

County's ag industry sees double-digit value jump

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The 2023 Calaveras County Crop Report was submitted last week to the Board of Supervisors and indicated gross crop value was up 18 percent in comparison to 2022.

The report was submitted by Jessica Fowler, the county's agriculture commissioner and director of weights and measures.

The county's gross crop value for 2023 was tabulated at \$25,014,627. That compares to \$21,121,038 in 2022.

"Cattle was the leading commodity in the county with a value of \$13,005,200, a 1 percent value increase from 2022," according to Fowler. The county saw decreases in the number of cattle and total weight, but the price was up from \$129 per hundred pounds in 2022 to \$164 this past year.

Timber production made a comeback in 2023, Fowler reported. It was the county's second-highest grossing commodity.

"Valued at \$3,003,438 in 2023, timber also saw the largest increase of over 3,000 percent from 2022," Fowler said in her report. "Such a leap was due to an increase in harvest volume by 23.5 million board feet."

Another area of improvement was wine grapes. They experienced a resurgence after decreases in production values from 2020 to 2022. The total value of wine grapes in 2023 was calculated at \$2,367,012.

"This value shows an increase by 121 percent from 2022, 71 percent from 2021, and 0.9 percent from 2020," according to Fowler.

Besides cattle, the rest of livestock and livestock projects, such as poultry and eggs, may have contributed to this year's decrease," she explained. "In 2022, the highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreak led to a scarcity of poultry and eggs, causing their prices to soar. Throughout 2023, however, cases of HPAI decreased overall. This resulted in a decrease in prices as inventory of these products began to recover."

Tonnage and prices for olives were up in 2023 compared to the prior year. The county harvested 34 tons of olives in 2023 compared to 29 in 2022 and the price was up from \$1,050 to \$1,100 a ton in 2023.

Although not part of the official report submitted to the federal government, legal cannabis production was up from an estimated production value of \$20.5 million in 2022 to \$29.9 in 2023.