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Calendar

For a listing of industry events and dates for the coming year, please visit:

<http://www.californiaavocadogrowers.com/commission/calendar>

California Small Farmer Conference

March 8-10

March 8

Time: 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Location: Marriott Mission Valley, San Diego, CA

March 9

Time: 8:00 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Location: Marriott Mission Valley, San Diego, CA

March 10

Time: 7:30 a.m. - 3:15 p.m.

Location: Marriott Mission Valley, San Diego, CA

CAC Annual Meeting

April 14-16

April 14

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Location: Grand Tradition Estate & Gardens (220 Grand Tradition Way Fallbrook, CA 92028)

April 15

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Location: Museum of Ventura County (100 E. Main St. Ventura, CA 93001)

April 16

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Location: SLO County Farm Bureau (4875 Morabito Place San Luis Obispo, CA 93401)

CAC Board Meeting

April 14

Time: 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Location: Grand Tradition Estate (220 Grand Tradition Way, Fallbrook, CA)

PSHB Update February 2015

On Tuesday February 3, the research team working on the polyphagous shot hole borer (PSHB) and fusarium dieback (FD) disease complex assembled in Riverside to exchange information and discuss progress to date. The team has grown to nearly 20 researchers working on various aspects of the problem so routine meetings like this are critical to keep the effort focused and on track.

Dr. Akif Eskalen, UC Riverside Plant Pathologist, is leading the efforts on field surveying and monitoring the current infestation and reported that 13 commercial avocado groves, totaling about 1000 acres, in San Diego County are currently affected by PSHB. Marianne Whitehead with UC Cooperative Extension in San Diego County is assisting with the deployment of a grid of traps and lures to monitor the infestation. She reported that 98 traps are currently distributed throughout the area and are being checked routinely to monitor the infestation. Additional traps have been distributed to Henry Gonzales, Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner, and UC Cooperative Extension personnel in Ventura, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties. These traps will serve as sentinel traps in these currently uninfested areas. There is also cooperation with the Forest Service to place traps in and around campgrounds to monitor for potential spread from the movement of firewood.

Dr. Richard Stouthamer, UC Riverside Entomologist, has focused his efforts on improving beetle trapping technology and further understanding the lifecycle of the beetle. He is working to determine the most effective trap design and height of placement. Their work has been aided by the discovery last year of a very effective quercivorol lure for PSHB. However, he reports that the manufacturing process for the lure is slow and there is currently a shortage of lures from the manufacturer. The manufacturer is developing other production methods and formulations, and Dr. Stouthamer's lab is field-testing these to determine if they are as effective as the existing lure. He reported that they have learned the beetle does not fly when temperatures are below about 65 °F, but they are still working to determine an upper temperature threshold and to understand how temperature affects the beetle's lifecycle.

Drs. Joe Morse and Frank Byrne, UC Riverside Entomologists, along with Dr. Eskalen, are leading the effort to find effective pesticides and fungicides to combat the PSHB/FD complex in avocados. They are currently screening a number of different products and formulations to identify materials that may demonstrate some level of curative efficacy or as a possible prophylactic tool. Foliar spray trials began late last year in an infested grove in Escondido, and trunk injections or infusions in a trial at the Commission's Pine Tree Ranch demonstration grove about 4 weeks ago. Sampling will begin next week to evaluate efficacy through recently developed bioassay techniques along with fruit residue sampling necessary for registration. The researchers are optimistic that the Commission will be able to submit an application(s) for a Section 18 Emergency Exemption in a few months and hopefully have at least one product available for grower use by later this year. The team is utilizing previous work from Dr. Daniel Carrillo, who has worked extensively with the red bay ambrosia beetle in Florida, and Dr. Tim Paine, who has screened numerous pesticides on non-avocado PSHB host species, to narrow their focus to those chemicals that will have the greatest chance of success.

In addition to chemical control measures, Dr. Stouthamer is investigating whether the lures can be used to attract beetles to traps inoculated with entomopathogenic fungi in the hopes that the beetles would pick up these "bug killing" fungi and take them with them to their gallery and infect other beetles. He is testing existing, registered entomopathogenic fungi so if this strategy proves out there will be no product registration hurdles to overcome.

The search for an effective biological control agent is also ongoing. Last spring, Drs. Stouthamer and Eskalen traveled to Vietnam where they established relationships with researchers and discovered a fly that may have potential as a biocontrol agent. Their cooperators in Vietnam are currently testing the efficacy of this fly against PSHB. To further these efforts, Drs. Stouthamer and Eskalen will be traveling to Taiwan, Vietnam and China in April, but this year they will be

bringing an effective lure and trap. This should allow them to collect larger numbers of PSHB specimens and potential biocontrol agents to move this area of research along more quickly.

Although the team working on behalf of California's avocado industry to combat this pest is composed of the best and brightest minds, this remains a very challenging issue for our industry. The Commission will continue to explore all possible control tools and provide industry updates as necessary.

Nationwide USDA Organic Survey

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has launched an Organic Survey to gather data on this growing sector of agriculture production. According to the USDA, total organic product sales in the U.S. have increased by 83 percent from 2007 – 2012. With the Organic Survey, the USDA hopes to gather critical information to help support this sector with appropriate research projects and funding.

By law, all organic growers who receive the Organic Survey must complete the survey. Growers do not need to be USDA certified organic producers; organic producers exempt from certification and producers who are transitioning to organic production are included in the survey as well.

Growers can participate in the survey by either completing the printed survey they received in January and mailing back their responses, or the survey may also be completed [online](#). Please note, that if growers choose to complete the online survey, they will need the ID number noted on the mailing label of the printed survey form they received. The deadline for mailed responses is February 13, 2015; the deadline for online responses is April 3, 2015.

The Organic Survey will include questions concerning:

- Production of field crops, vegetables, fruits, tree nuts, berries, livestock and poultry;
- Production practices such as pest management, cover crops, crop rotation, rotational grazing, conservation tillage, water management and buffer zones;
- Production expenses;
- Marketing practices, including wholesale, retail and direct-to-consumer sales; and
- Value-added production and processing.

Individual survey responses will be kept confidential and cannot be used for purposes of taxation, investigation or regulation. Survey results will be available in August 2015 at www.agcensus.usda.gov.

More information concerning the Organic Survey can be found [online](#). If growers need assistance while completing the survey, they may contact 888.424.7828, or visit www.agcensus.usda.gov.

Grant Workshops for Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program

Growers interested in completing federal grant applications for the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP) are encouraged to attend grant workshops designed to help them complete and submit these grant applications.

The curriculum for the workshops includes:

- An overview of FMLFPP
- Assistance in developing an idea
- Preparation of the proposal and application package

- Discussion concerning how to estimate costs
- Tools to assess and document the project's impact
- A review of evaluation criteria
- Post-award management requirements

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) FMLFPP awards grants to develop new market opportunities for farm operations serving local and regional markets. The [Farmers' Market Promotion Program](#) (FMPP) grants are available to agricultural businesses, agricultural cooperatives, produce networks and producer associations who develop proposals that help to increase domestic consumption of, and access to, locally and regionally produced agricultural products via farmers markets and other producer-to-consumer activities. The Local Food Promotion Program supports agricultural enterprises that aggregate, store, distribute and process local food.

The maximum amount awarded for any one FMPP proposal cannot exceed \$100,000; the minimum award is \$15,000.

A list of upcoming grant workshop dates and locations can be found [online](#). One California workshop, to be held in Berkeley, CA, is currently listed (no date has been set) and more workshops will be added soon. Some of the workshop sessions will be recorded and available for online viewing. Electronic copies of materials will be made available as well.

The workshops are a partnership between the USDA AMS, the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the Agricultural Marketing Service Technical Assistance (AMSTA) project.

For more information concerning upcoming workshops in California, email Jennifer Sowerine at jsowerwi@berkeley.edu.

Natural Disaster Assistance Available for Growers Affected by Drought

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has declared 55 California counties as primary natural disaster areas due to damage caused by the drought. Of the 55 California counties declared natural disaster areas, all major avocado growing regions are covered including Orange, Riverside, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura. Growers in these counties qualify for natural disaster assistance in the form of [low interest emergency](#) (EM) loans from the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA). FSA has a number of other programs available to help growers recover, including the Emergency Conservation Program and the Tree Assistance program.

EM Loans

Farmers in the above noted counties have eight months (from February 4, 2015) to apply for EM loans that will help cover part of their losses. Growers who may be eligible for EM loans are those who:

- Own or operate land located in a county declared by the President or designated by the Secretary of Agriculture as a primary disaster area or quarantine area.
- Are established family farm operators and have sufficient farming or ranching experience;
- Are citizens or permanent residents of the United States;
- Have suffered at least a 30 percent loss in crop production or a physical loss to real estate;
- Have an acceptable credit history;
- Are unable to receive credit from commercial sources;

- Can provide collateral to secure the loan and;
- Have repayment ability.

Of note, FSA loan requirements are different from those of other lenders:

- Borrowers must keep acceptable farm records;
- Borrowers must operate in accordance with a farm plan they develop and agree to with local FSA staff and;
- Borrowers may be required to participate in a financial management training program and obtain crop insurance.

Growers can borrow up to 100 percent of actual production or physical losses, with a maximum EM loan amount of \$500,000.

EM loans can be used to:

- Restore or replace essential property
- Pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year
- Pay essential family living expenses
- Reorganize the farming operation
- Refinance certain debts, excluding real estate

Visit the [EM website](#) for more information.

Emergency Conservation Program

The [Emergency Conservation Program](#) (ECP) provides emergency funding and technical assistance to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters and to implement emergency water conservation measures in cases of severe drought.

According to the USDA, to be eligible for the ECP the natural disaster must create new conservation problems that, if untreated, would:

- Impair or endanger the land
- Affect the land's productive capacity
- Represent unusual damage which, except for wind erosion, is not the type likely to recur frequently in the same area
- Be so costly to repair that Federal assistance is or will be required to return the land to productive agricultural use

Conservation problems that existed prior to the current drought are ineligible for ECP assistance. Visit the [ECP website](#) for more information.

Tree Assistance Program

The [Tree Assistance Program](#) (TAP) provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees damaged by natural disasters.

According to the USDA, eligible loss requirements are as follows:

- Eligible trees must have been lost or damaged as a result of natural disaster
- The individual stand must have sustained a mortality loss or damage loss in excess of 15 percent after adjustment for normal mortality or damage to be determined based on:
 - Each eligible disaster event
- The loss could not have been prevented through reasonable and available measures
- The damage or loss must be visible and obvious to the FSA representative; if the damage is no longer visible, FSA may accept other loss evidence that it determines reasonable

To be [eligible for TAP](#), growers must:

- Have suffered qualifying tree losses in excess of 15 percent mortality (adjusted for normal mortality) from an eligible natural disaster
- Have owned the eligible trees when the natural disaster occurred (eligible growers are not required to own the land on which eligible trees are planted)
- Replace eligible trees within 12 months from the date the TAP application is approved

For more information concerning TAP, visit the [TAP website](#).

Fact sheets concerning all three natural disaster assistance program are located in the right-hand navigation. For more information concerning USDA disaster assistance programs, click [here](#).

CAC's Dashboard Reports Show Growers Marketing's Key Performance Indicators

Several times throughout the year, the California Avocado Commission produces [marketing dashboard reports](#) that summarize avocado prices and marketing key performance indicators concerning consumer and trade initiatives as well as foodservice and retail merchandising activities. While FY 2013-14 had its fair share of challenges — a historic drought and a large influx of avocado imports — a review of the FY 2013-14 marketing dashboard reports illustrates that particular marketing activities had a noticeable impact on building the premium California avocado story and helped achieve a higher average retail price during California season vs. the off season.

Following are highlights from the 2014 marketing dashboard reports.

- During California avocado season from April – September the average retail price for avocados was \$1.17, an 8 percent increase compared to the October 2013 – March 2014 off season
- Consumer advertising generated 817 million impressions — this includes the 4th of July TV ads in California markets, radio ads from April – August in all markets and an online advertising campaign that ran through September
- The blogger and Registered Dietitian ambassador partnerships helped generate 1 billion consumer nutrition PR impressions
- The California avocado Facebook fan base increased by 15 percent to nearly 280,000 Facebook fans through September 2014
- Trade PR reached 4.2 million in circulation, including major features in *The Packer* and *The Produce News*

- Foodservice placements resulted in 6.4 million PR impressions
- California avocados were featured in more than 20 foodservice chain promotions at restaurants including Applebee's, Chili's, Denny's and Subway

California avocado growers can review the marketing dashboards throughout the year by visiting the [California avocado growers' website](#).

A Sneak Peak at CAC's 2015 Marketing Initiatives

Prior to the start of the 2014-15 fiscal year, the California avocado marketing team began preparing for the 2015 California avocado season by developing a business plan that coordinates the California avocado labeling initiative, consumer and retail trade advertising, public relations, online/social media and customer-specific retail and foodservice marketing programs. The integrated campaigns will each showcase California avocado premium messaging and are designed to increase demand for California avocados in target markets while helping growers obtain the best price for their fruit.

Marketing activities planned for the 2015 season include the following:

- Continuation of the California avocado labeling initiative
- New consumer advertising creative to be featured in all targeted ad markets
- Integrated consumer marketing programs that persuade consumers to look for "California" as the symbol of premium quality and freshness
- The American Summer Holidays campaign (Memorial Day – Labor Day), encouraging consumers to choose California avocados as the American choice
- Two programs designed to increase California avocado usage for breakfast/snacking and for sandwiches
- Public relations campaigns that engage avocado fans by utilizing the creativity and popularity of 18 artisan chefs (including two new chefs) and current and new blogger ambassadors
- A newly designed consumer website with improved functionality
- Customer-specific marketing programs that integrate individual retailer and foodservice operator needs with CAC's marketing campaigns
- Retail trade advertising and public relations campaigns that communicate the competitive advantages of merchandising California avocados

CAC Vice President of Marketing Jan DeLyser says, "CAC's marketing team is in high gear for California avocado season. Early season retail display programs kicked off in California for the Big Game, advertising is in production and we're getting ready to launch season opener programs in April."

The Art and Science of California Avocado Recipe Photography

One of the first things to catch the eye of a consumer browsing for a new recipe is, typically, a scrumptious photo of the finished product. To encourage consumers to prepare avocado recipes using fresh California avocados, each California avocado season the California Avocado Commission (CAC) marketing team works diligently with professional recipe developers, registered dietitians, bloggers, photographers and food stylists to craft new recipes and a portfolio of photos to accompany them.

In December and January, the CAC marketing team reviewed its current recipes and images along with the nutritional value of those recipes. Then — in partnership with professional recipe developers and food bloggers — set out to develop new recipes necessary to support the American Summer Holidays program and the new California Fresh Sandwiches initiative.

Once the recipes were completed, the marketing team worked closely with professional photographers and food stylists to complete the prep work and ensure the chosen ingredients were just right. For example, more than three-dozen types of rolls and breads were reviewed for the California Fresh Sandwich campaign.

With the right ingredients in place, photographers conducted photo shoots styled to complement the Commission's premium positioning and current advertising look. Recipe photos as well as recipe preparation shots were taken to illustrate the ease and versatility of preparing fresh dishes with California avocados.

Additional recipe development is in progress to support other initiatives. The 2015 portfolio of California avocado recipe photos will be used with the media, in advertising, in retail booklets, with supermarket registered dietitians, on the California avocado recipe section of the consumer website, in *The Scoop* blog posts and on CAC's social media platforms.



California Avocado Ranch Dressing recipe on the photography set.

California Market Trends

To view all market trend graphs, including “Weekly Volume Summary,” “Weekly Avocado Prices” and “U.S. Avocado Supply,” please visit: <http://www.californiaavocadogrowers.com/industry/market-statistics>.

California Avocado Commission Weekly Volume Summary (pounds)			
	Week Ending 2/15/2015	Season-to-Date (since 11/1/14)	2015 Year to Date
Hass	3,390,146	17,200,353	17,072,707
Lamb	0	0	0
Other (Greens)	61,916	528,636	438,192
California Total	3,452,062	17,728,989	17,510,899
Florida	221,870	11,920,040	3,559,600
Chile	496,789	9,857,148	5,101,035
Mexico	32,040,770	498,566,277	254,799,591
Other (Imports)	1,660,000	21,000,000	9,070,000
Import Total	34,197,559	529,423,425	268,970,626
USA Total	37,871,491	559,072,454	290,041,125
Source(s):	California = CAC (AMRIC)		
	Florida = Florida Avocado Admin Committee		
	Chile = Comité de Paltas, Chile		
	Mexico = APEAM		
	Other Imports = USDA AMS website		

California Avocado Society Weekly Newsline* Avocado Prices				
2/17/2015				
	FOB Price	Field Price	Retail Price	Last Year FOB
California Hass	(25# carton)	(per pound)	(per each)	(25# carton)
#2's	12.00-28.00	0.32-0.92		11.00-28.00
32's-36's	35.00-36.00	1.20-1.24		30.00-31.00
40's	35.00-36.00	1.20-1.24	1.99	31.00-32.00
48's	35.00-36.00	1.20-1.24	1.49	31.00-32.00
60's	27.00-29.00	0.88-0.96	0.99	28.00-29.00
70's	22.00-23.00	0.68-0.72	4/3.99	24.00-25.00
84's	15.00-16.00	0.45-0.50	0.69	15.00-16.00
Mexican Hass				
All Sizes	14.00-35.00	N/A	2/0.99-1.99	14.00-30.00
Chilean Hass				
All Sizes	14.00-35.00	N/A	5/5.99	14.00-29.00
Peruvian Hass				
All Sizes	N/A			

*To subscribe to the Weekly Newsline, please contact the California Avocado Society at (951) 225-9102 or www.californiaavocadosociety.org.

Weather: 30-Day Outlook For California's Coastal & Valley Areas

Synopsis - The sea surface temperature anomaly pattern supports troughing well to the west of California at 140-145W. The *El Niño* influence is the main source of energy for the southern branch of the westerlies. This subtropical jet stream directs and carries troughs towards southern California. However, due to the strong high pressure system off the coast of California, the primary influence of this southern jet is to induce development of cutoff lows near Baja. Because these lows are separated from the main belt of westerlies, they move and develop erratically and are a challenge for forecasters.

The National Weather Service reports stationary high pressure that is just off the coast of California. This suggests the continuation of conditions that are drier and warmer than normal for northern and central California. We agree with the NOAA/CPC solution that suggests a low probability of rains reaching the coast of central and southern California.

In the Near-Term – Southern California Avocado Area – February 19 to March 2... Some clouds and moisture with showers are suggested by numerical guidance for the 21st and 22nd after a period of coastal eddies with drizzle from the 18th to 20th. There is another chance for a shower around the 25th to 28th. Due to the warm sea surface temperatures, there is minimal frost risk at night. East winds should occur on the 27th and 28th and will bring an end to any showers that may occur, returning us to hot, dry conditions on March 1 to 3.

Summary – March 3 to 16... The warmer than normal sea surface temperatures near the coast of California and out to the west about 700 miles will continue to support upper high pressure near southern California. Upper lows will develop to the west of southern California for a stronger southern storm track and will tend to alternate with offshore flow events as has already been occurring. However, despite the lows and cloudy periods, rainfall will continue to be sparse.

In the avocado growing areas, it will be dry for the first five days of March. From March 8 to 12, we will see another period of cutoff lows with a possible shower or two. The sizes of the rain-bands and showers will be small, and many areas will receive minimal rain. Considering the current weather patterns, we would be lucky to receive rainfall that is anything near normal.

Seasonal Outlook/*El Niño* Update – March 16 to May 31... The most pressing issue now is the water supply. Currently we face the combined problems of minimal snowpack in the Sierra Nevadas and below normal seasonal rainfall.

There is a lack of the temperature differences that we normally see during winter in the east Pacific to provide energy to drive the development of storms.

In avocado areas, NOAA guidance (CPC and the CFS2 numerical guidance) suggest wetter than normal conditions in March but near normal rainfall in April. With weak cutoff lows occasionally developing, there is not a sufficient indicator for rains to develop in southern California during this latter part of the rainy season despite the hope provided by the CFS2 for coastal southern California.

We see no indications whether May will have above or below normal rainfall, but we can assume warmer than normal temperatures due to the warm sea surface temperatures that are expected to continue near southern California.

...Alan Fox, Fox Weather LLC...