



CALIFORNIA
TABLE GRAPE
COMMISSION

392 W. Fallbrook Avenue
Suite 101
Fresno, California
93711-6150
Phone: 559-447-8350
Fax: 559-447-9184
grapesfromcalifornia.com

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 14, 2024

Contact: Nick Nakashian
Nick@grapesfromcalifornia.com

California Table Grape Industry Focuses on Specialty Crop Competitiveness

Fresno, CA – Focused on the long-term viability of the industry it represents, the California Table Grape Commission (commission) is providing USDA with input on ways to enhance competitiveness through formal comments as well as testimony provided at the CDFA state board hearing which opened the World Ag Expo yesterday in Tulare, California.

The testimony, offered by Commission Incoming President Ian LeMay, provided recommendations focused on enhancing competitiveness in the U.S. marketplace, expanding exports, extending USDA food purchases for those in need, supporting research initiatives, and encouraging adoption of new technologies. A copy of the testimony is found: <https://www.grapesfromcalifornia.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/20240214-02-14-24-ca-state-board-testimony.pdf>

According to LeMay, the purpose of the testimony before the state board was to encourage inclusion of table grape grower priorities in the comments that CDFA will make to USDA on behalf of the state's specialty crop growers. "Competitiveness has long been a commission priority," said LeMay. "We hope that the state board sees value in the recommendations and includes them in its feedback to USDA."

Testimony Highlights:

- Noting the need to sell more U.S. grown products to U.S. consumers, the recommendations include establishment of a domestic promotion program modeled after the successful Market Access Program (MAP). The new program would allow grower organizations to apply for and match funds to promote in the U.S.; the biggest market in the world and one that is critical to the survival of table grape growers. To expand exports, the commission urges support for a doubling of MAP funding in the next Farm Bill.
- Citing the pride that table grape growers feel in providing nutritious food to those in need, the commission recommends an increase in the annual financial commitment for the purchase of fruits and vegetables to distribute to those who are food insecure. A pilot program that expands procurement to include fresh fruits and vegetables in international food aid programs is also recommended.
- Noting that economic viability requires research, innovation, and adoption, the commission advocates support for legislation establishing a fund for mechanization research and for the development of a grant program to help growers adopt new technology. Additional funding for USDA table grape varietal research is sought to help ensure that future varieties are resistant to pests, diseases, and weather; and are affordable to produce, stable to ship, and meet consumer expectations.

##

A photo of Ian LeMay is included with this release. High resolution copies are available upon request.

