

Today is \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_. This is Ken Morgan's Northcoast Ag Report, our lead story is about \_\_\_\_\_ when we return

## **Labor Shortages Continue to Plague California**

AUGUST 8, 2017

There has been a concerning trend over the past few years as labor shortages are continuing to be seen in many areas of California. Some farming operations are attempting to overcome the shortages by planting crops that can be mechanically harvested or simply require less labor.

With peak season just around the corner, it has caused some growers to think outside the box. Many farming operations are offering different types of incentives to help attract workers in preparation for their busiest time of year. CEO of the Fresno County Farm Bureau Ryan Jacobsen said, "this early August period, for about six weeks, we're looking at that as going to be the real crunch time to see where the labor situation is. We know it's going to be tight."

It is not just the farm side of agriculture experiencing a decrease in available workers, but other segments of the industry are suffering as well. "It's packing houses to processing plants and everything else are definitely seeing their sides of the shortages as well," Jacobsen stated.

A contributing factor to labor shortages is the current state of the immigration system and how policies like the H-2A program is administered. "The problem with H-2A is there's timelines and some requirements that just don't work for California agriculture probably as well as other parts of the country," said Jacobsen.

It can be frustrating to produce a bountiful crop and be forced to watch a portion of it rot because there simply were not enough workers available to get it picked in time. Jacobsen also noted that areas of the Central Coast have seen losses in the \$13 million-dollar range because of a lack of available labor.

Along with a shortage of labor, several other factors are making agricultural production in California even more difficult. President and CEO of the California Cotton Ginners & Growers Association Roger Isom commented on a number of challenges California growers face. "Workers comp rates

are twice what Arizona is, our electricity rates, our natural gas rates, our fuel rates, our labor, you can just go on and on down the list. We are at an economic disadvantage compared to these other states,” Isom said.

The California Farm Bureau Federation (CFBF) just concluded their [California Agricultural Labor Availability Survey](#). CFBF asked growers to take the survey to provide accurate numbers. That type of information from farmers in the field is critical for illustrating what kinds of changes are needed on a legislative level.

A majority of American voters support tax reform, and many support tax changes that would benefit farmers and ranchers. AFBF executive director of communications Mace Thornton says the results show the need for tax reform....tape

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## **Dairy Producers Needed for Sorghum Research**

AUGUST 9, 2017

The University of California is currently conducting sorghum research that is aimed at finding the most effective methods of growing sorghum as an alternative food source for dairy cows. The project is moving into its second year and dairy producers growing sorghum for silage are needed to further the study.

Jennifer Heguy is a farm advisor covering Merced, Stanislaus and San Joaquin Counties for the University of California’s Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The research initially began after writing a grant when water supplies were still extremely limited. “The goal of the project is to look at the viability of sorghum for California when we’re in these drought type situations,” Heguy stated.

**During the first year of the project, Heguy and her team sampled approximately 16 dairies during their sorghum harvest to investigate nutrient characteristics and chop length, to establish a baseline for the best possible growing practices.** Heguy said they are now sampling the same piles at feed-out to investigate fermentation characteristics and to compare the nutrient characteristics as well.

**Now in year two of the study, more participation is needed to get a more comprehensive survey of information.** “We’re currently looking for dairy producers that have sorghum in the ground and will be chopping it this summer to ensile,” said Heguy.

**The next step of the project will take place in year three when researchers will be examining just how much sorghum can be fed to dairy cows without impacting production or animal health. By the end of the project, researchers hope to establish sorghum growing techniques to achieve optimum nutrition.**

Dairy producers who would like to participate in the sorghum research or learn more about the project are encouraged to [contact Heguy](#) and her team. **The latest issue of UCANR’s [California Dairy Newsletter](#) also provides more detailed information on some of the most successful growing techniques for sorghum.**

### **Top U.S. Milk Processor Struggling**

A new report shows that Dean Foods Company is struggling amid slowing milk sales and rising costs. The news comes as Dean’s largest customer, Wal-Mart Stores, is preparing to open its own milk processing plant, reducing its reliance on Dean. The Texas-based milk supplier this week cut its per-share profit expectations nearly in half. Shares of Dean Foods are down 45 percent this year, and the company’s CEO has pledged to reduce annual expenses by up to \$50 million by 2018. The Wall Street Journal says Dean’s recent struggles, however, raised broader questions among some analysts on payoffs from the milk company’s long-term strategy to focus investment on branded milk products. Meanwhile, retailers have added to the price pressure by aggressively pushing for cheaper milk for their own store brands. Wal-Mart’s soon-to-open milk plant in Indiana will cost Dean about 90 million to 95 million gallons’ worth of sales annually. Though Dean has been preparing for the shift.

*From the National Association of Farm Broadcasting News Service.*

**Aug. 22-24 Weed Science School 2017**

Bowley Science Center, UC Davis

**Aug. 26-27 California Seed Trade Association Mid-year Conference**

Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa, Monterey