and agriculture: industry funded standardization program. Chaptered by Secretary of State – Chapter 208, Statutes of 2023.

This bill eliminates the January 1, 2025, repeal date of the California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) standardization program for fruits, nuts, and vegetables (standardization program), extending the program indefinitely.

SENATE BILLS

SB 547 (Blakespear) – District agriculture associations: real property: affordable housing. In Assembly Agriculture Committee.

This bill would require the 22nd District Agricultural Association (DAA) to lease 22nd DAA land to the City of Del Mar for the purposes of constructing a residential development that provides at least 61 units that are affordable to lower income households.

SB 624 (Alvarado-Gil) – Horse racing: state designated fairs: allocation of revenues. Held submission in Assembly Revenue and Taxation Committee.

This bill would allow the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to receive reimbursement for the cost of allocating revenue received from sales tax collected on state-designated fairgrounds to fairs, not to exceed 5 percent or \$2,500,000 of the funds; and increase the percentage of fair sales tax from .75 percent to 3.5 percent to that can be allocated to fairs in the state.

SB 701 (Hurtado) – Fruit and vegetable wholesalers: registration fees. Chaptered by Secretary of State – Chapter 409, Statutes of 2023.

This bill makes changes to the authority for a board of supervisors to impose a registration requirement and annual fee schedule on fruit and vegetable wholesalers.

SB 780 (Alvarado-Gil) – Department of Food and Agriculture: oversight: commercial feed, additives, and drugs. Chaptered by Secretary of State – Chapter 634, Statutes of 2023.

This bill will require any commercial feed, feed additive, or drug approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration that is fed to livestock to be under the oversight of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) as the primary state regulatory agency, including, but not limited to, products that make environmental health claims. Clarifies that this section does not limit the authority of the State Air Resources Board related to dairy and livestock methane reduction policies.

INFORMATIONAL HEARINGS

Winter Storm Impact on California Agriculture, May 23, 2023 (Joint hearing with Assembly Emergency Management Committee)

The Assembly Committee on Agriculture and the Assembly Committee on Emergency Management held an informational hearing to discuss issues related to the impact of past winter storms on California's agriculture. The committees heard from 10 panelists, including the Under Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Deputy Director of the Office of Emergency Services, Executive Advisor for the Department of Water Resources, Administrator of the California Farm Bureau, farmers, and two individuals on prevention and mitigation. The panelists described the scope of recent storms in California, their high-level economic impacts, how individual farming operations were affected, affects the hardest hit regions, commodities, and—finally—agricultural based mitigation efforts and prevention opportunities.