

**AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH  
CALIFORNIA PRUNES  
QUARTERLY REPORT – AUGUST THROUGH OCTOBER 2020  
GARY L. OBENAU**

---

*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; Methyl Bromide Alternatives Outreach (MBAO); UC Farm Advisor Positions; Sacramento Valley Orchard Source (SVOS); California Specialty Crops Council (CSCC); Meetings Attended and Scheduled.*

---

## **RESEARCH**

This year's Prune Research Workgroup meeting will be held on December 1<sup>st</sup> (full day) and 2<sup>nd</sup> (half day). Given the ongoing COVID restrictions, this meeting will be held virtually this year. Every effort will be made to leverage our technology to ensure a successful meeting, even with the online format. Working with the CPB staff and John Taylor, Chair of the Crop Management & Sustainability Committee, research priorities are being reassessed to ensure that assessments are directed towards projects that provide the highest value to the industry.

As a reminder, Prune Research Reports can be found at the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR) website here: [Prune Research Reports Database](#).

Significant activity is still taking place with pollinators. At a recent virtual discussion on these activities, Dr. Elizabeth Hills made the following presentation: [USDA-EPA Pollinator State of the Science Workshop](#).

## **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE for SPECIALTY CROPS (TASC) PROJECT**

The California Prune Board's recently awarded TASC Project, "Preserving Sulfuryl Fluoride for Dried Fruit Exports to the European Union" became effective on July 15<sup>th</sup>. Three of the members of that team will be reporting on their progress, including the direction of that research, at the November [MBAO Conference](#).

## **METHYL BROMIDE ALTERNATIVES OUTREACH (MBAO)**

This year's MBAO conference will be held virtually November 3-5, 2020 and every consideration has been made to ensure a successful, global event. Abstracts of presentations have been posted at the conference website: [MBAO Conference](#). Presentations will be available at the conclusion of the conference.

## **UC FARM ADVISOR POSITIONS**

No Staff Research Assistant (SRA) positions were funded this year. However, work continues with the Almond, Pistachio and Walnut industries to fill four of these necessary positions, the justifications for which are listed below:

- Statewide reductions in Farm Advisor positions, including positions left vacant from retirements
- Responsibilities of current Farm Advisors extend over ever-increasing areas/multiple counties
- Researcher responsibilities at the UC Experiment Station are being subsumed by Farm Advisors
- Provides opportunities for research priorities to be directly tied to commodity-specific funding
- Provides relief for Farm Advisors to address in-season issues that are not yet identified as funded projects
- Assists Farm Advisors with conducting research, evaluating data, and presenting results

## **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: [www.sacvalleyorchards.com/subscribe](http://www.sacvalleyorchards.com/subscribe).

## **CALIFORNIA SPECIALTY CROPS COUNCIL (CSCC)**

Even though this year's CSCC field tour for regulatory personnel was cancelled due to COVID, the MRL conference (May 27-28, 2020) was still held, but online. Last year's attendance number (160) was far surpassed with this year's 523 participants. The virtual environment provided opportunities for speakers and attendees to engage from multiple locations, irrespective of their time zones, making this an extremely successful and well-attended event.

Next year's conference is currently scheduled for May 26-27, 2021 and the tour is planned for August 2-5, 2021. Logistics (including location) are in the initial planning stages; the first MRL Program Committee meeting was held on October 28, 2020.

---

**MEETINGS ATTENDED August 2020 THROUGH October 2020**

08/11/20 Prune Breeding/Virtual  
08/11/20 MCFA Technical Committee/Virtual  
08/19/20 CSCC Technical Committee/Virtual  
08/19/20 CSCC Board/Virtual  
09/16/20 MBAO Program Committee/Virtual  
09/21/20 Chlorpyrifos/Virtual  
09/29/20 MBAO-Hotel San Diego/Call  
09/30/20 MBAO Board/Virtual  
10/01/20 MBAO-Hotel Orlando/Call  
10/19/20 MBAO-Board/Virtual  
10/28/20 MRL Program Committee/Virtual

**MEETINGS SCHEDULED (TO DATE) November THROUGH January 2021**

11/18/20 CSCC Technical Committee/Visalia (location tentative)  
11/24/20 MRL Program Committee/Virtual  
12/01 & 12/02/20 Prune Research Workgroup/Virtual  
12/10/20 CPB/Sacramento (location tentative)  
01/11/21 Fruit & Nut Research/Davis (location tentative)  
01/19/21 UC Review Prune Research Proposals  
01/21/21 CS&S Research Committee/Sacramento (location tentative)