

By Ken Melban
Vice President of Industry Affairs

Board Approves CAC's Newest Food Safety Manual

In 2011, the California Avocado Commission developed a Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) manual and launched a food safety program for growers. During the last five-plus years, Commission staff has worked to help growers remain competitive with their fruit by becoming food safety certified. This initiative included workshops and GAP manuals to assist growers in becoming GAP certified. During this time, handlers have provided crucial assistance by partnering with the Commission and working directly with growers in the GAP certification process.

The first GAP manual, developed in 2011, primarily supported a grower's conformance to the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) GAP audit. In 2014, due to changing buyer requirements, the Commission modified the GAP manual to prepare growers for certification through a Primus Ranch audit scheme. Growers made the necessary adjustments and significant numbers of acres continued to receive GAP certification. As a result, great progress has been made in the last five years with much of California's acreage becoming GAP certified via the Commission's food safety program.

During the last year, as the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) was finalized, retailer and food service customers have applied more pressure for GAP-certified fruit. Although there has never been one perfectly acceptable GAP audit standard

among the major buyers, the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) scheme has become the standard recognized and accepted by almost all customers. The Commission staff has been in contact with buyers and handlers during the past few months to assess their preferred food safety requirements and determine CAC's next steps. There was some discussion of moving to a Global GAP program, which includes a social responsibility component, but the industry consensus was that this is not necessary.

Based on input from buyers and industry members, the decision was made to modify the Commission's food safety program to support the GFSI standard. The newly-modified Food Safety Manual, Version 3.0, is aligned with the PrimusGFS scheme. As it currently stands, most of the PrimusGFS scheme demonstrates compliance with FSMA. The one area that will need to be modified is the water testing requirements. Primus is in the process of changing its scheme to fully comply with FSMA, and those changes are expected sometime in early 2017. The Commission staff considered waiting until the changes to the PrimusGFS are made before changing the Commission manual, but with key buyer deadlines for GFSI compliance set for no later than January 1, 2018, it was decided to move forward now to allow industry members time to adjust to the GFS scheme and become certified.

Once the PrimusGFS scheme is modified, it is anticipated that the

Commission's Food Safety Manual will be adjusted accordingly. The key changes will involve increased record keeping. The Commission has scheduled another series of food safety grower workshops (to include Spanish translation) to provide training on the new Food Safety Manual as follows:

Monday, January 30, 2017

1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

San Luis Obispo Farm Bureau
4875 Morabito Place, SLO

Tuesday, January 31, 2017

9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Santa Paula Ag Museum
926 Railroad Ave., Santa Paula

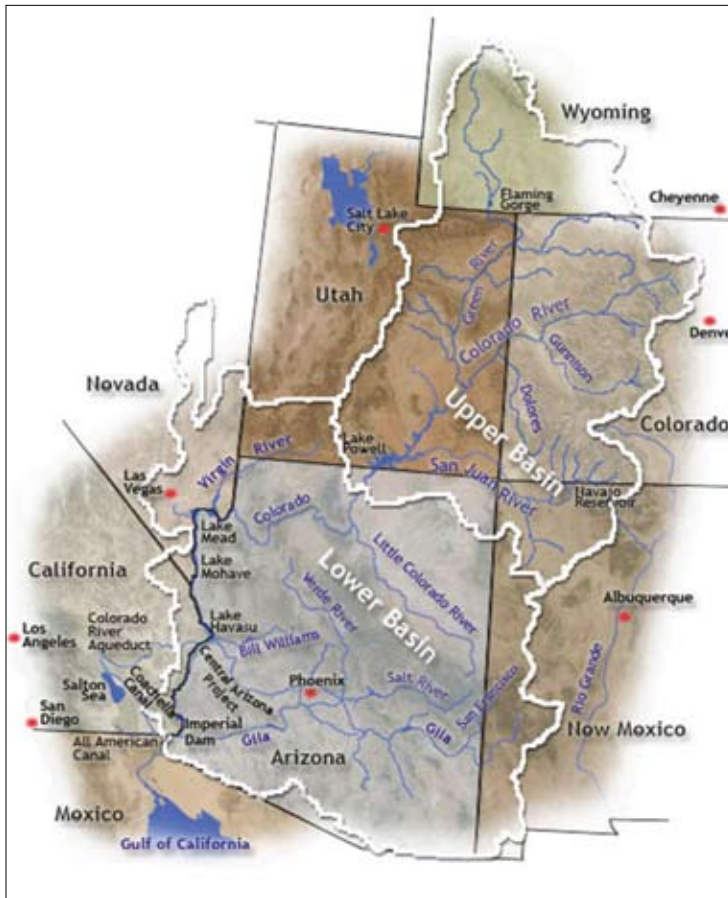
Wednesday, February 1, 2017

9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Grand Tradition Estate & Gardens
220 Grand Tradition Way, Fallbrook

Colorado River Supply Facing Unprecedented Low Levels

As the sixth year of drought continues, the water level in the country's largest man-made reservoir, Lake Mead, has been dropping steadily and is currently at only 38 percent capacity. Both Lake Mead and Lake Powell feed the Colorado River, one of two major supply sources for the Metropolitan Water District (Metropolitan). This critical source of water, at present serving 40 million people, is facing increasing demand from population growth and agricultural use. In recent years, water from



extraordinary joint effort, but illustrates the truly dire supply situation. Hopefully these unprecedented supply challenges will provide the impetus for a new era in how the Colorado River is best used to ensure this critical supply is sustained for generations. For success to be achieved all seven states must make sacrifices to correct the current supply and demand imbalance. Stay tuned.

Oceanside City Council Directs Staff to Research Possible Lower Ag Water Rate

The South Morro Hills Association (SMHA), including President Larry Balma and a group of area farmers, successfully advocated before the Oceanside City Council at its November 16 water rate public hearing. The SMHA's appeal was for the "City to direct staff to work with Oceanside growers to research and propose a lower water rate for agricultural use," which the City Council unanimously approved. Although the proposed 3 percent increase on agricultural water rates for 2017 was approved as presented, the Council's direction shows a willingness and interest in pursuing all possible options to ensure agricultural water rate charges are as affordable as possible. The Commission worked with SMHA to offer strategic consultation on possible avenues for success and will continue to provide similar support. Kudos to the SMHA for their grassroots effort! 🥑

the Colorado River accounts for roughly 55 percent of Metropolitan's overall supply, which serves avocado groves on district water from Ventura to San Diego.

In 1922, an agreement known as the Colorado River Compact was reached among the seven U.S. states in the basin of the Colorado River, which allocated water rights to the river's water. As populations continue to grow, the upper basin states – Colorado, Wyoming, Utah and New Mexico – are exploring using more Colorado River water, of which they are legally entitled.

Among the lower basin states, California has senior water rights and therefore wouldn't be required to cut back on water draws like Arizona and Nevada. However, if the situation continues to worsen the federal government could step in and reallocate the water.

The lower basin states, which in the past decades have been embroiled in lawsuits over the water allocations, are now working together to voluntarily cut their water use. This is an

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