

**AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
CALIFORNIA PRUNES
QUARTERLY REPORT – MAY THROUGH JULY 2020
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GARY OBENAU, President of Agricultural Research Consulting, coordinates research related to crop management and sustainability on behalf of the California Prune Board, its growers, and processors. IN THIS REPORT are updates on: Research; TASC Project; USITC; MBAO; UC Farm Advisor Positions; SVOS; CSCC; Meetings Attended and Scheduled.

RESEARCH

This year will hopefully be one to remember and not one to repeat, with regard to in-person meetings. While some advantages were realized in the transition to virtual meetings (necessitated by COVID-19 restrictions), the personal exchanges experienced at face-to-face meetings were noticeably absent in 2020.

On May 6, 2020, instead of the annual Prune Research Field Tour, a virtual meeting was held with Franz Niederholzer summarizing the past several years of his Temperature at Bloom research. Comments on this year's crop were shared, with input offered by most participants. Slides from this presentation can be accessed here: [Prune Bloom Review, 2020](#).

On June 10, 2020, a virtual demonstration was held on pruning young prune trees to bear early, with the possibility of hedging to reduce pruning cost. Two industry members, Joe Turkovich and Eric Nielsen, did an excellent job sharing how they train young trees. A recording of this meeting can be accessed at the following link: [Pruning Prunes: Long pruning during tree training](#).

Both of these meetings had approximately 30 participants, an attendance number similar to the traditional in-person meetings.

The 2019 Prune Research Reports have been added to the University of California website at [UCANR Prune Research Reports Database](#). Additional reports dating back to 1961 can also be found at this site.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SPECIALTY CROPS (TASC) PROJECT

On July 15, 2020, after three years of proposal submissions, the Technical Assistance Specialty Crops (TASC) project titled "Preserving sulfuryl fluoride for dried fruit exports to the European Union" was approved. Persistence and the shared leadership of Mr. Spencer Walse (USDA) finally resulted in successful funding of this important project. Even though the prune industry will directly benefit from this project, it should be noted that dried fruits and nuts are part of the project and they will benefit as well. Support from FAS/TASC totals \$1,467,281 over a three-year period that began on July 15th. Objectives of the project include:

1. Establishing proper tolerances/MRLs for SF on dried fruit.
2. Evaluating residues associated with contemporary SF use patterns on dried fruit and tree nuts.
3. Quantifying fluoride residues from SF vacuum fumigation of dried fruit and tree nuts.
4. Transferring research outcomes to other key markets to support QPS treatments.
5. Limiting SF emissions following postharvest fumigation.

U.S. INTERNATIONAL TRADE COMMISSION (USITC)

The U.S. International Trade Commission (USITC) is in the process of reviewing the study entitled, "Global Economic Impact of Missing and Low Pesticide Maximum Residue Levels, Vol. 1." This is an important study, triggered by the EU situation, and is relative to the cost of low or missing MRLs. The first part of the report can be accessed here: [Global Economic Impact of Missing and Low Pesticide Maximum Residue Levels, Vol. 1](#). More information will be forthcoming as this important work progresses.

METHYL BROMIDE ALTERNATIVES OUTREACH (MBAO)

As with the MRL conference, the MBAO is experiencing planning difficulties around its November 2020 conference. While this will likely be a virtual conference, planning is currently delayed due to ongoing cancellation negotiations with the hotels. Watch the [MBAO website](#) for further developments.

UC FARM ADVISOR POSITIONS

With the help of other commodities, support is still being sought to assist Farm Advisors with their multiple county responsibilities. Almonds, walnuts, and pistachio boards have commenced interviews for their Staff Research Associates (SRAs). These positions will likely be filled by the end of summer, one of which will be located with Luke Milliron and

another with Katherine Jarvis-Shean. While the number of SRA positions has not yet been determined, efforts to increase their totals will continue into next year.

SACRAMENTO VALLEY ORCHARD SOURCE (SVOS)

This is a reminder that the SVOS provides excellent information from UC on California Prunes. Look and then tag the website for easy access. You can subscribe to receive weekly updates and alerts on ET, Pest Reports, and events, in addition to specific information on prunes at: [Sacramento Valley Orchard Source](#).

CALIFORNIA SPECIALTY CROPS COUNCIL (CSCC)

The California Specialty Crops Council hosted its 15th annual MRL Harmonization Workshop on May 27-28, 2020. As with many other events at this time, the live event meeting evolved into a 2-day virtual webinar event. While losing the network opportunities that this meeting usually provides, the Council was able to extend its reach to over 500 participants this year.

The webinar started off with Anna Boulova with FRUCOM in Belgium and Reinhold Kugel in Germany. They provided a valuable update for conditions in the EU, including information on the latest "Farm to Fork Strategy." We then heard from Julia Doherty, Deputy Assistant US Trade Representative. She included information including the USTR's recent request to the US Trade Commission to study the current MRL situation. (Volume 1 of 2 was just released at the end of July.) On the second day, information was provided to explain the difference between a Hazard-based approach and a Risk-based approach to setting MRL assignments. Also, there were two presentations covering grains and soybean, which explored the problems these commodities are having in regard to MRLs when they are shipped in a bulk loaded manner.

MEETINGS ATTENDED May 2020 THROUGH July 2020

05/06/20	Prune Research Field Tour-Pruning/Virtual
05/27 & 05/28/20	MRL Conference/Virtual
06/04/20	USDA/Virtual
06/05/20	Spray Technology/Virtual
06/10/20	Prune Pruning/Virtual
06/17/20	MBAO Program Committee/Virtual
06/18/20	CPB/Virtual
06/24/20	CSCC Technical Committee/Virtual

MEETINGS SCHEDULED (TO DATE) August THROUGH October 2020

08/11/20	Prune Breeding/Virtual
08/19/20	CSCC Technical Committee/Virtual
08/19/20	CSCC Board/Virtual
09/16/20	MBAO Program Committee/Virtual