

# Capital Press

## The West's Ag Weekly



# High-stakes showdown

**With millions of dollars at risk, farmer John Duarte mounts a legal defense and political offensive in wetlands battle**

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

**R**ED BLUFF, Calif. — John Duarte is on the eve of the trial he hoped would never take place.

He is the California farmer who gained national attention after the federal government sued him for plowing his field and will defend himself in court beginning Aug. 15.

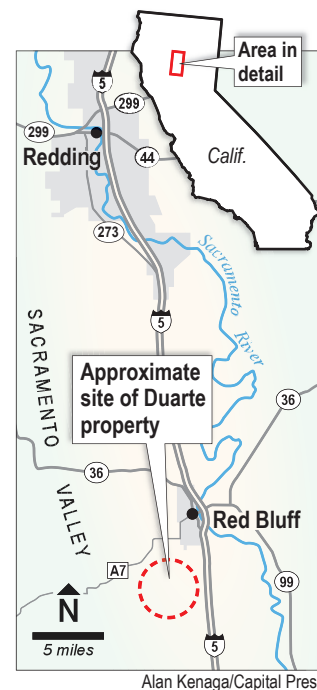
In 2013, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers notified Duarte that he had illegally “filled” wetlands in his Tehama County field by plowing it and ordered him to stop work. He argues the Corps violated his constitutional right to due process because the agency never gave him an opportunity to defend himself against the accusations before levying the fine.

If he loses, Duarte faces \$2.8 million in government fines and the possibility of being forced to buy tens of millions of dollars in required mitigation credits.

Turn to **DUARTE**, Page 10



Photos courtesy of Pacific Legal Foundation  
Nursery owner John Duarte, center, and Pacific Legal Foundation attorney Tony Francois, right, are interviewed outside the federal courthouse in Sacramento in June.  
**TOP PHOTO:** John and Jeff Duarte walk in a field south of Red Bluff, Calif., that they were ordered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to stop farming in 2013.



**If John Duarte loses, he faces \$2.8 million in government fines and the possibility of being forced to buy tens of millions of dollars in required mitigation credits**

## Perdue defends science nominee over background, statements

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press



**“I find it amazing how the media goes back years and finds every type of allegation. It’s what the opposition does. They did it with me.”**

— U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue vigorously defended an under secretary candidate who critics say lacks the credentials for the job.

Former Iowa college professor Sam Clovis, who was picked as under secretary for Research, Education and Economics, is “a very smart individual who’s very committed to the success of agriculture,” Perdue said Aug. 7 in a conference call.

Critics have said Clovis,

a former campaign co-chairman for President Donald Trump, lacks the credentials to serve as the USDA’s top scientist.

The position provides oversight for agencies including the Agricultural Research Service, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the Economic Research Service

and the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Sen. Debbie Stabenow of Michigan, the top Democrat on the Senate Agriculture Committee, last month questioned Clovis’ qualifications for the post as required by the Farm Bill. The statute calls for a scientist with a specialty or experience in agricultural

research, education and economics.

“I also have many questions about his troubling views on climate change and providing public investment in crop insurance and education,” Stabenow said in a statement.

The senator’s office did not immediately respond to

inquiries about how or whether the qualifications can be enforced.

Perdue said that as an academician, Clovis is familiar with the realm of research as well as with economics, which “is certainly part of agricultural success as well,” he said.

“I don’t buy the notion that you have to be (a researcher) to manage that service,” the secretary said. “He’s not going to be doing basic or applied research. He manages grant proposals.”

Clovis earned a doctorate in public administration

from the University of Alabama and served 25 years in the Air Force, retiring as the inspector general of the North American Aerospace Defense Command and the U.S. Space Command.

He was an economics professor at Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa, before joining the presidential campaigns of former Texas Gov. Rick Perry and later Trump. He served as the New York developer’s chief policy adviser and national co-chairman.

Turn to **PERDUE**, Page 10

## Sugar companies to launch \$4 million GMO education campaign

By **SEAN ELLIS**  
Capital Press

**SUN VALLEY, Idaho** — Genetically modified crops such as sugar beets and corn have been a godsend to the farmers who grow them, an Idaho farmer and biotechnology expert recently told members of the Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture.

But, he added, the majority of consumers don’t understand the science behind genetically engineered crops

**“We are losing the online debate. We can’t just sit back and let this evolve independently. We have to engage.”**

**Duane Grant, Idaho sugar beet farmer**

and farmers who use the technology are losing the online debate about “GMOs,” as the crops are commonly called.

To try to change consumers’ understanding and perception of GMO crops, the nation’s sugar beet industry is preparing a \$4 million online cam-

paign that will launch this fall.

“We are losing the online debate,” Idaho sugar beet farmer Duane Grant told WASDA members. “We can’t just sit back and let this evolve independently. We have to engage.”

The campaign, “A Fresh Look,” is primarily being financed by Amal-

gamated Sugar Co. and Western Sugar Co. and will target three large urban areas.

If successful — it will be evaluated after nine months — it will be expanded into a \$30 million national campaign, said Grant, chairman of the Snake River Sugar Cooperative’s board of directors.

Roundup Ready sugar beets, which are genetically engineered to withstand applications of the glyphosate

Turn to **GMO**, Page 10

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