

Index: Valley economic growth accelerated in April

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Growth in the local economy will continue to accelerate through the next three to six months, according to the latest San Joaquin Valley Business Conditions Index for April.

The index — produced by Dr. Ernie Goss, research faculty with Fresno State's Craig School of Business — stood at 59.9 last month, up from 57.2 in March. An index of greater than 50 indicates positive economic growth in the near term.

It is the 17th consecutive month the Valley's economy was in growth mode. More certainty in exporting activity was a plus, Goss said.

"The end of the West Coast dock dispute has had a very positive impact on the regional economy, especially for wholesale trade firms," Goss said.

The index is produced through a survey of individuals making company purchasing decisions in Fresno, Madera, Kings and Tulare counties.

The region's hiring index hit 64.9 from 63 in March.

"Even though the region's unemployment rate remains well above the state and national jobless rates, non-farm employment has expanded by more than 10 percent since the beginning of the national recovery in 2009," Goss said. "These gains will continue for 2015."

Negative points include a prices-paid index — tracking the cost of raw materials and supplies — of 46.4, down from 47 in March, and a confidence index down to 58.7 from 63.1 in March.

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