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Colusa County Advocates for Agricultural Industry Assistance

County Officials Discuss Impacts of Drought with Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry

(COLUSA, CA) May 26, 2022 – On May 21, 2022, Colusa County officials hosted a legislative tour and informative briefing for Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (D-Winters), highlighting the crisis-level economic impacts resulting from the unprecedented drought and winter freeze. Colusa County Supervisors Daurice Kalfsbeek Smith and Gary Evans, as well as Agriculture Commissioner Anastacia Allen, Public Works Director Michael Azevedo, and County Administrative Officer Wendy Tyler participated on behalf of Colusa County. Other stakeholders in attendance were California Herigate Mills CEO Steven Sutter and Depue Warehouse Co-Owner Kevin Dennis, and from the Sites Project Authority Board Vice Chair Jeff Sutton, Executive Director Jerry Brown, and External Affairs Manager Kevin Spesert. The event concluded with a request for local assistance.

“We are experiencing a confluence of crises resulting in catastrophic economic impact to our local agricultural industry,” said Supervisor Kalfsbeek Smith. “We appreciate Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry’s interest in this matter, and look forward to working with her office on economic assistance to carry us through this challenging time.”

As the top producer of rice in the Sacramento Valley, Colusa County historically produces more than 150,000 acres of rice in a normal year. In April 2022, the water districts serving Colusa County were given their final allocation for the 2022 growing season – 0.4-acre feet per acre. This

allocation is not enough to support rice production, and estimates show that the Sacramento Valley will fallow 370,000 of 450,000 acres in the Sacramento River Settlement Contractors service area, primarily in Colusa and Glenn Counties. Currently, less than 7,000 acres are estimated to be planted in Colusa County, resulting in a direct financial loss to growers in excess of \$270 million.

In addition to the drought crisis, on February 24, 2022 Colusa County and much of the Sacramento Valley experience a devastating freeze, ultimately resulting in a 74 percent loss of local almond crops, with an estimated direct financial loss to growers of nearly \$210 million. Downstream impacts are felt by dryers and processors, and growers are concerned about future labor shortages.

Colusa County's request of Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry's office is for an economic bridge to support and assist the industry through this crisis. The expected ripple effect of the freeze and drought is becoming a reality, impacting mills, aerial applicators, crop dusters, pesticide and fertilizer dealers, and ground applicators. Without assistance, generations of local heritage and our place in the global market are at risk. It is critical that the State develop and deploy local programs to help assist the industry through this historic crisis.

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