



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Top Quality and Good Supplies Expected for California Kiwifruit

Unlike last year's frost-ravaged season, this year the California kiwifruit industry is predicting a larger crop of excellent quality.

"Last year, California produced just 5.6 million trays, but this year's crop is more in line with normal production levels of 6.5 million seven-pound tray equivalents," explained Chris Zanobini, President of the California Kiwifruit Commission, which recently released the official pre-season estimate for California kiwifruit. Zanobini noted that a heavy frost last year seriously reduced supplies of kiwifruit. "This year we are in very good shape with respect to both volume and quality."

Kiwifruit grower and chairman of the California Kiwifruit Commission John Fagundes reiterated that this year's quality is excellent. "The fruit is coming off with really nice shape and it's virtually blemish free this season," said Fagundes who is currently harvesting kiwifruit in the southern San Joaquin Valley of California and will continue for the next few weeks. "The crop appears to be peaking at size 33, which is an excellent size for retail sales."

Zanobini, who heads up marketing programs on behalf of the California kiwifruit industry, explained that in the past, kiwifruit was often sold per piece which worked well for smaller sized fruit.

"Now that the industry is producing larger fruit, market research suggests that it is best for retailers to sell the fruit by the pound for maximum profits," said Zanobini. "Research also shows that larger kiwifruit displays will result in higher profits at retail."

Zanobini noted that California offers both conventional and organic kiwifruit options and that November is traditionally one of the biggest sales months for California kiwifruit. "This year, we are expecting good movement during November because of the excellent quality of this year's crop and the fact that exports from New Zealand and Chile are largely gone from marketing channels this season," he said.

"It's been very tough lately for California kiwifruit growers to compete against foreign imports," said Mike Noland, a kiwifruit farmer from Marysville. "This year, given the weakening U.S. dollar, we are optimistic that Italian imports will be less desirable for our customers. Also, we are really hoping our customers will support the U.S. kiwifruit industry."

There really should be no reason not to support California kiwifruit this season with a large crop, excellent quality and ample supplies. For more information about California kiwifruit, please contact the California Kiwifruit Commission at (916) 441-0678.

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Note: An electronic version of this press release is available at www.kiwifruit.org.