



AGENDA

California Avocado Commission
Governance Committee Meeting

Meeting Information

Date: March 4, 2026

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Location: Hybrid Meeting

Physical Meeting Location:
UC ANR South Coast Field Station
Conference Room
7601 Irvine Blvd.
Irvine, CA, 92618

Web/Teleconference URL:

<https://californiaavocado.zoom.us/j/82902648415?pwd=XLTHx3a0dz2MqIt4k4WhM8iuYzalm7.1>

Conference Call Number: (669) 900-6833

Meeting ID: 829 0264 8415

Passcode: 251675

Meeting materials will be posted online at least 24 hours prior to the meeting at:

<https://www.californiaavocadogrowers.com/commission/industry-calendar>

Committee Member Attendance

As of Tuesday, March 3, 2026, the following Committee members have advised the Commission they will participate in this meeting:

Robert Jackson, Chair
John Berns
Adam Francioni
Ohannes Karaoghlanian
Doug O'Hara
Charley Wolk

Time	Item
8:00 a.m.	1. Call to Order <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Roll Call/Quorumb. Introductions
	2. Opportunity for Public Comment <p>Persons may address the Committee on subjects within the jurisdiction of the Committee.</p>
	3. Approval of Governance Committee minutes of February 18, 2026

Time	Item
	4. Producer Definition
	5. Producer Eligibility to Serve and Vote
	6. Handler Seats on CAC Board
10:00 a.m.	7. Adjourn Meeting

Disclosures

All meetings of the Commission are open to the public and subject to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act. All agenda items are subject to discussion and possible action.

For information or a request regarding disability-related modification or accommodation for the meeting, please contact April Aymami at 949-341-1955 via email at aaymami@avocado.org. Such requests should be made at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

This meeting schedule notice and agenda is available on the internet at <https://www.californiaavocadogrowers.com/commission/meeting-agendas-minutes> and <http://it.cdfa.ca.gov/igov/postings/detail.aspx?type=Notices>.

Contact April Aymami at aaymami@avocado.org or 949-341-1955 if you have any questions.

Summary Definition of Conflict of Interest

Committee members are responsible to determine whether they have a conflict of interest.

A member has a conflict of interest in a decision of the Committee if it is reasonably foreseeable that the decision will have a material effect, financial or otherwise, on the member or an immediate family member that is distinguishable from its effect on all persons subject to the Committee's jurisdiction.

No Committee member shall make, or participate in making, any decision in which they know or should know they have a conflict of interest.

No Committee member shall, in any way, use their position to influence any decision in which they know or should know they have a conflict of interest.

**CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES
February 18, 2026**

A meeting of the California Avocado Commission (CAC) Governance Committee was held on February 18, 2026 at 8:00 a.m. with the following people present:

MEMBERS PRESENT

Robert Jackson, *Chair*
Kurt Bantle
John Berns
Adam Franscioni
Ohannes Karaoghlanian
Doug O’Hara
Charley Wolk
Rachael Laenen, *Ex-officio*

STAFF PRESENT

April Aymami
Zac Benedict
Alya Hijazi
Stacia Kierulff
Ken Melban
Cristina Wede

GUESTS PRESENT

Jennifer Bantle
Joseph Mark Buhl
Dan Coxe
Paula Coxe
Michael Craviotto
Norm Kachuck
Gray Martin
Joanne Robles-Swanson
Duane Urquhart
Tina Wolferd

OFFICIALLY PRESENT

Ben Kardokus, *CDFa*
George Soares, *Kahn, Soares & Conway*

Item #1 Call to Order

Roll Call/Quorum – Item 1.a.

Robert Jackson, CAC Governance Committee chair, called the meeting to order 8:00 a.m. and established a quorum.

Item # 2 Opportunity for Public Comment

Norm Kachuck commented that many of the issues facing the Grievance Committee were under consideration of the Governance Committee and could be solved through a Governance Committee directive. He requested the right to make additional comments during the meeting when topics were discussed by the Committee.

Gray Martin requested the right to make additional comments during the meeting when topics were discussed by the Committee.

Mr. Jackson stated that he would allow comments on agenda items throughout the meeting, but that he would not allow debate.

Item # 3 Approval of Governance Committee minutes of February 18, 2026

Mr. Jackson asked for a motion to approve the Governance Committee meeting minutes of February 18, 2026 as included in the meeting materials.

Motion:

***The Governance Committee approves the February 18, 2026 meeting minutes as presented.
(Karaoghlanian/O’Hara) MSC Unanimous***

MOTION 26-2-18-1

The *February 18, 2026 Meeting Minutes* are included in the February 2026 Governance Committee Packet and are attached to the permanent copy of these Minutes and identified as EXHIBIT A, Item 3.

Item # 4 Trade Relief Measures

Mr. Jackson introduced Carolyn Gleason, CAC's trade counsel, with McDermott, Will and Schulte, to discuss types of trade relief measures available to restrict imports.

Ms. Gleason provided an in-depth review of trade relief measures available to agricultural groups like CAC, specifically tariff rate quotas (TRQs), Section 201 safeguards and anti-dumping (AD) duties. Using the Blueberry Section 201 as an example, she cautioned CAC from following the same track, which cost the industry over \$1.5 million, lost the case with an International Trade Commission vote of 4-0 and now imported blueberry volume is even more aggressive. Ms. Gleason reported that while CAC's pursuit of a TRQ is an uphill battle, the renegotiation of USMCA presented an opportunity to include increasing import volume as part of the discussions. She noted that based on the CAC Board's direction in October, the Commission submitted comments to USTR requesting TRQs to help restrict the volume of imported avocados. Based on comments submitted by CAC, along with other agricultural industries, USTR flagged Mexican volume of imported produce's effect on U.S. agriculture as an item for review.

Ms. Gleason noted that the Commission was currently tracking several issues that could impact CAC's trade relief options, including an anti-dumping case on winter strawberries, the Administration's declaration to pull out of USMCA and the Supreme Court ruling on the legality of the fentanyl tariffs.

Ms. Gleason participated in a Q&A session with members of the Committee and public, which included the following:

- Committee – It appears the chance to do anything is very slim and the cost to try is very high, what are we trying to accomplish, as the costs of tariffs will only be passed on to the packers and growers and not retail/consumers?
 - Gleason – The path CAC is following now is not overly costly and proper with the USMCA renegotiations taking place.
- Committee/Public – What can be done about inspection of imported avocados that are genetically different than the Hass variety but are marked as Hass. The Mendez/Carmen Hass is exclusively grown in Mexico, unique from Hass and out produces the Hass variety 3 to 1.
 - Gleason – Not familiar with this issue and would need to investigate it before commenting.
- Public – The Avocado Growers of California submitted comments to USTR that the anti-corruption laws in the U.S. were not being enforced, as demonstrated in the various claims that the avocado import industry was financing drug cartels.
 - Gleason – The fentanyl tariffs were meant as a method to curtail drug trafficking. She noted the discussions on the fentanyl tariffs were under confidential review and it was unknown what or how it would be addressed.
- Public – Previously Ms. Gleason had provided comments at a CAC meeting regarding the process of filing an ITC claim which would look at information collected over three years, during which time importer might restrain volume during the review period.
 - Gleason – The Blueberry Section 201 case is a perfect example of why an industry should never engage in these activities without first doing the research.
- Public – Is filing an ITC claim an interim step to limit imports while pursuing other options.
 - Gleason – The law does not allow an industry to mix and match or interim action on trade relief measures.
- Committee – What option has the best chance of success.

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- Gleason – CAC has pursued TRQs through the USMCA Joint Review, and the Administration has flagged the issues of import volumes as an item to address. Strongly support continuing with the Joint Review process and encourage getting CAC’s message to representatives and GOP offices.
- Public – What can be done to reinstate APHIS inspectors in avocado groves in Mexico.
 - Gleason – This has already been done.
- Public – The issue is more than just improving growers’ situation financially; the public must see what is happening with the import pipeline and bring concerns to the government. Consumers need to understand the moral way food is being grown in the U.S. versus imports. CAC needs to work to get the message out regarding the plight of the growers.
- Public – What about food security.
 - Gleason – CAC has already included that messaging into submitted letters and comments.
- Committee – What about lobbying and podcasts.
 - Gleason – Strong supporter of lobbying, but caution against podcasts as it is easy to lose control of the messaging.

At the end of the Q&A Ms. Gleason cautioned the Committee from diluting the Commission’s position on trade relief with too many requests.

Mr. Jackson asked Ben Kardokus, CAC CDFA representative, if he had any comments, ideas or remedies on tariffs and imports, to which he commented that he was not aware of anything aside from the activities CAC was already pursuing. There was a follow-up question from a Committee member inquiring what CDFA could do regarding inspecting non-Hass avocados coming into the State. Mr. Melban provided clarification of the role of the Avocado Inspection Program, noting that they will perform inspections at retailers if an issue has been raised regarding fruit being sold and labeled incorrectly. It was noted that CAC could investigate the feasibility of testing and inspecting avocados at the border.

Mr. Jackson asked Committee members Ohannes Karaoghlanian and Charley Wolk to provide comments on their previous lobbying efforts with CAC. Mr. Wolk commented that his lobbying efforts were limited to the creation of the Hass Avocado Board. He went on to express his opinion that the government was not going to stop the flow of avocados, and that pursuing that relief would be a waste of time and energy. Mr. Wolk suggested that a better opportunity might exist if CAC worked directly with import associations to better manage the flow of fruit into the U.S. market.

Mr. Jackson stated that he hoped the Committee could formulate motions to bring before the Board for consideration in March. He noted that he had circulated some memorandums which had been AI-generated to encourage discussion, and that these were not his or CAC’s recommendations.

A member of the public inquired about getting avocados added to the USDA FSA ARC PLC program. The program provided price loss coverage and currently only covered program crops and not specialty crops. There was Committee discussion regarding this program and crop insurance coverage. It was noted that it would take an act of Congress to make changes to the price loss coverage program.

There was discussion regarding the equitable food initiative where corporations have come together and say they will only purchase fruit that has been sustainably sourced and free from illegal deforestation.

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There was discussion regarding a request from a member of the public to work with the University of California to modify licensing agreements to keep other varieties from being imported to the U.S. It was noted that this would be helpful in the future as additional countries petition for access.

Motion:

Move that CAC research the licensing agreements for varieties other than Hass and their potential importation to the U.S.

(Karaoghlanian/Frascioni) MSC 5 Yea/1 Nay

MOTION 26-2-18-2

The Committee discussed the costs associated with CAC's trade relief efforts and the need for additional funding. Mr. Melban clarified that there was already an existing budget associated with legislative and regulatory advocacy efforts and that if there was a need for additional funding, he would advise the Committee.

Adjourn Meeting

Mr. Jackson adjourned the meeting at 10:07 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

April Aymami, CAC Director of Industry Affairs and Operations

EXHIBITS ATTACHED TO THE PERMANENT COPY OF THESE MINUTES

EXHIBIT A February 2026 Governance Committee Packet

EXHIBIT B February 18, 2026 Governance Committee Meeting AB 2720 Roll Call Vote Tally Summary



EXHIBIT B

CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION

AB 2720 Roll Call Vote Tally Summary

To be attached to the Meeting Minutes

Meeting Name: <i>Governance Committee Meeting</i>	Meeting Location: <i>Hybrid Meeting In-person (Oxnard) Online (Zoom)</i>	Meeting Date: <i>February 18, 2026</i>
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Attendees Who Voted	<u>MOTION</u> <u>26-2-18-1</u>	<u>MOTION</u> <u>26-2-18-1</u>
Robert Jackson	Did Not Vote	Did Not Vote
Kurt Bantle	Yea	Yea
John Berns	Yea	Yea
Adam Franscioni	Yea	Yea
Ohannes Karaoghlanian	Yea	Yea
Doug O'Hara	Yea	Yea
Charley Wolk	Yea	Nay
Outcome	Unanimous	5 Yea/ 1 Nay