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Commission Calls for USDA's Mexico Avocado Inspections Returned to Long-standing Program Requirements

On January 20, 2025, the California Avocado Commission sent a letter to Brooke Rollins, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Designate, requesting “that USDA, under your leadership, immediately re-establish the inspection systems [in Mexico] originally agreed to before irreversible harm is done, and that safeguards be implemented to protect the USDA employees in question.”

The Commission also launched a Grower Petition, which will be used to support the letter to Secretary Designate Rollins (more than 700 signatures to date) and is working with members of Congress in support of this effort.

How did we get here? In summary, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service unilaterally acted in late 2024 to substantially downgrade inspection requirements for the importation of avocados grown in Mexico into the United States. These essential requirements were adopted by APHIS about 30 years ago following negotiations with the Commission and have effectively prevented harmful avocado pests in Mexico, which do not exist in the United States, from crossing

the border into California avocado orchards.

This unilateral shift of inspections by USDA to Mexico is due to cartel violence towards USDA inspectors. Shortly after the change in USDA's inspections, reports of Stem Weevil finds in Mexico packing facilities began to occur followed by Seed Weevil finds, resulting in the shutting down of those facilities.

USDA's actions have increased the risk to California avocado growers for the introduction of an invasive pest and we are requesting that President Trump reverse the action taken by his predecessor before U.S. growers are victimized. Further, we are requesting safeguards are adopted to protect APHIS employees assigned to inspect avocado orchards in Mexico.

It's critical that we show strength as an industry in these efforts, and your participation matters. Hopefully you added your name to the Grower Petition. If you are not receiving Commission GreenSheet emails sign up here CaliforniaAvocadoGrowers.com/publications. 🥑



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To contact a CAC representative, please visit:
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Hass Avocado Board Considers Assessment Rate Change

In October 2024, the Hass Avocado Board kicked off a five-year strategic planning process with a forum of industry stakeholders. Next is a strategic planning meeting on March 4-5, 2025, in Irvine (hybrid) where the HAB board will present industry input and define HAB's purpose, mission, vision, priorities, goals and assessment rate guidance. Then, on May 28-29, 2025, in San Diego County (hybrid) the HAB board will review and approve a 5-year plan and set the 2026 assessment rate.

The HAB assessment rate has remained unchanged – 2.5 cents per pound on all Hass avocados sold in the United States – since HAB became operational in 2003*. On California production, HAB assessments are collected by the first handler. HAB assessments on imports are collected upon entry into the United States from importers. The maximum authorized assessment rate is 5 cents per pound.

Of the 2.5 cents assessment, 85% is rebated back to the respective country association (e.g. California Avocado Commission, Avocados From Mexico, etc.) and 15% is retained by HAB for administration and programs. All HAB monies must be spent by the respective entities on marketing in the United States.

Appropriately, the California Avocado Commission's marketing budget is primarily funded from HAB assessment revenues. The only exception is if the Commission's marketing budget exceeds HAB revenues, at which point Commission assessments are used to supplement the marketing budget. The Commission's marketing budget ideally aligns with the projected HAB assessment revenue.

All the Commission's non-marketing programs (e.g. production research, advocacy, grower communications, etc.) are funded from Commission assessments.

For the 2024-25 FY, the Commission Board of Directors moved to a flat rate assessment instead of percentage of value, a first for the Commission, and set the assessment at a half-cent per pound. The result is a combined 2024-25 FY assessment on California growers of 3 cents per pound based on a 2.5 cents HAB assessment and a half-cent Commission assessment.

HAB is governed by a 12-member Board of Directors consisting of seven domestic Hass avocado producers, two importers, and three additional members, who can either be importers or domestic producers.

While the Commission Board has no direct role in HAB's assessment rate setting, it is prudent the Commission Board is informed and considers potential outcomes should the HAB assessment rate change.

The Commission's next Board meeting is February 20, 2025, in Temecula (hybrid) and the HAB assessment rate will be on the agenda. As a California grower, you are encouraged to share your perspective with your Commission representative or join us at the meeting.

Please send me an email at kmelban@avocado.org if you have questions or suggestions. 🍌

**The Hass Avocado Promotion, Research and Information Act (Act) became law on October 28, 2000. The United States Department of Agriculture promulgated the Hass Avocado Promotion, Research and Information Order (Order) under the authorizing legislation and the Hass Avocado Board (HAB) became operational in 2003. The Act and Order created a federal check-off program assessing "Producers" and "Importers" on all sales of Hass avocados within the United States.*