



Ed McFadden

Thoughts from the Chairman's Grove - Communication/Cooperation

Somehow the California Avocado Commission's (CAC) *From the Grove* magazine seems like an appropriate place for this Chairman's column. I manage an avocado grove and my wife and I live in our own grove where we raised our now-grown children. I was raised in a farm house in a grove my mother and father helped my grandparents develop. I am like many of the readers of CAC's seasonal magazine — literally "from the grove".

The global avocado grove is both shrinking and expanding. Shrinking in terms of our avocado world becoming smaller through improved communication and cooperation between the avocado growing regions around the world. Expanding in the sense that more of our favorite California Native — the Hass avocado — is being grown worldwide and more people are beginning to understand the unique health and eating qualities of avocados that we, who are "from the grove," have understood for generations.

World-wide cooperation among growers and marketers of our Hass



avocados has come a long way in recent years. Hass Avocado Board (HAB) meetings were once fairly intense. Now, while there is still spirited debate, I feel more of a spirit of cooperative competition when I attend meetings as the CAC ex-officio member.

As a former basketball player, I am reminded of the rivalry between Erwin "Magic" Johnson and Larry Bird. Unfortunately using those two basketball greats as examples here

also dates me. Both were skilled and highly competitive players who came to respect each other, even as they did everything they could to win games for their team. The respect and competition made the sport of basketball better, more popular and expanded the love of the game in the United States and worldwide.

I look at the U.S. avocado market in much the same way. Of course we Californians are proud of our premium product. Our competitors feel the same way. Of course we also have an advantage that no one else can claim: our groves sit right here in the middle of the market of choice for the world's best avocado producers. The important point is that even though we are competitors, we are also working together to build the U.S. market, something that will certainly benefit all California growers.

I have felt more of the same spirit at our own California Avocado Commission Board and annual meetings. Of course we are all individual growers working to improve our own bottom line. I do think that now more of us understand that we can

help ourselves by working together to improve and strengthen our California industry and brand while at the same time working with our competition around the world to grow and improve the U.S. and other markets.

Back to examples of cooperation in a shrinking world. For the past several years HAB Chair Jamie Johnson has hosted a dinner the night prior to the HAB meetings where Board members and staff gather to share a meal in a social setting. I can't tell you how valuable it is to share a drink, a meal and tall tales with the other "teams". Recently, the Mexican Department of Agriculture urged its U.S. counterpart to immediately expand the avocado export program, allowing fruit from any region in Mexico to enter the market. CAC President Tom Bellamore worked behind the scenes, teaming up with the Mexican growers' association APEAM to ensure that compliance with the necessary phytosanitary requirements occurs in a staged and orderly manner. Neither California nor its Mexican counterparts want the introduction of an insect pest that would lead to market instability. Meanwhile, we both need to spend time and money to increase U.S. consumption as volume gradually increases in order to preserve market value.

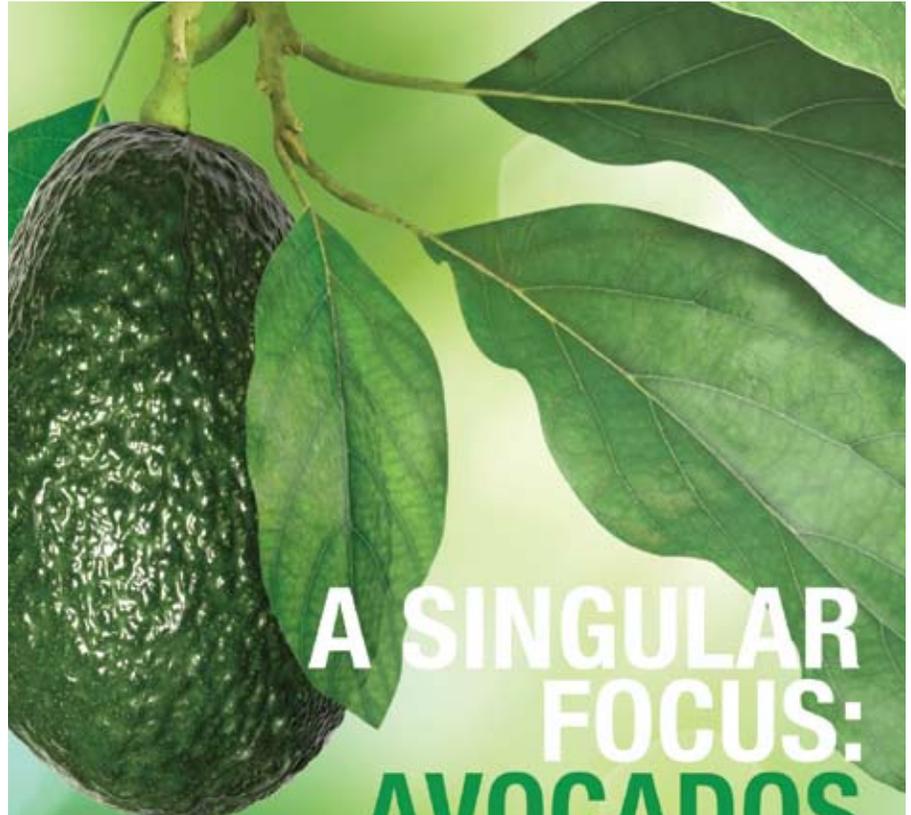
I still worry about importing pests and diseases into our groves. We must hold our government responsible for keeping these threats out of our state and country.

At the same time we California growers must recognize that having a year-round supply of high quality fruit available in the U.S. market has greatly improved the market for all of us. Does everyone still remember 1993? A 600 million pound California crop saturated the market and brought us average returns of 17 cents per pound. Nearly three times that volume will be consumed in the United States this season with much,

much better results.

It is time for me to stop writing and get back to my grove. We are still reeling from the dual triple digit May heat waves and winds but I'm seeing more late set sticking to the trees in blocks where I had expected to find everything on the ground. El

Niño is starting to look a little more solid for next winter — do we have some real rain on tap for next winter? Let's work together to make this "off" season work and get our trees ready for what is hopefully an "on" season on the way. 🥑



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