

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

2023-24

ESMERALDA SORIA, CHAIR



Assembly Committee on Agriculture

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Assembly
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ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
ESMERALDA SORIA, CHAIR
ASSEMBLYWOMAN, TWENTY-SEVENTH DISTRICT

October 8, 2024

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES:

The following report summarizes legislation referred to the Assembly Committee on Agriculture during the 2023-24 legislative session and indicates the final status of each measure.

The Committee's primary jurisdiction extends to agricultural commissions, agricultural commodities, Department of Food and Agriculture, expositions and fairs, farmers markets, food access, food labeling, labeling of agricultural commodities, livestock and poultry, marketing orders and agreements, milk and milk products, pest management, veterinarians: agricultural issues.

For additional information regarding this summary, or other activities of the Assembly Committee on Agriculture, please contact the Committee staff at (916) 319-2084.

Sincerely,



Esmeralda Soria, Chair
Assembly Committee on Agriculture

ASSEMBLY AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

2023-24

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.

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE

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 have required 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 have financed 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.

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE

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 have 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 have changed 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 have authorized 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

would have increased 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 have established 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 have provided 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 have allowed 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.

[AB 1833 \(Addis\)](#) – Mushrooms. Held in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This bill would have similarly made it unlawful to produce, process, sell, offer for sale, give away, or possess a mushroom in California, that indicates on the label “California Mushroom,” “California Grown,” or words of similar import that indicate that California is the source of the mushroom, unless 100% of that mushroom is grown in California, and would require the Department of Food and Agriculture to assess a civil penalty against any person violating that prohibition, as specified.

[AB 1861 \(Addis\)](#) – Pest Control: Pierce’s Disease. Chaptered by Secretary of State – Chapter 197, Statutes of 2024.

This bill extends the Pierce’s Disease Control Program to March 1, 2031 and removes the requirement that the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) submit, on a bi-annual basis, a report to the Legislature and instead requires the report to be publicly available on CDFA’s website on or before December 31st each year.

[AB 1961 \(Wicks\)](#) – End Hunger in California Act of 2024. Vetoed by Governor.

This bill would require the Department of Food and Agriculture, in consultation with specified entities, to appoint and convene the End Hunger in California Master Plan Task Force to make recommendations for future comprehensive strategies aimed at addressing access to healthy and culturally relevant food for all Californians.

The bill would require the Department of Food and Agriculture to serve as the lead agency for developing the End Hunger in California Master Plan and to assist the task force in carrying out its duties. The bill would require the plan to be distributed to the Legislature no later than January 1, 2027, or 2 years after an appropriation of funds is made to implement these provisions, whichever is later, and to include specified actions, among others, identification of barriers to bringing retailers to specific locations, inclusion of a strategy to maximize eligible individuals’ participation in specified federal and state nutritional programs, and identification of goals and implementation mechanisms to ensure California achieves an end to hunger.

GOVERNOR’S VETO MESSAGE

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 1961 without my signature.

This bill would require the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to create the End Hunger in California Master Plan Task Force, composed of 25 members of specified organizations, to create the End Hunger in California Master Plan. The Plan would be made available to the Legislature and the public by January 1, 2027, or two years after an appropriation, whichever is later, and contain recommendations to address hunger and food deserts in California.

Tackling food insecurity is a priority of my Administration. There are currently multiple state programs focused on addressing this issue through the Office of Farm to Fork (Office) within CDFA, including programs that focus on increasing access to healthy foods for underserved communities, such as the California Nutrition Incentive Program. While I support the author’s goal to address food insecurity in the state, the expansive scope of the proposed task force would be burdensome for CDFA to implement and would also result in ongoing General Fund costs that should be considered in the annual budget process.

In partnership with the Legislature this year, my Administration has enacted a balanced budget that avoids deep program cuts to vital services and protected investments in education, health care, climate, public safety, housing, and social service programs that millions of Californians rely on. It is important to remain disciplined when considering bills with significant fiscal implications that are not included in the budget, such as this measure.

For this reason, I cannot sign this bill.

Sincerely,

Gavin Newsom

[AB 1981 \(Lackey\)](#) – 50th Agriculture Association: Board Membership. Substantially amended to be a Franchise Tax Board: statewide financial relief payments: master agreements bill. Held in Assembly Agriculture Committee.

This bill would have required the Franchise Tax Board, by no later than July 1, 2025, to enter into master agreements with debit card vendors to render services related to statewide financial relief payments. The bill would have required each agreement to include certain terms, including definitions for key performance indicators, specified payment provisions, and options for fee-free services.

[AB 2077 \(Alanis\)](#) – Agriculture Trust Fund: audit. Held in Assembly Agriculture Committee.

This bill would have required the Agriculture Trust Fund activities of which are subject to audit at least once every 2 years, now be subject to an audit once every year.

[AB 2090 \(Irwin\)](#) – Office of Farm to Fork: food deserts: transportation. Held in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This bill would have required the California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) Office of Farm to Fork (Office) to work with transportation agencies to increase the amount of agricultural products available to underserved communities and schools in the state, and to prioritize the department's efforts in food deserts throughout the state.

[AB 2143 \(Connolly\)](#) – Fairs. Chaptered by Secretary of State. Chapter 559, Statutes of 2024.

This bill would repeal a number of these provisions in the Business and Professions Code and would revise and recast them as new provisions in the Food and Agricultural Code. The bill would replace references to the Division of Fairs and Expositions in the Department of Food and Agriculture with the Department of Food and Agriculture. The bill would make additional technical and conforming changes and repeal obsolete provisions.

This bill would instead authorize certain revenues deposited into the Fair and Exposition Fund to first be deposited into a separate account in the Fair and Exposition Fund designated by the bill as the California Fairs Trust Account, and would continuously appropriate those revenues for specified purposes. By expanding the purposes for which those revenues may be used.

This bill would instead continuously appropriate those additional moneys deposited into the Fair and Exposition Fund and unexpended moneys described above to the Secretary of Food and Agriculture for capital outlay to California fairs for fair projects involving public health and safety, for fair projects involving major and deferred maintenance, for fair projects necessary due to any emergency, for projects that are required by physical changes to the fair site, for projects that are required to protect the fair property or installation, and for the acquisition or improvement of any property or facility that will serve to enhance the operation of the fair.

[AB 2313 \(Bennett\)](#) – Farmer Equity Act of 2017: Regional Farmer Equipment and Coop Resources Assistance Pilot Program. Vetoed by Governor.

This bill would have established, upon appropriation of the legislature, and contingent upon voter approval of Proposition 4 in the November 2024 General Election, the Regional Farmer Equipment and Cooperative Resources Assistance Pilot Program as part of the Farmer Equity Act of 2017. This bill would have stated that the Program will provide financial and technical assistance to support regional farm equipment sharing.

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 2313 without my signature.

This bill requires the Department of Food and Agriculture, upon appropriation and contingent on passage of Proposition 4, a measure on the November 2024 ballot, to establish the Regional Farmer Equipment and Cooperative Resources Assistance Pilot Program to provide financial and technical assistance for farm equipment sharing and cooperative benefits for socially disadvantaged and limited-resource farmers and ranchers.

I support the author's goal of assisting small-scale farmers and ranchers, but this bill creates a new grant program that lacks the necessary continuous funding to support it. I vetoed a similar bill last year due to budget concerns, and while I understand that this bill is contingent on a potential initial funding source, a new grant program that will require ongoing funding should be considered in the annual budget process.

In partnership with the Legislature this year, my Administration has enacted a balanced budget that avoids deep program cuts to vital services and protected investments in education, health care, climate, public safety, housing, and social service programs that millions of Californians rely on. It is important to remain disciplined when considering bills with significant fiscal implications that are not included in the budget, such as this measure.

For this reason, I cannot sign this bill.

Sincerely,

Gavin Newsom

[AB 2324 \(Alanis\)](#) – Avocados: sale or donation by Secretary of Food and Agriculture. Chaptered by Secretary of State – Chapter 390, Statutes of 2024. This bill would extend from, 48 hours to 72 hours, the amount of time avocados can be held by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) after they have been seized from a person who is in unlawful possession of avocados. This bill adds on-campus food pantry to the list of organizations that CDFA can donate seized avocados too.

[AB 2436 \(Alanis\)](#) – Cattle: inspections: fees. Chaptered by Secretary of State – Chapter 214, Statutes of 2024.

This bill (1) increases various cattle inspection fees per head of cattle from \$1.50 to \$1.60, with certain exceptions, as specified; (2) increase re-inspection fee of \$0.70 per head cattle to \$0.80 per head of cattle; and (3) increases the inspection of carcasses with the hide on and of hide fees from \$2 to \$2.10 for each carcass or hide that is inspected.

[AB 2509 \(Kalra\)](#) – Integrated Pest Management: invasive species. Chaptered by Secretary of State – Chapter 720, Statutes of 2024.

This bill requires the Invasive Species Council of California (ISCC) to prioritize specified activities, including integrated pest management (IPM) for controlling invasive species already established in the state, in all of its activities. The bill would define "integrated pest management" and "invasive species" for those purposes.

[AB 2528 \(Arambula\)](#) – Williamson Act Contracts: cancellations. Held in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This bill would have allowed a local governing body in specified areas of the state to, upon a landowner's request, cancel certain land conservation contracts if the land subject to the contract has certain water supply constraints and if it will be used for specified renewable energy projects. The bill would establish landowner fees for such a cancellation that are less than those established in current law.

[AB 2606 \(Aguiar-Curry\)](#) – California Agave Commission. Chaptered by Secretary of State – Chapter 725, Statutes of 2024.

This bill establishes the California Agave Commission (CAC) and authorizes the commission to establish an assessment to be paid by growers and processors for the purpose of engaging in marketing of California Agave products.

[AB 2635 \(Irwin\)](#) – California Agritourism Liability Act. Held in Assembly Judiciary Committee.

This bill would have defined "agritourism activity" as an activity carried out on a farm, ranch, or rural land whose primary business activity is agriculture or ranching and that allows members of the general public to view, enjoy, and participate in rural activities and would exempt agritourism professionals from specified types of civil liability, as provided.

[AB 2662 \(Mathis\)](#) – Sale of agricultural land: tribal right to refusal. Held in Assembly Agriculture Committee.

This bill would have required a property owner selling agricultural land within an area of cultural and traditionally significant land to send, before selling or participating in negotiations to sell that agricultural land to a prospective buyer, a notice of first right of refusal for the agricultural land to a California Native American tribe affiliated with the cultural and traditionally significant land within the area of the agricultural land.

[AB 2721 \(Ag Committee\)](#) – Transporting kitchen grease. Chaptered by Secretary of State, Chapter 215, Statutes of 2024.

This bill authorizes the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to share any information, data, or observations obtained pursuant to the Produce Safety Program (PSP) with any local, state, or federal authority for purposes of evaluating, inspecting, or investigating an imminent or potential food safety hazard or risk in order to protect public health and safety. This bill extends the sunset of the CDFA's ability to charge each licensed renderer and collection center an additional fee for each licensed inedible kitchen grease rendering plant or collection center to cover the costs of the program to July 1, 2030. This bill extends the sunset of CDFA's ability to charge each licensed transporter of inedible kitchen grease an additional fee to cover the costs of the program until July 1, 2030. Finally, this bill allows the secretary of CDFA, if a cooperative agreement related to federal-state cooperative market news service is not in effect in the state, to define grape-pricing districts in the state.

AB 2734 (Connolly) – Agriculture: Cannella Environmental Farm Act. Vetoed by Governor.

This bill would have updated the California Department of Food and Agriculture’s (CDFA) Healthy Soils Program by authorizing the Scientific Advisory Panel under CDFA to consult with any relevant advisory bodies established by the department, including, but not limited to, the California Organic Products Advisory Committee regarding the Healthy Soils Program. This bill would have required CDFA to provide grants of up to 5 years for on-farm demonstration projects upon appropriation by the Legislature. This bill would have allowed Healthy Soils grant recipients to request an advance on their grant for incentive payments. This bill would have allowed the agriculture technical assistance grant program to, among other things, fund equipment sharing. The bill would have expanded the definition of “technical assistance” to include conservation agriculture planning and grant writing.

GOVERNOR’S VETO MESSAGE

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 2734 without my signature.

This bill would update the California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) Healthy Soils Program (HSP) by authorizing the Scientific Advisory Panel to consult with any relevant advisory bodies. The bill would also allow Healthy Soils grant recipients to request an advance on their grant for incentive payments and require CDFA to provide grants of up to five years for on-farm demonstration projects. While I support the author's goal to update the HSP to increase program accessibility for farmers, the provisions requiring CDFA to provide grants of up to five years would result in millions of dollars of General Fund cost pressures and should be considered in the annual budget process.

In partnership with the Legislature this year, my Administration has enacted a balanced budget that avoids deep program cuts to vital services and protected investments in education, health care, climate, public safety, housing, and social service programs that millions of Californians rely on. It is important to remain disciplined when considering bills with significant fiscal implications that are not included in the budget, such as this measure.

For this reason, I cannot sign this bill.

Sincerely,

Gavin Newsom

AB 2745 (Mathis) – Agricultural pests: public nuisance: civil penalty. Vetoed by Governor.

This bill would have authorized a county agricultural commissioner (CAC) to levy a civil penalty against a person that is found to maintain land deemed to be a public nuisance. This bill requires the person charged with maintaining land deemed to be a public nuisance to receive notice of the nature of the violation and be given the opportunity to rectify the violation within 15 days of receiving notice. If the person that maintains land deemed to be a public nuisance rectifies the situation, they will not be required to pay the civil penalty. This bill states the civil penalty can be increased after 30 days of inaction, and establishes the person's right to appeal the levy within 10 days of receiving notification of the penalty. Finally, this bill sunsets these provisions on January 1, 2035.

Governor’s Veto Message

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 27 45 without my signature.

This bill authorizes a county agricultural commissioner to levy a civil penalty against a person who maintains a public nuisance in violation of pest abatement laws.

While I support the author's goal of giving county agricultural commissioners an enforcement tool to combat negligent properties that harbor harmful pests, the broad definitions in this bill may unintentionally lead to penalties being assessed against growers who utilize insects in their practices that are not harmful to adjacent areas.

I encourage the Legislature to work with relevant stakeholders on legislation that provides enforcement tools to combat negligent properties while providing sufficient protections for growers utilizing beneficial insects.

Sincerely,

Gavin Newson

[AB 2799 \(V. Fong\)](#) – Sustainable groundwater management: small farms: fees. Held in Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee.

Would have required groundwater sustainability agencies (GSA) to consider the efforts of small farms to recharge groundwater when assessing fees on pumpers.

[AB 2827 \(Reyes\)](#) – Invasive species: prevention. Held in Senate Appropriations Committee.

This bill would have required the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to develop and implement strategies to detect, control, monitor, and eradicate invasive species, as specified.

[AB 2870 \(Muratsuchi\)](#) – Low Carbon Fuel Standard regulations. Held in Senate Agriculture Committee.

This bill would have prohibited the State Air Resources Board (CARB) from including avoided methane emissions (AME) in the calculation of carbon intensity for purposes of the state board's evaluation or reevaluation of a fuel pathway, as specified.

[AB 3053 \(Kalra\)](#) – State supported fairs: exhibits: regulations. Held in Assembly Agriculture Committee.

This bill would have required the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to prescribe regulations for the entry of junior exhibits, related to withdrawal of junior exhibit entities.

[AB 3098 \(Gallagher\)](#) – California Agriculture Relief Act. Held in Assembly Agriculture Committee.

This bill, the California Agriculture Relief Act, would have renamed the program as the California Small Agricultural Business Disaster Relief Grant Program and would have expanded the purpose of the program to include the provision of grants to qualified small agricultural businesses that have been affected by severe drought, heat, or flooding. The bill would have included within the definition of a "qualified small business" one that has been affected by the September 2022 heat wave, as specified. The bill would have revised the definition of "decline in annual gross receipts or gross profits" to mean a decrease in annual gross receipts or gross profits when comparing the 2022 or 2023 taxable year to the 2019 taxable year. The bill would have required funding appropriated related to severe heat impacts to be administered, to the extent feasible, by allocating 20% of grant funds in one or more rounds of grants for small and socially disadvantaged farmers who are qualified small agricultural

businesses and by allocating the remainder to qualified small agricultural businesses most impacted by severe heat, including those that are identified using specified codes.

SENATE BILLS

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

This bill would have required 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 have allowed 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.

SB 862 (Laird) – Pest control: Agricultural Pest Control Advisory Committee. Substantially amended to be a Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District: transaction and use tax rates. Chaptered by Secretary of State. Chapter 296, Statutes of 2023.

This bill allows the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transportation District's board to place a measure before its voters authorizing a district tax above the 2% cap.

SB 1117 (Laird) – Organic Products. Chaptered by Secretary of State – Chapter 456, Statutes of 2024.

This bill authorizes the secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to establish procedures for and conduct announced and unannounced spot inspections and collect samples to conduct periodic substance testing on products labeled as organic, and amends definitions within in the Food and

Agricultural Code (FAC) to mirror the definitions contained in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service's March 20, 2023 Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) Rule.

[SB 1186 \(Ochoa-Bogh\)](#) – Fairs: free admissions. Chaptered by the Secretary of State – Chapter 206, Statutes of 2024.

This bill would provide free admission to any state, county, district, or citrus fruit fair to military personnel, regardless of whether they are in uniform.

[SB 1270 \(Grove\)](#) – Department of Food and Agriculture: farm products: licenses and complaints: fees. Chaptered by Secretary of State. Chapter 603, Statutes of 2024.

This bill restructures and increases the complaint filing fee, the fee schedule for licenses issued to a person who contracts, solicits, negotiates, or acts as a processor or a cash buying processor on behalf of a processor, and the fee for each agent of a licensed producer or dealer/broker. This bill also establishes the Market Enforcement Advisory Committee to advise the secretary and make recommendations on all matters pertaining to the licensing program.

[SB 1367 \(Hurtado\)](#) – Agriculture: commercial feed: inspection tonnage tax: research and education. Chaptered by Secretary of State. Chapter 474, Statutes of 2024.

This bill extends from January 1, 2025, to January 1, 2031, authority of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to collect a higher annual license fee on each location where commercial feed is manufactured, distributed, sold or stored, and to designate a specified amount of revenues from the commercial feed inspection tonnage tax for research and education relevant to the commercial feed industry.

[SB 1419 \(Rubio\)](#) – Food deserts: grants. Vetoed by Governor.

This bill establishes the Food Desert Elimination Grant Program; which would provide grants to grocery store operators that open stores in areas defined as a food desert. This bill authorizes the California Department of Food and Agriculture to collect non-state, federal, and private funds, and would require those funds to be deposited into the California Equitable Food Access Account within the Food Desert Elimination Fund and would continuously appropriate moneys in the account to the department for purposes of the program. This bill establishes the Food Desert Elimination Fund in the General Fund and would authorize monies from the fund to be used, upon appropriation, to run the program. Finally, this bill repeals these provisions on December 31, 2030.

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am returning Senate Bill 1419 without my signature.

This bill would create, upon appropriation, the Food Desert Elimination Grant Program to provide grants to large and small-scale grocery store operators in food deserts. While I support the author's goal to increase access to healthy foods in underserved communities, this bill creates a new, unfunded grant program and should be considered in the annual budget process. In partnership with the Legislature this year, my Administration has enacted a balanced budget that avoids deep program cuts to vital services and protected investments in education, health care, climate, public safety, housing, and social service programs that millions of Californians rely on. It is important to remain disciplined when considering bills with significant fiscal implications that are not included in the budget, such as this measure.

For this reason, I cannot sign this bill.

Sincerely,

Gavin Newsom

[SB 1448 \(Hurtado\)](#) – Farm to Community Food Hub Advisory Committee: California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force. Chaptered by Secretary of State – Chapter 917, Statutes of 2024.

The bill extends to January 1, 2034 the Farm to Community Food Hub Program within the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). The bill eliminates the Farm to Community Food Hub Advisory Committee and instead requires the Office of Farm to Fork to develop and consult with a working group comprising of at least 7 individuals who possess expertise in the operation of food hubs and other specified areas, as provided. The bill exempts the working group from the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act and requires the program to prioritize the creation of new farm to community food hubs. The bill authorizes, instead of requires, the program to be administered in 2 phases. Finally, the bill authorizes the Strategic Growth Council, using existing or private funds, to provide public taskforce members a reasonable per diem allowance, as specified.

[SB 1522 \(Senate Ag Committee\)](#) – Fertilizing materials. Chaptered by Secretary of State – Chapter 208, Statutes of 2024.

This bill authorizes the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to adjust the mill assessment rate on fertilizing materials registered for sale in California without using a formal rulemaking process provided the Fertilizing Industry Advisory Board (FIAB) determines the adjustment is necessary, and makes other changes to registration and fee provisions.

[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.

Ground Water Recharge, September 17, 2024 (Joint hearing with Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee) – The Assembly Committee on Agriculture and the Assembly Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife held a Joint Informational Hearing to discuss groundwater recharge. The committee members heard from 10 panelists, including representatives from UC Merced, Department of Water Resources, California State Water Board, Merced Irrigation District, Leadership Council for Justice and Accountability as well as from several farmers in the Central Valley. The discussion covered water usage, standard and temporary permitting, the programs currently being utilized on farms,

and ideas for future groundwater recharge efforts including suggestions on possible legislative efforts moving forward.