

Crop Production Research

My name is Rick Stark and I am the Manager of Grower Relations and Secretary for Sun-Maid Growers of California. I have been with Sun-Maid for 28 years.

I have served on the Raisin Administrative Committee since 1998 and the California Raisin Marketing Board since 2009. I am the past Chairman of the National Grape and Wine Initiative, a grape industry organization representing raisins, table grapes, juice grapes and wine grapes in developing, overseeing, promoting and assisting in securing research funding. I serve on the California State University Fresno Viticulture Enology Research Center Industry Advisory Board and I am the Raisin Commodity Chairman for the Fresno County Farm Bureau.

I have seen first-hand the importance of crop production research in the raisin industry. Research has led to improved water efficiency and fertilization, integrated pest management, earlier ripening varieties and advanced high yielding trellising systems that benefit our growers every day.

Such research has been funded by the California Raisin Marketing Board (CRMB) in the past, however this new language would give the Raisin Administrative Committee (RAC) the authority to fund such crop production research in the event that the CRMB was unable to do so.

The CRMB has been unable to fund crop production research since 2012 due to ongoing litigation. By giving the RAC the authority to fund crop production research, critical issues such as vine mealybug control, development of mildew resistant vines and improved dried on the vine technology could continue uninterrupted. Research programs are typically ongoing and little is accomplished with on again, off again efforts.

Developments through crop production research have made the California Raisin Industry successful. With higher efficiency, higher yields and reduced pesticide residues, producers have become economically sustainable, while handlers and consumers have benefited from lower pesticide residues and higher quality raisins.

Crop production research can improve grower returns by increasing yields, reducing input costs, or improving quality and cleanliness.

Research is expensive and is a long process. Small businesses don't have the resources to undertake research. This is why a continuous industry effort is valuable.

Benefits of this research would be realized by producers, handlers, and consumers. The benefits would include higher yields, lower input costs, lower or more effective chemical use and improved raisin quality.

A crop production research program would only be implemented if the CRMB was unable to do so. As a former member of the CRMB Research Subcommittee, I participated first hand on the industry process in soliciting and evaluating research proposals and then making budget recommendations to the full CRMB in prioritizing these expenditures versus other marketing efforts. Good industry consensus was reached. I would expect the same if operated under this proposed RAC authority.

Compliance would include USDA oversight similar to all other RAC actions. USDA would be included in the review and approval of any proposed research project as part of the budget review process.

Thank you for considering my comments. Are there any questions?

RS/glj 4/1/16

Rick Stark
Proposal 4 - Production Research