



Rick Shade
Chairman
California Avocado
Commission

**“Farming
is a profession
of hope.”**

— Canadian Author,
BRIAN BRETT

CHAIRMAN’S MESSAGE

I do believe 2017 is a year that will be in the minds of growers and in the record books for quite some time. Now, as I write this message a few short days before Christmas, I don’t believe there has been a year that I will have been so happy to have over.

Going into the year the board and staff knew that we were facing a light crop. Programs were reviewed and trimmed where possible. Belts were tightened. As harvest in California started, though, very positive things began to happen as our California avocados hit the market. The consumers with educated palates, the buyers who know a good thing and those restaurants who want to put a quality avocado on the plate, all continued to demand California avocados. In the face of lower priced fruit from other sources, and ever higher prices for our crop, the buyers of quality paid for our fruit. In the end, we have booked the highest ever average price per pound for our fruit.

If we take a moment to review this past year, we have a few takeaways. We have known for years that California’s place in the market was going to continue to be a smaller percentage of the overall market. Our staff has planned and strategized, building programs to not only maintain, but build value for our crop. Over the years the board has overseen the

strategies and supported the staff in their direction. Has it always been easy? No. We have debated and pondered, fiddled, pushed and prodded but the plans and strategies have worked. In a year where we brought to market the smallest crop in a non-disaster year in decades, we not only held our own, but we gained. As growers, we can and should be proud of bringing some of the best avocados in the world to market. As California growers, we can and should be proud of having a marketing organization with foresight enough to bring us record returns in the face of smaller percentages in the marketplace.

I cannot end this column without a thought about the upcoming year. In this week before Christmas, I have spent the better part of too many days hiking the hills and surveying the damage from the record setting Thomas fire. Far too many friends, colleagues and fellow growers have been terribly touched by this fire and the Lilac fire as well. As I hike the hills, I can already see plants trying to regrow and get past the damage of the fire. As farmers we are inextricably linked to the natural cycles of nature. I can take comfort in the words of Canadian author Brian Brett: “Farming is a profession of hope.” Indeed it is.

