



Special Committee on Ag and Tribal Partnerships

# Central Valley Agriculture Perspectives

Item 3a

April 28, 2026

Presented by: Cannon Michael, President & CEO, Bowles Farming  
Company

# Summary

## Subject

Presentation on Central Valley Agriculture

## Purpose

Share perspectives on agriculture



# Bowles Farming Company

*A sixth-generation California family farm*

Presented to

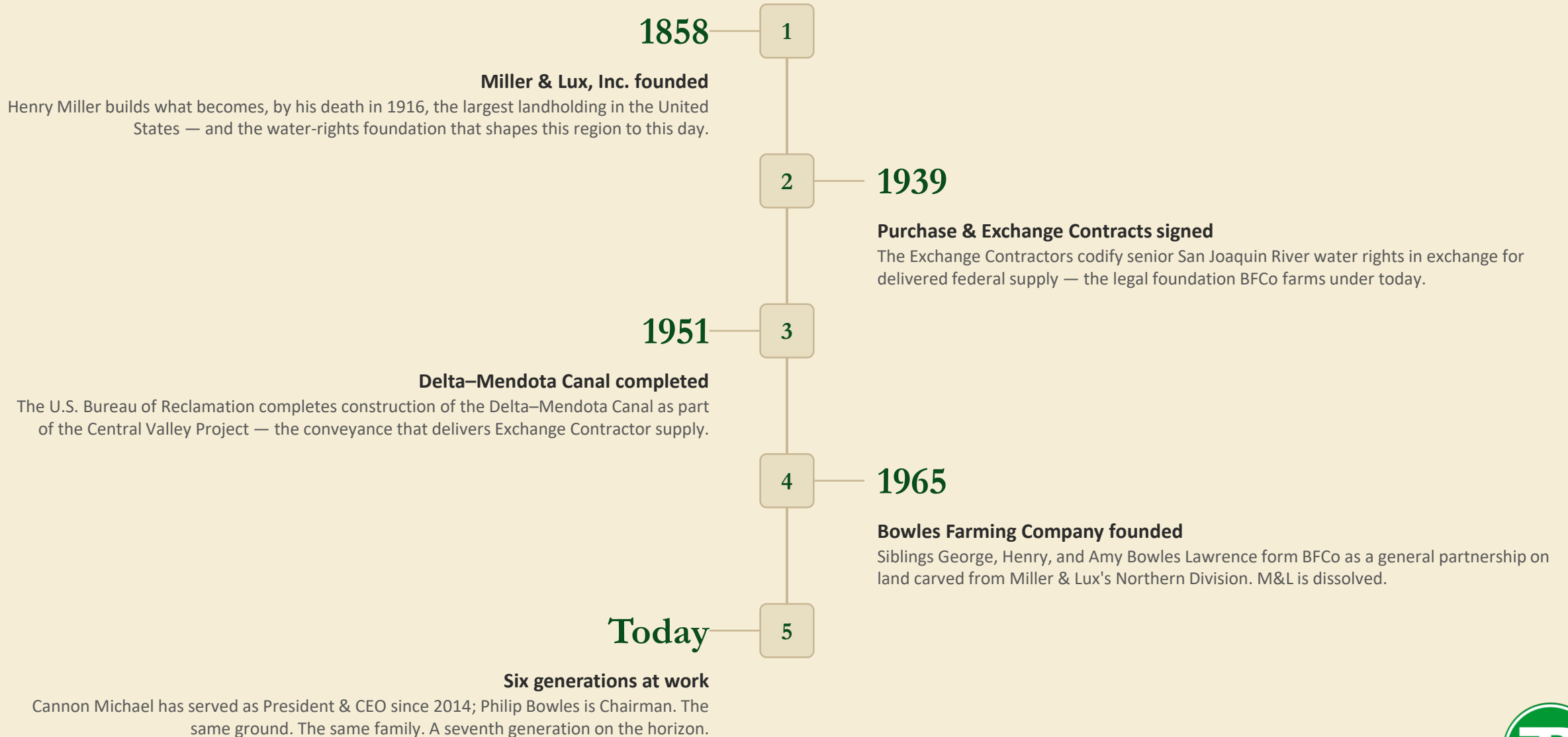
**Metropolitan Water District of Southern California**

Special Committee on Ag and Tribal Partnerships

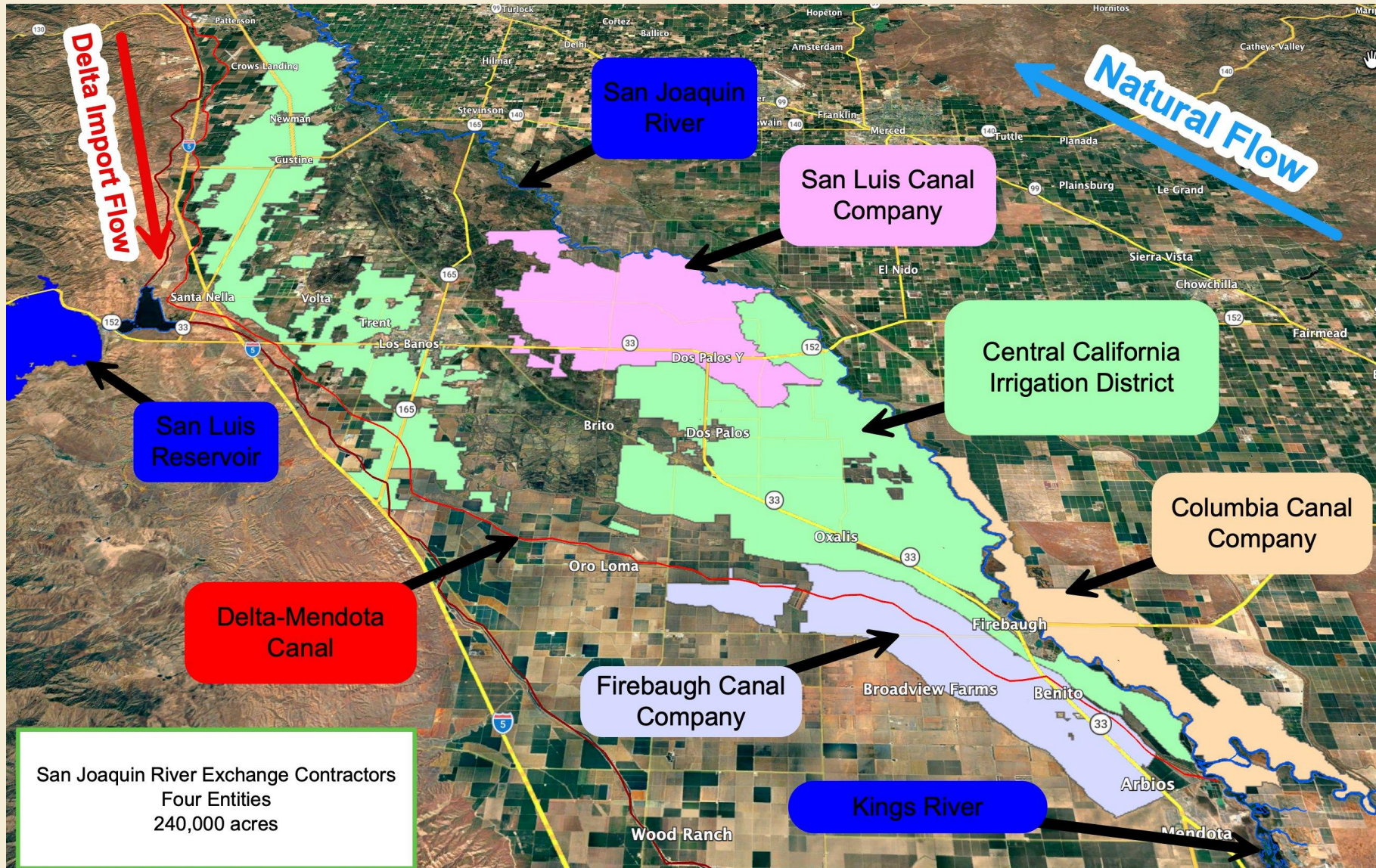
**Cannon Michael**

President & CEO | April 28, 2026

## *Six generations on the same California ground*



# Our primary water supply – pre-1914 water rights



# The reliability picture has changed — so we changed the farm

## CVP South-of-Delta Agricultural Contractors

Before and after 1991

	1952–1990	1991–2025
Years at 100% allocation	95% of years	14% of years
Average allocation	97%	54%
Zero-allocation years	0	4

Zero-allocation years: 2014, 2015, 2021, 2022

Source: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

### 2014 & 2015: the wake-up call

For the first time in the Exchange Contract's history, the Exchange Contractors had to pull water from the Friant Contractors — because USBR could not deliver our water through the Delta-Mendota Canal. A senior right is not immune to delivery failure.

## What we did — 2016 onward

### Diversified the crop mix

From a narrow rotation heavy in alfalfa, cotton, and wheat — into a mix of tomatoes, cotton, carrots, garlic, onions, herbs, and watermelons.

### Shifted ~20% of water demand into the shoulder months

Carrots, garlic, and onions are planted in winter; their water demand ends before the heat of summer — reducing peak-season draw and exposure in the driest years.

### Reinforced with infrastructure and agronomy

80% drip irrigation, on-farm solar offset, and regenagri® soil health practices — all part of the same strategy.



# Irrigation - matched to the crop, managed as a cost

## Infrastructure

### ~80% drip irrigation

Flood and sprinkler used where those methods serve the crop better. Not every crop benefits from drip — we match the technology to the crop. On average we use about 2.5 acre-feet per acre to produce crops using drip irrigation

### 100% offset by on-farm solar

Drip infrastructure is energy-intensive — filtration, pumping, pressurization. We offset that load entirely with solar generation on the farm.



*A drip filtration and pumping station — solar-powered*

## Philosophy

*"Water is an input cost. More water is not more crop."*



# Every gallon produces food and fiber — measurably, efficiently



Processing tomatoes



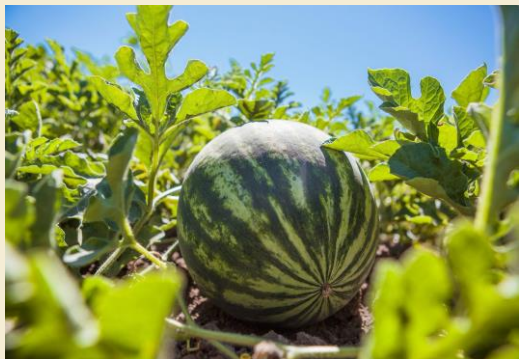
Extra Long Staple (Pima) cotton



Carrots



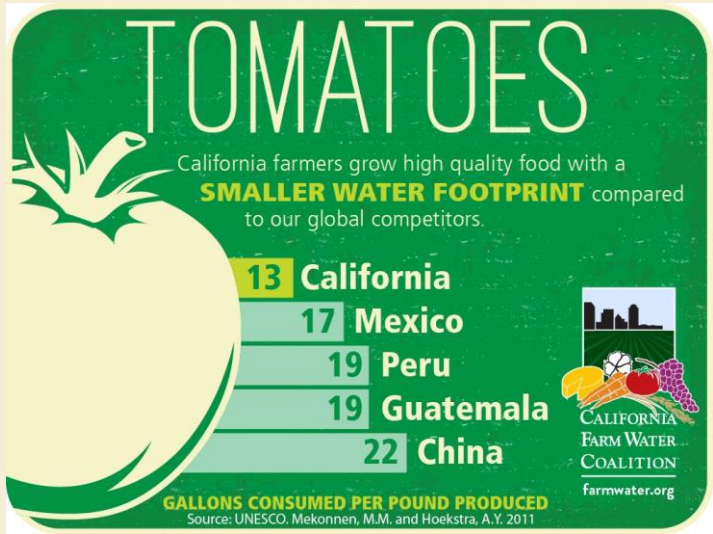
Garlic



Watermelons



Cantaloupe



## Gallons per pound produced

California grows processing tomatoes with ~24% less water than the next-closest producer — and roughly 40% less than China.

Source: California Farm Water Coalition (UNESCO, 2011)



# Farming California means operating at the highest standard

**We welcome California's standards — they reflect our values.**

- **Worker protection is unmatched.** California has the highest farm wages in the nation, overtime rules that apply nowhere else, and mandatory heat-illness, safety, and training protocols enforced by multiple state agencies — Cal/OSHA, the Department of Pesticide Regulation, and the Agricultural Labor Relations Board among them.
- **Environmental protection goes further than any other ag region.** Cal-EPA, the State Water Resources Control Board, and CDFA impose water quality, discharge, air quality, and endangered species requirements that simply do not exist in most of the country — let alone globally.
- **Chemical control has redefined conventional agriculture in California.** Products that remain in routine use worldwide are prohibited or severely restricted here. What California calls "conventional" is stricter than "organic" in many other regions. We farm without tools that our global competitors use every day.
- **The playing field is not level.** Produce from regions without these rules arrives in American grocery stores alongside ours — at lower cost — and the consumer cannot tell the difference.
- **Without public recognition, consolidation follows.** Small and mid-sized family farms cannot absorb California's costs while competing against imports that aren't held to the same standards. Either consumers and policymakers value California-grown — or California agriculture contracts.



# Why we farm

## To produce healthy food and fiber

— with the highest standards for worker protection and environmental stewardship

### 100% regenagri certified

across the entire farm and all crops — covering conventional and organic production, with independent third-party verification. 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Verification of soil health, biodiversity, employee protection and more.



# The farm is the foundation for more

## Stewardship of the land

### Biodiversity & habitat

650 acres of wetlands actively managed on the farm.  
Adjacent to the Grasslands Wildlife Management Area  
55 species of birds documented in restored riparian corridors.  
Native seed production and ongoing habitat enhancement.

### SB 1383 climate partnership

On-farm composting center diverts greenwaste from landfills — helping California meet its methane-reduction and organic-waste diversion goals.



*On-farm composting center*

## Investment in people

### Employee Advancement Program

Pathways for workers to grow into positions of greater responsibility across the operation.

### BF Scholars Program

Scholarships and school supplies for the children of our employees.

### BF Community Enrichment Program

Employees direct the company's charitable giving — investing back into the communities where our people live.

### Workplace standards

Worker protection, safety, and wage practices held to the highest standards in California agriculture.



# Urban–ag partnership is how the Valley moves forward

## San Luis Canal Company modernization

*A self-funding model of urban–ag collaboration*

1

### Line earthen canals

Historic dirt canals are lined with geomembrane and concrete.

2

### Quantify the savings

Ponding tests measure the water no longer lost to seepage — a defensible, measurable volume.

3

### Transfer the conserved water

Savings are transferred to willing urban and ag buyers.

4

### Revenue funds the next segment

Transfer income pays for more lining — and holds water rates down for district farmers while the work continues.

## A broader track record

**80,000** acre-feet / year

*Exchange Contractor conserved-water transfer program — annual, non-critical years*

## SLCC Following program since 2014

Voluntarily following acreage in dry years to transfer water where it is most needed, with agronomic benefit to the rested land.

## The future of San Joaquin Valley farming

Depends on partnership, not isolation — between ag and urban users, between districts, and between farmers and the State.

BFCo intends to keep farming this ground for a seventh generation. Getting there means continuing to build partnerships like this one.





# Thank you

*Questions and discussion welcome*

## **Bowles Farming Company**

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