



CALIFORNIA  
TABLE GRAPE  
COMMISSION

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# News Release

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## **Commission Strengthens Commitment to Science and Technology**

Fresno, CA – The California Table Grape Commission (commission) strengthened its long-term commitment to science and technology with the collation of a new Science and Technology division.

The new division unites three important areas of innovation including mechanization and advanced automation, patenting and licensing, and viticulture research under the leadership of Senior Vice President Ross Jones, who will serve as Chief Science and Technology Officer.

This expanded commitment brings new responsibilities to commission staff members Dr. Maha Afifi, Dr. Franka Gabler, and Ms. Julie Mercado. Dr. Afifi has been promoted to Director of Viticulture Research and will now lead production research and its related responsibilities while completing the projects on which she serves as principal investigator. Dr. Gabler has been named Director of Science and Technology to emphasize her work in mechanization and advanced automation while continuing to provide scientific data and analysis organization-wide, and leading invasive species research. Mercado's roll with the commission has also expanded to include administering the viticulture research agreements and related grant requirements with scientists as part of her work as Director of Grant Management.

“Uniting these programs under the umbrella of this new division makes clear the strength of the commitment the industry has made to science and technology,” said Kathleen Nave, president of the commission. “The depth of experience this team brings to this important area will serve the organization and industry well in the years ahead.” Nave said.

Photos of Afifi, Gabler, Jones, and Mercado (left to right) are included with this release. High resolution copies are available upon request.

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