

# SIERRA *News*

News, notes and tips from your friends at Sierra Pacific Farms

800-899-3276, [www.spfarminc.com](http://www.spfarminc.com)

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## *Inside this issue:*

- ▶ Food Safety Program
- ▶ And what does need to be done?
- ▶ Why do this?
- ▶ Let Sierra Pacific Farms help!
- ▶ Out in the Field

## *Food Safety Program*

If you haven't already heard what is going around the produce industry, I am here to fill you in. Currently, everyone is dealing with "food safety" or GAP which is "Good Agricultural Practices" Many large retailers such as COSTCO and WalMart are now demanding that they understand and have information from the growers who can show that they follow safe procedures when handling food products. All packing houses have been certified and now it is our turn. Sierra Pacific has had several groves "food safety certified" by Primus



Labs. Now, the California Avocado Commission working hand-in-hand with the USDA, have created a very reasonable GAP program growers can utilize for certification by the USDA. It is the intention of all avocado packers in California to have their growers signed up for certification within six months. If you don't want to sign up, the alternative is to receive a third-label price for your fruit, creating an incentive great enough to comply with what needs to be done.

## *And what does need to be done?*

Primarily the work lies in paperwork. In today's society, paperwork is everything. I can go on and on about the lack of enforcement of these requirements, but at this point it is in our best interest to follow through on our end. The California Avocado Commission has put together a simple binder for the information on your grove; it is a one-time start up to get your grove certified and then maintenance of at least once per year on those information logs. For Sierra

and Somis growers, we will be handling that for you. If there is a problem in the grove, the paperwork will be kept for your individual grove at our office so that it can be reviewed.



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## Sierra Pacific News Cont...

### *Why do this?*



In general, Avocado growers are probably the safest growers in California. We use no serious pesticides for our pest control; our pest problems are once every three years, not a yearly event. Our Good Agricultural Practices can actually help us in what I call, "produce that is naturally safe". As you all know, we don't eat the skin of an avocado and therefore, we fall into a totally different Food Safety category. I would like to praise the California Avocado Commission for going through and creating this specialized process. Once it is complete it is good for any packer in California, so there will be no need for duplication.

### *Let Sierra Pacific Farms help!*

At Sierra Pacific, we are looking at a one-time start up fee to accomplish this of \$285.00. This will cover the appointment of taking the inspector out to the grove and setting up all of the information necessary to complete the inspection of the documents required to be audited by the USDA. Your participation in this will not be necessary; we got your back on this one! Our plan is after completing harvesting each year, to update the binder per their instructions so there will be a minimum fee to administer the ongoing USDA Food Safety program.



If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call our office. Elena Fox – Elena@spfarms.com telephone 951-699-9980 ext. 219 is our contact person for the South and Christopher Jackson – cjackson@spfarms.com 805-523-7200 ext. "0" will be the contact person in the north.

### *Out in the Field*

Estimates are looking very good as they are now coming in we should have estimates done by the end of November for all of our growers. Currently, the California Avocado Commission is using 375 million pounds of Hass as an estimate for next year as I feel bodes very well for the price back to the grower. People are anticipating somewhere between .90 to 1.20 per pound and the commission has been optimistic on projected prices as well. Our size is exceptional for this point in the year and we should look forward to beginning harvest sometime in January

## Until Next Time...

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