

# World Ag Expo in Tulare ready to roll starting Tuesday

By Robert  
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## WORLD AG EXPO

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- If you go

World Ag Expo next week

**When:** Tuesday and Wednesday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Where:** International Agri-Center, 4500 South Laspina St. , Tulare (just east of Highway 99)

**Admission:** \$15 at the gate; children 12 and younger free

**Details:** [www.worldagexpo.com](http://www.worldagexpo.com)

The World Ag Expo in Tulare is like the Super Bowl of farm equipment trade shows.

The biggest event of its kind, the expo attracts 100,000 visitors from around the nation and world.

Starting Tuesday, the grounds at the International Agri-Center, just east of Highway 99 in Tulare, will be carpeted for three days with exhibitors showcasing the latest in farm equipment and technology. Spread over more than 2.6 million square feet of exhibit space, everything a farmer might need — from sprinkler parts to \$500,000 cotton harvesters — can be viewed.

“We like to say that we have the equipment and technology for every type of agriculture there is,” said Jerry Sinift, chief executive officer for the Agri-Center. “It says something about your event when you have people attending from 48 states and 40 different countries.”

Farmers and expo officials anticipate that technology and equipment to increase irrigation efficiency will continue to be a hot topic, given California’s ongoing drought. Labor-saving tools, alternative energy sources and the use of drones also are expected to get attention.

There also will be a series of seminars exploring topics including the drought, international trade and milk prices. Tours also will be available to area wineries, citrus ranches and a dairy.

Nearly 50 nonprofit groups, schools and civic organizations sell food as a fundraiser for their organizations. To some, part of the fun of attending the expo is munching on a rib-eye steak sandwich or enjoying a Dutch oven peach cobbler

“It always smells so good on the expo grounds,” said Terri Rufert, superintendent of the Sundale Union Elementary School District, supplier of the rib-eye sandwiches.

Equipment vendors say the show is significant because of the number of people attending and the opportunity to meet potential buyers from all over the world.

“This is where you want to be, especially if you have a new piece of equipment,” said Bruce Shannon, sales manager

for Nikkel Iron Works in Shafter.

Nikkel, a longtime vendor at the show, is one of 10 companies that has won the expo's Top-10 New Product award this year. Nikkel's new product is a piece of nut-harvesting equipment that reduces the need for workers to rake nuts after they have been mechanically shaken off the tree. What took a crew several minutes to do can now be done in seconds. Shannon expects a fair amount of attention from nut growers.

"Anything that reduces labor and increases efficiency is going to get looked at," Shannon said. "It is getting harder and harder to find people to work on farms."

One of the expo's newer features gives farmers a first-hand look at equipment in action. Throughout the day dealers will demonstrate their tractors, tillers and mulchers in a special arena.

New this year is the "Farmers' Lunch" on Thursday at noon in the VIP tent. Farmer and former California Agriculture Secretary A.G. Kawamura is the special guest speaker.

"We are always looking for ways to make the event more interesting, and we think A.G. provides a lot of knowledge and perspective from his years in Sacramento," Sinift said.

Expo officials also said they hope that a first-ever tour for schoolchildren will give young people a better understanding of the types of jobs available in farming. About 1,800 students have signed up for the tour. Sinift said he was impressed by the response from the schools and vendors who will give the students short presentations about their industries.

"We have 55 exhibitors who wanted to talk to the kids about what they do," Sinift said. "We think this will really give them a chance to learn about how many different careers are out there in agriculture. And what better place to do that than at the expo."

Sinift expects another record crowd this year, and is already thinking about next year. He said there are at least 60 vendors on a waiting list. Typically, the show's exhibit space fills up by early summer.

"It begs the question," Sinift said. "Is it time to expand again?"

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