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California

Group seeks to boost donations of farm goods to food banks

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — California's agriculture agency is teaming with a nonprofit organization on a campaign to boost donations of fresh farm goods to local food banks.

The state Department of Food and Agriculture and the California Association of Food Banks have embarked on a social media campaign and are making presentations to farm groups to extol the virtues of donating.

The CAFB's Farm to Family program has a goal of increasing contributions from the more than 140 million pounds of fresh food donated in 2014 to 200 million this year, said Sue Sigler, the association's executive director.

"Food banks are always looking for donations of all kinds of food," Sigler said, adding that the Farm to Family program is primarily seeking "fresh produce for our food banks to distribute to people in need."

The campaign was kicked

off in December, as state Food and Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross toured a fresh produce facility and met with media to promote the #CAGrown social media hashtag.

Consumers who share a picture of a California-grown product on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram with the hashtag will generate a one-pound food donation to a food bank from California Grown, a state- and federally funded promotion campaign.

Sigler said farmers who donate fresh goods may be eligible for state and federal tax credits, and some may receive small reimbursements for picking and packing costs from the Farm to Family program.

"Beyond that, we hope we serve for some farmers as a way to rid themselves of excess inventory," Sigler said. "For any seconds or culls or B-grade, No. 2 products, we know often times those are perfectly edible and nutritious even if they don't meet retail expectations."

Research unlocks clues about powdery mildew in wine grapes

By **TIM HEARDEN**
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DAVIS, Calif. — Researchers have unlocked key genetic clues to a pathogen that is one of the worst destroyers of vineyards.

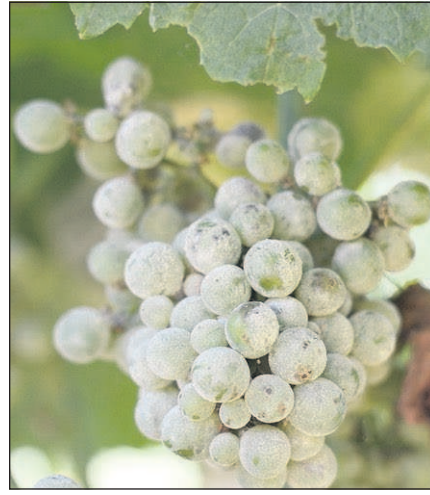
Left untreated, grape powdery mildew — caused by the fungal pathogen *Erysiphe necator* — destroys grape quality and yield, according to the University of California-Davis.

Scientists in the university's Department of Viticulture and Enology have mapped the pathogen's genome, which could help growers become more efficient in treating for the ailment and eventually lead researchers to develop new mildew-resistant varieties.

"It is a huge problem," university spokeswoman Diane Nelson said of the pathogen. "They say that if there's 1 percent of this stuff on the leaves or grapes when they're harvested, it's going to affect the taste and flavor of the wine you drink."

Symptoms of powdery mildew include red blotchy areas on dormant canes, and later the infected areas take on a white, powdery or dusty appearance as masses may cover the entire surface of the grape, according to the UC's Pest Management Guidelines.

Growers treat for the disease with



Courtesy of UC-Davis

Wine grapes show the effects of grape powdery mildew, one of the most destructive vineyard maladies in California and the world. University of California-Davis researchers have discovered important genetic clues about the pathogen that causes the ailment.

a variety of fungicides, and sulfur and some other treatments are acceptable on organically certified grapes, according to the university. More chemicals are used to control powdery mildew than for any other vineyard problem.

"I talked to one grower in Napa that

Online

Manuscript of research to map the *E. necator* genome: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2164/15/1081>

UC guidelines for grape powdery mildew: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/r302100311.html>

said if you grow grapes in California, you're going to get it," said Nelson, a senior writer for UC-Davis' College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. "It's spread by the wind and the conditions.

"Basically, you can't not treat grape powdery mildew," she said. "Left untreated, it's going to destroy both the quality and the yields. That's why they dump so much sulfur on it."

Knowing how the pathogen evolves and causes disease will help grape growers select which fungicides to use and when to use them throughout the season, the UC explains in a news release.

Understanding the pathogen will also help UC-Davis breeders develop new grape varieties with effective and durable genetic resistance to powdery mildew, the release explains.

"They're going to have to breed for resistance," Nelson said, adding it could be a while before a new variety becomes commercially viable.

California citrus exports hurt by West Coast labor dispute

FRESNO, Calif. (AP) — California's citrus growers already grappling with a fourth year of drought say their exports are taking a hit from a labor dispute at West Coast seaports, costing farmers millions of dollars a week.

Al Bates, president of Sun Pacific Shippers and Farming, told the San Francisco Chronicle that growers like him are exporting half of their normal fruit produce to places such as Korea, Japan and China. A leading grower of citrus in the Central Valley, Bates blames the ongoing disputes at the seaports for

crippling the flow of his goods.

"You shouldn't be able to hold an industry hostage," Bates said. "There's got to be some way that we can continue to operate while they negotiate."

The labor dispute has impacted 29 seaports along the West Coast, including Long Beach, Los Angeles and Oakland. The White House said on Saturday that President Barack Obama is sending Labor Secretary Tom Perez to California in an attempt to reach a deal at the bargaining table. The concern is that the slow movement of goods through the seaports will

have broad economic damage.

Citrus growers in California who generate nearly \$1 billion a year are hit especially hard because they are entering their peak season, and unlike auto parts and non-perishable goods caught in the labor dispute, oranges and other citrus products

spoil if they sit too long.

Bates said his company is losing \$3 million a week, which stings during the drought when export profits are needed to compensate for the high price of irrigation water.

While farmers are hurt by the loss of export sales, Bates

said the labor dispute has left an abundance of fruit available to Americans consumers at lower prices. He estimates the port stalemate will cost the citrus growers by up to 40 percent of the normal profits.

U.S. Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, both of Cal-

ifornia, wrote a joint letter this past week demanding an agreement that puts the ports back in business. "Clearly the ramifications of this slowdown are hurting the California economy and our households, small businesses and communities," the pair wrote. "This is unacceptable."

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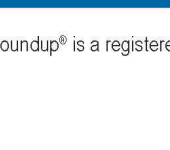



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