

Finalists have been chosen in the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's annual amateur film-making contest.

Bakersfield Californian, Friday, June 22, 2012

Sophia Breedlove of Fresno won in the K-8 category, Andrew Beard of Bakersfield won in the high school category and Antonio Garcia of Bakersfield won in the college and teachers category.

Participants created 30-second videos illustrating how to change things in daily life that would improve air quality in the San Joaquin Valley, according to Valley Air District spokesman Anthony Presto.

The videos can be watched and voted for at healthyairliving.com until 5 p.m., July 5. A winner will be announced July 9. They will win a \$100 iTunes gift card and their video will be aired on a local TV station.

Senate-approved Farm Bill applauded

Written by Business Journal Staff

Business Journal,

The California Farm Bureau has applauded the U.S. Senate's passage of the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 and is now urging the House of Representatives to quickly ratify the legislation.

The legislation was approved June 21 and includes \$15 million per year in funding for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The grants are designed to help strengthen the market for specialty fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture.

Apricots are one such specialty crop that is grown primarily in the San Joaquin Valley. Over 300 growers in California, covering 17,000 acres in the San Joaquin Valley, produce over 95 percent of the apricots grown in the United States. Most apricot farms in California are small, family-owned businesses.

"California farmers produce a large proportion of the nation's specialty crops, and we're pleased to see that programs benefiting specialty crop growers stayed intact as the Senate debated the farm bill," said Paul Wenger, California Farm Bureau president, in a release.

The California Farm Bureau Federation reports that it supports many aspects of the 2012 Farm Bill, including a number of programs that benefit California farmers, ranchers, consumers and the environment.

"The Senate has passed a bipartisan bill that contains \$23 billion in savings but maintains programs to help farmers stay competitive in global markets, feed those in need and improve the environment," said Wenger. "We hope the House will be as efficient as the Senate in debating the bill, and that the final version of the farm bill retains many of the programs that the Senate thoughtfully crafted."

The bill cuts some programs while preserving others.

It decreases the number of conservation programs from 23 to 13. The new structure streamlines some processes for farmers and ranchers and gives USDA more flexibility to account for economic and environmental differences across the country.

At the same time, the farm bill continues to fund and prioritize programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Grassland Reserve Program, which focus on conserving working farmland instead of taking land out of food and fiber production.

The California Farm Bureau succeeded in urging passage of an amendment that pulled the Air Quality Initiative back from elimination. The program provides assistance to farmers and ranchers for agricultural air quality programs.

The Senate farm bill also directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture to study the benefits of offering insurance for fruit, vegetable, nut and other specialty crop growers against losses from food safety or contamination issues. Other farm bill programs of particular interest to California farmers protect against invasive pest species and assist in domestic and foreign market development.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Friday, June 22, 2012:](#)

Ban drive-through lanes

If Fresno and other Valley cities are concerned about the air pollution from idling vehicles, they should show they are serious and outlaw drive-through lanes at fast food restaurants.

That would force people to get out of their cars and provide a small amount of exercise if they really want that soda or ice cream or half-pound burger or burrito.

Dennis Housepian, Fresno

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