

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Who is old-fashioned?

I disagreed with all the points of Joe Lombardi's letter to the editor in the June issue (Page 10), but the one statement that leapt off the page was "... there is no science that indicates that organically grown crops are any safer than food grown the old-fashioned way." The "old-fashioned way" is organic, Mr. Lombardi, and was from the beginning of farming until the 1940s, when synthetic fertilizers and pesticides first appeared. Petrochemical farming is less than 100 years old, and is certainly not the "old-fashioned way."

Bill Bertram,
Fairplay

Fund CSU

The governor's May revision, while seeking to restore some critical funding to the California State University, still falls short of the minimum needed to stop the door from closing on qualified students' admission to the CSU. At this crucial economic juncture, it is imperative that the CSU continues to get the resources it needs to produce a highly skilled workforce and increase college-going rates of underserved communities in California.

The CSU still faces \$215 million in reduced funding and serious fiscal challenges, plus \$124 million in mandatory cost increases not covered by state funds, including rising health care and energy bills. Without funding to mitigate these costs, students will be facing a closed door when trying to enter the CSU this fall, and current students may see an eroding quality of education.

I believe this is the wrong direction for the state to go; cuts to the CSU will only hurt California's economy by reducing the number of qualified and trained individuals in key job industries.

Susan Bakalar,
Livermore

Don't pit farmers against their customers

I appreciate your efforts to assist all parties in resolving this thorny LBAM problem.

The city of San Bruno passed a resolution in opposition to the spray. The California Department of Food and Agriculture gave a presentation suggesting that CDFA was going to the Central Valley and obtain resolutions to support the spraying. We surmised that this was going to be their new strategy based on the May 14 forum in Reedley, which CDFA Secretary A.G. Kawamura tried (and failed) to close to the media and the fact that the CDFA had succeeded in getting Reedley to pass a resolution in support of the spray the night before the forum.

Frankly, we consider this tactic to be reprehensible and that the attempt to pit farmers against their customers is not good for anyone.

Jane Kelly,
Berkeley

City folks care

I'm one of those city folks (Santa Cruz) who worked against the LBAM spray with the California Alliance to Stop

the Spray. We generally love fresh vegetables and cherish farmers. We'd much rather see people making a living growing food than, for example, needing lots of prisoners to guard. (We don't want our kids scooped up on trumped-up charges by a hungry, punitive penal system.)

So, I disagreed with a minor point in your article (we do care about your economic issues, including ability to export).

Mostly though, I think your commonsense article is excellent and particularly welcome, because we in this movement were recently annoyed and alarmed at the CDFA's attempts to, and apparent early success at employing "divide and conquer" tactics to pit "you folks" against "us folks."

The solution to this "economic emergency" is not to spend \$70 million of our public treasury making Stewart Resnick richer by poisoning coastal people and the environment with his patented, toxic, plastic mist.

The solution is a pen stroke through the LBAM line in the "Class A Pest" list.

Joseph C. (Jody) Ferguson,
Santa Cruz,
California Alliance to Stop the Spray

Muffling science?

Thank you for your astute and straightforward reporting on the LBAM. Isn't it a shame that the University of California entomologists think they can't speak about their scientific knowledge publicly? What does that say about our system?

Wouldn't it be interesting to do a longer piece on the muffling of agriculture-related science in the UC system? I'd be interested. I'd sure like to understand how the CDFA went so far down a road when the UC scientists don't agree it's the right path. What are the pressures on the other side?

Thanks for your articles and for your publication generally.

Susan R. Clark, executive director,
Columbia Foundation,
San Francisco

Water emergency

This is my take on your Web water story "Central Valley Water Emergency" (posted June 23 at www.CaliforniaFarmer.com).

Let's get real here. There is not enough water. Transshipping it around the state is not the solution, and, having grown up in farming country, I know there is much that can be done to reduce water consumption on farms. The problem is a few go to the extreme, a few more do a decent job on reduction, but nobody else seems to do what they can because of the capital hump. Then there are those who think water is endless. Like the Westside cotton growers. Been there, seen it!

It ain't cheap, but the farming universe needs to find a way to stop farming those super water-hungry crops! Growing grapes in the Lost Hills to Taft region is not smart, especially when the water is delivered by sprinkler.

Running sprinkler systems on crops

during the hot hours of the day will result in 20% to 50% loss by direct evaporation. Ninety-plus degrees and a relative humidity of 10% to 20% will see to that. Add a 10 to 15 mph breeze, and evaporation rates can triple. Teach the farmers to sprinkle from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. instead of 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. And if crop damage from "wet nights" could result, just don't sprinkle.

Growing cotton on the Westside in the old Lake Tulare bottomland is a waste due to the soil conditions — too much leaches down and poisons the water table, or is lost due to surface evaporation because the fines and alkali conditions keep it too close to the surface. I remember trying to walk those fields as a young person with a hoe.

We grow cash crops where the conditions are decent to marginal, and pump too much water as a result. What wonderful water quality there was in the early part of the 20th century is long gone. There is salt and chemical incursion into the upper 20 to 50 feet of water table, and we keep drafting deeper to avoid that layer, which pushes it deeper.

For much of the past century, especially the last 50 years, we have



stripped the rivers of all water and pumped fossil water.

We need to change the way we deal with water in the state or, as I suggest in my June 8 blog, the San Francisco Bay will become a backwater slough fed from the Pacific, not river water.

Bill Ries-Knight,
Stockton

Editor's note: Read the mayor's blog at savelstockton.org/blog/mayor.

Where's Baxter?

Please send me Baxter's column so I can have a good laugh. I am amazed you actually answered the phone, rather than an automated voice. Usually it is someone in India, or somewhere. Thank you, and I will read the rest of the magazine now.

Pat Lenz,
Villa Park

Editor's note: Because of a printing error, Baxter Black did not appear in all editions of the May issue, and we received several calls. We directed Pat and others to "Magazine online" at www.CaliforniaFarmer.com. The online version included Baxter.

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