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*This section provides an update on a few of the issues the Commission has been working on that impact the industry:*

## Grower and Harvester Food Safety Workshops

The California Avocado Commission hosted grower and harvester food safety training through a series of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Harvesting Practices (GHP) workshops in December, 2012 and January, 2013. This is the second series of workshops over the last year, and based on the turnout at all six of the recent workshops, momentum is continuing to build for GAP and GHP certification. With more than 25 percent of the acreage currently GAP certified, it seems growers are accepting that GAP certification is a necessary step toward remaining competitive in the marketplace. Growers were provided instruction in the areas of worker health and hygiene, worker training, water quality, among others.

For fruit to be fully GAP certified it must be certified in three areas: Farm Review (grower audit); Harvest Certified (harvest contractor audit); and the Facility Review (handler audit). With all of the major California avocado handlers having been GAP certified, growers who have gone through GAP certification or are considering becoming GAP certified were encouraged to utilize only a harvester who has been GHP certified to ensure their fruit is truly GAP certified.

With the release of the draft Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Rule it will become mandatory that growers demonstrate their compliance with the standards set forth. If a grower becomes GAP certified under the CAC-GAP program, they will be in compliance



with the FSMA standards. The one exception is in the area of dropped fruit, which is further discussed in the FSMA article in this issue.

As an incentive the Commission, for the second year, is offering a rebate to growers of up to \$300 for actual audit costs. Complete guidelines may be found at: <http://www.californiaavocadogrowers.com/cac-gap-incentive-rebate-resources/>. In addition, the California Department of Food and Agriculture will make available up to \$200 for those qualified farmers who have their water and/or soil tested, or for those growers who have an informational or full GAP audit performed. (For more information contact Vonya Fetters, CDFG, at 559-595-8000).

Between the commission and CDFG, rebates up to \$500 for GAP audit costs are currently available to California avocado growers wishing to complete GAP certification (subject to the availability of funds). If you are interested in becoming GAP certified and would like to talk with a commission staff member for more

information, please email us at [cac.iaf@avocado.org](mailto:cac.iaf@avocado.org).

## Meeting with EPA on Uniconazole (Sunny)

On February 14, 2013, I met with senior Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials to discuss the commission's interest in completing a registration package on Uniconazole for use on avocados in California.

As background, Uniconazole is a plant growth regulator used in other countries and reported to control shoot growth. The commission has been exploring the possibility of an EPA registration on Uniconazole for nearly two years. Registering a crop protection material in the U.S. is normally a complex and expensive proposition, costing as much as \$15 million. But, in the case of Uniconazole, it has been further complicated by the fact that three international companies are involved in the licensing and manufacturing of the material, and while they all finally gave the green light for support of a U.S. reg-



istration, as previously reported they are unwilling to provide any financial assistance. What they are willing to do is provide scientific data that was developed in support of other international studies, but initial estimates are that another \$3 million to \$3.5 million in studies will be necessary for an EPA registration.

Valent, who would be the U.S. distributor, has suggested the possibility for a Licensing Agreement should the material become registered in California. This type of agreement would provide a portion of product sales to be rebated back to the commission allowing CAC to recoup some of the investment costs.

The purpose of my recent meeting with EPA was to present our initial arguments for the scientific merits of specific waivers and hear their response. The meeting went very well. EPA was in agreement with the waivers we were considering and the scientific rationale for each. While this is in no way a formal commitment by EPA, it was definitely a positive indication that we are on the right track which could result in a savings of nearly \$1.7 million. The commission is set to begin two efficacy field studies this spring that will continue for one year. At the same time, we are exploring the most cost-effective options to begin some

of the necessary scientific studies. This remains a long-term process that won't result in a registration until 2016 at the earliest. In the meantime, updates will be provided as new information becomes available.

### USDA Farm Bill Update

I traveled to Washington, D.C., in February and met with members of Congress on a number of issues including the Farm Bill. Although I was hopeful there would be something new to report, member after member just sort of shrugged when asked about what they expected to happen with the Farm Bill. As part of the fiscal cliff deal signed on January 2, 2013, the 2008 Farm Bill was extended through September 30, 2013. The problem with just extending the 2008 Farm Bill is that funding for key areas like the Specialty Crop Research Initiative and Clean Plant Network was not continued and these programs were allowed to expire.

The commission will continue to communicate with Congressional members the importance of specialty crops and the need for continued Farm Bill funding in areas like research and pest detection, eradication and exclusion. 🍌



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