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California Grape Commission launches new global campaign

By

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California table grape growers have long sought innovative ways to grow a healthy product in a fruitful and efficient manner. Since 1972 the industry has funded viticulture research projects ranging from the development of new varieties to establishment of best cultural practices to the evaluation of pest management processes.

That's where the California Grape Commission comes in. All of the commission's work is about creating opportunity for California table grape growers to grow, pick, pack, ship and market a crop as efficiently and economically advantageously as possible.

"This includes work in mechanization and advanced automation in areas focusing on harvest efficiency, viticulture research to reduce/optimize pesticide use, conserve water, improve grape quality and keep export markets open," said Kathleen Nave, president of the commission.

The commission annually markets grapes from California domestically and in key export markets around the world to foster both retailer and consumer demand for California grapes.

"The commission works with retailers to develop digital and in-store promotions that help motivate consumers to purchase California grapes," Nave said. "In the U.S. and several export markets, California grapes are advertised via grocery shopping apps that serve multiple retailers to reach online grocery shoppers. The commission also conducts social media advertisement campaigns and works with social media influencers to reach consumers in markets around the world."

Weather and costs are constant drivers of practices in the industry.

"Higher prices drive the need for adopting mechanized and automated technology to reduce input costs, and newly developed varieties must be resistant to extreme weather challenges while still meeting consumer expectations for flavorful California grapes," Nave said.

The current estimate for the 2024 table grape season is 92.5 million 19-pound boxes, down from the

2020-2022 average of 96.6 million boxes.

“Each season comes with its own unique challenges, whether from Mother Nature or otherwise; however, California table grape growers find ways to meet challenges and early shipment numbers of California table grapes this season are strong,” Nave said.

Costs for water, labor, insurance, packing materials, etc. have increased significantly and consistently over the course of the last five years, and the California regulations around these issues contribute to the challenges facing California table grape growers.

“On the other hand; however, these regulations set California apart from others in areas like employee compensation; health and safety; environmentally beneficial cultural practices; improved sustainability methods; and food safety protocols,” Neve said. “The high standards to which California growers must operate under are challenging, but they also should give consumers confidence that when they buy California, they are buying that high standard.”

Of the 2020-2022 three-year average volume for California table grapes, green and red grapes represented 45 percent each, and black grapes represented 8 percent. In 2023, the top five varieties, Autumn King, Sheegene-21 Flame Seedless, Sheegene-20 and Scarlet Royal, represented 46 percent of the total volume.

For 2024, the commission is launching a new global marketing campaign designed to drive consumer demand in the U.S. and 21 target markets around the world, which represents an increase of five additional markets.

“The campaign motivates shoppers to purchase California Grapes as a healthy snack with a focus on holidays, celebrations and/or gift-giving,” Nave said. “Happy, Healthy Grapes from California includes three focus areas: share focuses on ways to share grapes on holidays and celebrations; snack focuses on myriad ways to snack on grapes; and add focuses on adding California grapes to recipes as a signature ingredient.”

The California Goodness video series, which is shared with retailers and shoppers, captures not only the benefits and quality of California table grapes, but the impact, growth, and strength of the industry at large.

About Keith Loria |

A graduate of the University of Miami, Keith Loria is a D.C.-based award-winning journalist who has been writing for major publications for close to 20 years on topics as diverse as real estate, food and sports. He started his career with the Associated Press and has held high editorial positions at magazines aimed at healthcare, sports and technology. When not busy writing, he can be found enjoying time with his wife, Patricia, and two daughters, Jordan and Cassidy.

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