AG DIGEST

Six ag start-ups will compete for funds at meeting in Hawaii

Western Growers has chosen the final six companies that will pitch their ideas at the November Western Growers meeting in Hawaii.

Two winners will be chosen to receive a one-year membership with Western Growers and the opportunity to work with the company's Center for Innovation & Technology in Salinas.

Nearly 50 startup companies applied to compete in this year's Innovation Arena in Irvine, more than doubling last year's total of 20 applicants. Only six of those 50 were selected to advance, and they are pitching technologies that range from soil microbe testing to irrigation management to an autonomous robotic harvester for fresh strawberries.

The competition, in its second year, is part of Western Growers' commitment to supporting the development of technology that will help solve agriculture's biggest challenges.

Western Growers is a company that represents farmers in Arizona, California and Colorado.

For more details about the competition and the six finalists, visit www.wga.com/innovation/innovation-arena.

— Aylin Woodward

Fire management course takes place for mostly women

A fire management program is taking place through Friday in Trinity and Shasta counties, according to the UC Division of Agriculture and Resources.

The program, modeled after prescribed-fire-training events that take place across the country, will include beginners to seasoned professionals. The difference is that most of these participants will be women.

Members of the group, which includes 38 women and six men from 12 states and four countries, eventually will serve in qualified and trainee firefighting positions to do prescribed burns throughout the northern California region. The program includes pre-fire and post-fire monitoring, training with equipment, practicing leadership skills and learning about local fire ecology and fire management.

— Aylin Woodward

Study: California ranks as 15th most energy-efficient state

California came in 15th out of 48 states included in a WalletHub study about the most and least energy-efficient states in the U.S.

October is National Energy Awareness Month, and given how much a household can spend annually on energy bills, a personal-finance website, we chose to analyze energy efficiency, stated Communications Manager Diana Pope.

The website used a ranking system that combined "home energy efficiency" and "car energy efficiency," to render their totals.

New York took the top spot for energy-efficiency, while South Carolina brought up the rear.

— Aylin Woodward

Wine grape genome could help develop new grape species

With the help of new sequencing technology, scientists have assembled the genome sequence for the cabernet sauvignon grape, according to a new study in Nature Methods.

This information allows scientists to learn about important traits that make this grape so popular, according to Pat Bailey from UC Davis Food and Agriculture News.

UC Davis scientists also hope to use this information to develop new species of grapes that are of equally high quality, but also disease-resistant and more suited to changes in the environment, like warmer temperatures.

— Sarah McQuate

Online course could help prevent illegal pesticide residues

A new online course will teach participants how to use pesticides properly through real-life scenarios, according to the UC Agriculture and Natural Resources blog.

This course is intended for pesticide users who need to renew their licenses with the state Department of Pesticide Regulation. The course, which costs $40, is approved for two hours of Pesticide Laws and Regulations continuing education credits.

For anyone interested in viewing the course content, materials are available for free at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLo3rG4iqv4gEHrtixdZnOipGoR-pBWvzG

To register and find out more information about this course, visit http://ipm.ucanr.edu/training/?src=16propgr and scroll down to the Proper Pesticide Use to Avoid Illegal Residues section.

— Sarah McQuate