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TIPA has expansive advocacy agenda

By

Tim Linden, editor at large

April 5, 2023

In a lightning fast educational session, [Texas International Produce Association](#) President and CEO Dante Galeazzi laid out an expansive list of accomplishments and goals for the organization's advocacy program during the recent Viva Fresh Expo.

Speaking to a packed room on Friday, March 31, Galeazzi discussed priorities as well as exploring challenges and opportunities on both the federal and state level. He had a number of slides chock full of information that he went through in rapid speed, only hitting the highlights during the 45-minute Legislative Issues Briefing.

Boasting a bit about past accomplishments, the TIPA executive revealed that the efforts in changing the inspection process for products crossing into Texas from Mexico saved the industry \$5.7 million in 2022. He also noted that TIPA, in collaboration with other associations, helped design the USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program that brought in \$51 million to specialty crops in Texas. He noted additional efforts saw the Texas specialty crop industry receive \$40 million in natural disaster relief funds.

In determining the association's advocacy efforts, Galeazzi said an assessment of challenges facing the industry in both Texas and Mexico is necessary. Topping the list of challenges for Texas-based companies are labor shortages, urbanization, supply chain disruptions and adverse growing conditions such as pests, bad weather and drought.

Growers on the Mexican side of the border have some of the same issues but also have to deal with border crossing delays and political grandstanding. He relayed that in the spring of 2022, Gov. Greg Abbott used his power to greatly delay shipments in a move to emphasize immigration issues. The result was a negative impact on the ag industry. Galeazzi said every day that a load of produce is delayed at the border, it loses an average of 10 percent of its value. He indicated a delay on a Friday that prevents the crossing until Monday is devastating to the payload and very expensive.

Surveying what's happening in Washington, DC, that impacts the Texas produce industry, he said immigration reform leading to a workforce solution is unlikely in 2023. He did say that border security is a top issue that has bipartisan support and there could be movement in that direction.

He also noted that the farm bill is up for renewal in 2023 and will be a topic of discussion that deserves priority status from TIPA. Additionally, Galeazzi said wellness issues seem to be a priority for the White House, which could result in good news for the fresh produce industry. Galeazzi also expects there to be ongoing discussions concerning Rio Grande River water allocations between the U.S. and Mexico, which could greatly impact Texas growers. This is another priority for the Texas trade association.

Galeazzi also indicated that heat standard legislation for workers is getting some traction, with potential action being devastating for Texas farms. In states that have enacted such standards, he said 85 degrees is the trigger number, which defines Texas weather almost on a daily basis during the harvesting season.

On the regulatory front, Galeazzi said TIPA will be working on such diverse issues as lime grades, inspection fees and an insurance pilot program for fruits and vegetables, most of which are not covered by national crop insurance.

The TIPA CEO also advised his members that this month the organization is going to marshal the forces for a day at the state capitol in Austin to educate legislators about the state's ag industry.

[Tim Linden](#)

About Tim Linden |

Tim Linden grew up in a produce family as both his father and grandfather spent their business careers on the wholesale terminal markets in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Tim graduated from San Diego State University in 1974 with a degree in journalism. Shortly thereafter he began his career at The Packer where he stayed for eight years, leaving in 1983 to join Western Growers as editor of its monthly magazine. In 1986, Tim launched Champ Publishing as an agricultural publishing specialty company.

Today he is a contract publisher for several trade associations and writes extensively on all aspects of the produce business. He began writing for The Produce News in 1997, and currently wears the title of Editor at Large.

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