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California



Courtesy National Grape and Wine Initiative

A Carnegie Mellon University research team collects data on California vineyards with a high-throughput crop imaging unit. The University of California-Davis and several other universities received a grant to research ways to enhance vineyard management.

UC-Davis scientists to help develop high-tech vineyard management

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — The University of California-Davis and several other universities will receive \$6 million in federal funding over four years to develop new technologies for managing vineyards.

The USDA specialty-crop funds, which were secured by the Sacramento-based National Grape and Wine Initiative, will enable research into creating digital maps that will allow growers to zero in on the conditions within their vineyards, the grant's proponents explain.

This would significantly enhance vintners' ability to predict their crop size, said Jean-Mari Peltier, president of NGWI.

"The goal of this project is to deliver an innovative, sci-

ence-driven and approachable precision viticulture platform to measure and manage sources of vineyard variation," Peltier told the Capital Press in an email.

The research aims to help growers identify how their soil, canopy and other vineyard characteristics impact vine growth and productivity and try to manage those components, she said.

"Successful spatial measurement and management of vineyard soil, canopy and crop will optimize productivity, while lowering financial, labor and natural resource inputs," she said.

The project will be led by award-winning scientists Terry Bates of Cornell University and Stephen Nuske of Carnegie Mellon University, who will be joined by experts from UC-Da-

vis and Newcastle University to assist in the work, according to the NGWI.

At the University of California's Kearney Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Parlier, Calif., scientists will use a suite of sensors to develop maps of management zones, study the potential economic benefits of such a system and educate growers, the NGWI states. The primary UC researcher for the project has not yet been formally hired, university spokeswoman Jeannette Warnert said.

Funding comes from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture's Specialty Grant Research Initiative, which has released the first grant installment of nearly \$2.4 million, according to the NGWI.

The project comes as UC researchers have focused in recent years on improving technology for growers. UC-Davis scientists recently developed a suite of sensors to deliver real-time plant-stress data to a grower's computer so that he or she can irrigate only when and where the water is needed.

The combined data from the vineyard project promises to provide a wealth of information to farmers, including data about crop yield, soil conditions, irrigation and fertilizer needs, canopy growth and the color and maturity of grapes, NGWI officials explain.

In addition, digital mapping could help growers balance quality and quantify of the crops, identify soil needs and better manage harvests, the organization asserts.

Agency tests find fresh Calif. produce mostly free of residue

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — Fresh produce sold in California stores, farmers' markets and other venues last year was mostly free of pesticide residues, a state agency's tests found.

In all, 96.4 percent of California-grown produce tested in 2014 had little or no residues, according to the Department of Pesticide Regulation's newly released 2014 Pesticide Residues in Fresh Produce report.

The year-round collection of about 3,500 samples of produce, including those labeled as organic, showed that the vast majority of fruits and vegetables available for sale in the Golden State meet stringent federal safety standards, DPR officials said.

Growers, wholesalers and retailers have maintained a consistently high rate of residue-free produce in recent years, agency spokesman Craig Cassidy told the Capital Press.

"This report further confirms that California's vigorous pesticide regulatory program creates a reliable marketplace where consumers can have faith in their fresh fruits and vegetables," DPR director Brian Leahy said when unveiling the report on Oct. 14. "The pesticide rules and oversight we have in this state are effective at protecting the produce that we enjoy eating."

Officials tested for some 300 different pesticides with equipment operated by the state Department of Food and Agriculture. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sets safe-tolerance standards allowing each piece of fruit or vegetable to contain trace amounts of pesticide, state officials explained in a news release.

The report comes as the DPR's air monitoring in three agricultural communities has found for a third straight year



Courtesy Department of Pesticide Regulation

California Department of Pesticide Regulation staff scientist Amanda Thompson collects cilantro samples at a Los Angeles grocery store. The agency found that fresh produce sold in California was mostly free of pesticide residues.

pesticide residues at levels well below levels that would cause a health concern. The communities were Salinas, Ripon in San Joaquin County and Shafter in Kern County.

Among highlights of the produce report:

- More than 94 percent of all produce samples had pesticide residue levels at or below EPA tolerances. Of those, nearly 41 percent had no detectable residues at all, while nearly 53 percent had residues detected within the legal level.

- A little more than 1 percent of the samples had pesticide residues in excess of the established tolerance level, and an additional 5.5 percent of the samples had traces of pesticides that were not approved for that commodity.

- Produce that most frequently tested positive for illegal pesticide residues last year included ginger from China, cactus pads, cactus pears, limes, papaya, summer squash, tomatillos, chili peppers and tomatoes from Mexico, and domestic spinach and kale, according to the release.

FFA members hone skills at competition

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

REDDING, Calif. — A new member of FFA, Jack Klaiber, plans to begin raising two meat goats in February, so he wanted to learn what livestock judges look for.

He entered a judging competition at the annual FFA field day and career fair Oct. 15 at Shasta College in Redding, where he and other students made their observations on paper.

"I just want to get some experience with animals," Klaiber, a freshman at Anderson, Calif., High School, said before the contest. "I want to learn how to judge other animals so I can determine how my animals will come out."

Klaiber was one of about 850 FFA members from Northern and Central California at the Shasta College meet, which is one of the first of the school year and helps students hone their skills for later events.

In addition to livestock judging, the students competed on contests relating to soils, horticulture, small engines, welding and agricultural mechanics. Some veterinary students took a written test to show their knowledge, while other youngsters took part in timed contests cutting through a log with a saw and moving a tractor through an obstacle course.

Awards were given to winning individuals and teams in about 20 contests, and a small college club information fair

was held in the Shasta College farm pavilion so that students could explore future options.

"This is the first contest of the year for FFA students," said B.J. MacFarlane, Shasta College's farm manager. "For years, the contest has been getting freshman and sophomore students involved to see what activities they want to participate in throughout the rest of the year."

For some students, the meet is a chance to practice before big statewide and national contests. Ally Rose McDonald, a Durham, Calif., high school senior and the FFA's Superior Region secretary, normally competes at job interview during bigger contests but participated in the veterinary science event at Shasta College.

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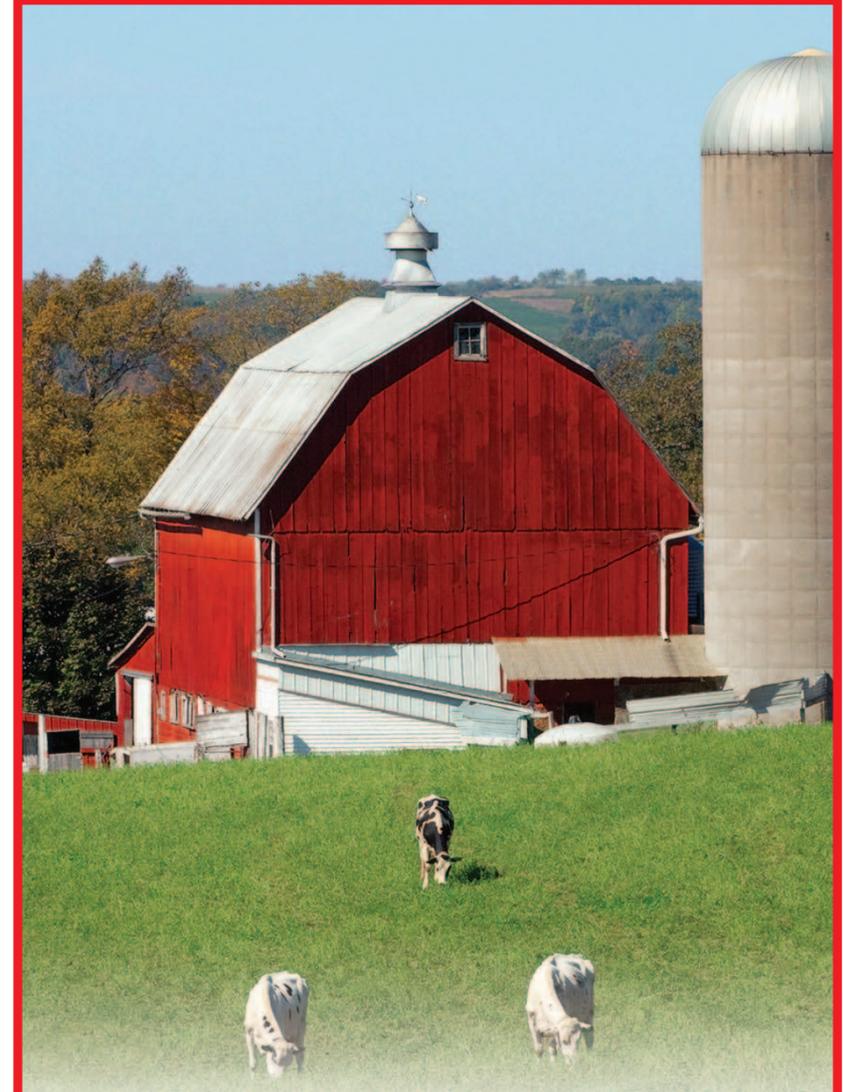
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