

Hope Springs Eternal

“Hope springs eternal” is a phrase that comes to mind as we kick off this year’s 2023 California season. Meeting with stakeholders recently I mentioned how I was struck by all the articles in the trade press leading up to the Big Game. Almost every article lent itself to boasting about the increased availability for import volume, yet handlers and the reporters were seemingly focused on the excitement for the California fruit to enter the marketplace. This is a true testament to the premium quality and value for customers and consumers that California fruit delivers.

I recently sat with Jan DeLyser on one of her last days before her retirement and echoed my thoughts on these articles and the ‘surprise’ that these articles focused on California fruit. She stopped me to proclaim – “It’s not a surprise, we at the Commission have worked for years to ensure that message is delivered year in and year out!”

Jan, point made. Thank you for all your service, and know that your legacy will remain as we move forward as a team continuing to promote the premium brand positioning for California Avocados and improving grower sustainability.

The Commission team has been active during this start to the season with meetings in growing districts to gain feedback from stakeholders. We

also hosted a well-attended grower field day at Pine Tree Ranch in Santa Paula. During my remarks at Pine Tree Ranch, I was asked if I can guarantee a \$5 return to the grower...and I countered that “We’ll do our best — however, what did everyone think about the rain and snow that we’ve delivered this winter?!” OK, we can’t take credit for the weather,

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but we are working hard on key grower issues such as best practices for Phytophthora control, pruning strategies, how best to navigate freeze/frost, and mapping the success of various root stocks depending on the growing district and conditions.

In my first column, I discussed the hot topic of how the Commission can potentially expand promotional opportunities for multiple varieties. As we



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enter the 2023 season, we are focused on variety opportunities with our retail customers and relaying how some late-season varieties could help extend the season. We also are mindful of the market share these new varieties make up in total when balancing the spend and allocating our efforts within our marketing programs.

At the last Commission board meeting, outgoing Vice President Marketing Jan DeLyser was challenged that we focus a lot of effort promoting Hass versus other varieties. Her answer will stick with me forever. She said: “We do not promote Hass, we promote CALIFORNIA AVOCADOS!” Thanks again Jan, for the spot-on reminder.

Looking ahead there are great opportunities for the coming season. Already the Commission is welcoming a new vice president of Marketing (p. 12) who will help maintain our efforts in promoting your fruit and look strategically into the future to maximize our efforts in a new landscape. Despite 2022 Q4 and early 2023 Q1 pricing, we are seeing FOB prices on the rise, and some handlers have provided feedback concerning the good premium California fruit is receiving. So, we will focus on what is within our control at the Commission and on delivering value to the stakeholders to make this another strong California season. Let’s go! 🍌