

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." 🥑

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