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California Fresh Fruit Association Advocates for Growers

Every summer, people around the country enjoy luscious fruits like apricots, table grapes, kiwis, peaches and plums. And since California is the nation’s largest producer of each of these commodities, there’s a good chance those fruits were grown right here in the Golden State.

Working to protect the interests of growers of these and several other permanent fruit crops is the California Fresh Fruit Association (CFFA). With roots dating back to 1921, it’s one of the oldest agricultural trade associations in California, said Courtney Razor, CFFA’s Director of Member Services and Communications.

“CFFA is a public policy organization that advocates on behalf of 13 permanent, fresh fruit commodities, everything from blueberries to stone fruit to table grapes,” Razor said. “We advocate for our grower and shipper members at the local, state and federal levels on a vast array of issues including but not limited to labor, water, trade and food safety.”

Statewide, the association has about 350 members from Lake County to the Coachella Valley, with the bulk of operations clustered between Madera and Kern counties.

Keith Hesterberg, President and CEO of Fresno Madera Farm Credit, said without CFFA members, consumers would have much less fresh fruit.



“According to state statistics, California growers lead the nation in the production of apricots, figs, table grapes, kiwis, nectarines, peaches, persimmons, plums and pomegranates – and second nationally in production of kiwis, nectarines, clingstone peaches and plums. Farm Credit is proud to support many different commodities like fresh fruit that are such important parts of California agriculture.”

Farm Credit Alliance members AgWest Farm Credit, American AgCredit, CoBank and Fresno Madera Farm Credit are proud supporters of CFFA. The organizations are part of the nationwide Farm Credit System – the largest provider of credit to U.S. agriculture.

Razor said water supply and implementation of the state’s groundwater management system were key priorities, even in this extremely wet water year.

On the labor front, CFFA members were disappointed in the passage of AB 2183 last year, which permits so-called “card check” voting for union representation instead of secret-ballot elections that allow workers to vote without fear of coercion. She said the association has been working with other ag

organizations to educate members about how to comply with the new requirements. The group is also supportive of technological research and mechanization with the goal of making farm practices more efficient.

She credits the Association for rising to the occasion during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure CFFA members and their employees had access to personal protective equipment and vaccinations so growers could provide safe working environments and ensure fruit could be harvested and transported to consumers.

Razor also thanked Farm Credit for its sponsorship of CFFA's 87th Annual Meeting, which was held in March this year at The Lodge at Torrey Pines near San Diego.

"The California Fresh Fruit Association is extremely grateful to Farm Credit for their continued partnership and support in helping us make the event a success each year. At our 2023 Annual Meeting, we had 225 members in attendance who heard from keynote speakers about priorities taking place this year at the state Capitol and in Washington, D.C. as lawmakers begin preparations for the Farm Bill.

Mark Littlefield, President and CEO, AgWest Farm Credit said supporting organizations advocating for California agriculture is an important priority for Farm Credit's philanthropical efforts.

"The issues CFFA works on are absolutely critical to the success of our state's fruit growers – indeed, all of California's farmers and ranchers," Littlefield said. "Without water, a labor force and the ability to export crops overseas, the industry that feeds the nation and the world could not exist, which is why it's so important that CFFA and other advocacy organizations do such a great job of educating policymakers here in California and in Washington, D.C."

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About Farm Credit:

AgWest Farm Credit, American AgCredit, CoBank and Fresno Madera Farm Credit are cooperatively owned lending institutions providing agriculture and rural communities with a dependable source of credit. For more than 100 years, the Farm Credit System has specialized in financing farmers, ranchers, farmer-owned cooperatives, rural utilities and agribusinesses. Farm Credit offers a broad range of loan products and financial services, including long-term real estate loans, operating lines of credit, equipment and facility loans, cash management and appraisal and leasing services...everything a "growing" business needs. For a link to this article and for more information, visit www.farmcreditalliance.com.

About the California Fresh Fruit Association:

The California Fresh Fruit Association is a voluntary public policy organization that represents growers, packers, and shippers of the California table grape, blueberry, kiwi, pomegranate, and deciduous tree fruit communities. CFFA serves as a representative for these growers, shippers, and packers, on issues at both the state and federal levels. More information on the Association can be found at www.cafreshfruit.com.