

Subscribe to our weekly California email newsletter at CapitalPress.com/newsletters

California

California FFA raising funds for members' jackets

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

GALT, Calif. — The California FFA Foundation is raising money to buy the iconic blue corduroy jackets for students who can't afford them.

This year's fundraiser is Nov. 29, and the FFA foundation wants to raise at least \$6,500 — enough to give a jacket with a tie or scarf to 100 students.

Katie Otto, the foundation's development director, said many students have to borrow jackets from their chapter for competitions and events.

"A lot of them didn't have the means to have their own jackets," she said. "Definitely for me it illustrated the need (to help) all of our students who don't have the opportunity to have a jacket with their name on it that fits comfortably."

The push started during the run-up to the Sacramento area's Big Day of Giving on May 4, during which local residents and businesses do-



Capital Press File

Orland, Calif., members wear their emblematic blue FFA jackets at a competition.

nated more than \$22,000 to support FFA and agricultural education.

The foundation sent emails to members and supporters, and many of them told emotional stories about what their jackets meant to them, Otto said.

"It kind of becomes their identity," she said, adding that some members still have their parents' or grandparents' jackets.

"After we did the Big Day of Giving, we talked about online giving," Otto said. "I had heard of Giving Tuesday in the past but I didn't know much about it. ... With Thanksgiving being an opportunity to be thankful and give back, it made sense."

Giving Tuesday is a United Nations Foundation-sponsored movement to encourage philanthropy at the beginning of the holiday season.

Almond growers plant 14.5M new trees despite price slide

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — A nursery survey reporting at least 14.5 million new almond trees have been planted since June 2015 shows the continued vibrancy of the industry, experts say.

Based on an average of 135 trees per acre, the new purchases equate to 108,000 acres of almonds planted, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

A little more than 71 percent of the trees sold — or 77,000 acres — are new almond orchards while the rest were used to replace existing trees or orchards that were taken out, the agency explains.

The estimate is consistent with an April acreage report that found there are 220,000 non-bearing acres of almonds yet to come online, said Richard Waycott, president and chief executive officer of the Almond Board of California.

"Those trees are between 1 and 3 years of age," said Waycott, noting that if one-third of them are new, that would be

close to 77,000 acres. "It's in keeping with where we are in terms of new orchard expansion."

The growth continues as prices have fallen by nearly half in the past year from the more than \$4 a pound that was paid for some almonds during the 2014 crop year. The reduced prices and development of new products using almonds revived demand, leading to record shipments this summer, industry officials said.

"It's still a good investment," University of California Cooperative Extension farm advisor Roger Duncan said of almonds. "It still makes sense. Farmers are still making money. It's still profitable. If you're a farmer and you own land, you have to farm something, and you look at all your options."

Several factors have fed the continued growth in acreage even amid lower prices, experts said.

For one, some of the trees may have been ordered from nurseries while prices were still booming, as there was a waiting list of a year or two for

some varieties.

Moreover, the lower prices were an incentive for growers to replace older orchards that had lost productivity, Duncan said.

"An almond orchard's life-span is somewhere around 25 years," he said. "A lot of orchards have been artificially ... kept on life support. In previous times they would have been removed, but because prices were so high, even the fairly poorly producing orchards were making money."

Satellite imagery used by the Almond Board has found that 96 percent of new almond orchards have gone into existing irrigated land, replacing other crops, Waycott said. Only 4 percent went onto grazing land or other land that wasn't irrigated, he said.

"I think it's just a shift going on between what (crops) are more profitable as foreseen by growers and more essential in the California environment than certain crops that can be grown elsewhere," Waycott said.

In anticipation of a 25 percent increase in production over the next three years as the new trees come on line, the Almond Board is seeking the USDA's permission to raise its grower assessment from 3 cents to 4 cents per pound, which would increase its income from about \$60 million to \$80 million annually, Waycott said.

Officials: California salmon avoid catastrophic year

By **SCOTT SMITH**
Associated Press

FRESNO, Calif. — California's native salmon, which has been hard hit by historic drought and high temperatures, has avoided a third disastrous year, federal officials said Thursday.

The number of juvenile winter-run chinook salmon spawning on the Sacramento River in Northern California and swimming out to sea has doubled from 2015, and it's significantly up from the prior year, officials said.

California has experienced five years of drought. The fishing industry and farmers in California's fertile Central Valley are in a constant struggle over the same river water to sustain their livelihoods.

The fish — federally protected as an endangered species — were bolstered by heavy rainstorms in March, said Maria Rea of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries' Central Valley Office.

Storms filled Shasta Lake so officials could hold back cold water behind the dam and release it through the hot months, when young salmon need it to survive in the river below, she said.

Officials note, however, that this year's run so far is made up of less than half of the 1.1 million counted in 2010 — a sign that they are still struggling.

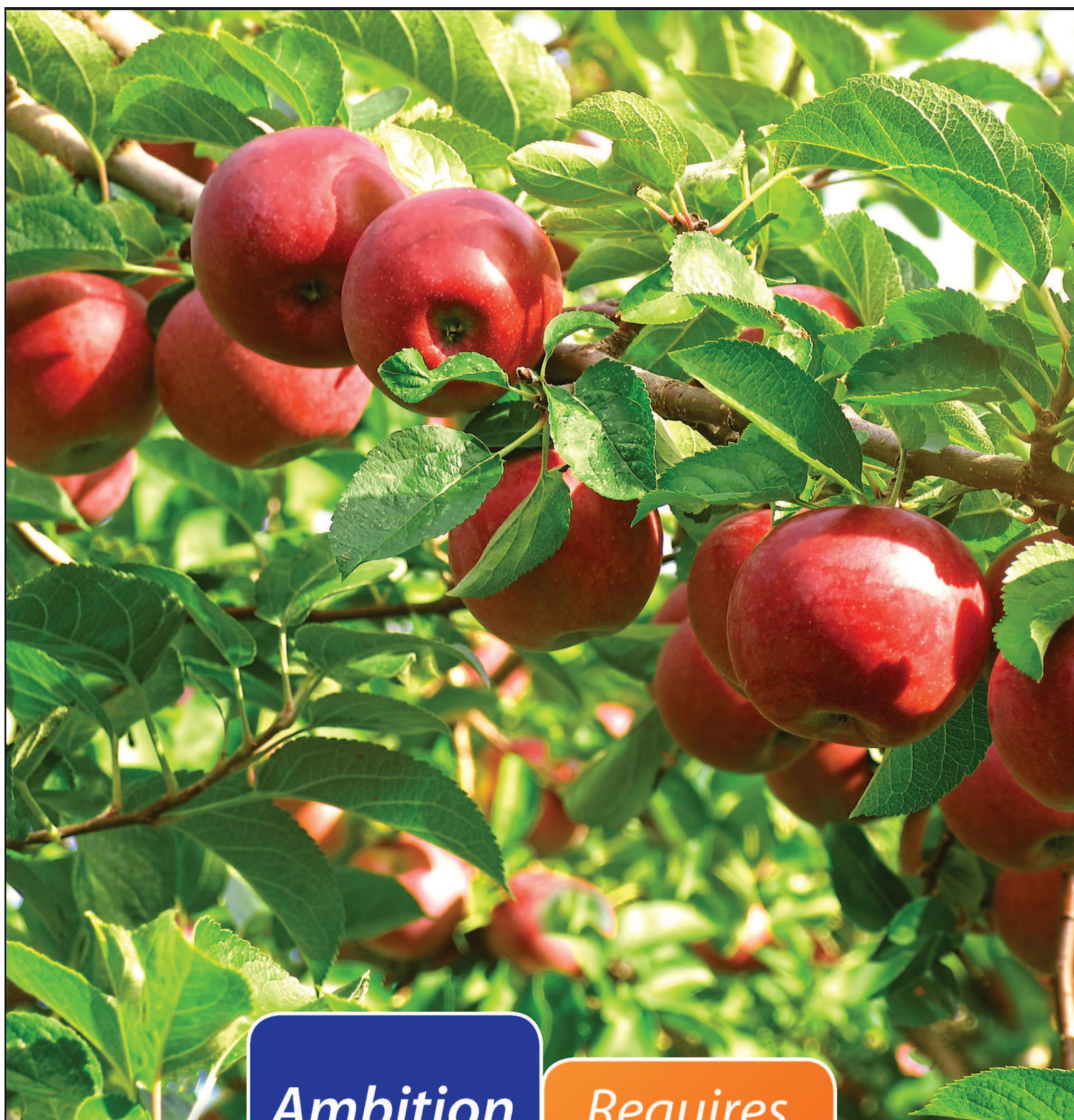
"It's too early to declare a huge success," said Garwin Yip, branch chief for water operations at NOAA's Fisheries California Central Valley Office.

John McManus, executive director of the Golden Gate Salmon Association, said the rebound this year is good news.

The salmon industry in California is valued at \$1.4 billion annually. It supports 23,000 jobs in California, he said.

Yet McManus said he worries about coming years, when salmon that spawned before in low numbers at the height of drought return.

"What happens next summer?" he said. "We don't know."



Ambition

Requires Vision

It's important to see things as they really are – and how they could be.

Ambition is knowing the seeds I'm planting today will create lasting value. It's working alongside those who share my vision.

My ambition is to build the best possible future for my family and me.



Rabo AgriFinance

855-722-7766 RaboAg.com

[fb.com/RaboAg](https://www.facebook.com/RaboAg) [@RaboAg](https://twitter.com/RaboAg) [Rabo AgriFinance](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Rabo-AgriFinance)

Access to Financing | Knowledge | Networks