



*Doug O'Hara*

## A New Year; A New Chairman

**A**s the 2014 California avocado season winds down, we quickly gear up for the upcoming 2015 season. With a new avocado season comes the seating of a new Avocado Commission board along with a new executive committee. I have the honor of being elected to serve as your new chairman and I look forward to the challenges ahead.

I would like to thank Ed McFadden for serving as chairman for the last three years. His passion and dedication to the job have paved the way for the future success of the California avocado grower and makes my job that much easier. I appreciate all his hard work and I look forward to working with him in the future to continue our success.

I have been farming avocados for more than 20 years, the first 12 years in San Diego and Riverside Counties and the last eight-plus years in Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. I graduated from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo in 1993 with a B.A. in Soil Science and have been farming ever since. There has always been talk about how different it is farming in the north and south, but working in both areas makes me believe this is not the case. Issues such as water costs/availability, labor, etc. have impacted growers all over California and will continue to do so. I think it

is important to stand strong as California avocado growers and battle these issues together to come up with solutions; this is what I intend to do as chairman.

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Before I look into our industry's future, I would like to reflect on the past year. On a positive note I think the price per pound returns were very good. There are people that thought the returns should of and could have been much higher, but as we all know anything can happen in the avocado market. I looked back at some returns from last July: packers were returning anywhere from \$1.00-\$1.40 per pound, depending on size, with inventories of around 50 million pounds! In past years inventories this high would have been devastating to the California grower.

This proves that demand is ever increasing and that our marketing team is doing an excellent job promoting our product as premium; they must continue to do so. More about why this is so important when I discuss the future of our market.

Obviously with great successes come challenges. Lack of rain and the high cost of water are probably our biggest obstacles and will continue to be so if we don't see some consistent rainfall in the future. There is a good chance for El Niño type weather in the coming months but we all know one year of rain will not solve the problem. Our CAC Water Committee, including Charley Wolk, has been working hard to alleviate some of the increasing costs but it has been a struggle. Now, with the state in a drought emergency, the challenges will increase. All of us at CAC will keep fighting and do whatever we can to address this issue but it will be an uphill battle. I do appreciate their hard work and perseverance, I know they become very frustrated at times but they continue to fight.

On to the future and what I believe to be the most pressing issues. The obvious immediate threat is the polyphagous shot hole borer (PSHB), which has been found in groves in San Diego County. I will not give you an update on status of finds and/or re-



## Board of Directors

### District 1

Member/Carol Steed-**Secretary**  
Alternate/Bill Rice

Member/Jerome Stehly-**Vice Chair**  
Alternate/Alex Gonzalez

### District 2

Member/Charley Wolk  
Alternate/Kellen Newhouse

Member/Leo McGuire  
Alternate/Cristina Leon

### District 3

Member/Ed McFadden  
Alternate/Keith Reeder

Member/Doug O'Hara-**Chairman**  
Alternate/Mario Martinez

### District 4

Member/John Lamb  
Alternate/Robert Grether

Member/Art Bliss-**Treasurer**  
Alternate/Jason Cole

### District 5

Member/Will Carleton  
Alternate/Leo Murillo

Member/Rick Shade  
Alternate/Jim Swoboda

### Handlers

Member/John Dmytriw  
Alternate/Vacant Seat

Member/Steve Taft  
Alternate/Donny Lucy

Member/Reuben Hofshi  
Alternate/Wayne Brydon

Member/Gene Carbone  
Alternate/Robb Bertels

### Public Member

Leesa Eichberger

To contact a CAC representative, please visit:  
[CaliforniaAvocadoGrowers.com/Commission/your-representatives](http://CaliforniaAvocadoGrowers.com/Commission/your-representatives)

search as this is changing on a daily basis and will be old news by the time this is published. I will tell you that your CAC board and staff are taking this very seriously and are doing everything necessary to attack this pest. We have researchers working on products to kill the beetle, procedures to dispose of infected wood, traps that attract and possibly kill the beetle and other research that is forthcoming. CAC has held meetings and workshops to help get as much information out to the growers as possible and they will continue to do so as long as the threat exists. I firmly believe we must continue on this path, but must do so in an organized manner. With the limited funds CAC has, we must be sure to spend them wisely and on work that will directly help the grower. CAC has also started to secure funding from outside sources so the cost burden will not lie solely on CAC but will be shared by other affected industries. I suggest you continue to read the GreenSheet and look for emails from CAC for updates. If you are not currently receiving these communications, please contact CAC and staff will make sure to put you on their e-mail list.

The final issues I want to discuss are imports and California premium positioning. I somewhat touched on the amount of fruit we are moving in this country during the year, but this is only the tip of the iceberg. I recently attended a Hass Avocado Board meeting and heard some very important information when the other countries were discussing future production. At the present time, most of the fruit imported to the USA comes from Mexico, Chile, and Peru. Of these three countries, Mexico and Chile have been able to open markets around the world to sell their fruit when the inventory in the United States increases to a point where movement slows and price is negatively affected.

Peru, on the other hand, has

not been as successful at this, which means the majority of their fruit will come to the United States at a time when the California harvest is at its peak. Peru's total volume in 2014 was around 145 million pounds; they are predicting their total volume to increase to 1.8 billion pounds down the road. What does that mean to the U.S. market? It means unless they can access other markets across the world we could have a substantial amount of fruit to move in the coming years unless we do something.

This is where premium positioning comes in. We must continue to push the California brand in the coming years. Jan DeLyser and her marketing team have done an excellent job of selling the California brand name to retailers and consumers and we must continue to do so if we wish to stay relevant in this growing market. The frustrating part is that our funding can't compare with the amount of money these other countries have to spend on advertising. I applaud Jan and her team for maximizing the campaigns' effectiveness with the resources she has. I think we all should continue to support her efforts so we can maintain and increase our premium position in the market.

I think that is it for now. The year has just started and I am sure there will be much more to talk about in the future. The crop for next year looks similar to last year and I am hoping the prices stay strong. Lastly, I would like to thank all growers for their continued support of CAC and all of our CAC staff. I have been involved on the board for more than seven years and can tell you first hand that they are the hardest and most dedicated group of people I have ever worked with. They all truly work for all of us growers and always have our best interests in mind.

Until next time...let's all pray for rain and high prices! 🥑