

Would **three Californias** be better for ag?

Splitting California into three states probably wouldn't help agriculture and may even hurt it, ranchers and farmers say

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

Ranchers and farmers laugh when asked what they think of Cal 3, the proposal to split California into three states. The laughter is quickly followed by comments like that of Dave Doonan, 54, a Bishop, Calif., hay and cattle rancher: "That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard of. Then we'd have three screwed-up states."

California agriculture sees itself as "under attack by the Legislature and the governor" and the Cal 3 idea shows how "fractured" state leadership is and its "lack of vision for what California could be or should be," says A.G. Kawamura, 61, secretary of agriculture under Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. He is co-owner of Orange County Produce in Irvine.

Large agricultural organizations — the California Farm Bureau Federation and Western Growers Association — declined comment. The Farm Bureau will analyze the proposal if it qualifies as an initiative for November general election ballot, Dave Kranz, CFBF spokesman said.

But Doonan, Kawamura and other ranchers and farmers said they see little to no chance of agriculture gaining political clout with Cal 3. Rather, they see liberals, who tend to not be helpful to ag, gaining four new U.S. Senate seats.

"This proposal makes more sense than the State of Jefferson (a previous proposal to combine Southwestern Oregon and Northern California) because it would have a tax base, but if I were a betting man I wouldn't put any money on it, not even a long shot," said Jeff Fowle, 48, a fourth-generation cattle, horse and hay rancher near Etna, north of Redding.

"I can't believe people in the south will support it when they know the majority of their water comes from us up north," he said.

Farmers are frustrated with urban

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Dan Wheat/Capital Press

A.G. Kawamura, a former California secretary of agriculture.



"We would end up with three states voting like California. It's better to have one evil stepchild than adding two more."

Jeff Fowle, rancher near Etna, Calif.

Water wait hangs Klamath Basin farmers out to dry

Still no irrigation start date for basin

By GEORGE PLAVERN
Capital Press

The suspense is killing farmers and ranchers in the Klamath Basin.

Two weeks after a highly anticipated federal court hearing in San Francisco, local producers still do not know when or how much water they will have available for this year's irrigation season.

Without a concrete start date or allocation, irrigators say they are in limbo trying to figure out what they can and cannot grow and how they will adjust heading into what is expected to be a severe summer drought.

"I would say it is agonizing," said Ty Kliewer, a member of the Klamath Irrigation District Board of Directors. "Particularly this late into the spring, you don't know what to plant. You don't know if you should plant a dryland crop, or something you can irrigate. ... A lot of guys with row crops are really up in the air."

Kliewer, who raises beef cattle and organic hay south of Klamath Falls, said a big part of his business is selling commercial breeding bulls, but with all the uncertainty that market has gone stagnant.

"Everyone is coming up with their disaster plan right now," he said. "You've got to plan for the worst, and then everything is

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a nice surprise for later, hopefully."

The water situation is especially dire in southern Oregon. While the northern part of the state is experiencing near or above normal snowpack, the Klamath Basin has just 43 percent of its usual snow for the year. Oregon Gov. Kate Brown declared a drought emergency for Klamath County on March 13, with stream flows expected to range between 24 and 58 percent of normal through September.

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Farmers and ranchers in the Klamath Basin are anxiously awaiting a judge's decision on water availability so they can determine which crops to grow this year.

Capital Press File

Growers prepare to decide fate of Christmas tree checkoff

Workers load Christmas trees onto a conveyor in preparation for shipping at Sunrise Tree Farm near Philomath, Ore., which is owned by Pat and Betty Malone.



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Research and promotions program up for referendum in May

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Christmas tree farmers across the U.S. will begin voting May 1 on whether to continue funding a research and promotions "checkoff" program for the crop.

The referendum will accept votes until May 31 from roughly 1,500 growers who sell more than 500 trees per year and are

thus subject to the 15 cent per tree assessment. The checkoff program, overseen by the USDA and the Christmas Tree Promotion Board, completed its third annual advertising campaign last year since being launched in 2015.

Roughly \$1.8 million a year is collected under the program, with much of that money directed at an online and social media strategy intended to convince Millennial generation consumers to choose real trees over artificial ones.

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