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## How Can We Measure Marketing Success?

The California Avocado Commission gives very careful consideration to every dollar it invests in promoting California avocados, choosing judiciously to ensure that we generate not simply brand awareness, but brand equity, trade and consumer demand that contributes to the economic viability of California avocado growers. Bottom line — what matters most to growers is economic returns, and the Commission's role is to help create conditions that optimize those returns. What makes that mission challenging are the complex factors that contribute to profitability: sourcing, production, distribution, sales and marketing, as well as competitive pressures.

For branded companies, measuring profitability is simplified because they control all the aforementioned factors, except competitive pressures, and can look at the sum of their activities to determine how each contributed to said profitability. On the other hand, commodity boards like the Commission do not control most aspects of the profitability equation. CAC represents the interests of diverse growers who each face unique challenges and rely on specific operational processes that best suit their grove's profile. And those factors that determine *individual*



grower profitability are outside the purview of the Commission.

So, how can the Commission define and measure marketing success? From a purely marketing perspective, CAC's goal is to market strategically to bolster brand perception, build demand and encourage consumers to willingly pay a premium for California avocados.

To measure success, the Commission tracks meaningful metrics across multiple dimensions. CAC's annual tracking study measures consumer awareness, preference and attitudes toward California avocados — providing a historical view of data that helps define and refine the upcoming season's messaging and direction. To measure the effectiveness and reach

of marketing, the Commission tracks media and public relations metrics including impressions and engagement — and compares the results of specific tactics to industry benchmarks and year-over-year data to determine improvements and opportunities.

The Commission also relies on information provided by third-party data providers and feedback from retail and foodservice partners. Data includes sales lift during promotions, menu penetration, shipment trends and distribution gains. Although PLU scanner data doesn't capture origin of avocados because they are a bulk produce item, the data remains useful to examine considering when and where California avocados are merchandised. Feedback from partners also is valuable as trade customers eager to merchandise California avocados in season appreciate the value of the customized marketing and working with the Commission.

The Commission also leverages third-party expertise including Curious Plot's Board of Advisors, the FOB differential report and ROI studies, like that conducted by the University of California at Davis, that measure how marketing investment translates into grower value.

To best serve California avocado growers, the Commission has prioritized transparency with regular reports

delivered at Board meetings, annual and district meetings, through the Annual Report and timely GreenSheet and *From the Grove* articles. What these reports and articles demonstrate is that to deliver the most value to growers, the Commission's marketing strategies and programs cannot remain static. Relying on the myriad data we have at hand, we constantly refine our tactics based on what works, what needs improvement and — just as importantly — what we need to walk away from. In today's world of digital marketing and data availability, some of those decisions can be made as the season progresses, allowing CAC to make real-time adjustments to optimize marketing investment. This season, we doubled down on Connected TV and YouTube short videos when they proved to be particularly effective. And we quickly paused some social media activity when

the conversation on CAC's channels began to turn negative due to socio-political concerns.

Ultimately, marketing success is determined by growers asking themselves, "Did CAC's marketing activity help increase demand, positively influence pricing and support my operation?" Measuring California avocado marketing success isn't simply an exercise in accountability — it's a means of sharpening strategies and ensuring long-term industry viability. As a commodity board, CAC represents a wide swath of diverse growers and diverse operations — each facing unique challenges and reaping unique rewards. But investment in collective marketing — with the goal of optimizing profitability for all growers — pays dividends when measured thoughtfully and consistently. 🥑



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