

By Jason Cole
Chairman of the Board



Jason Cole

Our New President

It is my honor to introduce Ken Melban as the new California Avocado Commission president, effective May 22, 2025. Having said that, I'm not really *introducing* Ken to our readers — simply his change in title — because he has been a fierce, respected advocate for California avocado growers since 2011 when he joined CAC as the director, issues management.

For the past 14 years, Ken has served as the face and voice of California avocado growers on some of the thorniest issues — water rates and supply, the Farm Bill, sensible immigration measures to ensure we have a stable workforce, pesticide registrations, wildfire compensation, exports, USDA inspections of imported fruit — before some of the most challenging audiences of industry members, regulators and legislators. He has always protected our best interests — diligently pressing forward no matter how distant success might have seemed. One example of that is the nine years he spent advocating to secure market access to China, which was finally granted in 2020. Or his current efforts to convince the U.S. Department of Agriculture to reinstate its original inspection protocols of Mexican avocados by the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

His perseverance on behalf of growers led to his rapid rise at the



Ken Melban, President, California Avocado Commission.

Commission — in just four years he was deservedly promoted to vice president, industry affairs and then tacked “operations” on to that title in 2022—leading successful efforts to right size CAC staffing, internalize more functions, and optimize the budget and assessment rates. In the last two years, he’s served as co-executive leader alongside Terry Splane, CAC’s vice president of marketing — the two of them effectively pairing the public facing marketing side of our business with the nuts and bolts of operations and industry affairs.

The Commission’s efforts during the last few years to streamline the organization and its processes has served us well and we have settled into a good

place. With new challenges on the horizon, we are ready to move forward, and it makes perfect sense to put the guy who has served as our most vocal and effective advocate for more than a decade at the head of the organization.

Ken has the full support of the Board and our industry. His face and unmistakable voice have long represented California avocado growers’ interests before the rest of the world. His finesse, persistence and knowledge will help us lean into the future with a strong sense of continuity and purpose. On behalf of all our California avocado growers, I congratulate Ken and thank him for his service. 🥑