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## Press Release

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### **CA Secretary of Food and Agriculture, Karen Ross visits Stanislaus Bioeconomy Hub**

**Stanislaus County, CA, February 9, 2023-** At the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors meeting on January 31, 2023, the Supervisors voted on committing \$10 million towards the Stanislaus 2030 sector development strategy including bioindustrial manufacturing. In a collaboration with Beam Circular, a newly established hub for the bioindustrial manufacturing industry in Stanislaus County, Stanislaus County leaders hosted a visit with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Secretary Karen Ross. This visit was hosted on Thursday February 9, 2023.

The visit marks important early momentum for the Stanislaus 2030 Investment Blueprint, a community roadmap for generating high quality jobs that includes a focus on growing a regional specialization in bioindustrial manufacturing. This was a great opportunity to have a discussion with Secretary Karen Ross about regional efforts to advance the circular bioeconomy. The bioindustrial manufacturing industry converts waste from food and agriculture activities into valuable bio-based products, fuels, and materials.

Secretary Ross began her visit with a meeting with local partners at Modesto Junior College (MJC). There was a roundtable discussion that included Stanislaus County Supervisors Vito Chiesa and Mani Grewal; BEAM Circular Chief Executive Officer Karen Warner; former US Secretary of Agriculture and advisor to BEAM Circular Ann Veneman; and leaders from MJC, California State University Stanislaus, University of California Merced, Almond Board of California, Stanislaus County Farm Bureau, Stanislaus Community Foundation, Opportunity Stanislaus, and the nonprofit organization Sustainable Conservation.

The group discussed efforts underway to establish the North San Joaquin Valley as a global leader in bioindustrial manufacturing. Josette Lewis, Chief Scientific Officer of the Almond



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Board of California, provided a presentation on current research and development in the use of agricultural byproducts such as almond hulls, shells, and tree trimmings to create new bio-based products.

The Secretary affirmed CDFA's commitment to supporting regional efforts through participation in the Leadership Council of the new North San Joaquin Valley Bioindustrial Manufacturing Innovation Engine, a coalition co-led by UC Merced, Lawrence Berkeley National Lab, and BEAM Circular with over 25 local and state partners focused on building regional innovation and workforce capacity in the sector.

"As the leading agricultural state in the Nation, it is essential for California to advance a circular bioeconomy that converts waste streams and food and ag processing byproducts into climate-smart products. The efforts underway in the North San Joaquin Valley to advance the bioindustrial manufacturing sector will accelerate innovation and generate higher paying jobs that lift families out of poverty," said CDFA Secretary Karen Ross. "Stanislaus County's investment in the BEAM Initiative is exactly the type of bold local leadership that will ensure the long-term viability of agriculture and the vitality of our rural communities."

Following the meeting at MJC, Secretary Ross joined BEAM Circular for a tour of the Aemetis bioenergy production facility in Keyes, California and a nearby biomethane anaerobic digester project developed by Aemetis with the support of a Dairy Digester Research & Development Program grant from CDFA.

Secretary Ross ended her tour with a visit to the almond processing operation of Travaille and Phippen Inc in Manteca. The stop was used as an opportunity to explore supply chain dynamics related to the movement and preparation of biomass, such as almond hulls and orchard waste, for prospective use as inputs to the bioindustrial manufacturing sector.

"The North San Joaquin Valley is the best place in the country for innovations in the circular bioeconomy to be brought to scale," said BEAM Circular CEO Karen Warner. "Secretary Ross has been a tremendous champion for agricultural communities like ours, and we look forward collaborating to accelerate models that expand local economic opportunity for our residents while unlocking solutions to global environmental challenges."

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