

TALL XV

SESSION #6

CALIFORNIA

COHORT

NARRATIVES

Heath Reeves, #21

TALL XV

Session 6 – California – “Employment, Emigration, Environment”

October 23-27, 2017

Monday, October 23, 2017

Bayer CropScience

The California session started off with a bang as we visited Bayer’s West Sacramento Campus. This is one of the complexes where Bayer searches for biological insecticide and fungicide solutions to complement its’ diverse crop protection portfolio. Denise Manker gave us an overview of the facility before we split up in smaller groups to tour the facility.

California Department of Food and Ag

Our group was lucky enough to sit down with Secretary Karen Ross of the California Department of Agriculture. Secretary Ross spoke to us about the challenges faced by the agriculture industry in a state that is both highly regulated as well as urban dwelling. These will continue to be large challenges for the state’s producers moving forward to the future.

California Farm Bureau Federation

While at the CDFA, we also heard from Paul Wenger, President of California Farm Bureau. He gave us an overview of his duties as president as well as spoke to us about his organization’s efforts to help California farmers.

Conaway Ranch

Our next stop was at Conaway Ranch where we heard from speakers regarding their conservation efforts. We heard from representatives of Conaway Ranch, Ducks Unlimited, and the Audubon Society about each organizations effort to provide habitats for migratory birds. These efforts include working with rice farmers to flood their fields after harvest to mimic native wetlands.

Wallace Weir

Wallace Weir is a salmon recovery weir that is currently being constructed. It is an example of what is being done to help grow the salmon population. The weir consists of a large steel door set on a hinge in concrete that blocks the salmon’s ability to move upstream. They are then diverted into a trap where they are caught and moved to other rivers for them to spawn. Once this happens they will return to the new spawning grounds each year.

Tuesday, October 24, 2017

Sacramento Valley Water Tour

Tuesday started out with an extensive overview of the Sacramento Valley's water system that is part of the overall system used to move water from the Northern snow pack to the agricultural lands and cities in Southern California. This system is very impressive. California is very lucky that this system was built in the middle of the last century. I don't think they would be able to get it built in today's political climate in the state.

Del Puerto Water District Pipe Project

The DP Water district is currently building a pipeline to use cleaned city wastewater to water high value crops. We had the opportunity to see both the pipe being laid as well as one of the large pumping stations being constructed to help with water movement.

Triple C Farms

Tuesday wrapped up with a tour of Triple C Farms. This is a family farm that grows walnuts, almonds, and no till corn. They had just finished harvest of walnuts when we arrived, but we were able to tour the orchards as well as ask questions about production practices.

Wednesday, October 25, 2017

Stevinson Corporation

Our first stop on Wednesday was a multifaceted operation that included dairy and almonds. We were able to tour their milking operation as well as tour their almond orchards. We were lucky enough to see them harvesting and transporting almonds during our visit.

Stewart and Jasper Almond Processing

Stewart and Jasper Almond Processing was a unique place to visit. I had no idea what was involved in processing almonds. The first step is to remove the outer green husk, followed by the shell. Each of these is saved and used in various products such as cattle feed. The raw almond is then stored and sent in bulk to retailers and various food companies.

San Juan Ranches Bunkhouse – Joe Del Bosque

Our last stop for the evening was at the San Juan Ranches Bunkhouse where local grower Joe Del Bosque spoke to us about how government regulation affects availability of labor. This was an interesting talk due to the vast quantities of labor needed for the agricultural products produced in California.

Thursday, October 26, 2017

Dos Palos Co-op Gin

The Dos Palos Co-op Gin was the first place I had ever seen a roller gin. We toured this gin and were able to view it while running. This is an interesting process that historically has been able to increase the fiber length of the cotton, although it is much slower than a traditional saw gin. This gin had 10 gin stands that were capable of running approximately 35 bales per hour. In comparison, their saw gin

plant had 4 stands and they were running approximately 80 bales per hour. Interestingly, they ran a module of pima cotton through the saw gin a few years ago to see what the difference in quality would be. The quality assigned by the USDA classing office was identical from both the roller and saw gins, but they grower was penalized by USDA for running Pima through a saw gin. This is an antiquated system that needs to go. If we can get the same quality out of a more efficient saw gin that should be the preferred method.

Tanimura and Antle, Inc.

Tanimura and Antle is a large produce company where we were able to view lettuce harvesting operations as well as tour their employee facilities. They take a slightly different approach to employee housing than those that provide H-2A visa required amenities. Their employee apartments look like a typical apartment complex in any city in America. They also have a picture perfect baseball field and soccer field for employees. Tanimura and Antle use these facilities to attract laborers to them and then they select the best of them for work. These workers pay a small fee each month to live in these apartments. This works out well for both parties involved.

Odonata Winery

Odonata Winery is a small winemaking operation in Salinas, CA. We were able to tour their facility and speak to the owner and head wine maker while touring. They explained some of the intricacies of making wine. This is an interesting process that can be influenced by many factors. It is always interesting to hear about the art and science behind it.

Uesugi Farms, Inc.

Our last stop of the trip was at Uesugi Farms. They are a produce farm that grows all types of fruits and vegetables. At the time of our visit, they had pumpkins stacked and ready for shipment, as well as a crew packing red bell peppers.

Conclusion

After taking part in this session it is clear to me that California is a very valuable agricultural state that has a significant fight in the coming years. They are going to have to convince their state legislature to not regulate them out of business, and they will also have to come up with many compromises related to water. Labor issues will also be a significant fight. With California raising the minimum wage to nearly twice the federal requirement, farmers won't be able to pay their workers enough to keep them in the field. Long term, this could be a good thing because it will drive the invention and adoption of automated process, but that will mean less jobs for able bodied people. This has been seen in manufacturing and other industries as well. The federal government will probably have to step in and help out at some point because the state government seems unable or unwilling to come up with a system that benefits farmers and ranchers as well as workers. One of these days they are going to realize that the food production of their state cannot be replicated anywhere else in the United States. I fear that fact will be realized when it is too late. Food security is paramount to our survival as a country, so hopefully a compromise can be reached before that day comes.

TALL XV

Jeff Sarchet, DVM

Employment, Emigration, & Environment

Session 6 of the TALL XV convened with a tour of Bayer Crop Science facilities in Sacramento, California. Dr. Denise Manker shared with the group the main mission and goals of Bayer Crop Science's of supporting farmers with biological products to enhance agricultural production. It was interesting to me to learn about the parallels of crop science and animal science relative to biological production and applications to disease control. The use of biological applications along with or in place of chemical solutions provides diversity for agricultural producers.

Our next stop was at the Capitol to have a lively discussion with California Secretary of Agriculture, Karen Ross. Secretary Ross impressed everyone with her knowledge of many diverse issues facing agricultural producers in California such as emigration, labor, environmental regulations, food safety, and global marketing. She struck me as a very practical person who gathered the facts from relevant stakeholders and worked to achieve the most practical solution for all involved.

Paul Wenger, president of the California Farm Bureau Federation addressed the class with comments that encouraged more financial support from members to make a significant difference in agricultural policy. Farmers might have less impact from regulatory and legislative policies if producers committed a larger portion of their budget to support lobbying efforts. Another good point is for agricultural lobbyists to cooperate with one and another rather than all work on their own.

After lunch at the Capitol, we departed for the Conoway Ranch to discuss agriculture and the environmental efforts to provide benefits for species in the Pacific Flyway. The Conoway Ranch comprises over 17,000 acres near Sacramento that is zoned for agriculture or waterfowl preserve and contains three different wetlands. We had discussions on benefits of zoning regulations, environmental regulations, wildlife habitat control measures, and the Williamson Act of California which provides relief of property tax to owners of farmland and open-space

land in exchange for a ten-year agreement that the land will not be developed or otherwise converted to another use.

Our next stop was to visit the Wallace Weir Fish Rescue Facility on the Sacramento River. Manmade changes to the Sacramento River to prevent flooding and provide irrigation for agriculture, can result in salmon traveling up branches of the river which might be a drainage ditch where spawning is hopeless. Therefore, facilities such as the Wallace Weir Fish Rescue Facility are being built to rescue the salmon to bridge the gap between wildlife and agriculture. This facility is designed to recover strayed salmon and truck them back to the main river where spawning is possible.

We had an interesting dining experience that evening at a restaurant in Stockton with a wine tasting room with wine on tap where you could enjoy sampling several different types of wine by the glass.

Tuesday started with a trip to the Clarksburg Sugar Mill in the Sacramento River Delta. We learned about the transformation of the Delta Region into one of the most productive agricultural areas with engineering changes to the waterways. However negative impacts to wildlife and other indigenous species have occurred because of those manmade changes. Many of these impacts became much more evident with the severe drought that plagued California recently. The result of these impacts has created much animosity between farmers and environmentalists however some have taken the approach to work together to find solutions that benefit both.

After lunch we had a discussion with John Duarte with Duarte Nursery about their experiences with regulatory policies, labor, drought, and how they became the largest permanent crops nursery in the United States. John has very strong opinions on private property rights and agricultural legislation but also had interesting comments on how their family approached labor issues such as providing health insurance and 401K accounts for their employees. He also attributed the success of their business to emphasizing their goal of providing quality, friendship, and service to their customers.

The diversity of California agriculture was showcased with a tour of Campbell Dairy where we toured the 1500 cow dairy and experienced almond harvesting on the farms almond orchards. Again, the example of providing employees with benefits other than salary was emphasized as a solution to labor turnover problems that some operations experience. It was interesting to see the process of almond harvesting from shaking the tree, conditioning the almonds to remove sticks and leaves, and transporting them to the processor.

We then traveled to tour the San Joaquin River Improvement Project that is a large water pipeline to connect the to restore flows and naturally reproducing and self-sustaining populations of salmon to the San Joaquin River between the Friant Dam and the Merced River. It is a solution to restore the ecosystem while providing flood protection and water management for agriculture producers in the San Joaquin Valley.

We had a lively discussion during dinner and later while watching the World Series with Joe Del Bosque of Los Banos. Joe is the owner of a diversified farm in the San Joaquin Valley where they grow cantaloupes, almonds, asparagus, cherries, and organic melons. His wife started as a migrant worker in the produce industry and is now a leader in migrant worker issues. Joe is passionate about finding better farm management practices that lessen environmental impacts and conserve water. He impressed me as a hard-working intelligent entrepreneur who really cares about his employees and that is what has made him highly successful.

The last day in California was mainly spent touring processing facilities for almonds, produce, and wine. We had a discussion with Steve Patricio, CEO of Westside Produce about issues with food safety in produce. E. coli food poisonings with cantaloupes, spinach, and lettuce have led to regulations and implementation of other processes to decrease the risk of these food safety risks for the produce industry. Food Safety is new issues that all produce farmers are aware of and are passionate about because the last thing they want is for someone to become sick because of consuming a product that they produced.

We also learned about milk pricing during a discussion with Scott Wickstrom of Wickstrom Jersey Farms. They participate in a cooperative to provide high fat milk for cheese production which offsets the lower milk production from Jersey cows. They also sell purebred seed stock

to other dairy producers. Scott is a young dairyman who is passionate about the industry and involved in the political aspects of the dairy and agricultural industry.

We then traveled to Tanimura and Antle Inc. to see produce harvest operation in the field and discuss labor issues. The speed and expertise that the employees had harvesting six types of lettuce at the same time was amazing. The lettuce was harvested and packaged in the field and then transported to a refrigerated warehouse for distribution across the United States. We also toured an innovative employee housing facility that Tanimura and Antle has just completed where employees can enjoy an apartment housing complex during their time working in the fields harvesting produce. Again, the approach of providing benefits such as affordable housing and day care are ways to differentiate one as an employer and combat the issue of obtaining and retaining labor when needed for harvest. Improving lifestyle rather than focusing solely on benefits during the job has proven to be an important benefit to these companies.

We then traveled to Gilroy, California to tour Uesugi Farms processing facility where general manager, Pete Aiello, talked to us about their mission to provide premium quality and exceptional service to their customers. Their family-owned, second-generation farming operation has been dedicated to growing the finest bell peppers, chili peppers, napa cabbage, sweet corn, strawberries, pumpkins and beans since 1979. Pete discussed some of the challenges they had with overcoming city, county, and state regulations before building a new refrigerated storage facility. Pete is a passionate producer with strong opinions, but it was evident that he was a great manager who trusted and enabled his employees to get the job done.

Overall the California trip was a great illustration of how regulation can be overly cumbersome and costly but with determination and imagination can be overcome. The success of so many agricultural producers in many diverse operations despite the burdensome regulation and taxation environment in California was encouraging and as with other sessions and areas of the country, the ability of farmers to adapt to the environment to achieve incredible production is inspirational.

Scott Irlbeck 15
TALL XV
Session 6 – California

October 22-27, 2017

An exciting adventure awaited our TALL group as we headed west to California to experience agriculture in the California Central Valley area. Never did I imagine that this area could grow so many different crops – one of our speakers suggested there are more than 200 different crops that could be grown in their area. There are many different types of vegetables, fruits and tree nuts throughout the area.

Something else that really surprised me while visiting was the weather pattern there. I had in my mind that it probably rained a small shower nearly everyday but that is not at all the case. They receive most of their rain over the winter and then it basically stops in the spring. From that point forward, they rely on surface water that comes down from melting snow in the rocky mountains to the northeast. There is an elaborate system of ditches and canals once it gets to central California that delivers water to the different farms. Most of the farmers we talked to did have complaints with the delivery system citing political unfairness and an uncertainty of how much water they would receive along with its high cost. All these factors combined to make long-term planning difficult for many of them.

Many of the crops grown there require lots of hand labor – an issue made even more complex with recent political debates regarding migrant workers or illegal immigrants. This is by no means a new issue or one I had not heard of, but seeing first-hand the implications involved still were astonishing. Something new for me to think about was the fact that one farmer told us the number of his legally documented workers coming from Mexico are getting smaller and smaller while the average age of them is going up. This is a signal that even the workers' children are not replacing their aging parents on the job of harvesting fruits and vegetables in California.

The final thing that struck me was the sheer amount of people who live in the area with the farmers. Farmers we talked to all said people are moving farther and farther out from the San

Francisco/San Jose area into what used to be mostly farming communities and continue to commute to the Silicon Valley area. This is making it difficult since less land is now available for farming. In addition, it makes it harder for farmers to move equipment from field to field because the roads are full of cars. Many of the farmers said they must wait until evening just to move tractors because of high traffic. This of course stands in stark contrast to what I have on my farm where I can go an entire day and not one other vehicle will travel down some of the roads where I farm!

Monday, October 23

Our first stop of the trip included a visit to Bayer CropScience. There we learned about the different biological agricultural products the company was working on in their effort to create a better life through science – which is their tagline. They talked about the rigorous testing process that can take as long as 7-12 years in development and testing. Creating a new synthetic pesticide can cost nearly \$300 million dollars to develop. They also talked about how manipulating different genetic sequences has allowed them to produce crops now resistant to insects and disease that would previously be detrimental.

We then made our way near the state capitol to the California Department of Food and Agriculture and listened to State Secretary Karen Ross. She talked about the complex situation of California agriculture since there are five ports of entry into the state. She said at least one new pest or disease is discovered each month that has arrived through the ports. Their job is to protect and promote California agriculture working with USDA and APHIS. Their main goal is to build bridges between ag producers and consumers. Another group working on that goal is California Farm Bureau. Paul Wenger, president, talked about how politics does matter to ag producers. He said agriculture needs to be more politically motivated with farmers working together and not against each other.

The next stop was the Conaway Ranch to learn about the Pacific Flyway program. Large rice fields in the area provide food and habitat for more than 230 different wildlife species. To help maximize ricelands habitat, the group works with rice growers, conservation organizations, and state and federal agencies to expand and enhance wildlife habitat on farms.

Next stop was the under-construction Wallace Weir project working to protect migratory salmon. This project prevents the adult Sacramento River salmon from swimming into a drainage ditch where they are not able to spawn. The massive project will provide better control of farm drainage releases to protect the salmon.

Tuesday, October 24

The majority of this morning was spent on the bus with fourth generation farmer Russell Van Loben Seis. He has farmed pears, tomatoes, grapes and grains in the California Delta. We were able to stop by his pear orchard that had just been harvested. We also saw lots of vegetable crops growing from the bus window. The lunch speaker was John Duarte, owner of Duarte Nursery. Duarte talked about his battling the federal government after plowing some of his farm that was considered a wetland. The government had said he needed a permit before plowing and planting. What ensued was a multi-million-dollar lawsuit and years tied up in courts. The afternoon was spent visiting Darryl and Norma Cordova of Cordova Farms. Originally the farm only produced grain, but Mr. & Mrs. Cordova have introduced walnuts and almonds as well.

Wednesday, October 25

After eating breakfast and boarding the bus, the group arrived at Stevinson's farm. This a diversified operation incorporating dairy, tree nuts, beef cattle and farming corn and alfalfa. They also sell water to a local water district and have 3,000 dairy cattle producing about 10.25 gallons of milk per day. Sean Kelley, manager talked about the diminishing numbers of dairies in California. Five years ago, there were 800. Now there are 500 left. He also talked about the struggle to find employees. His company does provide health coverage for employees and a retirement plan. He said even though this costs his company extra, he finds employees are more willing to remain steadily employed. After touring the dairy, our TALL group went out to the almond field to watch harvest which was underway.

That afternoon we learned about a unique recycled water project being built in the central valley. It is a partnership with 3 cities that will gather the treated recycled water that will then

be distributed to agricultural customers. This will provide a new water supply, reduce an unsustainable reliance on groundwater and imported water, allow for the year-round use of recycled water and generate jobs. This was a massive project to see and it is very near completion. That evening we listened to Mr. Joe Del Bosque speak about ag labor issues. Since so many of the crops in California are labor intensive, Mr. Bosque encountered many issues from illegal immigrants to minimum wage. That evening we stayed at the San Juan Bunkhouse after enjoying a delicious steak dinner.

Thursday, October 26

For our last day in California we visited Westside Produce where we saw a harvest of different types of lettuce and spinach. This was one of the highlights of my trip as I have never seen this type of agriculture. Five varieties of spinach/lettuce were planted on one bed side by side. We saw crews in the field harvesting and gathering each of one of the five varieties, then collect them into a bag ready for stocking on store shelves. The fields were visually beautiful and there was not a weed to be seen. Then we were taken to an employee housing facility. It was built for employee usage to attract and retain quality employees. The project was somewhat experimental in the beginning, but the company said they have had great success with it and the employees seem to really appreciate it. The apartment complex was new and modern.

One of the remaining stops was Stewart Jasper, and almond processing facility. The processing facility runs four months for 24 hours a day. If the almonds are fumigated, they can be stored for two years. South Korea, Japan, Canada and the United Kingdom have all become high users of almonds. Stewart Jasper is involved in hulling, shelling, processing and marketing almonds though both wholesale and retail markets. The final stop was touring Uesugi Farms. This company operates more than five thousand farming acres including produce such as bell peppers, chili peppers, cabbage, corn, strawberries, pumpkins, and beans to food distributors and wholesalers across the world. Pete Aiello talked to our group about running this complex operation and the struggles involved with building a new refrigerated distribution center. Many of California's infamous regulations caused the project to be delayed for nearly five years.

Overall the trip to California was a great experience for me to see many of the differences not only between grains and vegetable production, but also agriculture production between California and Texas. California notoriously has many additional regulations against agriculture such as sound or dust ordinances, wetland and species protections, and water issues. While these types of ordinances were clearly frustrating to many of the growers, nearly all of them commented that Texas will surely be burdened with these same regulations soon. One grower said while he does not like seeing new restrictions placed on him, he said there is some consolation in being the first to come under such regulations as they can sometimes have some say in how laws are written or enforced. It was a great trip and offered many eye-opening experiences.

TALL XV Session VI California

Lacey Hoelting

October 23 – 26, 2017

Cohort #14

Monday, October 23

Bayer CropScience

Denise C. Manker, Ph. D. Technical Product Support, Biological Research at Bayer Division CropScience

Monday started in West Sacramento at Bayer's Biologic and Vegetable Facility. Denise went through Bayer's process of research and development. She emphasized how corporately, Bayer trains their employees to have ownership of the company's products and reputation, and encourages them to be able to explain the science to the public. Tad Smith, one of the location's lead plant pathologists led our tour.

- *A biological consists of microorganisms such as bacteria and fungi, which include beneficial macro organisms, semiochemicals, and natural compounds.*
- *This facility helped develop; insecticides, BioAct, Flocter, and Requiem; fungicides Contans, Serenade and Sonata; Votivo for Seed Growth.*
- *A lot of high value seed is grown in California, because they have virtually no moisture during the summer, which prevents plant from developing any fungus-related diseases.*
- *Biologics can be applied up to the day of harvest with no chemical residual, unlike traditional synthetic chemicals.*
- *The facility offers a series of open houses in the evening for the public to encourage transparency and the promotion of science.*

California Department of Food and Agriculture

CDFA Secretary of Agriculture Karen Ross,

Secretary Ross gave an overview of the department, which is over 100 years old and revolves around their two largest departments, plants and pests. California has five different ports of entry, and CFDA works extensively with USDA-APHIS, to inspect imports and prevent spread of pests and diseases. The department puts no money into marketing, but works with 52 state marketing orders, similar to checkoff programs in Texas. She said agriculture faces a lot of challenges, mainly changing demographics, where the majority of voters are from urban areas.



- *CA has over 800 certified organic markets. Certified markets mean 80% of the products for sale are grown by the producer, not purchased at wholesale and resold at retail.*
- *CFDA houses a fertilizer program, which contains organic component certifications. Directly connected to issues with nitrates in the state's water supply.*
- *Working toward a farm-to-fork program.*
- *Only state to have their own dairy pricing system.*
- *Implementing term limits in CA, got rid of many senior politicians that represented rural California.*
- *CA implemented a county ag commissioner system in the 1940s, to represent each county's unique agricultural industry. Motto: Educate before you regulate.*

California Agricultural Policy Briefing – Farm Bureau’s Perspective

Paul Wenger, President of California Farm Bureau

Paul has been president of Farm Bureau since 2009 and is a third generation farmer, growing walnuts, almonds, and previously dairy beef. He said as Texas brings in new industries, we will bring in new politics, and groups of people. While many Texans view California as a different country, Paul said Texas could be heading the same way. Texas and California should be the most powerful states in the nation, but many producers see each other as competition, rather than cohorts. Producers have to be advocates for the industry, because in California, producers are less than half of one percent of the population.

- *CAFB is membership based, as they no longer have an insurance arm. People are members of CAFB for the advocacy benefits.*
- *30,000 farmer members*
- *Check out the website, myjobdependsonag.com*

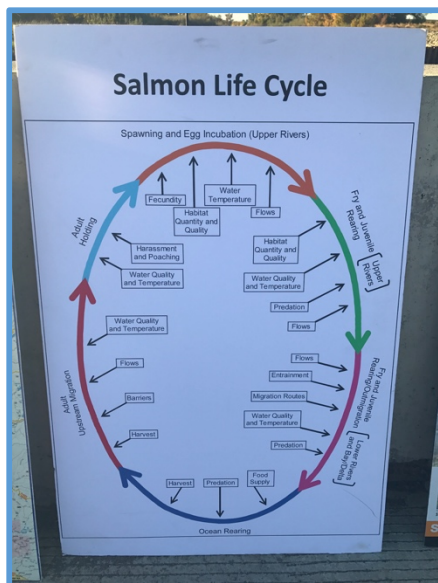
Agriculture and the Environment: Efforts to provide Pacific Flyway Benefits

Mike Hill, Khara Strum, Craig Garner, Curt McCasland, Craig Isola

Our speakers from the Conway Ranch, Ducks Unlimited and Audubon California talked about the partnerships developed between their groups that benefited wildlife and farmers. They also talked about the necessity of working together when California was in a drought.

They briefly discussed the importance of the farm bill because it includes the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP), which encourages cooperation between agriculture and conservation partners.

“Everyone has an agenda. You have to really listen to one another and find common ground.” – Khara Strum, Audubon California



Agriculture and the Environment: Sacramento Valley Salmon Recovery Program

Lewis Bair, Roger Cornwell, Jacob Katz

This was an interesting stop, where farmers were explaining how the federal and state agencies were inefficient at completing effective water projects, and the producers took on the projects instead through their local irrigation districts. The districts have completed 144 projects and 16 flow agreements since 2000. One project costing approximately \$750,000 involved bolting wood to 25 boulders and placing them along a ¼ mile stretch of river. These boulders provided shelter for juvenile salmon, allowing higher survival rates and protection from prey.

- Four species of salmon exist in the Sacramento River, which is unique.
- This group of producers has completed 144 projects and 16 flow agreements since 2000.
- “Farmers are geared to think we can fix this.”

Tuesday, October 24

Clarksburg Sugar Mill & Delta Cross Channel Tour



Russell Van Loben Sels

Tuesday morning started with a beautiful drive, watching the sun come up over a variety of crops - olives, pears, and grapes. Russell's family came to this area, known as the Northern Delta, in 1876. The family lost all the stock and infrastructure in a flood in 1908. Russell's father slowly rebuilt the farm and acreage starting in the 1940s. They previously grew sugar beets, and the Sugar Mill, where we arrived, was once a working beet-sugar refinery built in 1934. The plant closed in 1993. Redevelopment of the facility began in 2008, and today houses six wineries, a crush facility and venue space. Today, Russell's family grows safflower, pears, tomatoes, and wine grapes.

- Housing in the area is hard to sell, with the median price is \$500,000 to \$600,000
- Agricultural land depends on elevation and the crops you can grow, can range from \$5,000 to \$15,000 per acre
- Only 30% of the San Joaquin river flow reaches the Delta and the river is about 20 feet deep on average.
- Early 1900s, Sacramento rebuilt the city above the flood level to avoid catastrophic floods that were occurring every 3-4 years.
- 80% of pears to cannery and 20% to fresh markets



Private Property Rights – Pacific Legal Foundation

John Duarte, Duarte Nurseries

I really enjoyed our lunch stop as we listened to Mr. Duarte go into detail over his legal battle with governmental agencies and WOTUS. The original cease and desist order was issued after Duarte tilled a field planted previously in wheat. The agency said the dark spots he tilled were protected pools. Mr. Duarte was very passionate about agriculture and concerned of the precedent this case could set for other farmers, requiring them to obtain costly permits just to plow a field.

I'm never going to stop trying to expand the footprint of agriculture and bringing more land into production, and if you're against that, you're against human kind." – John Duarte

Del Puerto Water District

Anthena Hansen, General Manager

Anthena's passion for her work was obvious. The 55-mile-long water district serves over 200 family farms. The district has funded \$20 million in low interest loans to help producers implement water efficiency improvements. They've also partnered with with the Cities of Modesto and Turlock to create the Del Puerto Recycled Water Program. Anthena said a big part of her job is educating the public on water usage and making sure the nearby city populations understand all the measures that producers are taking to conserve water.

Cordova Farms Almond & Walnut Orchards

Daryl, Norma and Trevor Cordova

This was our first chance to get into some nut orchards and really talk to the producers. Our group was full of questions and the Cordovas were wonderful hosts. Cordova Farms contracts and grows for Blue Diamond, a name we all recognized. They showed us one orchard of Independence almonds, which are a new self-pollinating variety. We learned that walnuts have to be dried down to 5% moisture and are grown 130 trees to the acre. It was interesting to hear the younger generation's ideas for expansion on the farm contrasted against the history of the farm from the older generation.



Wednesday, October 25



Stevinson's Family Ranches

Sean Kelley, Assistant VP and Bryan Simus, Lead Herdsman

We started the morning at a diversified family operation, which was concentrated in dairy and almond orchards. The ranch has 3000 head of dairy cows and 5,000 acres of almonds and feed. They ship out 30,000 gallons of milk of day. Bryan covered labor shortages and issues faced in

California while Sean gave us a tour of the ranch. This was one of the only places where we got to see actual harvest, since it was pretty late in California's harvest season. We saw a shake machine knocking almonds from the trees. I learned the almond is divided in to hull, shell and meat. The hull can be fed to dairy cattle and shells are often used for bedding.

Hilmar Cheese Expansion into Texas

Scott Wickstrom, Owner

Hilmar started in the 1980s when 12 local dairyman mortgaged everything they had to get a contract with Kraft Foods and build the Creamery. Today, it is the largest single site creamery in the world. Scotty discussed Hilmar's expansion in to Texas, saying they chose Texas over Idaho to be closer to Eastern markets, and they were courted and impressed by Governor Perry. In his business Scotty gets paid on how many pounds of cheese come from his 100 lbs of milk.

"In dairy, there are two things you never skimp on- breeding and feeding."

San Joaquin River Improvement Project and California Water Supply

This was a great overview of water issues in California and the history of how those issues originated. The river improvement project was pretty detailed but interesting and we went out to two of the project sites where they were working on some massive pipe lines to transport water with some of the largest pumps I'd ever seen.

An Update on California Ag Labor: Where do we stand today?

Joe Del Bosque, Farmer and Vice Chair, California Water Commission of Las Banos, CA

The son of farm workers, Joe's family came to California from the Imperial Valley over 100 years ago. Del Bosque Farms grow cantaloupes and other produce. He said fresh crops are picked by hand: cantaloupes, grapes, cherries, asparagus. Typically, he runs 15-20 employees, but melon harvest requires 300 for 3 months. He said the citizenship program is ridiculous, and he's had workers that have been waiting 10-15 years to get their citizenship status. Joe believes we need a temporary visa program and he's not crazy about H2A. He also noted that the minimum wage in California is \$10.50 with government plans to raise it. Water and labor are two issues every California farmer will have to deal with.

Thursday, October 26



Dos Palos Cooperative Gin – Roller and Traditional Ginning

I was one of four that chose to go check out a roller gin, something I don't get to see in West Texas. Mike Davis gave us a great tour and I wasn't sure we would ever get Danny out of there.

The roller gins were much smaller in size than I expected and when unginning, I couldn't tell much difference between the long staple pima cotton and the traditional short staple like we grow back home. Their gin, on average, gins 125,000 bales a year and they use a DNA spray to make sure the pima and upland cotton doesn't get blended together. One of their hybrid seeds is actually green in color, which also hadn't been seen. They had a massive seed store house and Mike seemed genuinely excited to show us around. We left with coffee mugs, caps, and a new friend.



Produce Harvest Operations, Labor Issues & Employee Housing, Tanimura & Antle, Inc.

Brandon Avila, Division Manager

I think artisan blend lettuce might be the prettiest row crop I have ever witnessed. I now have a better appreciation for food safety practices, as the lettuce was cut and retail packaged in the field. and

The skill of the workers harvesting the crop was impressive. These were not just migrant labor, but an experienced team that was efficient and good at their jobs. To keep that kind of skilled labor, I understood why the company made such an investment in worker housing. There is a real sense of community there and the apartments the company built were nicer than many I lived in in college.



Odonata Winery

What's a trip to California without at least one stop at a winery? Odonata didn't disappoint and our guide took us through both white and red varieties. I learned they buy grapes by the ton and depending on the variety and availability, that ton can range from \$4000 - \$7000. He said they even work with some growers, using half the grapes for their own varieties while using the other half to make a private label wine for the grower. He said fires in California could greatly affect access to quality grapes, making the costs of California wines higher in 2018.

Uesugi Farms, Inc. Tour

Pete Aiello, General Manager

I am so glad we finished our trip at this stop. I'm pretty Pete is an honorary Texan at this point and Cody Harris would personally help him move his operation to East Texas at any time. Pete told us the history of Uesugi and the very touching story of the Japanese family who lost everything when the patriarch was forced into an internment camp, how he rebuilt, and gave Pete's grandfather his start, letting him eventually buy the operation.

Pete had horror stories of trying to expand their operations, only to be delayed again and again by governmental interference. Pete was honest, animated, and his colorful language made this probably my favorite of all the speakers.



Session VI Wrap-Up:

There's no doubt California is beautiful and contains some of the most fertile land on the continent. The sheer variety of crops (more than 400) they grow is amazing, and I can't imagine the number of decisions producers make each year before planting.

That being said, I left this session depressed for the families we met. I admire them for continuing to make a living in agriculture in such a hostile environment, where the opinions of the urban population outnumber and therefore trump the basic needs of the state's farmers and ranchers. One speaker said something that really haunted me. He said the only difference between California and Texas, is that California is about 10 years ahead of us in population growth. He talked about how many people are moving to our state and how they are moving into the cities, not the rural areas.

This session really emphasized the need for the TALL program, and for each of us to be advocates for agriculture – to make our voices heard and to be active in our communities, so hopefully in 10 years, we won't be California.

