

Press Release from the
Walnut Alliance of California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 8, 2025

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Walnut Industry Forms New ‘Walnut Alliance of California’

Sacramento, CA -- A group of walnut industry members announced today the launch of a new organization with a mission to promote a stable and profitable marketing environment for walnuts from California.

“For too many years, walnut growers have faced prices well below levels that are profitable. We don’t believe this is sustainable or beneficial for anyone in the industry,” said Donald Norene, a walnut grower from Rio Oso, CA who is among the group leading the formation of the new organization. “This year California is expecting to see a significant improvement in pricing with excellent quality, reduced acreage, a lower crop estimate, prospects of emerging export markets and solid marketing campaigns being implemented by the Walnut Board and Commission. Now is the time for us to take advantage of these opportunities.”

The new organization to be called the Walnut Alliance of California is loosely modeled after the Almond Alliance, which has provided tremendous value for California almond farmers and performs activities on behalf of the almond industry that are not allowed through its federal marketing order, the Almond Board of California.

Like the Almond Alliance, the Walnut Alliance of California will operate as a non-profit association with voluntary members who will pay a fee based on their size. The Walnut Alliance will be comprised of walnut growers, handlers, hullers and other businesses associated with the California walnut industry.

“A primary objective of the organization is to assist the Walnut Board and Commission with the excellent work they are already doing on a number of fronts,” continued Norene. “One of our first actions is to establish a federal Political Action Committee, which is something mandatory commodity programs are not allowed to do. Our plan is to raise funds that will help efforts to fight for fair regulations and trade policy on behalf of California walnut growers.”

Additionally, the Walnut Alliance also intends to focus on increasing grower returns and will be taking over the organization formerly known as the Walnut Bargaining Association.

“Our vision is that California walnut growers, marketers and handlers are profitable and conduct business in a transparent manner to the benefit of all segments of the industry,” said Aaron Martella of Grower Direct Nut Company which grows, processes and markets walnuts in Hughson and who will be serving on the Board of the new Walnut Alliance. “We believe this new organization will allow us to address several issues that are impacting growers, handlers, hullers, suppliers and the entire supply chain.

In October, Walnut Alliance organizers published a comparison of grower prices paid by handlers for walnuts in 2023. Pricing data gathered from a survey of walnut growers throughout the state clearly shows a need for improvement when it comes to grower returns.

“Our survey indicates a wide range of prices paid to growers in 2023. All were well below profitable levels no matter which handler was involved,” said Pete Jelavich, walnut grower from Yuba City. “To summarize the results, virtually all of the prices reported by the growers in our survey were below break-even for growers, which is estimated to be in the range of 75 to 80 cents per in-shell pound.”

“The California walnut industry won’t last at these prices that are below break-even levels,” said Jelavich. “We are urging all growers and handlers of California walnuts to work with us to fight for a profitable and stable marketing environment that will sustain and grow our industry. Sharing information and improving transparency about these serious pricing issues is a critical step.”

Jelavich noted that current members of the Walnut Bargaining Association and anyone who joins the new Walnut Alliance can receive a copy of the pricing survey and will be able to contact the organization to learn more about prices paid by handlers in 2023.

The Walnut Alliance of California is embarking on an outreach and educational effort to inform the industry about the new organization and encourage membership. The organization is seeking members from throughout the walnut industry and is looking for individuals who wish to serve on its new Board. The Walnut Alliance is being managed by Chris Zanobini of Sacramento-based Agricultural Association Management Services. They can be reached at (916) 441-1064 by or phone or via email at info@walnutalliance.org.

More information is available on the organization’s new website at www.walnutalliance.org where industry members can see the cost of membership, complete a membership application and sign up to receive updates.

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