

From the **Grove**

The Latest News from the California Avocado Industry

**Commission Showcases
California Avocados at
Global Produce & Floral Show
See more on Page 22**



Your Partners
for Profit

Celebrating 100 Years of Fresh!



Calavo®

f  in | calavo.com | 805.933.9960 | growerinfo@calavo.com



Commission Selects New Consumer Marketing Partner: Curious Plot
Read more on Page 24

From the Grove

Volume 13, Number 4

Editor
 Tim Linden
 Champ Publishing
 925.216.0973
 tim.linden@ymail.com

Ad Sales
 Tom Fielding
 626.437.4619
 tomfielding1@mac.com

Design/Layout
 Heather Gray
 User Friendly, Ink.
 userfriendlyink@gmail.com

April Aymami
 Director of Industry Affairs
 and Operations
 aaymami@avocado.org



www.californiaavocadogrowers.com

Winter 2024

In This Issue

- 14 2023 Consumer Research Insights
- 18 Managing Avocados Before and After a Wildfire
- 22 Commission Showcases California Avocados at Global Produce and Floral Show and Evaluates Future Plans
- 24 Commission Selects New Consumer Marketing Partner: Curious Plot
- 26 2023: The Year of the Fruit Fly
- 31 Featured California Avocado Recipes

Departments

- 4 Chair's Report
- 9 Executive Notes
- 12 From Your Commission
- 33 Handlers' Report

The articles, opinions and advertisements presented in this magazine are designed to offer information and provoke thought. Inclusion in this publication does not presume an endorsement or recommendation by the California Avocado Commission for any particular product or cultural practice.

Volume 13, Number 4 Winter 2024

FROM THE GROVE is published quarterly by California Avocado Commission; 12 Mauchly, Suite L; Irvine, CA 92618. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to California Avocado Commission; 12 Mauchly, Suite L; Irvine, CA 92618.

Meet Your 2024 Executive Committee

Like many of you reading this, the path that led to my serving as Chairman of the California Avocado Commission Board — and to my career in the California avocado industry — was a rambling one. Only now, looking back at the choices I made and the avenues I explored, do I fully appreciate the long-term vision of my grandfather Lee Cole and my father Guy's oft-repeated sentiment: "You won't get it until you're sitting in my seat."

As a husband, father of two young sons, volunteer and philanthropist who likes to "keep it local" — I acknowledge I am blessed to work alongside my brother Taylor and father as a third generation California avocado grower. And I am honored to serve as Chairman — to advocate on behalf of all growers and find a middle ground with legislators, constituents and industry members that helps build and secure the legacy of our premium crop for future generations.

Growing up, I loved being on the ranch. But at the age of 12 — spurred by having to lug around 80-pound bags of California avocados — I started dreaming of a career beyond the fence line of our land. I began my undergraduate career with the intent of becoming a pediatrician but as I dab-

bled in science courses at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, I eventually began to gain a firmer grasp of my family's business and appreciate its potential. This, and a desire to return to ranch life, led to my completing an Agricultural Science and Agricultural Business degree.

As the oldest grandchild, I always felt duty-bound to do what my parents and grandparents wanted me to do — so I sought the advice of my grandfather (the long-time CEO and president of Calavo) to see whether he thought the business side of the operation was a path I should pursue. He knew me all too well: No, he said, go back to the ranch. Frankly, it was a relief as I had tried a few desk jobs and dearly missed what felt natural to me: being out in the groves.

I returned to the ranch and within three years Taylor and I decided to act upon the hidden potential of our family's operation by launching a massive reinvestment plan that could support us and our extended families. Since 2011, we have quadrupled the size of our family ranch to 4,000 acres that produce lemons, avocados and cattle. True to my nature, I'm the lead shovel in the field alongside our irrigation and harvest crews and get to work alongside my brother and best friend. Just as Taylor and I used to do, our children



Chair Jason Cole

now roam and play in the groves together — a vision that is as rewarding and satisfying as a healthy fruit set and robust harvest. After all, like many of you, I am motivated to work hard, grow the best avocados possible and serve on the Commission to ensure my children can come back to farming on the family ranch if that's what they love to do.

I've served on the Commission's board, in a variety of positions, for more than a decade and have gained a wealth of knowledge about the challenges and opportunities of our industry while serving on the Governance, Finance and Production Research committees. As Chairman, I will use this experience to continue the positive, albeit challenging, change our Commission has experienced over the last few years. I am extremely excited about the Commission's new look and feel. Our team is streamlined and focused on doing all we can to promote California avocados for what they are: The World's Best! As we move forward, we plan on capitalizing on the momentum that has been building and will continue to make improvements that benefit the folks we represent — California growers.

Enough about me. Let me introduce you to the other members of our Executive Committee.



THANK YOU TO OUR
California
GROWERS



Scan to see
our Field Staff



delreyavocado.com



Vice Chair Rachael Laenen

Rachael Laenen hails from a storied California avocado family with more than 100 years' experience growing avocados and lemons, and it is this family legacy — and the people behind it — who fuel her ambitions. Now the mother of an 18-month-old, she noted, "I'm a temporary steward and involved in farming, but it is my responsibility and duty to make certain the ranch can be passed down to the seventh generation."

Although she treasures her family's history and accomplishments — her great-grandfather designed farm machinery and her grandmother is an acknowledged pioneer in the industry — Rachael grew up in England and Italy, not Ventura County. Her father Gordon Kimball, who was a Formula 1 mechanical design engineer, eventually returned to California but Rachael "didn't want to live in California or be in farming." Instead, she built an impressive career in F1 herself as the Head of Hospitality and Events for Mercedes AMG Petronas. Weary of globe-trotting, she decided to come home and spent two years discussing with her dad how she could contribute to the ranch. "I wanted to make sure I was adding value to the operation."

Six months after returning, her family's farm was devastated by the

Thomas Fire. "I was new to the operation and was having this amazing experience," she observed. "And then the fire hit. There was a steep learning curve, rebuilding a business from the ground up and replanting our acreage."

Rachael has overseen the ranch's food safety, OSHA and grant programs and in 2020 launched a business-to-consumer sales channel. Now as her father steps back from the business, she is preparing to take over the entire operation.

"Working with my dad is the best thing I could ever ask for," she stated. "He's an incredible mentor and wonderful farmer, advocate, strategist and innovator. One of the things I appreciate most is that he is open to exploring any idea, innovation or technology — it's really inspiring and motivating. What we are doing today is night and day different than five years ago and it's paying off. We're better farmers today but still have room to grow and can be even better tomorrow."

Rachael has served the Commission in a variety of roles, including on the Succession Planning Task Force and Marketing Committee, and was the California representative on the Hass Avocado Board where she participated in the Sustainability Task Force and their BOLD leadership program.

She happily admits that she, her husband, Andrew, and son, Eugene, spend most of their time on the ranch. She still enjoys travel and takes great joy from being creative with home-grown produce. Ultimately, "the most important thing is that we, as growers, are producing safe and healthy food for people and have the opportunity to be stewards of the land in a responsible manner. I take a lot of pride in that."



Treasurer Maureen Cottingham

As a child, Maureen Lamb Cottingham "definitely lived the ag lifestyle — walking the groves with my dad, sisters and brother and just having fun finding avocados" on the 1,000-acre Camlam Farms. Her upbringing, she observed, "instilled a special connection to the land in us. We grew up learning stewardship from our family." While she always had an interest in agriculture and pursued a degree in Agri-Business with a concentration in farm and ranch management, at the time Maureen didn't give serious consideration to returning to the ranch. As a senior at Cal Poly – San Luis Obispo she completed a fundraising project for The Wheelchair Foundation at Tolosa Winery and so began her 17-year career with Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance, a marketing and educational trade organization.

Her family is celebrating the enterprise's 50th anniversary next year. "We are immensely proud to reach this major milestone. It's a testament to the hard work and unwavering commitment to best practices by everyone at Camlam Farms." It's that longevity — and commitment to the land — that motivated her and her husband to leave Sonoma and join the family business in Southern California (Camlam Farms takes its name from Camarillo, which



We began in California, but we didn't stop there...

Four decades of
delivering strong returns
with global retail and
foodservice connections
across 25 countries

~

Superior grower relations

~

Pricing & volume incentives

~

Growing & harvest
strategy support



Grow With Us

field@missionproduce.com

[@mission_produce](#) [f](#) [t](#) [@](#) [in](#)

was named after her family, and Lamb, a nod to her lineage). Today she is a sixth-generation California avocado & citrus grower serving as assistant manager who — as she so aptly puts it — “is a sponge for information. As we prepare to transition to the next generation, I’m learning everything I can with an eye toward optimizing our practices and continuous improvement, something every farmer strives for.” She works side-by-side with her Uncles John, David and Bert, her father. “Farming is at the heart of our family, and I’m honored to continue our family’s rich agricultural heritage while continuing to build a legacy for the next generation.” And she’s proud to “follow in my grandfather and Uncle John’s footsteps with my service to the California Avocado Commission.” Like them, she has served with CAC in a variety of roles. She has invested time on the Marketing Committee, Finance Committee and now as Treasurer on the Executive Committee. “I have a deep understanding and knowledge about trade organizations like CAC and the important role they serve in our industry.” She added, “I’m excited to be a part of this valuable organization and the new chapter we are beginning.”

As for her free time? It looks a lot like her childhood — simply enjoying being on the ranch. “My husband Adam and I really enjoy being with our three children — Quincey (8), Cash (6) and Charlie (2) — on the ranch riding horses, hiking, barbecuing and gathering with our entire family.” She continued, “I’m so grateful to have grown up here and have the opportunity to live in Ventura County, and Sonoma, and raise our children in such incredible places.” When they’re not on the soccer or baseball fields with their children, they love to explore the Golden State with their kids who enjoy surfing nearly as much as exploring the groves.



Secretary Daryn Miller

Growing up on his family’s farm, Daryn Miller learned valuable lessons from his father, Jim, watching him navigate the challenges of growing, packaging and direct marketing Valenica oranges to retailers while managing a small-scale farm. When Daryn was in middle school, the family enterprise, which originated in 1978, planted six acres of hillside California avocados.

“My dad was keenly aware of the threat of citrus greening in Florida and had the foresight to diversify production on our farm,” Daryn noted.

By 2018, his dad had leased an additional 16 acres solely devoted to avocados. Today, that acreage is thriving in berm-planted rows serviced by a new irrigation system, a solar array, remote sensing and an automation system recently installed with the help of a SWEEP grant.

Prior to beginning his career in agriculture, Daryn served six years in the United States Marine Corps, primarily in the reserves serving at an artillery unit 5th Battalion, 14th Marines originally based in Pico Rivera, CA. While a potential long term military career was considered, he ultimately decided to follow his passion for agriculture, leading to him managing vineyards in southern Monterey County.

He completed a degree in Agribusiness with a minor in viticulture at Cal Poly SLO and currently concentrates his day-to-day efforts on vineyard management, agronomy and irrigation management.

He continues to be actively involved with the family’s farming operation, bouncing new farming strategies and cultural practice ideas off his father. As a certified crop consultant and pest control advisor, he has the opportunity to see diverse methods growers employ in their operations — fueling his interest in advancing agriculture through innovation. Gaining different perspectives — and learning from them — is something he grew to appreciate in college when he worked at the Mission avocado grove just north of campus under the direction of Gabe Felipe. “It was pretty cool to see California avocado production on a much bigger scale than my family’s operation,” he stated. “I learned so much by seeing how differently they managed production and what pruning techniques were being employed.”

Now in his second term as a California Avocado Commission Board member, and his first term as secretary, Daryn notes he is honored to be part of the California avocado industry and exploring ways to advance its productivity.

He has put roots down with his fiancée, Mary, and their one-year-old daughter, Penelope, who loves to dance in the groves while her dad plays guitar. He hits the links as often as he can and also enjoys archery and bow hunting on his family’s property. 🍌

By Terry Splane
Vice President of Marketing



Terry Splane

Embracing a Bright Future in 2024: Strategic Shifts to Drive Success

The California Avocado Commission marketing team has been hard at work adjusting our game plan and resources to elevate efficiency, effectiveness and overall success in 2024. Due to economic conditions and budget cuts, we left no stone unturned as we strived to optimize our investment strategy and drive successful results. The two primary areas of change for next year center around how we think about trade investment and a new marketing campaign.

Elevated focus on trade customers

To achieve our reduced financial investment goals, the team assessed all areas of the business. There are reductions in virtually all activities and initiatives including consumer advertising, website development, content creation, etc. The one area we were conscientious about not reducing was direct investment into our customer base...typically referred to as “trade investment”. However, not all trade investment is created equal. It was necessary to redefine trade investment into two buckets: trade customer support and industry support.

Trade customer support is defined as investment that has a direct impact on those accounts who directly market and sell California avocados to consumers. Activities include supporting their marketing efforts with in-store promotions, social and digital advertis-

ing, sampling, menu mention and promotions.

Industry support is defined as investment in communicating seasonal availability and the value of California avocados to our trade customers. Activities include trade advertising, public relations, events and trade sponsorships.

The industry support portion of our budget was severely reduced. Our thought process was that our loyal trade customers are aware of California avocado seasonal timing and value to their business. Due to the lower crop volume expected this season, it's not necessary to pull new customers into the brand. In addition, we have CAC representatives and AMRIC handlers fully engaged in ongoing communications with these customers. This allows us to reduce our spending without losing connectivity and engagement with those customers who are critical supporters of our brand.

Trade customer support was untouched by budget cuts and actually was elevated in several areas. So, when it comes to customer awareness of California avocado availability and value, we won't skip a beat. With these financial adjustments, almost 60% of the total annual budget is now invested into trade overall, with approximately 85% of that being deployed against building our trade customers' business.

New marketing campaign supporting the 2024 California avocado season

After three years with the advertising campaign creative, “The best avocados have California in them”, it's time for a refresh. The purpose of the refresh is to reignite the California Avocados brand with ownable, relevant and meaningful content. Over time consumers become “fatigued” with the same advertising look and feel, so they lose interest, minimizing their overall engagement and the effectiveness of the marketing campaign.

We're in the middle of this critical body of work, so I have nothing visual to unveil. We'll save that for the next *From the Grove* edition, so be sure to check it out when it arrives!

What I can share is how we're approaching the new campaign and what you can expect to see.

Campaign Mandatories:

- Pulling from my last *From the Grove* article, we will be maniacally focused on the messaging that truly differentiates California avocados from the rest of the category. That messaging includes premium quality and preference, locally grown, now in season and sustainability.

Continued on page 11

By Ken Melban
Vice President, Industry Affairs & Operations

Tackling Grower Challenges: a Big Part of CAC's Agenda



Ken Melban

Looking back at 2023 brings a smile as I recall what was accomplished. Granted, there is always more to do as we work every day to benefit our growers—large and small—but 2023 shows what we as an industry can do when we are focused and results oriented.

Topping the list of urgent issues were water costs, pest quarantines and water quality restrictions; at times all were simultaneously in play.

No doubt, water availability at affordable costs is a big deal throughout California's avocado growing regions. So, when the California Avocado Commission (CAC) learned that two water districts—Rainbow and Fallbrook—were attempting to detach from the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) and its average 10% water cost increases annually, CAC teamed with the districts and hundreds of our growers to make it happen.

The proposed move by the districts to the Eastern Municipal Water District was fought every step of the way by SDCWA and the City of San Diego. That included appearances and testimony by many over the months, including CAC, before the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo), whose approval was required before detachment could occur.

Compelling facts presented during avocado growers' testimony and others ultimately convinced a majority of the LAFCo directors to adopt the proposal, which left only a vote by

residents of the two districts to make the ask a reality...or so we thought. The winning vote eventually occurred in late 2023 but it almost did not happen, which returns us to the opposition by SDCWA and the City of San Diego.

Having lost the LAFCo vote, the opposition turned to the State Capitol and caused the introduction of legislation that would have greatly expanded and urbanized the eligible voter pool to include all voters in San Diego County—rather than limiting the pool to voters from the two relevant districts. The legislation also included an urgency provision (requiring a two-thirds vote in the Senate and Assembly) that would allow the proposal to become law when signed by the Governor (which would have occurred around September 2023) rather than becoming law on January 1, 2024, which occurs with passage of majority vote legislation.

The opposition's strategy was to change the law ahead of the pending vote with full expectations that the new voter pool would oppose detachment and thereby lock our growers into paying present and likely future untenable SDCWA water rates. So, what to do?

CAC and the districts did the only thing they could do. We went to the State Capitol, too. Further, CAC organized growers throughout "avocado country" resulting in a petition signed by more than 300 of our growers and delivered to legislators in their districts and Sacramento. Over time, our message against offensive power politics

and economic harm to our growers and their communities broke through and that changed everything.

Support for the legislation began to dwindle and ultimately the vote count did as well. At some point, the opposition's vote count showed that they could achieve a majority vote in both Houses of the legislature but not two-thirds. With that, the question of how to proceed shifted and the opposition accepted reality. The urgency clause was removed, the majority vote legislation passed, which the Governor signed, and it became law January 1, 2024, but too late to stop the vote approving detachment.

On a different front, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) mistakenly listed Hass avocados as a host for Oriental Fruit Fly and Queensland Fruit Fly thereby subjecting the fruit to quarantine restrictions. This action took place despite the fact that Hass avocados are not listed as a host for Mexican Fruit Fly or Mediterranean Fruit Fly.

CAC petitioned and USDA corrected this error but what if this had slipped through the cracks? Multiple pesticide treatments; restricted movement of the crop from groves; and economic distress to our growers, their labor force and communities? Our work

is not done, however. CAC continues to engage with USDA to remove the listing of GEM and Lamb-Hass avocados as host crops.

The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board got our attention as well last year with its proposed limitations for discharges from irrigated agricultural lands, which would impact avocado growers and many other farmers in the region.

Coordinating with the Ventura County Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business, and other likeminded groups, CAC stepped up and supported the collective, common-sense message in defense of our avocado growers. The highlights included a laundry list of bureaucratic overreach driven in part by little, if any, understanding of agriculture and farming practices.

The following are a few examples of what we are fighting:

The total maximum daily load (TMDL) of additives to the soil for farming purposes will be imposed on a given area outlined on a map rather

than specific properties already subject to existing TMDL limits. This arbitrary approach to decision making surely accommodates regulators but creates real risk of victimizing our growers.

Requires farmers to install best management practices even if such practices are deemed unnecessary or infeasible by technical experts and does not make allowance for the time needed to comply.

Our avocado growers are as unique as the land they farm with hill-sides, intersecting roads and valleys that often require specialized farming practices. There is little recognition of this operational diversity as the Regional Board and staff look to adopt and enforce inflexible rules — in effect applying a one-size-fits-all framework. This must be avoided if possible.

There it is—a sample of challenges we faced in 2023, some of which will carry over to 2024 even as other issues surface and require our attention. Stay tuned. 🥑

EXECUTIVE NOTES

By Terry Splane

Continued from page 9

- We're getting back to our roots, literally. Or to be more exact – your roots. -Building on the locally grown message, California growers and groves will take on a prominent role in California avocado communications.
- And speaking of California, the state's iconic shaped outline will have unmistakable visibility in much of the new creative. This simple state visual is powerful in its presence, and a picture is worth a thousand words.
- We will continue to focus on Now

in Season messaging. Our objective will be to turn this statement from a fact into a sense of urgency and excitement for consumers to get to their retailer or restaurant and buy these amazing California avocados, NOW!

There's plenty more to tell, but I'll stop there. I'd rather show you in the next edition, so be on the lookout. Suffice it to say, we're extremely energized to launch all this newness beginning in a few short months. And we can't wait for you to see it too! 🥑



Board of Directors

District 1

Member/Jessica Hunter
Member/Robert Jackson
Alternate/Jaime Serrato

District 2

Member/John Cornell
Member/Victor Araiza
Alternate/Ohannes Karaoghlanian

District 3

Member/ Maureen Cottingham-**Treasurer**
Member/Robert Grether
Alternate/John Berns

District 4

Member/Rachael Laenen-**Vice Chair**
Member/Jason Cole-**Chair**
Alternate/Hayden McIntyre

District 5

Member/Will Carleton
Member/Daryn Miller-**Secretary**
Alternate/James Johnson

Handlers

Member/Peter Shore
Member/Vacant Seat
Alternate/Vacant Seat

Public Member

Member/Quinn Cotter
Alternate/Maddie Cook

To contact a CAC representative, please visit:
CaliforniaAvocadoGrowers.com/Commission/your-representatives

2024 Crop Volume and Monthly Harvest Projections

In December 2023, the California Avocado Commission conducted a survey of AMRIC Handlers requesting crop volume and harvest timing projections for the 2024 crop year. The results of those surveys yielded a total crop volume of 208 million pounds, all varieties, with projections of May through July for peak harvest volumes. CAC will conduct the mid-season grower crop survey, as well as AMRIC Handler survey, in April 2024 to get an update on total crop volume and make any necessary adjustments to weekly harvest projections. The results of these surveys will be available in May 2024.

Included here is a summary of the December 2023 AM- RIC Handler survey responses and updated harvest projections:

Hass Volume Estimate Range

Low: 180 MM
High: 215 MM

Lamb Hass Volume Estimate Range

Low: 4 MM
High: 8 MM

GEM Volume Estimate Range

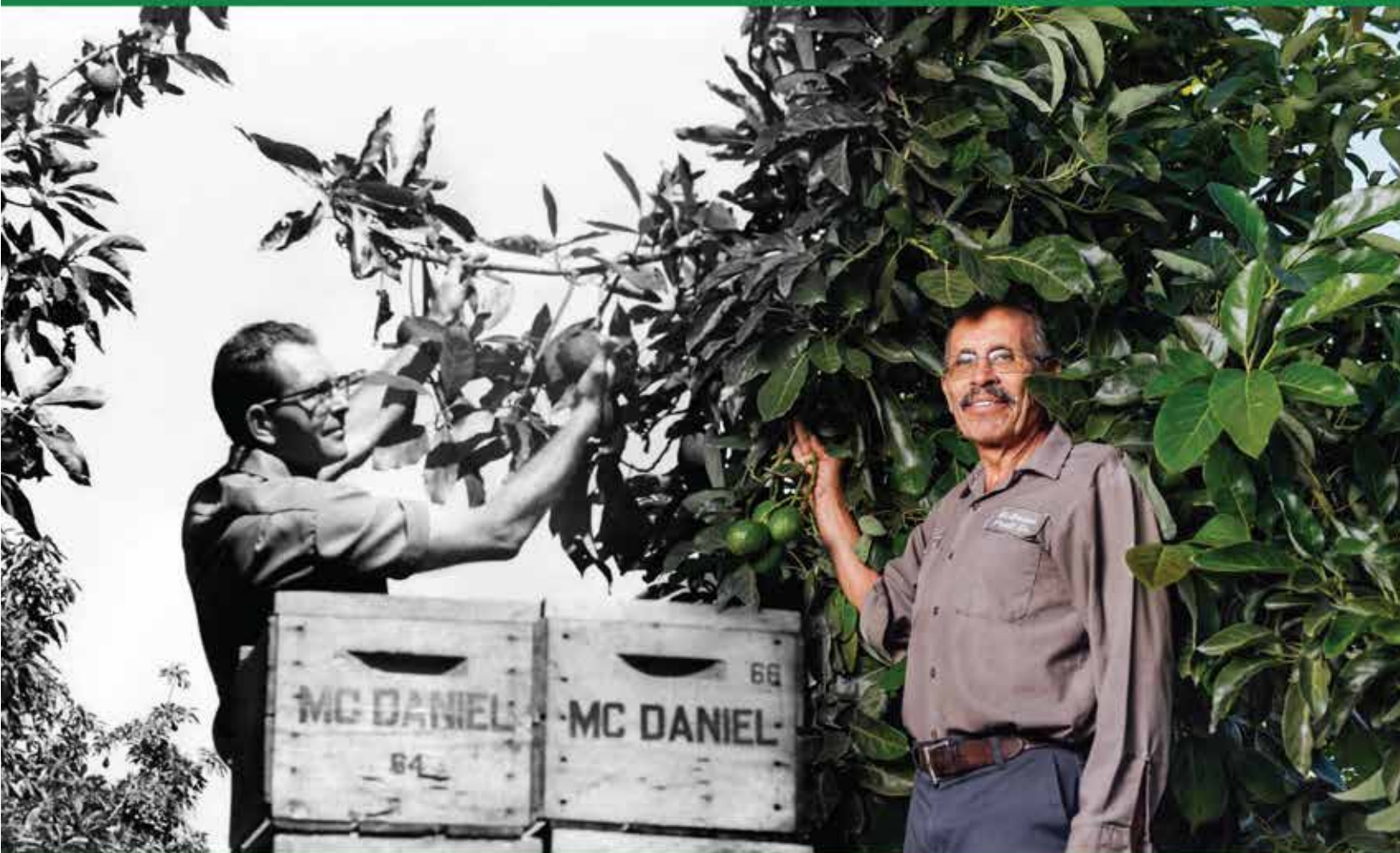
Low: 1 MM
High: 6 MM

2024 Crop Estimate

Hass: 196 MM
Lamb Hass: 6 MM
GEM: 5 MM
Other: 1 MM

Total: 208 MM

2024 Preliminary California Crop Harvest Projection						Dec 2023 Handler Survey Hass Distribution
Month	Hass	Lamb	Gem	Other	Total	
Jan	987,600	-	-	149,800	1,137,400	0.5%
Feb	2,970,800	-	-	137,400	3,108,200	1.5%
Mar	10,289,900	-	50,900	42,400	10,383,200	5.3%
Apr	29,994,200	200	1,743,200	76,400	31,814,000	15.3%
May	40,733,800	5,900	1,803,200	33,100	42,576,000	20.8%
Jun	45,246,000	151,500	1,207,900	135,100	46,740,500	23.1%
Jul	40,379,800	3,605,100	174,200	236,100	44,395,200	20.6%
Aug	21,327,500	1,572,700	15,000	103,900	23,019,100	10.9%
Sep	4,070,400	623,800	5,600	50,200	4,750,000	2.1%
Oct	-	40,800	-	7,000	47,800	0.0%
Nov	-	-	-	4,900	4,900	0.0%
Dec	-	-	-	23,700	23,700	0.0%
Total	196,000,000	6,000,000	5,000,000	1,000,000	208,000,000	100%



THE FAMILY NAME IN CALIFORNIA AVOCADOS SINCE 1944

JOIN THE MCDANIEL FAMILY OF GROWERS

www.McDANIELAVOCADO.COM

(760) 728-8438

INFO@MCDANIELAVOCADO.COM

965 E MISSION RD - FALLBROOK, CA

2023 Consumer Research Insights

Since the mid-1990s, the California Avocado Commission has conducted a California Avocado Tracking Study to better understand consumer behavior and attitudes. CAC utilizes the wealth of information provided in the report to direct consumer communications that encourage brand loyalty and purchases of the fruit at a premium price. The study also helps the Commission measure objectives and performance measures established in its annual business plan. Further, the data provides the CAC marketing team with valuable insights that can be shared with handlers to encourage them to prominently feature the California origin on packaging and with retailers to encourage them to carry the fruit in season and feature the California Avocados brand. This year, the 2023 California Avocado Tracking Study was complemented by research conducted by CAC's new agency of record, Curious Plot. **(See article on p. 24)**

Data from the study was presented to the CAC Board at the November 16, 2023 board meeting. Following are highlights from the tracking study; unless otherwise noted, results

listed are for the California region.

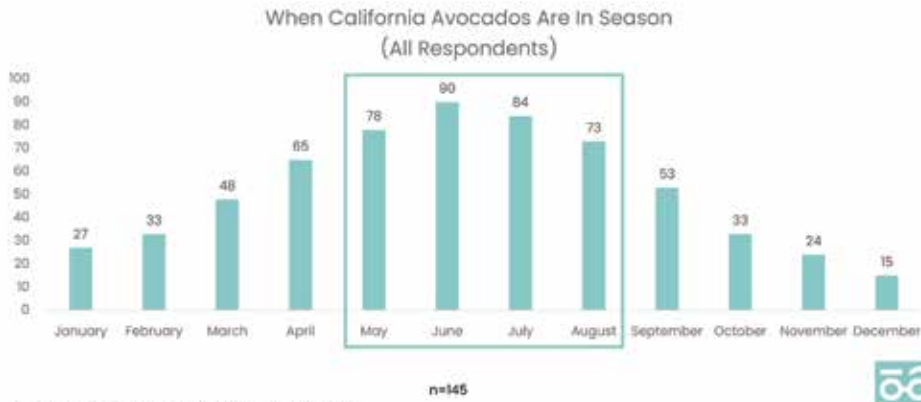
In the California market and the West, California continues to be the preferred avocado growing region. California also continues to exceed all other origins on positive product perceptions with 68% of Californians saying California avocados are the best. Further, California avocados are perceived, by a wide margin, to have the best food safety practices as compared to fruit from other origins. This remains a top purchase driver. While consumers state that California avocados are most expensive, 63% say they are worth paying more for.

As concerns brand awareness, California avocados (unaided and aided) held steady with total awareness at 86% and is on par with Mexico at 83%. Awareness of California avocado advertising increased to 55% (comparable to Mexico at 48%) and unaided ad awareness for Mexico declined to 25% (comparable to California at 18%). It is worth noting that 53% reported hearing or seeing a lot of “buzz” about California avocados, as compared to 49% for avocados from Mexico – particularly significant given Mexico’s much larger adver-



California avocados continue to outpace avocados from Mexico concerning the quality of the fruit and consumers' willingness to pay more for them.

Those who purchase California Avocados believe they are mainly in season from May–August.

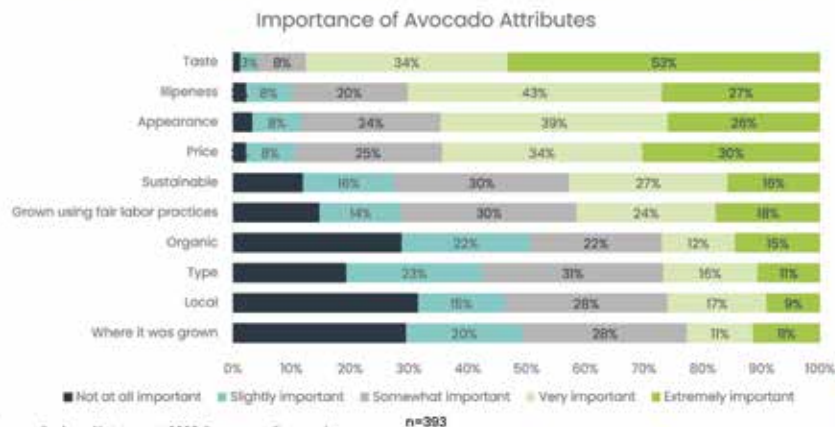


Source: Curious Plot August 2023 Consumer Research
Q: Select the months in which you believe California avocados to be "in season." Select all that apply.

The Curious Plot survey indicates an opportunity to build awareness around California avocados' seasonality.

The results of these surveys identified opportunities to clarify and expand consumer messaging. While California avocados are more likely than avocados from Mexico to be described as the highest quality and worth paying more for, the data from the Curious Plot survey indicated that 24% of "frequent" avocado buyers do not know where their avocados come from — underscoring the need for education and brand connection to location and sourcing. Additionally, those who purchase California avocados do not fully understand California's unique seasonality — indicating an opportunity to build anticipation and appreciation for the specific months California fruit is available. When asked to rank the importance of avocado attributes, respondents most valued attributes that equate to "best" taste, ripeness and appearance. 🥑

Consumers value attributes that equate to "best."



Source: Curious Plot August 2023 Consumer Research
Q: When shopping for avocados, how important are the following to you?

Curious Plot respondents indicated taste, ripeness and appearance are the most valued attributes when it comes to the "best" avocados.



**Your trusted
partner in all
things Avocado.**



805-650-1040 | www.freskaproduce.com



An avocado tree canopy completely desiccated by heat from fire combined with high winds and extremely low relative humidity. Note the presence of weeds still around the tree and the lack of trunk damage; this tree will mostly likely recover, but the existing crop is lost.

Managing Avocados Before and After a Wildfire

By Tim Spann, PhD
Spann Ag Research & Consulting, LLC

The reality is that fire season has expanded to 12 months of the year. As if avocado growers needed any reminder of this, on the morning of Saturday, December 9, 2023, a wildfire started near the top of South Mountain between Somis and Santa Paula. This same area had burned in October 2019 in the Maria Fire. Fortunately, the fire was quickly contained and, although avocado production is in the vicinity, no damage to groves was reported.

Fire Preparation

The danger from Santa Ana conditions and fires seems to never end and it is worthwhile to consider precautions to reduce potential damage should a fire break out near your grove. Keep stacks of dead pruning wood away from trees and structures. Remove brush, weeds and other fuels from areas adjacent to the grove and within tree rows. Debris will add fuel to the fire making it more difficult for fire crews to control and resulting in more permanent damage to trees, especially when

debris is close to tree trunks. Keep fire rakes handy to clear away leaves when fire is approaching. They are better than regular rakes because they do not get clogged with avocado leaves. Alternatively, leaf blowers can be used to quickly clear leaf litter from around trees if a fire is approaching.

During times of extreme fire danger in fire prone areas it may be worthwhile to turn irrigation systems on to wet down dry litter under trees, raise orchard humidity and keep trees stress free. Check with your local fire department to be certain that your irrigation system does not reduce the water pressure in nearby hydrants, which could jeopardize efforts to save lives and structures in a fire event.

Fire Damage Symptoms

Should a fire impact your grove, it is important to understand how avocado trees are affected by fire so you can implement proper recovery plans. The damage to avocado trees from fire is based on two primary factors — the speed of the fire and the heat of the fire. A fast-moving, cool fire will be far less destructive than a slow-moving, hot fire. When fire burns through a grove it may damage the trees superficially, scorching those parts of the tree facing the fire's heat, or — if heat and wind persist — the entire canopy may desiccate, and next season's crop is certainly lost on these trees. If orchards were subject to intense heat, damage to tissues within the trunk and branches may be permanent and trees may never fully recover.

It may take weeks, months or even longer to know the full extent of damage to avocado trees following a fire, and it all depends on the damage to the trunk. In a fast-moving fire, the leaves may turn completely brown soon after the fire has swept through. It may look like the grove is devastated, but there is a good chance these trees can recover — just keep a watchful eye.

In a slower, hotter fire, damage to the tree trunks can be significant and they are less likely to recover. If the trunk has been blackened and charred, recovery is unlikely. In some cases, the trunk may not be significantly charred, but in the days and weeks following the fire if the tree develops cankers or boils where the sap bubbles to the surface, it is unlikely the tree will recover. If a tree begins to sprout from its base, at ground level, the tree is a goner; the graft union has died and the tree is trying to resprout from the roots.

In the months following a fire, a recovering tree will sprout out indicating where it is still alive. However, this new growth may suddenly collapse the following year when stressful conditions — high winds or heat — occur.

Growers who have lived through past fires generally agree that struggling to resuscitate badly damaged trees is time lost, and in such cases tree replacement may be the best option. Just as with freeze damage, dealing with fire-damaged



An avocado tree trunk completely blackened and charred by fire. Note the lack of any weeds or mulch remaining and the complete loss of leaves on some branches, indicating the high heat and intensity of the fire. This tree will not recover.

groves requires patience and discipline. It is best not to rush assessment of tree damage and consider getting a second opinion before making major pruning cuts or replacing trees. With that in mind, it is worthwhile to consider the following points concerning grove fire recovery and preparation for potential future fire events.

Document, Document, Document

Growers should take copious notes and document everything related to any fire damage and recovery. Growers also must take into consideration the Food Safety Modernization Act. Growers affected by the fires should record a “notice of unusual occurrence and corrective action” in their food safety plan. A form for this is available in CAC’s Food Safety Manual, which is available online (<http://www.californiaavocadogrowers.com/growing/food-safety/food-safety-manual-resources>). In addition, growers should document all costs associated with the fire in their groves. This includes keeping records of things such as labor costs, and receipts for any materials and supplies purchased in association with recovery. These records are necessary for any future insurance claims or potential litigation related to the fires.

Irrigation Is Critical, But Must be Adjusted According to Fire Damage

Replace all damaged sprinklers, risers and other irrigation system components as soon as possible, make sure underground plumbing is operational and test your system. The dry winds and fires will have caused considerable tree stress, so a thorough deep irrigation should be applied as soon as irrigation systems are operational. Remember that fire damaged trees will use less water if leaves are scorched because they will have a reduced functional leaf surface area. If irrigation continues per pre-fire schedules, the ground may become saturated and cause further tree damage during recovery due to root asphyxiation. In consideration of this, it may be worth investing in soil moisture sensors to help ensure that a bad situation is not worsened.

In post-fire irrigation management, growers should be especially cognizant of the fact that fire damage is unlikely to be uniform across a block. Individual trees or areas within a block may have been damaged differently and will now have distinct irrigation needs. It may be necessary to run a second line in some blocks to accommodate trees with different water requirements, change microsprinkler sizes, or even swap some microsprinklers for drip emitters to accommodate this variation.

Protect Trees from Sun Damage

It is extremely important to whitewash (using a diluted interior white latex paint) all sun-exposed branches and trunks that were previously shaded by leaves. Sunburn on exposed branches, limbs and trunks can cause considerable additional tree damage. You may unnecessarily whitewash some trees that will not survive, but it is better to be cautious and whitewash everything to protect those trees that will recover.

Be Patient with Pruning

It is important to wait to prune until you can determine the extent of damage to the trees. Cutting away the bark and looking for live cambium may not necessarily be a good measurement of how badly a tree has been damaged, because it may be hard for the inexperienced grower to discern differences between living and dead tissues. Wait to see where the new growth flush occurs on damaged trees before making pruning cuts. In hot areas, give the trees a chance to test new growth in warm weather before pruning, because some new growth will inevitably collapse. By waiting to assess damage to your trees, you will know where to make definitive pruning cuts, thus allowing you to salvage as much of the damaged tree as possible and return to production as quickly as possible. If your grove was overcrowded or was too tall to efficiently manage, this may be a good opportunity to modify your management practices by thinning trees and reducing tree height. 🍌



Sap blisters on the trunk of an avocado tree following a fire. These blisters indicate the sap in the tree boiled during the fire and the tree will not recover. Photo courtesy of Ben Faber.

MAXIMIZE YOUR YIELD & QUALITY

We are dedicated to growing stronger plants more efficiently through improved plant performance.

Our technology helps growers build a strong foundation in the four pillars of bio-nutrition:

Sh

Soil Health

Rd

Root Development

Ne

Nutrient Efficiency

AsD

Abiotic Stress Defense



Soil Health:

Necessary to support optimum soil biology and plant growth.



Nutrient Efficiency:

Increasing soluble carbon to improve nutrient availability for root growth and microbial diversity.



Root Development:

Essential to healthy plants and maximizing performance potential.



Abiotic Stress Defense:

Critical protection against stress factors that can reduce performance.

 redoxgrows.com

      @redoxgrows

Contact us for more information at (208) 678-2610

LISTEN TO OUR REDOX GROWS PODCAST



Redox GROWS



Scan the QR code to listen to our Podcast



The Commission booth team for the Global Produce and Floral Show

Commission Showcases California Avocados at Global Produce and Floral Show and Evaluates Future Plans

From October 19 –21, 2023, members of the California Avocado Commission attended the nation’s largest produce show – the International Fresh Produce Association Global Produce and Floral Show – held in Anaheim, California. The event, which gathers industry leaders from across the United States, provides the Commission with an impactful opportunity to showcase and build loyalty to the California Avocados brand, while encouraging demand for the fruit with key retail decision makers.

Throughout the event, the Commission’s top priority was to meet with retailers to demonstrate the value of premium California avocados. The Commission’s Retail Marketing Directors David Anderson and Carolyn Becker met with a variety of retailers including Albertsons/Vons, Brookshire Grocery, Gelson’s, Hy-Vee, Kroger Corp, Mother’s Market, Northwest Grocers, Nugget Market, Safeway NorCal, Sam’s Club, Save Mart Supermarkets, The Fresh Market, United West Texas and Walmart global food sourcing representatives.

Former CAC Board Chair Rob Grether, Vice President of Industry Affairs Ken Melban and Vice President of Marketing Terry Splane met in person with Hass Avocado Board representatives at the Commission’s booth located along the prime “Broadway” of the show. The CAC leadership team also met with attending California avocado handlers, as well as California avocado growers who stopped by.

Prior to the global gathering, the Commission set goals for the event including meeting with targeted retailers, stakeholders and trade media representatives. In a post-show evaluation, the IFPA GP&FS event was considered to be successful overall for CAC. The RMDs met with 28 retailers and the team achieved the goals set for meeting with stakeholders and trade media. However, given back-to-back years with smaller California avocado crops and ensuing reduced marketing budgets, the team also conducted a critical analysis that indicates the need to make substantial changes regarding the show going forward.

“It is imperative to ensure that event participation yields enough value to more than justify the cost of participation,” said Commission Vice President of Marketing Terry Splane. “This is especially true during the alternate years when the event is not held in California, such as in 2024, when fewer of the Commission’s targeted retailers attend.”

A significantly smaller budget has been allocated for CAC’s participation in the Global Produce and Floral Show for 2024. The marketing team is investigating options to protect and promote the California Avocados brand at the event in a cost-effective manner. 🥑



IFPA CEO Cathy Burns with CAC's David Cruz



CAC and HAB meeting in the Commission booth



Fresno, California
 [GenesisNurseries.com](https://www.GenesisNurseries.com)
 559.393.8444

The Best Avocados Come From the Healthiest Trees



Start with high quality trees from Genesis Nurseries



Seedling and clonal rootstalks available



Now taking orders for the 2024-2025 growing seasons



Commission Selects New Consumer Marketing Partner: Curious Plot



As part of an orientation and planning session, the Commission marketing staff and representatives from Curious Plot toured a California avocado grove and packinghouse.

In the spring and summer of 2023, the California Avocado Commission's Board leadership and marketing team determined that it was time to take a fresh approach to consumer communications. The advertising campaign that the Commission had used for several years served its purpose well but it's time for a positive change in consumer advertising and public relations. A comprehensive search was set in motion to find a new consumer agency of record. After a months-long search that began with 15 agency candidates, CAC's search committee — comprised of the CAC marketing team and Board members including former Board chair Rob Grether, current Board chair Jason Cole and current Board treasurer Maureen Lamb Cottingham — unanimously selected Minneapolis-based Curious Plot as CAC's new agency of record.

As part of the search process, the marketing team narrowed the field of candidates to seven — selecting agencies who could handle both advertising and public relations. The semifinalists submitted initial materials and were interviewed by the team. From this field, four agency finalists were selected to submit proposals and meet the search team in person during August

and September. CAC Vice President of Marketing Terry Splane checked references as well.

During the search process Curious Plot exhibited a blend of a strong strategic approach, excellent advertising creative, unique public relations activations and a partnership approach that melds very well with the Commission's needs. Midway through the search, CAC's Board of Directors and management determined it was necessary to significantly reduce marketing investment and reallocate the marketing mix.

"With back-to-back years of smaller crops, it is necessary to adjust Commission marketing spending to work within the reality of available revenue," said Splane. "To do this, marketing investment needs to be very focused and efficient. There are significant efficiencies by combining the tasks of consumer advertising and consumer public relations into one agency and bringing some activities in-house."

Curious Plot is now on board to take on that challenge and deliver against a new set of marketing objectives. The agency has a unique business model focusing on clients in the food and agriculture space. As such, they have significant experience



From front to back: Curious Plot's President and Chief Strategy Officer Mitch Van Kampen, Senior Digital Strategist Eleanor Sequeira, and Creative Director Justin Peterson learn about growing California avocados during a grove visit.



The team discussing marketing plans, from left: Cristie Mather, Curious Plot vice president of food; Terry Splane, California Avocado Commission vice president of marketing; Amy Wood, Curious Plot senior vice president, strategy.

working with commodity boards and commissions, including the Mushroom Council, National Watermelon Promotion Board and Potatoes USA. Beyond consumer advertising and public relations, they have broad capabilities with retail and foodservice marketing and research.

While headquartered in Minnesota, the agency has an office in Portland, Oregon, from which team members manage the Commission's account, and others from several agency locations are working on the team for California avocados. In partnership with Curious Plot, beginning this season the Commission will launch a new advertising campaign helping to maintain consumer preference for California avocados among the target market and encouraging the most valuable avocado shoppers to be willing to pay more for the fruit.

Laurie Fleck, Curious Plot CEO, remarked, "We at Curious Plot are beyond thrilled to be selected as the California Avocado Commission's agency of record. California Avocados is a premium brand we've long admired, and we grew more impressed with the Commission and its talented team during every phase of the agency review process. We are eager to work alongside

this passionate and dedicated team in partnership with the greater California avocado industry to drive marketplace preference for California avocados." 🥑

Brokaw Nursery
www.brokawnursery.com

Producing all
top-performing
clonal avocado
rootstocks & fruiting
varieties

Order Today!
5501 Elizabeth Road,
Ventura, CA
(805) 647-2262
sales@brokawnursery.com

2023: The Year of the Fruit Fly

By Tim Spann, PhD
Spann Ag Research & Consulting, LLC

California has seen an unusually high number of fruit fly detections in 2023. Currently, quarantines are in place for four species of fruit fly important to avocado growers. These include the Oriental Fruit Fly (OFF; *Bactrocera dorsalis*), the Mediterranean fruit fly (medfly; *Ceratitis capitata*), the Tau fruit fly (TFF; *Zeugodacus tau*) and the Queensland fruit fly (QFF; *Bactrocera tryoni*). Except for QFF, all these fruit flies have been previously detected in California numerous times and successfully eradicated; 2023 is only the third time QFF has been detected in California.

It is nearly impossible to determine exactly how any of these fruit flies arrive in California. However, it is very unlikely they arrive through commercial trade channels since very robust protocols exist within exporting countries as well as at U.S. ports of entry, whether land, air or seaports.

It is more likely that these incursions are a result of post-pandemic travel trends. The United Nations World Tourism Organization reports that 2023 international travel is predicted to be 90% of pre-pandemic levels. For the Americas specifically, international tourist travel from January through September 2023 was at 88% of 2019 levels. Many of those traveling to the U.S. may not have seen family and friends for several years due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and they may be anxious to bring a taste of home with them, and not all these exotic treats are intercepted by Customs and Border Protection officials.

Avocado Fruit Fly Host Status

Hass avocados are recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the California Department of Food and Agriculture as conditional non-hosts for OFF, medfly, QFF as well as the Mexican fruit fly (*Anastrepha ludens*, for which there are currently no quarantines in California). This means that officials acknowledge that mature, hard, green Hass avocados, like those normally commercially harvested and transported, are not a suitable host for these fruit fly pests. As such, commercial Hass avocados grown within quarantine areas for these four fruit fly species are not required to follow the quarantine treatment protocols prior to moving fruit.

Importantly, the above paragraph is specific to Hass avocados. All other avocado varieties grown within quarantine areas must follow the established treatment protocols (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/plant/PE/InteriorExclusion/current_preharvest_treatment.html). Some avocado varieties (such as certain green skin varieties) are known to be good fruit fly hosts because they lack the thick, hard peel of the Hass variety. Others, such as GEM and Lamb Hass which have similar peel characteristics to Hass, are not exempted due to a lack of data to support their conditional non-host status. The California Avocado Commission is diligently working with their partners in the research community to uncover any existing data that supports the conditional non-host status of GEM and Lamb Hass and submit that data to the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service for their consideration.



Oriental Fruit Fly

Adult OFF is slightly larger than the common housefly. Their body color is variable, but usually dominated by bright yellow with a dark T-shaped mark on the abdomen. Females lay eggs under the skin of host fruit in groups of 3 to 30, and can lay up to 1,000 eggs in their lifetime. Maggots feed on fruit flesh and emerge in about 10 days. The larvae drop from the fruit and pupate in the top 1-inch of soil. Adults emerge in 10 to 12 days and newly emerged females are sexually mature in 8 to 12 days. OFF adults are strong flyers, capable of traveling up to 30 miles in search of food and host fruit.

OFF is widespread throughout the mainland of southern Asia as well as surrounding islands (e.g., Sri Lanka, Taiwan). OFF is known to attack over 230 crops including citrus, nuts, berries and vegetables. OFF became established in Hawaii in 1946 where it is a pest of nearly all commercial crops except pineapple. In California, OFF was first detected in 1960 and detections have been made every year since 1966 through the movement of infested fruits and vegetables. Fortunately, the rigorous monitoring and eradication efforts by CDFA and USDA have prevented the establishment of OFF in California. If OFF were to become established in California, the annual economic cost is estimated to be as high as \$176 million from direct crop loss, treatment costs and quarantine requirements.



Mediterranean Fruit Fly

The medfly is a small fly, about ¼ inch long. Its thorax is blackish in color with silver markings, a tan abdomen and clear wings. Like OFF, medfly females pierce host fruit skin and lay 1 to 10 eggs per fruit. Developing maggots feed on the fruit flesh, and decaying infested fruit usually fall to the ground where the maggots leave the fruit and pupate in the ground. Emerging adults mate and the cycle repeats.

Medfly has the widest known host range of any pest fruit fly, infesting over 300 crops. It is also the most widespread, being established throughout Africa, southern Europe, the Middle East, the Caribbean, Central and South America, Australia and Hawaii. Medfly will attack fruit, nut and vegetable crops of temperate, subtropical and tropical origin. The first detection in California was in 1975 and CDFA's monitoring and eradication program has successfully eradicated every incursion since then. Medfly's known hosts in California had an economic value in 2011 of over \$16.5 billion, and it is estimated that if medfly were to become established in California the annual economic impact would be \$1.3 to \$1.8 billion.



Tau Fruit Fly

TFF is similar in size to a housefly. Their body is yellow with brown to black markings, wings are clear with two dark stripes, one along the front wing margin and one running diagonally across the wing. As with other fruit flies, females lay eggs beneath the peel of host fruit and they may lay more than 400 eggs in their lifetime. Larval development can be as short as one week, depending on temperature. They pupate in the soil in about one week and newly emerged adults are sexually mature about 12 days after emergence.

TFF is native to southeast Asia and is not known to be established outside of this region. It has a much narrower known host range than other fruit flies, with only about 100 host species documented. It is a particularly aggressive pest of cucurbits (cucumbers, melons, squash). The first detection of TFF in California was in 2016. Since then, three more introductions have been discovered and eradicated.



Queensland Fruit Fly

Adult QFF are slightly smaller than a housefly. Their body is mostly brown with small yellow markings and clear wings, which are about twice the length of their body. Females lay up to seven eggs through fruit punctures. Development is temperature dependent, but eggs typically hatch in 2 to 3 days and larvae mature in 5 to 7 days, emerging from the fruit to pupate in the soil. The pupal stage lasts anywhere from one week to a month or more in cool conditions. The total lifecycle ranges from 2 to 3 weeks in summer to 2 months in fall. QFF are strong flyers and can infest new areas quickly.

QFF are native to Australia, being found in the states of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria. Prior to 2023, QFF had only been detected twice previously in California — in San Diego County in 1985 and in Orange County in 1991 — and was successfully eradicated both times.

Exotic fruit flies pose a tremendous risk to California agriculture. We are fortunate that the primary avocado variety has a tough, leathery peel that allows it to resist these pests. But if any of these fruit flies were to become established in California, they would no doubt become a burden for avocado growers. All current fruit fly quarantine maps can be found on the CDFA website (<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/plant/pdep/treatment/>). If you suspect you have seen any of these fruit flies outside of the quarantine areas you are encouraged to call CDFA's pest hotline: 1-800-491-1899. 🍌

Featured California Avocado Recipes

For this edition of *From the Grove* the California Avocado Commission is highlighting two recipes. The first recipe, *Chicken and California Avocado Casserole*, was developed by California avocado grower Dorcas Thille. This delicious comfort food recipe includes fresh California avocados inside the casserole as well as in the topping! The second recipe, *Air Fried Avocado Egg Cups with Sriracha Yogurt Cream*, was created by dietitian Wendy Jo Peterson, drawing on consumer interest in recipes using air fryers and multicookers. A culinary-trained nutritionist, Peterson also is an award-winning cookbook author,

including *Air Fryer Cookbook for Dummies*.

To explore recipes created by other California avocado growers and more, visit CaliforniaAvocado.com/recipes/. Growers: to share one of your family's California avocado recipes for use in marketing communications, call 949-341-1955. 🥑

***Large avocados are recommended for these recipes. A large avocado averages about 8 ounces. If using smaller or larger size avocados adjust the quantity accordingly. As with all fruits and vegetables, wash avocados before cutting.*

Air Fried Avocado Egg Cups with Sriracha Yogurt Cream

Serves: 2

Time: 12 minutes

Ingredients:

1 ripe, Fresh California Avocado, halved, seeded, peeled
½ lime
2 medium eggs
⅛ tsp. crushed black pepper
⅛ tsp. sea salt, divided
Cooking spray
2 Tbsp. plain Greek yogurt
¼ tsp. sriracha sauce, or more to taste
½ tsp. black sesame seeds



Instructions:

1. Preheat air fryer to 370° for 4 minutes.
2. Depending on seed size, you may need to scoop a tablespoon out of the center of your avocado. If the seed is large, the egg should fit inside the center hole with ease. Next, squeeze one quarter lime over the avocado insides. Place each avocado half in small, oven-safe ramekins, cut-side up. Crack each egg one at a time and place into the center of the avocado. Season the eggs with pepper and half the salt. Spray the avocado egg cups with cooking spray.
3. Cover the ramekins with foil. Place the ramekins inside the air fryer basket. Cook at 370° for 4 minutes. Open air fryer and remove foil. Continue cooking for 4 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, stir together Greek yogurt, sriracha sauce, and the juice of the remaining lime quarter. Season with salt to taste.
5. Check to see the egg is set by gently pressing on the white edges of the egg, if it is too soft return for another 2 minutes. Total cook time may vary depending on air fryer.
6. To serve, slice the avocado egg cups in halves. Top with sriracha cream and sprinkle with black sesame seeds.

Notes: If you can't find black sesame seeds, white sesame seeds work great, too. Sour cream can be substituted for Greek yogurt.

Chicken and California Avocado Casserole

Serves: 4

Time: 1 hour

Ingredients

- 1 (16-oz.) container salsa verde
(fresh green salsa in the refrigerated section)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup low sodium chicken broth
- 12 medium corn tortillas, cut into 1-inch strips
- 3 cups cooked shredded chicken
- 1 (8-oz.) package shredded jack cheese
- 1 (8-oz.) package shredded low-fat Mexican cheese blend
- 2 ripe, Fresh California Avocados,
seeded, peeled and chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt, or to taste
- California Avocado Sauce
(see make-ahead recipe below)



Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a 9x13-inch baking dish with non-stick cooking spray.
2. Combine salsa verde and chicken broth in a medium bowl. Set aside.
3. Cover bottom of prepared baking dish with half the tortilla pieces. Spoon half the salsa verde mixture over tortillas.
4. Scatter half the chicken over salsa verde. Sprinkle with half of the cheeses. Spoon all the avocados evenly over cheese and sprinkle lightly with salt. Place remaining tortilla pieces on top of avocado, pressing gently to compress ingredients. Spoon remaining salsa verde mixture over tortillas, followed by the remaining chicken. Top with remaining cheese.
5. Bake until cheese is bubbly and begins to brown, about 35 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool 10 minutes before serving.

California Avocado Sauce

Sauce Ingredients

- 1 ripe, Fresh California Avocado, seeded and peeled
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup low sodium chicken broth
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. ground black pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt, or to taste

Sauce Instructions

1. Place all sauce ingredients in the work bowl of a food processor or blender and purée until smooth.
2. Top the casserole with sauce or serve on the side.

By Tim Linden

Spring to Offer Opportunities for California Fruit

A trio of California-based handlers agreed that the sweet spot for the marketing of California avocados in 2024 will most likely occur during the April/May time frame with some opportunities available in late winter and early June as well.

Speaking to *From the Grove* in separate interviews during the first week of January, Patrick Lucy of Del Rey Avocado, Gahl Crane of Eco Farms Avocados and Peter Shore of Calavo Growers agreed that with California's 2024 crop being on the low end of its volume curve, the fruit will most likely be sold in a tight window as Mexico's crop decreases in volume throughout the spring months.

"I don't expect to see much volume from California for a couple of months," said Lucy on January 3, "but of course it depends on Mother Nature."

He said the fruit on the trees is starting to size but currently the size curve is also on the low end of the spectrum. "Right now, we have a stable market, so unless the market goes crazy, I expect most growers to wait a bit before they start picking."

Lucy said it appears Mexico has a lighter crop this year than last year so volume from that point of origin should start to decline after the tremendous shipments that typically come in January and early February to accommodate the football playoff weekend



promotions. He noted that with the Big Game slated for February 11, which is a bit later than usual, retailers will have an extra week to promote the always popular fruit for the "Big Game" weekend. With Mexican imports projected to approach 400 million pounds during the first six weeks of the calendar year, that country could see a bigger decline in fruit earlier this year than last year. "We expect that Mexico is going to be lighter than last year on 40s and larger as the season wears on," he said, noting that March, April and May appear to be ripe for California avocado sales.

During this early January conversation, the rain was falling at the Del Rey office in Fallbrook, which Lucy said is a good sign for growers. "If we

can get some warm weather in March and April, we could get a very good set for next year."

Lucy reminded that it was an extended period of gloom and mist in March and April of 2023 that contributed to the low crop volume for 2024.

Crane agreed that very little California fruit will be marketed before late February. "There is not a need in the marketplace and the size isn't there yet," he said on January 4. "We expect it will be late February or early March before we see much California fruit, but the weather will be a factor in the timing."

He said significant rain during the next few months, as is forecast, will be good for both the 2024 and 2025 crops,

but it also can reduce the number of harvest days and push the crop back a bit. Crane said Eco Farms is expecting the 2024 crop to produce between 200 and 220 million pounds of fruit.

“Mexico is expected to have a little bit less fruit this year so we expect April/May and into June to be a good window for California,” Crane said.

He added that early reports from Peru indicate that the regions with early fruit will have a lighter crop than in 2023. “We do not think Peru will be a factor until June,” he said. “And even then, a high percentage of their shipments will be to the East Coast with their peak in July and August.”

Crane reasoned that it was still a bit early in early January to predict the best window for California growers. He said the Big Game promotion period extends beyond the actual date of the Big Game, but rather encompasses all of the January and February football playoff weekends. He noted that early January demand was very good even with heavy supplies. Crane said an assessment of what Mexico has left in mid-February will help to inform California growers as to their best marketing window.

He said the marketing situation is also changing a bit from the traditional program as more and more retailers are promoting 60-size fruit to create good promotable price points attractive to consumers. This trend is creating a larger array of fruit sizes in good demand. Crane said this is a good thing for growers as it allows them to get a good return on the many different sizes of fruit a grove typically yields.

He added that the trend toward bagged fruit, which typically features even smaller fruit, continues on its upward trajectory, which also helps growers and their packers utilize the entire tree’s output.

Shore of Calavo was the final handler interviewed and his comments



echoed those of the other two. “We’ll see what happens in January, but we don’t expect to see much California fruit this month,” he said on January 4.

He added that while the oil content release date for 60s and larger fruit occurred in early January with the release date for all fruit slated for January 16, there won’t be much on the market until late February or early March. He noted that most fruit had not sized yet and the market opportunity isn’t there either. “We expect some decent volume in March with the peak coming in April and May and into June,” Shore said, adding that there should be California fruit in July and August but at a much lower volume level than most years.

He agreed that California’s marketing window will very much revolve around the movement of Mexico’s fruit over the next couple of months. Heading into the very heavy

January/February time frame, he said Mexico has marketed about half of its projected volume during the first half of its marketing year. If volume is as heavy as projected over the next two months, Shore said volume should drop off in spring allowing opportunities for California and other points of origin. He did agree that Peru is expected to ship fewer avocados than last year to the U.S. market in April and May because of their light early crop.

“Right now, we are seeing good volumes, good promotions and a pretty good market,” said Shore of the U.S. market, adding that a solid world market also bodes well for California avocados this spring and summer. “We are seeing a very strong European avocado market because of lighter supplies from Spain and Morocco this season,” he concluded. 🥑



FARM CREDIT

AgWest Farm Credit | American AgCredit | CoBank

Community Driven. Agriculture Focused.

Our community depends on agriculture and we're committed to financing each operation, one field at a time.



SCAN ME



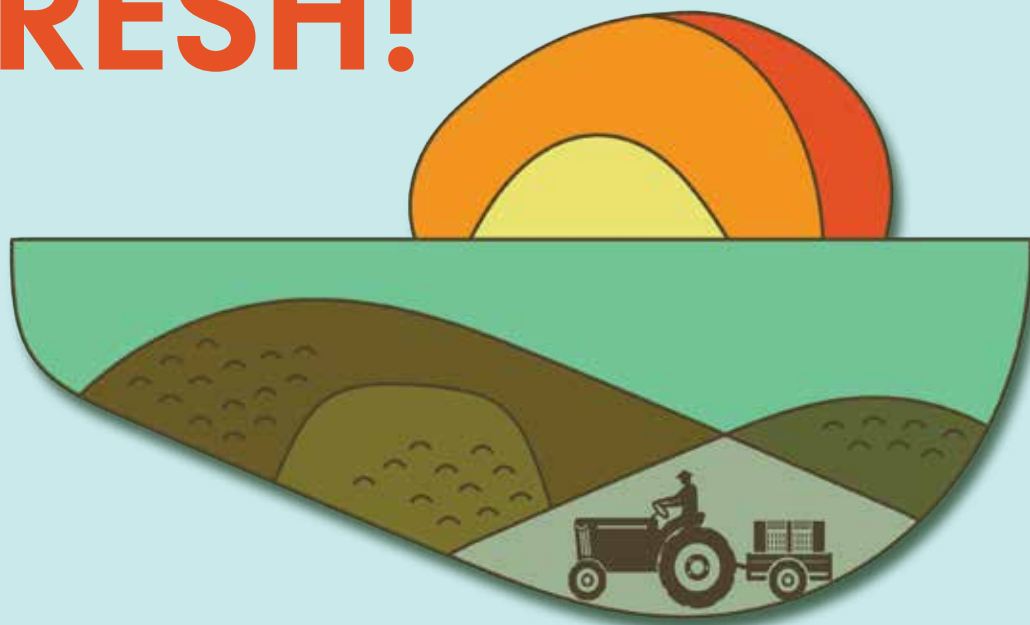
WE ARE FARM CREDIT

A network of customer-owned associations supporting California's rural communities and agriculture with reliable, consistent credit and financial services.





keeping it
FRESH!



909.877.1577 INDEXFRESH.COM