



CALIFORNIA CANNING PEACH ASSOCIATION

CLING PEACH REVIEW

Winter/Spring 2014





CLING PEACH REVIEW

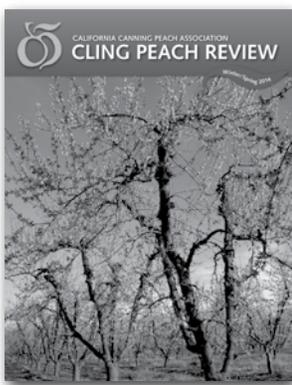
CALIFORNIA CANNING PEACH ASSOCIATION
Winter/Spring 2014

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ON THE COVER:
Photography: Ron Boone

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California Canning Peach Association

92nd Annual Meeting • January 22, 2014

STATE OF THE ASSOCIATION

Remembering the Past, Planning for the Future

Good afternoon. I am pleased to welcome all of you to the Peach Association's 2014 Annual Meeting. Today we will reflect on the events of the past year and look ahead to the challenges which will confront us in 2014. The theme for my remarks this afternoon is "Remembering the Past, Planning for the Future" since several of the issues I will touch on this afternoon have surfaced before (and some more than once) during the Association's 92-year history.

Let's begin with a look at the industry's current supply/demand situation. As many of you know, following the 2013 peach harvest, growers have once again pulled over 2,200 acres. This marks the second consecutive year that more than 10% of the industry's total bearing acreage has been removed following the harvest. We are now expecting the industry's 2014 bearing acreage to fall below 20,000 acres for the first time in modern history. *See chart on page 9*

To give this figure a historical context, our industry has experienced nearly a 70% drop in bearing acreage during the past 45 years with more than a 35% decrease occurring in just the last 10 years. With normal yields in 2014, we will be returning to production levels the industry last saw during World War II.

Today, all processors are actively seeking additional acres to be planted in 2014 and 2015

in order to meet the current market demand. Processors are offering contracts which are significantly improved over prior years in order to secure their needed acreage. While this represents a big change from our oversupply situation just a few years ago, I will quickly add that no grower should even consider planting without a contract. Contact your local cannery field representative to discuss specific plans and obtain a contract commitment on the acreage to be planted. Remember that the pendulum always swings both ways on supply and your orchard will be producing for the next 20 years.

Don't make the same mistake a number of peach growers made during the past 10 years of planting without a contract and simply hoping everything would work out. While long-term contracts for new plantings are an important piece of the puzzle, the major factor influencing a grower's decision to plant more peaches in the future will always be prices. Although an improved supply/demand position has allowed the Association to negotiate a 30% increase in raw product pricing since 2011, higher costs have absorbed much of the gain in peach prices and profit margins remain significantly higher for less labor intensive crops such as almonds or walnuts.

This is not the first time that we've faced this issue. Consider the following quote:

"It is in our best interest to ensure that processors remain in business and continue to buy our peaches. Yet, we are realistic farmers and know that if we cannot achieve a reasonable return for our investment, we must use our land to grow other crops."

Roy Norene, CCPA Board Chairman, 1980

More than 30 years later, Roy's words still ring true today.



Rich Hudgins

Today, all processors are actively seeking additional acres to be planted in 2014 and 2015 in order to meet the current market demand.

Continued on page 8

“Peaches Are Where We Started”

Hard Work and Discipline Key to Successful Family Farm

By Ann Schmidt-Fogarty

Ravi Thiara is a busy man. Young, energetic and fit, with an easy smile, he tries to ignore the nagging of his persistent phone. It’s hard to do, since it belts out an “answer me” tune every minute and a half.

Moving quickly through his new Yuba City office, it’s clear that this young farmer and businessman has a lot going on.

“Things are really hectic right now,” he says apologetically, finally turning his ringtone off. It would continue to vibrate.

Ravi and his brother Jinder, sister Satpal, and mom Sukhwant, run the family business which farms peaches, prunes, walnuts and almonds in Yuba, Sutter and Merced counties.



Ravi Thiara with his mother Sukhwant

A New Life in the U.S.

The family’s farm story began when Gurdial Thiara arrived in the U.S. from India in the late 50’s.

“Back then he had nothing,” Ravi explained. “He came here with the hopes of a better life.”

During that time, immigration to the U.S. was encouraged to help with the need for farm labor. Ravi’s grandfather arrived in 1950 and sent for his sons who later arrived in 1959.

With no extra money for frills or even some necessities, Gurdial, along with his brother Gurdev, took on a life of frugality and hard work. While living on a farm labor camp with 16 to 18 other Indian men, they not only were able to save money but learned to work as a team. Ravi remembers the stories his dad told him of them cooking together, washing their clothes by hand, and sharing the responsibilities of everyday life.

Then four years after their arrival to the U.S., their hard work gave them an opportunity to buy their first orchard. It was 20 acres of peaches. “I think they made a little over \$300 per month,” said Ravi. “They had saved up \$10,000 for the land. We still have those acres. We farm them today.”

A younger brother, Kuldip, joined the family business several years later.

The Beginning of the Business

Ravi’s earliest memories are of peach orchards.

“I would not give up my childhood for anything,” he said. “We got to be outside a lot of the time and I loved helping my dad on the farm.”

Realizing that farming was his passion, Ravi embraced the idea of being a farmer at an early age. His parents saw the commitment that their kids had to agriculture but they also saw a need for a strong academic foundation.

“Both my mother and father had a 10th grade education and wanted us to go to college,” he says. “My mother really pushed me so I went to Cal Poly for ag business. Both my sister and brother got their degrees from Sac State.”

Ravi says that the role of the family farmer has changed drastically since his father (who died of Lou Gehrig’s Disease in the mid 90’s) started out. “Things were a lot more hands-on when my dad was around. Now, I find myself spending more time than ever in my pick-up, driving from field to field managing the operation while attending meetings and also serving on the Peach Association Board.

“My Mom is My Right Hand”

Ravi credits both his mother and father for his drive and passion for business. But since the death of his father, his mother has been the driving force.

“She, to this day, works the orchards,” he says. “When it’s harvest or thinning time, she gets up at 4:30 in the morning and is in the field by 5:30 to help oversee the crews. She is our hardest worker and the one who understands everything that is going on with the peach orchards.”

Sukhwant Thiara is a vision of tradition and practicality. Dressed in a colorful Indian suit, she also sports a pair of athletic shoes. She came to the Yuba-Sutter area in the 60’s after an arranged marriage with her husband in Punjab.

“Mom came from a well-off family there, but the opportunities are just so much better here,” said Ravi, while driving through the family’s orchards.

Sukhwant, speaking in Punjabi, shared her feelings about living in the area and working in the orchards.

“She’s just had a very happy life, and liked it here right away,” he translated. “She does go back to see her mother every year. She can’t stay, though. She’s needed here.”

The Business Today

Currently, Thiara Orchards continues to grow. Following the death of Gurdial, Ravi, his mother, sister and brother amicably split off into their business from Gurdial’s brothers in the late 90’s. At the time of the reorganization, the brothers had 2,400 acres.

The family business is now comprised of 4,500+ acres of farmland and prune drying facilities in Sutter and Merced counties, along with an almond huller.

When it comes to peaches, the company will continue to grow them. “We will always have peaches for a couple of reasons,” Ravi explains. “Nut crops tend to fluctuate in price quite a bit. The stability of peach prices helps us to offset a low price in prunes or nuts. Peaches also give our labor force an incentive to stay year round so we are not scrambling for help throughout the year. And peaches are a tradition for us. It’s where we started.”

At this time, the family has 400 acres of peaches. “We may push a few more acres out, but we are pleased with how the market is performing.”

“We think the Thiara family strategy is a perfect example of how to keep a solid agricultural portfolio,” said Rich Hudgins, President and CEO of the California Canning Peach Association. “Their many years of experience have shown them that the marketplace can shift dramatically and that the best path is diversification.”

Thiara Orchards is adding 400 more acres to its 1,100 acres of almonds. They just planted an additional 220 acres to their 500-plus acre walnut orchards and have 1,600 acres of prunes. About 40 percent of the family’s acreage is in Yuba-Sutter, which Ravi manages. Jinder manages the remaining 60% in the Merced area.

My mother really pushed me. But things were tough and she wanted us to have more than they had, so I went to Cal Poly and got a degree in ag business.

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Annual Meeting Presentation



Paul Wenger
President, California Farm Bureau Federation

We agreed that rather than talking Democrat or Republican, we should focus on those elected representatives who are fiscally responsible vs. those who think they can tax our way to prosperity or continue to borrow further into the future with no real solution for paying off that debt.

California Canning Peach Association 92nd Annual Meeting • January 22, 2014 KEYNOTE ADDRESS: INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

Thank you for the opportunity to visit with you this afternoon.

These are very interesting times. And I know no one has had more interesting times over the last few years than those of you that grow and harvest labor intensive crops. Certainly, we in California in general have a much higher demand for a mobile labor force that can move from farm to farm and field to field, wherever the need arises, more so than many other states. It is an interesting time for sure.

Beyond the labor challenges, we find ourselves in some very uncharted territory with our current weather conditions. This very day in Sacramento, the record was broken for the greatest number of days without any measurable precipitation. I'm not sure it is a record that we wanted to set, but if we're here, we might as well have something to tell our kids and our grandkids, just as we often recall the drought of '75 and '76. This is going to be a tough one, the only difference is we've got a heck of a lot more people that are dependent upon the available water supply than we had back then, not only for direct consumption but also for industrial, agricultural and environmental demands.

2014 will be the second chapter of the open primary where the top two candidates in a race will vie against each other in the general election this November. This is our second year of dealing with a legislature that was elected with the new Top Two Primary in 2012, resulting in a legislature that is more urban and for the first time in history, a super-majority for the Democratic Party. While many were concerned about the type of legislation we could see with this new legislature, if this past year was an example, we will have opportunities to make improvements to our state in the future. Awhile back I was talking to one of my neighbors who farms

almonds. We agreed that rather than talking Democrat or Republican, we should focus on those elected representatives who are fiscally responsible vs. those who think they can tax our way to prosperity or continue to borrow further into the future with no real solution for paying off that debt. It's not about Democrat or Republican, it's really a mindset of once again becoming a business friendly state. Are we going to be able to do things that are going to ensure a future for our kids and our grandkids that may somehow mimic or mirror the good fortune that we have had up to this point in time? That's going to be the real challenge.

We are in the second year of a legislature that looks different and we're in the first year of the Affordable Care Act. This is really uncharted territory. How in the world did we get here? With our organization's health insurance program that has existed for 75 years, we were forced to send 23,000 letters to folks who were members of the Farm Bureau because they availed themselves to our unique health insurance policy which allowed for a group rating but individual underwriting. It had been in existence for 75 years because rural areas were often times poorly served by much needed medical facilities. But under the auspices of The Affordable Care Act, our health insurance became illegal, so we had to inform our members with our health insurance that their current policy would be terminated on December 31, 2013. People were mad because the President of the United States assured them that if they liked their insurance policy, they could keep it. He was wrong. We did what we had to do so our members would be sure to have health insurance on Jan 1st, 2014. Telling responsible people that their quality health insurance policy is now null and void was unfortunate and I worry to this very day that some folks will get caught without health insurance thus jeopardizing their financial well-being.

This issue really bothers me when I think about someone who has had insurance for the last 10 or 15 years, doing the responsible thing, making sure that they worked hard to pay for that insurance... but if you are anything like me you are resistant to change. What if you get into March, April or May and you have a heart attack or you find out that you have some sort of unexpected health malady? Up until this point, if you didn't have insurance, no one turned you away at the hospital; you got the care you needed. But if you are a farmer and you have a peach or almond orchard and you have some assets that are there and you can't get under the Affordable Care Act because they lock you out- and they say they will lock you out after March if you haven't signed up, your hard-earned assets are vulnerable. That medical facility will come after your assets. That is why we keep telling folks, make sure whatever you do, get insurance. Make sure that you do not put at unnecessary risk, what you worked so hard for your entire life.

The other issue that we are looking at today is immigration. Rich Hudgins and I have been to a lot of meetings this past year regarding immigration. We are going to see what happens at the federal level. We understand that Speaker Boehner is going to try to get some things done on immigration. We've heard that the House doesn't want to undertake a comprehensive approach to reform, rather focus on a piecemeal approach. That could be good, but it also could be perilously bad as well.

In October, the American Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors took a position to continue to support the efforts of the Agricultural Workforce Coalition to get a proposal for immigration reform out of the House. The Senate has done their job, so now it's up to the House. But you have the conservative elements in the Tea Party who aren't supportive of immigration reform. They don't think that we should have any kind of immigration reform policy, we shouldn't give people the opportunity to change their immigration status and we certainly shouldn't let people back in this country to work. They think that most of us aren't paying enough for our help because there's plenty of unemployed and if we just paid more they would come to

work on our farms and ranches. They just don't get it. If they are going to pass something on immigration, it's going to be with less than the majority of Republicans supporting it. That means you are going to need a greater number of the Democrats. Actually, whatever comes out of the House, even though it is controlled by the Republicans, it could be to the left of what came out of the Senate.

We know that usually things only get done when problems get really bad and often times the state legislature and Congress don't work together for solutions until they see things going bad. If we don't get immigration reform this year...we thought it was going to be the end of last year, maybe we have until April, maybe. It will be five to seven years before we have another opportunity because now we're in to mid-term elections, then we're right into the next presidential election, so neither party is going to weigh in on this issue. Once we get a new president, Democrat or Republican, they are probably going to seek a second term. They are not going to touch the immigration issue in their first term; it's just too volatile of an issue. Again, unless there's fruit rotting in the fields and it's just so obvious they've got to do something, it's going to be a long way down the road before we get another opportunity. However, whatever we do today, we're going to live with for 30-40 years, so we better get it right.

The last immigration reform was in 1986 and it had no future flow program except for the H-2A program which we know doesn't work well. A very important part of S. 744 is the visa program, even though we know there's not enough folks in that visa program. In the Senate proposal, data will be collected so the Secretary of Agriculture can validate we have a problem out in the fields and we need to increase those visa numbers. With 112,000 visas proposed per year for three years for a total of 336,000, there will be a need to have increased flexibility in the system to meet the seasonal needs of our perishable crops. Individuals currently in our Country without credible documentation can apply for the blue card program, which they will be able to convert to a green card once they've met certain requirements. At that point, there is

We know that usually things only get done when problems get really bad and often times the state legislature and Congress don't work together for solutions until they see things going bad.

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President's Report - 92nd Annual Meeting

Continued from page 3

Looking back at last year, I believe that early pricing for our 2013 crop turned out to be a “win/win” for growers and processors. Growers had certainty on pricing and could secure needed crop financing while processors were able to communicate with their customers and use higher raw product prices as part of their justification for raising selling prices with retail and foodservice accounts. We are pleased that it was possible to reach an early price agreement this fall for the 2014 crop at \$379/ton. Hopefully our early price agreement for 2014 will again turn out to be a “win/win” situation and give peach growers more confidence in the future.

However, as market conditions allow, we must continue to seek higher prices to keep pace with rising labor costs and competing crop margins. Our next goal must be to break the \$400/ton price barrier for the 2015 crop.

While eventually the cure for high almond and walnut prices will be those high prices (which, in turn, drive more plantings), the cost pressures that peach growers continue to face due to a dwindling and more expensive labor force are unrelenting. The challenge for both growers and processors is to be able to recover our higher costs from the marketplace in order to maintain a viable cling peach industry in California.

I know that there are those who are pessimistic about our ability to overcome the pricing challenges we currently face in order to keep peach trees in the ground. However, throughout our history, the California peach industry has survived many other threats to our existence ranging from cannery strikes at harvest to multiple processor bankruptcies to subsidized foreign competition to rationing and tinsplate shortages during World War II, just to name a few.

I continue to be optimistic that we will find our way through the latest challenges and that cling peaches will remain a part of many growers' diversified farming

operations. After all, California peach growers are the best in the world, we produce nutritious products with the highest levels of food safety, quality, and traceability in the largest single market for canned fruit in the world. U.S. consumers are continuing to hear the message that they must increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables as part of a healthy lifestyle. So basically it boils down to the fundamental difference between the pessimists and the optimists. A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity while an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty. I see plenty of opportunities ahead.

Another recurring theme throughout the Association's 92-year history is the use of marketing orders to improve industry conditions. In fact, the first Marketing Agreement (which was a precursor to state Marketing Orders) was established in the cling peach industry in 1936. It provided for a check-off funding mechanism for both growers and processors. A total of \$244,000 was raised that year from a total of 48 canners and over 2,400 peach growers. In the years which followed, the industry has voted in and has voted out a series of marketing orders – producer only, processor only, and joint marketing orders. They have all been the source of spirited debate by the industry and changes have been made as needed over the years to reflect changing industry conditions.

However, there has been a consistent message throughout our history. Consider the following quote:

“The men who have served on the Board of Directors of the Association have never regarded the marketing order as being capable of solving the problems of the peach industry, but rather as a tool to deal with our problems.”

***Jack Sullivan, CCPA President
(Board Chairman), 1961***



However, as market conditions allow, we must continue to seek higher prices to keep pace with rising labor costs and competing crop margins.

More than 25 years later, we find a similar quote:

“I want you to keep in mind that the marketing order is a tool to be used by the industry to help itself. The Advisory Board is made up of growers who are elected to represent you. Therefore, you must seek representatives who support your views. I am asking you to be involved, nominate more than one person for each Board seat, and urge all growers to exercise their right to vote.”

Ron Schuler, CCPA President & CEO, 1987

I think we can all agree that marketing orders are a tool designed to improve an industry’s position in the marketplace. However, like any other tool, what matters is how it is used. If you’re trying to drive a nail, the hammer is a very useful tool. For fixing your watch, it’s not the right tool and you won’t be happy with the results!

As you may know, peach growers will have the opportunity to vote on the renewal of

our current producer-only marketing order during the spring of 2014. In light of our new supply/demand realities and recognizing that we have experienced more than a 30% decline in canned peach retail sales since 1998 despite spending nearly \$7 million in grower funds on our domestic promotion efforts, I believe the timing is right for the Advisory Board to consider significantly reducing this year’s \$435,000 domestic promotion budget for future years in order to lower the current \$2.90/ton grower assessment.

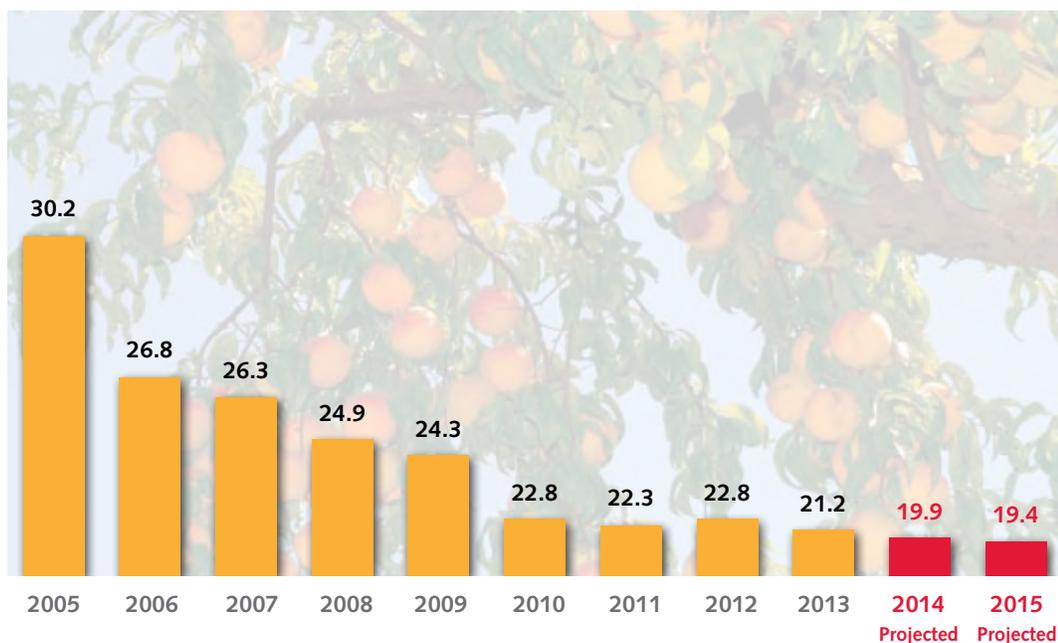
Once again, this quote demonstrates that growers have struggled with the promotion funding issue for decades:

“Today’s domestic marketplace is dominated by large processors who will advertise and promote their own brands in domestic retail sales channels with far more effectiveness than growers can hope to achieve with their limited funds.”

Ron Schuler, CCPA President & CEO, 1984

The bottom line is that the Peach Association has always been committed to doing all we can to improve the cling peach industry and we will react to changing circumstances in 2014 as needed.

California Cling Peach Bearing Acreage Trends 2005-2015 (Thousands of Acres)



President's Report - 92nd Annual Meeting

Peach growers have always needed to adjust to factors beyond their control. We all understand that weather conditions can change quickly and unexpectedly and that "Mother Nature" always bats last.

The recent action undertaken by the Advisory Board's Executive Committee earlier this month to initiate an outside review of the Board's current Domestic Promotion program is a good first step, but we must continue our efforts to ensure that growers are getting the best value and highest return on their assessment funds.

Simply put, I believe the outcome of the upcoming renewal vote rests in the hands of all voting Advisory Board members. A "no changes needed, full speed ahead" approach appears likely to result in a "No" vote on the marketing order renewal while a clear signal of a different approach to future spending decisions is likely to result in a "Yes" vote on the renewal. During the last renewal vote in 2009, less than half of all peach growers even bothered to return their ballots. Let's work to make sure that all growers vote on this important question in 2014.

In many respects, the present marketing order has served our industry well. Two recent examples are the "fresh vs. processed" nutrition research conducted by Oregon State University and the industry's ability to remain engaged on trade issues in Washington, D.C. The marketing order also provides a funding mechanism for all growers to share in the cost of programs meant to benefit the entire industry.

The final point I want to make on this subject is that the Association will not stand idly by in the event the current marketing order is not renewed for another 5-year term. If necessary, we will seek to fill the void so that ongoing work in Washington, D.C. on our industry's trade issues, our production research, and our export promotion efforts utilizing MAP funds from USDA can continue in future years. A similar approach was followed in the apricot industry when the Apricot Producers of California stepped in after the apricot industry's marketing order was voted out by growers in 1996. The bottom line is that the

Peach Association has always been committed to doing all we can to improve the cling peach industry and we will react to changing circumstances in 2014 as needed.

I have described several changes occurring within the industry, but your Association has seen our share of change as well. Since 1999, we have reduced our staff headcount by three, we've changed our annual meeting format, and eliminated the per diem compensation that Directors traditionally received for attending Board meetings. These steps, along with many others, have allowed us to maintain our financial strength despite the industry's continued acreage decline. This strength is what allows us to effectively represent peach growers and to continue our long tradition of industry leadership.

At this point, I would like to recognize the members of the team who serve as the staff of the California Canning Peach Association. They are truly the backbone of this organization and I am very proud of their accomplishments and dedication to meeting the needs of our grower members.

After spending much of my time this afternoon talking about changes within the industry, I would like to close my remarks by focusing on several things which haven't changed.

Peach growers have always needed to adjust to factors beyond their control. We all understand that weather conditions can change quickly and unexpectedly and that "Mother Nature" always bats last. Growers have also faced challenges from changing market conditions since the dawn of farming and know that survival often hinges on having the ability to recognize threats and to adapt quickly to new market realities. A third constant is that peach growers will always need processors and processors will always need growers. We share common goals and only achieve these goals by working together.

In the spirit of working together, I am also pleased to report that last year the Association's Board approved funding for two of our processor's export promotion proposals in response to the offer made by the Association at last year's Annual Meeting to work with processors to expand future U.S. canned peach exports beyond our existing markets in Canada and Mexico.

While the industry was unable to supply significant volume for new export sales this year, I believe that this export development effort will prove to be very similar to planting a new orchard – it will take a couple of years for the program to “bear fruit.”

Since future U.S. canned fruit consumption is likely to continue its slight decline each year, we must continue to seek out the emerging middle class of consumers around the globe in order to grow our sales. The pending acquisition of Del Monte's Consumer Products

Business by Del Monte Pacific Limited also gives us new hope for eventually finding our way into the canned fruit market in India since they already own the rights to the Del Monte label in India as well as the international rights to the S & W label. We're looking forward to having more chances to introduce U.S. canned peaches to new international audiences in 2014.

Through our collective strength, the Peach Association has a 92-year history of adapting to changes in our business and of being an industry leader. In fact, the parable that “one stick is easily broken, while a bundle of sticks is strong” could have been written to describe the structure of our bargaining and marketing cooperative. There is no doubt in my mind that we will continue our leadership role for everyone involved in the growing, processing and marketing of California cling peaches for many years to come. I am very proud to serve as your President and look forward to meeting the new challenges that 2014 will bring. 🍑



Del Monte canned peach products on store shelves in India

Spotlight Album Annual Meeting



Sunny Dale welcomes attendees



Balbir Sohal, Gurnam Pamma, Sarb Thiara,
Harbhajan Sandhu and Kuldip Atwal



Rich Hudgins and Dave Withycombe catching up

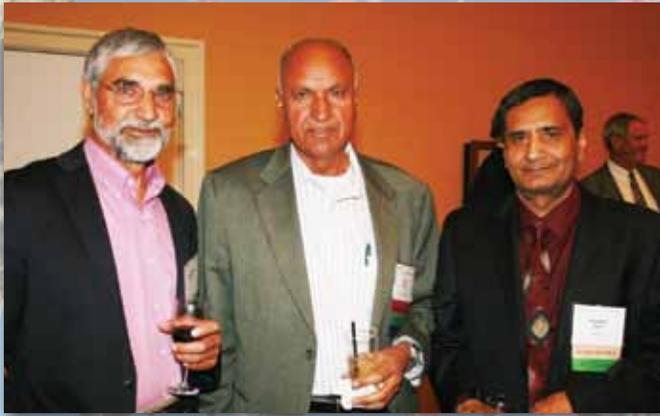


Rajinder Chohan visiting with Tim Nelson and Paul Palmby



Derek, Mark, Kyle, Cindy and Jeff Cederlind





Harbhajan Sandhu, Mohan Bains and Kulwant Johl



Craig and Peggy Carberry



Emily Rooney and Sally Kay



Peach Family Dinner following the meeting



CCPA Directors Rob Parks, Peter Martini and Jasbir Bains.



Jeff Cryer, Satinder Davit and Stacy Cryer



Marjorie Bishop presenting Oberthier Award to Rajinder Chohan

Northern District



Ajayab Dhaddey



Brian Sowden

More pumping will further deplete water tables beneath our crops.

This winter drought has been on the minds of most growers. Lack of rain has become a big concern for agriculture in California. This year with a low carryover of water in lakes and reservoirs, it is being considered the worst drought in California since the state started keeping records.

Since July 1, 2013 to January 26th, 2014 we have had just 2.40 inches of rain. Normal rainfall for this time is 11.50 inches. However, most growers do not rely solely on surface water to complete all irrigation needs. Irrigation pumps are integrated to sustain water cut backs by irrigation districts, but that also comes with concerns. More pumping will further deplete water tables beneath our crops. The major difference between the drought of 1975-76 is that population has increased, which means residential consumption has substantially increased as well.

At this time, we still have a couple of months to accumulate some more rainfall. However, growers have been irrigating in January, which means that you can pretty much count on cutbacks to come if there is no major change in the weather. For example, water districts differ on allocated water; most water districts connected to the Feather River are already predicting 50%; other districts connected to the Yuba River are predicting allocations ranging from 0-50%. All water districts are currently waiting on the Department of Water Resources to make

final judgments regarding water availability in early April.

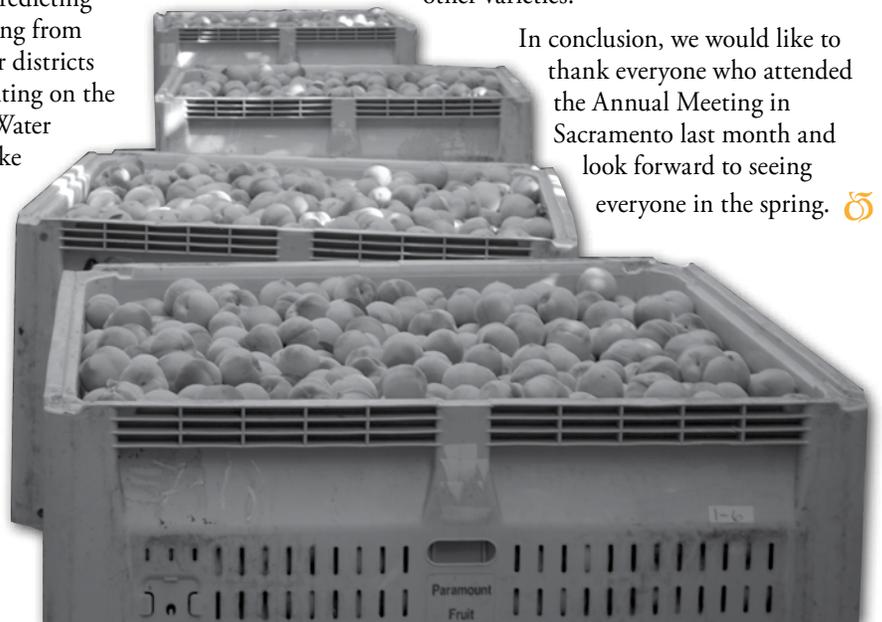
Chilling hours as of February 2nd are at 886 hours compared to 905 hours for the same time last year. This is enough chilling to meet the requirements for cling peach trees.

With the dry weather conditions growers have been able to get many things done in the field which would otherwise been completed sometime in March/April. For instance, growers are getting pruning done earlier and getting fields ready for planting along with irrigation systems. Some new orchards have already been planted.

Since the harvest (2013) the Yuba/Sutter area has pulled just over 1,335 acres out of 2,259 acres pulled in the state. With a few more acres to come out the 2014 bearing acres are estimated at below 20,000 acres, an all-time low. As a result, all canners are currently offering long-term peach contracts, however, we still strongly urge you to contact your canner and receive a letter of intent prior to planting.

For 2014, the base price agreement has been established with all canners at \$379/ton. Also the industry's Terms of Sale for No. 2 peaches have been modified from 5% to 10% paid for Extra Earlies and from 2% to 5% paid for all other varieties.

In conclusion, we would like to thank everyone who attended the Annual Meeting in Sacramento last month and look forward to seeing everyone in the spring. 🍑



Central District

The Number 1 topic on peach grower's minds today is the drought in California this winter. December and January have been the driest in history with only .83 inches falling during this period. Our total rainfall for the season is 2.28 inches, this compares to 6.33 inches last season. The snow pack in the Sierra is at 12% of normal at this time with not much hope for rest of the winter. Local irrigation districts are telling growers that surface water deliveries for 2014 will likely be about half of the water they delivered to growers last year.

Chilling hours have been very good for the 2013/14 season. We have received 1,091 hours so far this winter. This compares to 1,162 total hours accumulated for the 2012/13 season. Our hours should be in the excellent category this year due to deep freezing temperatures in December.

Pullouts through January total 738 acres for the Modesto area and 22 acres for the Linden area. The Modesto area pulled 10.6% of its total bearing acres and Linden pulled just 4% of the total bearing acres.

Cling peach plantings could reach 200-300 acres in the Modesto area. All three canners are seeking growers interested in planting additional cling peach acreage in the Modesto area with 20-year contracts for new plantings now available.

Bloom timing could be earlier this year based on our unseasonably warm January, which saw temperatures reach 70 plus degrees on more than one occasion. As a result, the almond bloom has been predicted to be 5 to 7 days earlier than 2013. Some early nectarine bloom in the Kingsburg area was noticed in January.

In conclusion, not only will peach growers have to worry about labor availability and labor cost increases, they now will face the threat of not having enough irrigation water to produce a cling peach crop. Fortunately, early pricing this year has helped many peach growers already secure bank loans for the 2014 season. We will now see what type of weather February and March hold in store. 

Local irrigation districts are telling growers that surface water deliveries for 2014 will likely be about half of the water they delivered to growers last year.

Southern District

The Kingsburg area is currently suffering from a very severe and prolonged drought, with only .19 inches falling during December and January. This brings the total rainfall in Kingsburg to .40 inches since July 1. This compares to only 3.88 inches received during the whole rainfall season last year. Peach growers in the area are very concerned with dropping ground water levels and dry wells. Unlike other growing areas, surface water is not a major factor in the Kingsburg area. If the Kings River flows in the spring, that would be a major help in recharging the ground water levels.

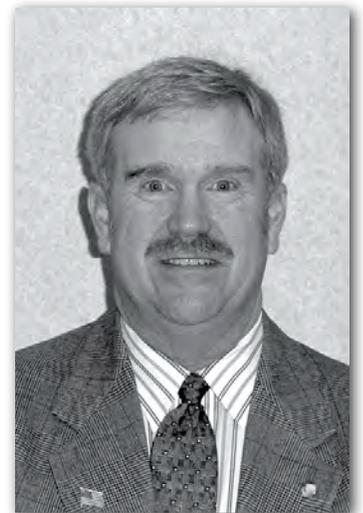
Chilling hours have reached 905 hours as of the end of January 2014. This compares to the 919 total hours received during the 2012/13 season. Cold weather during December has produced an excellent amount of good quality hours.

Pullouts for the Kingsburg area total 163 acres, which represents 7.6% of the 2013 total bearing acres in Kingsburg. At this point, it appears that new plantings in the area could reach 100 acres this spring, although water concerns could reduce the number of acres actually planted. All three canners have been actively looking for more planted acres in the Kingsburg area with unprecedented contract offers for new plantings.

Full bloom could be earlier this depending on the weather conditions during February. Full bloom last year was March 11. An earlier bloom this year could mean a greater threat of frost damage, we will keep our fingers crossed until mid-April.

In conclusion, this year peach growers will also have to worry about their wells and the water supply, along with labor availability and the increased labor cost to thin and harvest cling peaches. 

If the Kings River flows in the spring, that would be a major help in recharging the ground water levels.



William F. Bryan

Keynote Speaker - 92nd Annual Meeting

Continued from page 7

Hopefully we can use this disastrous water year to finally bring much needed responsibility to the discussion of sensible water storage.

a very real possibility that they move to a job other than agriculture. We need to make sure that we have a visa program that works, that they can come in, be able to move around for three years, and then renew that visa. If we don't get that guarantee, I anticipate California Farm Bureau Federation will oppose any changes to the immigration rule. If we take anything less than that, we've sold ourselves and an effective long term solution down the river; we've sold the industry down the river because in 5-10 years we'll be right back to where we are today.

Some people say that after the last immigration reform in 1986, we went from one-and-a-half million undocumented to 12 million undocumented. There's a number of things that happened to create that problem, not the least of which was the tragedy of Sept 11th. That resulted in border security that was tight enough to not let people go back and forth. In addition, the drug cartels are more of a threat to those people going across the border than the security

guards and border agents. So of course you are going to have people that are stuck here. They don't want to stay here; they want to be able to go back and forth. A lot of people who are living in this country illegally say they just want to come here, make money and go home. So we are going to continue to work on that.

When it comes to the Farm Bill, while it's certainly important, there's not as much that impacts California as it does other states. We're not a big farm bill state but EQIP funding, market access funding and plant protection and health funding are critical to our diverse crops and growing regions. Regarding the EQIP funding, there are about 12 states that would divvy up about \$48 million and California could get the lion's share of that. But this is because of regulations that would put our producers at risk. If the government wants to put new environmental regulations on you, they ought to help to pay to replace a perfectly good engine when it could run for a much longer time.



Sunny Dale, Paul Wenger & Rich Hudgins

We also have the tax extenders that need to be dealt with. We are not sure what is going to happen with accelerated depreciation. We also know that regarding cash and accrual accounting, there's going to be changes.

This year, as we begin the second session in our state legislature, I'm not that pessimistic. However, I think we have to be on our guard, we have to be involved and we have to be engaged. Through your involvement with the California Canning Peach Association, Ag Council and Farm Bureau, we are out there talking to legislators, giving tours and educating them about the opportunity to change California. But the first item of business is to get the right folks elected. That means we in agriculture have to start writing checks. We have to get more active in electing qualified individuals and if we don't, then we have nobody to blame but ourselves.

For obvious reasons, water will take on a significant importance in the legislature. Water quality and the presence of nitrates in groundwater were certain to be at the forefront of legislative interest, but water supply will now move to the front of the line. Many of the problems we have with water quality have been exasperated by the constant push to conserve water. This has resulted in a lack of planning for droughts such as the one we are currently experiencing while concentrating salts including nitrates in many of our underground aquifers. Hopefully we can use this disastrous water year to finally bring much needed responsibility to the discussion of sensible water storage.

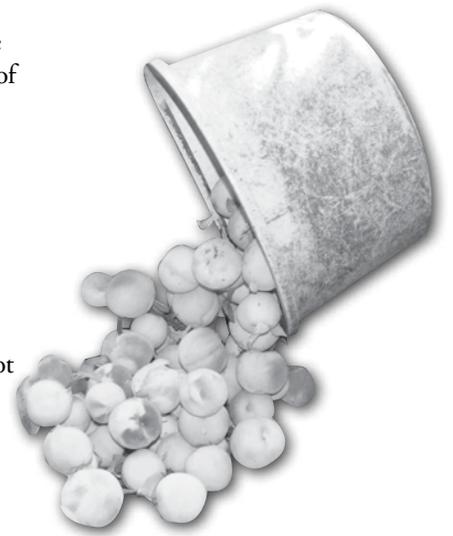
I'll talk a little about the two-thirds supermajority. Almost a year ago this past November...Something that we thought might happen, happened overnight when all of a sudden, with the president up for re-election, Prop. 30 on the ballot and the Governor and the unions working for its passage, the Democrats suddenly had a two-thirds supermajority in California.

An interesting thing happened on the way to us having a supermajority. We're seeing folks who are now in the legislature under the new term limits that are going to be there for 12 years. Because of that, they are going to own what they do because they are probably

going to stay there for the full 12 years. The other thing that we've seen is they are from increasingly urban areas, with greater diversity. They are not the old guard that follow the same party mantras as others before them. They are from blue-collar communities that don't share the same wealth security as those from many of the coastal enclaves. They want the food that you produce. They want fresh peaches, they want canned peaches, strawberries, almonds, walnuts and they are not sure why they won't always have it. We're going to tell them why they don't have it, because we've had a whole lot of rules and regulations that have driven the price of food up and now we've got food that is going to other places and bypassing a lot of those folks that want it. They are our allies; we've just got to reach out them and educate them.

But how do you elect a person in San Francisco, Los Angeles, or any other urban district, where they don't have ag voters in their districts and have little understanding or appreciation for what farmers and ranchers do every day? Through political action we can influence the outcome of those votes. They've been doing that in our districts for years. Those folks that have a different view of life, the environmental community, who are throwing money at candidates in our districts to try and influence the vote. It is really difficult for a Republican to vote for anyone other than a Republican if there is a Republican on the ballot. But in some of those districts that we know there's going to be a Democrat that is going to win, let's make sure it's a Democrat that is a business person, a person that pays taxes, that signs the front side of the check, a person that has to deal with regulation. We can give them a home and help them get elected. Through our allied groups here working together, we're finding those folks.

While I hope you are all Farm Bureau members, it is important that you support your commodity organization. We're not a replacement for your commodity organization; we are an additive to your commodity organization. There are many opportunities where we can work together for the benefit of all growers, regardless of commodity or growing region of the state. You've got to support your commodity group, your trade



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Keynote Speaker - 92nd Annual Meeting

What you guys do is nothing short of miraculous. We as farmers, we love to talk pessimistically and we live optimistically.

association, and you've got to support Farm Bureau.

The drought. It's going to change our way of life and our way of living. Last year, growers produced \$43.5 billion in ag production in California. We're not getting our due here in California. Some of the things we've been trying to do through our California Bountiful Foundation is to raise needed financial resources so we can do much needed updates to the added value of the products we raise here. Rich Hudgins and I recently attended a Nationwide board council meeting in Alabama, where the president of the Alabama Farm Bureau stated they have a \$123 billion agricultural industry in Alabama. I thought, wow, we just got to \$43.5 billion and we were on a pretty good ride setting an all-time record for California agriculture. Someone sitting next to me said, I thought California was a bigger agricultural state than that. Until around three years ago, if you would combined all of the agricultural farm gate value of Texas and Iowa into one state, it still would have been the second-largest state behind all we produce here in California. Do you know what the farm gate value is in Alabama? \$3.2 billion. They engaged Auburn University do a study on the value-added benefit of farming to the rest of the state's economy. seventy percent of their added value of \$123 billion is derived from the timber industry. What are we doing here in California? What would that \$43.5 billion extrapolate into? Consider an almond grower. A number of years ago we considered almonds to be an ingredient only product and today for those folks who are lactose intolerant, we're making an almond drink. Consider apples and how you used to send your children to school with an apple in their lunchbox. Today that apple is sliced, put in a plastic box with some flavored walnuts, grapes, caramel sauce and yogurt. What is the value of all of that? Whether or not we as farmers and ranchers made any money at the end of the day, and I'm not going to complain because I think we're all doing well right now, although that could change, we put a lot of people to work.

Whether or not in those years when we didn't make money or it was really break even, as soon as that product left our farm, we put a lot of people to work, they got a salary, those folks doing the marketing were getting their margins added onto that, so we put a lot of people to work.

Today we are sitting in a drought. The other day after the governor came out with his drought declaration and we put out a press release, the calls started coming in. When asked how agriculture was going to deal with this dry weather, we made sure and pointed out that what we're dealing with today didn't start today. It started 20 years ago and it started 20 years ago because we didn't plan. We're farmers and ranchers; we have to deal with what Mother Nature gives us. Government and the regulators in the shiny buildings downtown and in Washington, D.C., they are used to borrowing ahead. Look at the deficits that we have. We are going to let our kids and grandkids pay for what we're spending now. But you can't fool Mother Nature. You better take and bank it whenever you can get it so that you can use it later on but nobody's learned that lesson. But I think they are going to learn that now.

If we don't drive that lesson home, if we don't take advantage of the podium the drought has given us to engage in the important dialogue of responsible water development, we have only ourselves to blame. Environmentalists say that we have to save the delta smelt...we have to save the salmon. And we want salmon and we want the smelt, unfortunately we've allowed other people to control the dialogue. They say they have to exist the way they have for thousands of years? Really? As soon as somebody tells me that I tell them, put on a loincloth, get out and live under that oak tree and start foraging for grubs because that's the way humans existed for thousands of years. You didn't have a smartphone, you didn't sit in an air conditioned car, you didn't go in an air conditioned and heated home. We as people have changed how we live and we

still think that this poor fish is supposed to survive the way it has for the millennia. We can help them survive, make sure they don't go extinct, but it's going to look different. We have to change the discussion.

The reason I got involved in Farm Bureau was because of that little white pickup that came down the road with the insignia. When I came back from Cal Poly, majoring in animal science, ironically we switched from raising cattle to beginning to farm almonds and walnuts. That began my appreciation for that little white truck coming by telling you how you could do your spraying.... they are really nice folks but they are being driven by the regulations here in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. As we see fewer and fewer people that are involved in production agriculture... we still like to say that fewer than 2 percent of the people in the US are involved in production agriculture, while in California it is actually less than a half of a percent. What you guys do is nothing short of miraculous. We as farmers, we love to talk pessimistically and we live optimistically. We're a unique group of people and we like people just to leave us alone and let us do our own thing. We can't do that anymore folks. When we plant an orchard, when we plant any crop, when we put in a processing facility, we want to do it right. We look at efficiency. We know that if we don't do the right investment today, the payout tomorrow isn't really going to be good. When it comes to politics, we say that those people have to do the right thing. You can't plant an orchard, then go on vacation and expect to produce a crop. You've got to nurture it, you've got to stay engaged, you've got to invest in it and it will produce for you. It is the same way in politics.

We have a power behind us that is unbelievable but it has not been realized yet. In California Farm Bureau we have 30,000 farmer members. Even if someone is in an allied industry such as a processor, you ought to be a member of Farm Bureau. I welcome you to join because with increased support and membership, we can do even more.

The personal challenge I have made to those involved in agriculture is to commit \$1,000 a year for political action. We can do it, it's just a matter of making the decision that

we're unwilling to allow others to dictate our political future and the regulations that come with that.

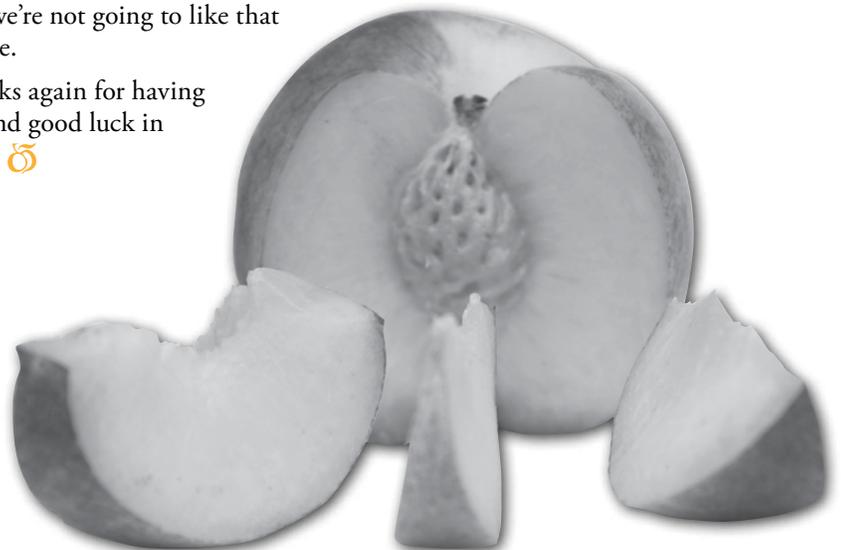
Most of us are having a pretty good year. As you go home, when it comes time for paying that fuel bill, whether it goes to the Canning Peach Association, Ag Council, Farm Bureau, maybe all three, write a check. I'm seeing more and more of these Political Action Committee pins come up.

When it comes to the pin design... I put the eagle because as farmers and ranchers, if you come in my office I have a big eagle. But if you've ever been to Alaska, or the Yukon or anything there's a lot of bald eagles they are the most majestic, individualistic birds- just like all of us here in this audience. In the middle is a single share plow, that is what opened up this state and what made this state the most powerful agricultural state in the country, the fifth or sixth largest agricultural economy in the world, and meant a lot of hard work because all of those plows were drawn by a horse and a person behind it.

We have a course in front of us and we can set the course or we can let somebody else set it for us. And I know it is tough to write that check, because I don't like to spend money when I don't have to but I'll invest in my orchards, I hope you'll invest in us to do the right thing because we're just like you. We can change Sacramento, we can change Washington, D.C. and the only reason we don't do it is because we become ambivalent and say, let somebody else set the course and we're not going to like that course.

Thanks again for having me and good luck in 2014. 🍊

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Tom Gradziel

Grower-funded research aims to boost the bottom line

By Robyn Rominger

Researchers at U.C. Davis are continuing their efforts to develop new and improved cling peach varieties in an effort to increase production efficiency and fulfill consumer demand for tasty, nutritious canned peaches.

In order to help the state's cling peach growers and processors compete on a global scale, University of California, Davis peach breeder Tom Gradziel conducts on-farm research as well as experiments at the University's Wolfskill Experimental Orchards in Winters.

"With tree crops, it's a long-term investment," said Gradziel, a geneticist who seeks to develop peach varieties with consistently superior performance. "I'm looking for solutions 20 years down the road."

His research focuses on the development of improved varieties of processing peaches that are adapted for the Golden State. Regarding short-term breeding objectives, Gradziel said variety replacement is a top priority, and he is focusing on the extra early, early and extra late varieties. For example, "The Extra-Early #1 is a replacement for Dixon and Andross," he said. "It will be available to the nurseries beginning in 2014."

He is testing replacement varieties "that don't have problems with soft fruit and pit fragmentation" and have comparable or higher yields than existing varieties.

Commercial canning peach growers throughout the state participate as research cooperators. Sarb Johl of Yuba City is a long-time research cooperator who has planted some of Gradziel's experimental varieties. "We watch them and compare them to similar varieties and see how they react, how they bear fruit and how they grow."

"Ross is still the most prominent variety in the state now," he said. Other popular varieties include Dr. Davis, Andross, Hesse and Lilleland. "They are all U.C. Davis varieties."

Johl said, "As a peach grower, I want to have something my operation can start harvesting in the first week of July and work until the first of September because I don't want to lose my workers. A grower probably wants to grow eight or 10 varieties that ripen extra early to extra late to keep your employees busy and your processors filled. Tom is trying to fill the gaps. Tom is trying to find more early varieties and more extra lates."

Johl serves as chairman of the California Cling Peach Board, which provides funding for the UC peach research program. "The Cling Peach Board spends about \$150,000 each year on research and about 80 percent of that is varietal research," he explained.

In terms of other research objectives, "The next priority is recognizing the changes in the industry," Gradziel said, such as the loss of crop-protection chemicals. To that end, he is focusing on improving disease resistance to brown rot in Extra-Early #1 and other varieties.

The loss of labor is an on-going challenge for cling-peach growers. As a result, Gradziel is experimenting with semidwarf peach trees. "These compact trees are one-half to two-thirds the size," and are being tested by growers.

Semidwarf trees "would reduce going up and down the ladder," Johl said. He also hopes the shorter trees will lead to less pruning, less fruit-thinning, improved worker safety and reduced labor costs. "It looks promising."

Semidwarf trees would also be suitable for one pick harvesting and mechanical harvesting. Gradziel said, "We're looking for varieties where fruit will hang on the tree one to two weeks while remaining firm to allow growers to do a one pick harvest and get good fruit size."

Peach grower Peter Martini of Escalon, who serves on the board of the California Canning

He is testing replacement varieties "that don't have problems with soft fruit and pit fragmentation" and have comparable or higher yields than existing varieties.

Peach Association, said he and his father, Pete, carefully plan out which trees to plant so that there is always something ready to pick, thus avoiding gaps in the harvesting schedule.

“We grow about a dozen different varieties,” Martini said. “We pick about 100 bins of fruit every single day until the end of the harvest. If you lay your employees off because you don’t have a variety that fits that window, they’ll just leave. My dad planned out our varieties so about six acres will ripen at a time. It takes some planning.”

Martini continued, “We want higher-quality fruit that doesn’t get overripe too fast. It hangs on the tree longer. I don’t have any varieties where the fruit will hang for more than five days. When you have a variety that needs to be picked - that’s what is scaring farmers right now, when you can’t find people to pick. Peaches are a really high cost crop to grow and if you put all this money into it and you can’t find somebody to pick it, then you’re up a creek. Maybe it will take another day or maybe a week to find enough people, so you need to have more of a window.”

Mechanical harvesting may become more common in the future. In response, Gradziel is developing peach varieties that resist bruising; the fruit can hold up better to tree shakers and other mechanical harvesting equipment.

Johl noted that some growers are supplementing their hand-harvesting with mechanical harvesting. “For the last few years labor has been tight. Growers are trying to get caught up, so they’ll bring in a few machines. Growers are trying to do as much as they can with hand labor, but some processors will work with mechanical harvesting on a limited basis.” As a result, “Tom is really focusing on trying to find varieties that are suited to mechanical harvesting.”

In terms of long-term breeding objectives, Gradziel wants to “improve fruit quality to the point that we’re not as dependent on added sugar during the canning process.” The goal is to develop varieties that are sweeter. “We’re looking to improve the fruit flavor, the sweetness and quality of the peaches so we can go to an even lighter syrup.”

Gradziel is also interested in phytonutrient research. “A cling peach is very high in antioxidants and has beta-carotene,” he said,

and these plant nutrients offer potential health benefits.

U.C.’s peach research program is a combination of conventional plant breeding and biotechnology. “This program is very unique with tree crops,” Gradziel said. “We’ve been using molecular markers since the mid-90s. We’re seen as a pioneering program for the application of molecular markers.”

The measure of effective peach breeding is “whether it’s going to be economically viable for growers--that answer has to come from the growers’ orchards,” Gradziel concluded. “And crucial to that is the collaboration with growers and processors.”

Rich Hudgins, president and chief executive officer of the California Canning Peach Association, said, “There is no substitute for growing and evaluating new varieties in a grower’s orchard under ‘real world’ conditions. While we have a few experimental orchards in the ground today, I think there is more we can do to speed the evaluation process along.”

“It will take perseverance on our part,” Rich states, “but I am confident that we are on the right track with our varietal research efforts. The good news for peach growers is that all processors are actively seeking additional acres to be planted and are offering up to 20 year contracts to secure their needed acreage. We’ve seen an increase in the industry’s plating intentions for 2014, but there are still plenty of opportunities for growers looking to plant additional acres in the coming years.”

The measure of effective peach breeding is “whether it’s going to be economically viable for growers--that answer has to come from the growers’ orchards...”



Tom Gradziel checking his experimental varieties



Emily Rooney
President, Agriculture
Council of California

The increased scope of the regulation has created an opportunity for plaintiffs' attorneys to cash-in at the expense of many businesses in California.

Creating a Future for Prop. 65 Reform

By Emily Rooney, President, Agricultural Council of California

Last May, Governor Brown announced an effort to reform Proposition 65, a voter-approved initiative that passed in 1986. This proposition was initially meant to warn Californians about potential exposure to hazardous chemicals that could cause cancer or reproductive harm in drinking water.

Prop. 65 has evolved beyond the scope of drinking water to include anything sold in California containing these chemicals. Many of the chemicals on the Prop. 65 list can be found in food products, including those that are used for food safety purposes, or occur naturally in the soil, plants and other types of foods. In some cases, trace amounts of these chemicals have already been deemed safe by the FDA.

The increased scope of the regulation has created an opportunity for plaintiffs' attorneys to cash-in at the expense of many businesses in California. Any product that is found positive for containing a chemical on the list -- yet does not have a warning -- is at risk for litigation. A quick search on the California Attorney General's website will reveal that attorneys profit in the millions of dollars in Prop. 65 settlements on an annual basis.

Through his proposed reform efforts, the Governor aimed to minimize "shake-down" lawsuits, improve the warning system and strengthen scientific information that is utilized in the warning process. His goal for reform had a number of hurdles, including requiring a two-thirds vote of the State Legislature for approval.

The Governor's office embarked on an ambitious effort to find consensus among the various stakeholder groups, in order to have strong support heading into the Legislature. After several weeks of negotiations, the effort failed. This is not surprising, given the array of personal interests at the table.

Absent legislative reform, what is left?

All is not lost. The Administration will now have to focus on improving Prop. 65 through its regulatory authority. Unfortunately, litigation reform does not seem likely without a legislative fix.

However, the regulation can be improved in the following areas:

- Improving the regulatory process for chemicals found in foods;
- Providing more meaningful warnings to the consumer; and
- Clarifying the regulations for chemicals that occur naturally.

One successful accomplishment has already been achieved. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has joined into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) to participate in the regulatory process when regulations could impact food.

MOUs are common between many agencies in Sacramento. We are hopeful that this new partnership will provide agriculture an added voice when developing these regulations.

Specifically, this MOU allows CDFA to participate in the process at CalEPA that considers the listing of chemicals. Additionally, it creates flexibility so that CDFA can provide data and other scientific information to CalEPA for the purposes of developing regulations. This is a strong, positive step.

Second, CalEPA is in the process of developing warning regulations that could provide flexibility for manufacturers. The

agency is evaluating the possibility of providing other options in lieu of on-product warnings. Possibilities include warnings provided via the Internet, or at the point of purchase, such as on the grocery store receipt. New regulations are under consideration and are likely to be released for public comment in the next eight to twelve weeks.

Lastly, CalEPA is examining the regulation as it pertains to naturally occurring chemicals. These chemicals occur in the soil or can grow naturally in the plant and manifest themselves in various fruits, vegetables and dairy products. There is a very narrow exclusion for these types of chemicals, and the courts are defining the boundaries of this exemption.

CalEPA could clarify this regulation so food companies and consumer groups have a better understanding as to what qualifies for use. Improving this piece of the regulation is new

territory for CalEPA, so it will be a work in progress.

Even though litigation reform does not have a clear path forward at this time, we will continue to work with the Administration and the Legislature to try to create momentum to pursue the effort. Litigation reform was the basis of the Governor's original call-to-action last year, and many still believe this is the greatest weakness of Prop. 65.

As is typical for most regulatory reform efforts in California, it takes a creative, proactive approach to move the ball forward. Fortunately, this Administration has created a positive environment for allowing collaboration between agencies, which could benefit our industry. We are hopeful these new bridges will improve the environment for agriculture on not only Prop. 65, but other issues as well. 

Litigation reform was the basis of the Governor's original call-to-action last year, and many still believe this is the greatest weakness of Prop. 65.

Grower Profile

Continued from page 5

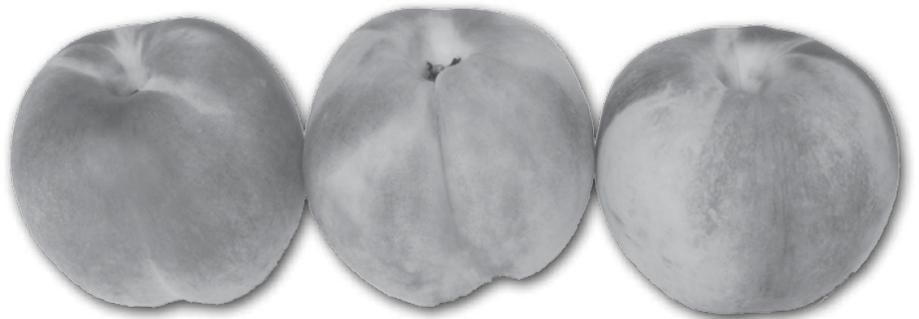
The Future

The young man with the persistent phone says that a great deal of his focus is now spent thinking of fresh ways to make the best use of his time. Enjoying time with his wife Sureena and children Atham, Daya, Imani and Ekram is important.

I am interested in finding a good balance in life, so I always have to ask myself if I'm spending time wisely.

To that end, he is evaluating efforts to create more efficiency on his orchards. "We are planning on getting a walnut huller so we can get the work done faster, and it fits in with our policy of integrating all of our operations."

And agricultural re-development is also a factor. Pointing to four neat piles arranged behind his desk for emphasis, he says it is a job unto itself.



"There are so many opportunities when it comes to rehabilitating properties that have needed it," he said. "I find that I really enjoy this part of our operations."

Thinking of how the company started, Ravi Thiara says he doesn't know if he would have had the mixture of courage and sacrifice that his father and uncles had so many decades ago.

"I am not sure if I could have done what they did," he says. "If there is anything I can say about our company, it is this: Without their efforts, we would never have had the wonderful opportunities that we have today. They are the real heroes of our family."

"We are interested in seeing what the future will hold for the promotion of peaches," Ravi says. "We want to see the market prosper and are intrigued by new promotional ideas, but we are ready to see more results." 

I am interested in finding a good balance in life, so I always have to ask myself if I'm spending time wisely.



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Back Row (left to right):

Kuldip Atwal, Rajinder Chohan, Jim Tavernas, Sonny Kalkat, Peter Martini, Gurnam Pamma, Steve Zovickian, Kevin Voss, Eric Spycher, Ravi Thiara, Gary Darpinian and Karm Bains.

2nd Row (left to right):

Kulwant Johl, Ken Bettencourt, Harry Berberian, Robert Parks, Balbir Sohal, Jay Fiorini, Ranjit Davit and Rick Zolezzi.

Seated (left to right):

Sarb Thiara, Vice Chairman; Rich Hudgins, President & CEO; Sunny Dale, Chairman; and Jasbir Bains, Treasurer.

(Not pictured: Billy Dhmi, Blaine Yagi and Leonard Perez, Secretary.)