



Senate Committee on Agriculture

Senator Melissa Hurtado, Chair

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2023-2024 Legislative Summary

Introduction

This publication provides a comprehensive list of bills referred to the Senate Committee on Agriculture during the 2023-2024 Legislative Session.

This report is intended to provide a quick reference to bills considered by the Committee and is not intended to provide a comprehensive analysis of the bill. Each summary includes the final status of the bill. Bills the Legislature passed and the Governor signed into law include the chapter reference.

If you would like additional information about a particular bill presented in this report, please contact the Committee office by phone at (916) 651-1508 or visit the Committee's website at <http://sagri.senate.ca.gov>. The Legislature also maintains a website where all bills and analyses are readily available. This website can be accessed at <http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>.

Senate Bills

SB 224 (Hurtado)

Agricultural land: foreign ownership and interests: foreign governments.

This bill would have prohibited a foreign government from purchasing, acquiring, leasing, or holding a controlling interest in agricultural land within the State of California, exempting any land held by foreign governments, before January 1, 2024. This bill would have required the Office of Emergency Services (OES), in consultation with the appropriate boards and/or departments, to compile an annual report on the total amount of, and recent changes to, foreign-owned agricultural land, water rights, water desalination facilities, energy production, energy storage, and energy distribution in California.

Held in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

SB 485 (Becker)

Methane emissions: livestock: feed additives.

As heard in this committee, this bill would have added an additional member with expertise in scientific research in livestock emissions to the existing Scientific Advisory Panel in the Office of Environmental Farming within the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). It would have required the California Air Resources Board (CARB), in consultation with CDFA, to create a feed additive program to reduce emissions and report to the Legislature two years after a safe and effective feed additive is commercially available. This report would include recommendations about further funding and scientific research needed to improve the incentive program, convene specified workgroups, and provide a comprehensive assessment on the potential impacts of feed additives on or before August 1, 2026. This bill would have also required CDFA to report to the Legislature an outreach plan on incentives to applicants that would like to provide technical assistance to any organic or pasture-based dairies or small farm for any enteric fermentation program created. Upon completion of the report on improving the incentive program to the Legislature, this bill would have appropriated \$10,000,000 to CARB for early research, development, and demonstration projects of enteric fermentation.

Assembly Amendments deleted the contents of the bill, and inserted language that would expand the crime of interfering with an election to include obstructing an election officials, their staff, including temporary workers and volunteers, or a member of a precinct board, in their performance of any duty related to conducting an election or canvass in order to prevent the election or canvass from being fairly held and lawfully conducted.

This bill was amended on 6/22/23 to remove all agricultural-related provisions.

SB 547 (Blakespear)

District agricultural associations: real property: affordable housing.

This bill would have clarified a district agricultural association may engage in the construction and maintenance of affordable housing on state-owned property.

Held in the Assembly Committee on Agriculture after testimony only hearing.

SB 624 (Alvarado-Gil)

Horse racing: state-designated fairs: allocation of revenues: gross receipts for sales and use tax.

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 of the funds.

Held in the Assembly Committee on Revenue and Taxation.

SB 780 (Alvarado-Gil)

Department of Food and Agriculture: oversight: commercial feed, feed additives, and drugs.

This bill requires any commercial feed, feed additive, or drug approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration that is fed or administered 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.

Signed into law. Chapter 634, Statutes of 2023.

SB 862 (Laird)

Pest control: Agricultural Pest Control Advisory Committee.

As heard in this committee, this bill would have increased the public members on the Agricultural Pest Control Advisory Committee within the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) from one to two members.

Assembly Amendments deleted the contents of the bill, and inserted language that would allow the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transportation District board to place a district tax measure before voters that if approved, would exceed the 2% cap.

This bill was amended on 6/13/23 to remove all agricultural-related provisions.

SB 1117 (Laird)

Organic products.

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's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service's March 20, 2023 Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) Rule.

Signed into law. Chapter 456, States of 2024.

SB 1186 (Ochoa Bogh)

Fairs: free admissions.

This bill provides a courtesy pass admission to any state, county, district, or citrus fruit fair, to military personnel, regardless of whether they are in uniform or not.

Signed into law. Chapter 206, States of 2024.

SB 1270 (Grove)

Department of Food and Agriculture: farm products: licenses and complaints: fees.

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. This bill clarifies the secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) may fix and adjust license fees if the secretary finds funds needed to administer the applicable licensing program must be adjusted for the sustainability of the program.

Signed into law. Chapter 603, States of 2024.

SB 1367 (Hurtado)

Agriculture: commercial feed: inspection tonnage tax: research and education.

This bill extends the sunset of the inspection tonnage tax and the secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) authority to designate a specified amount of revenues from the inspection tonnage tax for commercial feed to go towards research and education regarding the safe manufacture, distribution, and use of commercial feed from January 1, 2025 to January 1, 2031.

Signed into law. Chapter 474, States of 2024.

SB 1419 (Rubio)

Food deserts: grants: personal income tax and corporation tax credits.

This bill would have established 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 would have authorized the California Department of Food and Agriculture to collect non-

state, federal, and private funds, and would have required those funds to be deposited into the California Equitable Food Access Account within the Food Desert Elimination Fund and would have continuously appropriate moneys in the account to the department for purposes of the program. This bill would have established the Food Desert Elimination Fund in the General Fund and would have authorize monies from the fund to be used, upon appropriation, to run the program. Finally, this bill would have repealed these provisions on December 31, 2030.

Vetoed by Governor.

SB 1448 (Hurtado)

Farm to Community Food Hub Program: California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force.

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. Additionally, the bill authorizes the Strategic Growth Council, using existing or private funds, to provide public taskforce members a reasonable per diem allowance, as specified. Finally, this bill extends the program’s operation until January 1, 2034.

Signed into law. Chapter 917, States of 2024.

SB 1522 (Committee on Agriculture)

Fertilizing material.

This bill extends the label registration for a manufacturer or distributor of fertilizing material from 2 years to 4 years and adjusts registration fees accordingly. This bill allows the Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to adjust the mill assessment rate on fertilizing materials registered for sale in California without using administrative regulations and/or the rulemaking process provided the Fertilizing Industry Advisory Board (FIAB) determines the change is necessary. Finally, this bill updates definitions and makes technical changes.

Signed into law. Chapter 208, States of 2024.

Assembly Bills

AB 402 (Aguiar-Curry)

Weeds: Broomrape Program.

This bill establishes the Broomrape Board within the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to conduct research and provide recommendations related to broomrape, surveying, detecting, analyzing, and treating causes of broomrape. This bill establishes the Broomrape Management Account within CDFA and allows the Board to recommend to the Secretary of CDFA an annual assessment rate or schedule of rates to be paid equally by producers and handlers. This bill sunsets the Board by July 1, 2028.

Signed into law. Chapter 651, States of 2023.

AB 404 (Connolly)

Department of Food and Agriculture: reporting requirements: certified organic operations.

This bill would have required, upon appropriation of funds, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to evaluate reporting requirements affecting certified organic operations and remove any duplicative reporting requirements and submit a report to the legislature that includes suggestions to amend or remove unnecessary reporting requirements.

Vetoed by Governor.

AB 408 (Wilson)

Climate-resilient Farms, Sustainable Healthy Food Access, and Farmworker Protection Bond Act of 2024.

This bill would have enacted the Climate-resilient Farms, Sustainable Healthy Food Access, and Farmworker Protection Bond Act of 2024 and would have authorized \$3,365,000,000 pursuant to the State General Obligation Bond Law to finance programs to improve agricultural resilience, advance sustainable agriculture, protect the health and well-being of California's Farmworkers, support healthy food access and nutrition security, and strengthen regional food economies.

Died in Senate Committee on Appropriations.

AB 454 (Aguiar-Curry)

California Rice Commission: board membership: referendum.

This bill authorizes the California Rice Commission (Commission) to review drought conditions in the state, evaluate the impact of these conditions on the production and handling of rice, and issue a drought declaration. The bill allows a Commission member who is a rice producer or

handler to continue serving on the Commission, and vote to issue a declaration, even if they did not handle or produce rice within the prior four years due to drought conditions.

Signed into law. Chapter 84, Statutes of 2023.

AB 552 (Bennett)

Farmer Equity Act of 2017: Regional Farmer Equipment and Cooperative Resources Assistance Pilot Program.

This bill would have established the Regional Farmer Equipment and Cooperative Resources Assistance Pilot Program, requiring the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), under the Farmer Equity Act of 2017, to provide financial and technical assistance to support regional farm equipment sharing and enhance cooperative benefits for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and, if funding is still available, for limited resource farmers and ranchers.

Vetoed by Governor.

AB 660 (Irwin)

Food and beverage products: labeling: quality dates, safety dates, and sell-by dates.

This bill requires food manufacturers, processors, and retailers responsible for the labeling of food items, beginning July 1, 2026, to use “BEST if Used by” to indicate quality, and “Use by” to indicate safety of a food item, and prohibits the use of the term “sell by.”

Signed into law. Chapter 911, Statutes of 2024.

AB 1016 (Jones-Sawyer)

Pest control operations: aircraft operations: private applicator.

This bill expands the Department of Pesticide Regulation’s (DPR) authority to create training programs for drone aerial applicator licensing independent of the existing journeymen/apprenticeship requirements.

Signed into law. Chapter 354, Statutes of 2023.

AB 1042 (Bauer-Kahan)

Pesticide treated seed: labeling.

This bill, beginning January 1, 2027, requires the label for certain pesticide treated seeds to include the pesticide’s registration number from the United States Environmental Protection Agency, if applicable, and the application rate by weight of seed, among other specified information.

Signed into law. Chapter 348, Statutes of 2024.

AB 1141 (Megan Dahle)

Agricultural lands: agricultural and livestock producers: agricultural pass program: disaster access to farm lands.

This bill would rename the “Livestock Pass” program to the “Agricultural Pass” or “Ag Pass” program and make the Agricultural Pass program applicable to qualified agricultural producers, as defined.

Held in the Senate Committee on Agriculture, at the request of the author.

AB 1197 (Hart)

Agricultural Production Planning Grant Program: local food producers.

This bill would have authorized a nonprofit organization to apply to the California Department of Conservation (DOC) for a planning grant to assist in identifying and mapping local food producers, subject to appropriation from the legislature. The bill would have authorized planning grants for maintaining local food producers through the protection of agricultural lands and for the development of public-private partnerships for the long-term protection and stewardship of local food producers.

Held in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

AB 1583 (Committee on Agriculture)

California Seed Law: subventions: sunset extension.

This bill extends the California Seed Law subvention program to July 1, 2027, with all provisions relating to the subvention program repealed on January 1, 2031.

Signed into law. Chapter 128, Statutes of 2023.

AB 1603 (Alvarez)

Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program: qualified entities: consumer cooperatives.

This bill would have established a consumer cooperative that sells California-grown fresh fruits, nuts, and vegetables and is authorized to accept nutrition benefits is considered a qualified entity eligible to be awarded moneys through the Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program.

Held in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

AB 1763 (Committee on Agriculture)

Food and agriculture: industry-funded standardization program: Cannella Environmental Farming Act of 1995: Noxious Weed Management Account.

This bill eliminates the January 1, 2025 repeal date of the California Department of Food and Agriculture’s (CDFA) Fruit, Nuts, and Vegetable Standardization Program, makes changes to the Technical Assistance program for the CDFA’s climate smart agricultural programs to increase funding amounts for technical assistance, and makes changes to the weed abatement program to waive local cost-share when feasible in order to help rural and/or disadvantaged communities who may not be able to apply for weed abatement funding due to costs associated with it.

Signed into law. Chapter 208, Statutes of 2023.

AB 1861 (Addis)

Pest control: Pierce’s disease.

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.

Signed into law. Chapter 197, Statutes of 2024.

AB 1864 (Connolly)

Pesticides: agricultural use near schoolsites: notification and reporting.

This bill requires a notice of intent (NOI) to be submitted before a person applies a restricted use pesticide within one-quarter of a mile of a schoolsite using an application method that is restricted under the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) Pesticide Use Near Schools regulations.

Signed into law. Chapter 552, Statutes of 2024.

AB 1963 (Friedman)

Pesticides: paraquat dichloride.

This bill requires the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) to complete a reevaluation of paraquat dichloride, as provided, and make the determination to retain, cancel, or suspend its registration or to place new restrictions on the use of pesticide products containing it as an active ingredient.

Signed into law. Chapter 688, Statutes of 2024.

AB 2113 (Garcia)

Pesticides.

This bill increases, over a four-year period, the mill assessment (a fee on the sale of all pesticides sold into the state) to pay for programs within the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) related to the regulation of pesticide sales and use in California, among other things, and would declare its provisions are to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.

Signed into law. Chapter 60, Statutes of 2024.

AB 2143 (Connolly)

Fairs.

This bill repeals and recasts provisions referencing the Division of Fairs and Expositions in the Business and Professions Code into the Food and Agricultural Code. This bill also establishes the California Fairs Trust Account within the Fair and Exposition Fund to continuously appropriate monies from license fees from satellite wagering for specified projects, including fire and life safety improvements, among others. Finally, the bill provides technical and clarifying changes.

Signed into law. Chapter 559, Statutes of 2024.

AB 2313 (Bennett)

Farmer Equity Act of 2017: Regional Farmer Equipment and Cooperative Resources Assistance Pilot Program.

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. The Program in this bill would have provided financial and technical assistance to support regional farm equipment sharing.

Vetoed by Governor.

AB 2324 (Bennett)

Avocados: sale or donation by the Secretary of Food and Agriculture.

This bill extends, 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 to.

Signed into law. Chapter 390, Statutes of 2024.

AB 2436 (Alanis)

Cattle: inspections: fees.

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.

Signed into law. Chapter 214, Statutes of 2024.

AB 2509 (Kalra)

Invasive Species Council of California: activities: definitions.

This bill requires the Invasive Species Council of California to prioritize specified activities, including integrated pest management 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.

Signed into law. Chapter 720, Statutes of 2024.

AB 2606 (Aguiar-Curry)

California Agave Commission.

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

Signed into law. Chapter 725, Statutes of 2024.

AB 2721 (Committee on Agriculture)

Food and agriculture: omnibus bill.

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.

Signed into law. Chapter 215, Statutes of 2024.

AB 2734 (Connolly)

Agriculture: Cannella Environmental Farming Act of 1995.

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 it 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.

Vetoed by Governor.

AB 2745 (Mathis)

Agricultural pests: public nuisance: civil penalty.

This bill would have authorized a county agricultural commissioner to levy a civil penalty against a person that is found to maintain land deemed to be a public nuisance. The bill would have sunset these provisions on January 1, 2035.

Vetoed by Governor.

AB 2827 (Reyes)

Invasive species: prevention.

This bill would have required the California Department of Food and Agriculture, along with relevant state agencies and stakeholders to develop and implement strategies to detect, control, monitor, and eradicate invasive species to protect the state’s agriculture, environments, and natural resources.

Held in Senate Committee on Appropriations.

Oversight and Informational Hearings

Committee on Agriculture

U.S. Farm Bill: Update for the 2023 Reauthorization and Its Impact on Californians March 7, 2023

This informational hearing provided an update on the Agriculture Improvement Act (U.S. Farm Bill) that is currently being vetted by the U.S. Congress. The U.S. Farm bill is an omnibus bill governing policy in many areas related to agriculture including crop insurance, food assistance, conservation programs, and rural development for California's diverse agricultural sector. *This hearing was held at the State Capitol in Sacramento, California.*

Navigating Threats to California Agriculture August 29, 2023

This informational hearing provided information on threats to agriculture in California such as food security and agricultural land preservation. *This hearing was held at the State Capitol in Sacramento, California.*

Navigating Threats to California Agriculture – Continuing the Discussion March 19, 2024

This informational hearing provided an update to the continuing threats to California agriculture such as climate change, food security and agricultural land preservation. *This hearing was held at the State Capitol in Sacramento, California.*

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