



IMPACT REPORT

2012–2017



Chairman

Steve Patricio, Firebaugh

Board Members

George Mainas, Holtville

Bart Fisher, Blythe

John Dresick, Huron

Lance Levake, Turlock

Berj Moosekian,

Los Banos

Matt Maring, Westley

Neill Callis, Turlock

Barry Zwillinger,

Dos Palos

Bonnye Whamond,

Public Member

Alternates

Tyler Colace, Brawley

Andrew Fisher, Blythe

Randy Johnston, Huron

Brian Wright, Westley

Fotis Bilios, Mendota

Garrett Patricio,

Firebaugh

Steve Smith, Turlock

Pat Tucker, Dos Palos

John Chubbuck

About the Board

Board members are elected by the industry to direct the organization's activities. Funding for these activities comes from a per box assessment paid on each box of cantaloupe the handler member produces in the State.



LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIRMAN



- In May 2012, an overwhelming majority (100%) of all California cantaloupe handlers voted in a statewide referendum to establish the State's first mandatory food safety program to be implemented by a commodity board.
- This action followed the tragic outbreak of listeria associated with cantaloupe produced at Jensen Farms in Colorado. Although California cantaloupes have never been associated with a foodborne illness outbreak, California cantaloupe producers have long been committed to ensuring the safety of our product. The creation of the CCAB's mandatory food safety program was simply the next step in our industry's 25-plus years of food safety leadership.
- Five years later, we are even more committed than ever. Through the California Cantaloupe Advisory Board's mandatory food safety program, over 3.5 billion servings of cantaloupe have been produced under a system of mandatory government audits that verify our product is being grown and prepared for market using the safest practices.
- It is now time to renew our commitment to safety and to decide if the outreach, communication

and crisis management program in place to protect consumers and California cantaloupe farmers is worth keeping.

To help you decide, this Impact Report is meant to provide a brief overview of our activities and accomplishments from 2012 through today. The report includes:

1. a review of the past five years production and financial history;
2. an overview of the CCAB's mandatory food safety program;
3. a compilation of food safety audit findings;
4. highlights from CCAB's communication and social media program;
5. a summary of important issues including food safety research and crisis preparedness.

We hope you will take some time to read this important document and share it with your fellow California cantaloupe producers. Since 1988, the California Cantaloupe Advisory Board has helped cantaloupe producers achieve great things in quality control, public relations and food safety. More importantly the CCAB has provided a means for us to work together to survive. In the years to come, this may be more important than ever.

Sincerely,

Steve Patricio

ABOUT THE CALIFORNIA CANTALOUPE ADVISORY BOARD



From 1988 until 2012, CCAB assessments were used to pay for research, promotion and quality assurance. In 2012, all state handlers unanimously approved expansion of the Program to include mandatory compliance with science-based food safety practices and verified by CDFA auditors.



The organization is comprised of all producers of cantaloupes in the state and operates the only mandatory food safety program in the U.S. produce industry that invites government auditors to inspect all aspects of cantaloupe operations.

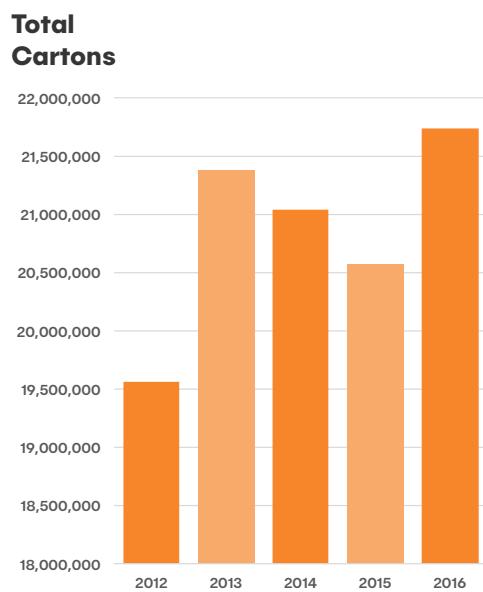


The California Cantaloupe Advisory Board (CCAB) was formed in 1988 and is headquartered in Dinuba, California. The Board operates under a State "Handler" Marketing Order and falls under the direction and authority of the Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA).



The California Cantaloupe Advisory board represents a commitment to the highest level of safety and quality for all cantaloupe consumers.

ANNUAL CANTALOUPE PRODUCTION



CALIFORNIA CANTALOUPE ADVISORY BOARD FINANCIALS SUMMARY

	FY 2012/13	FY 2013/14	FY 2014/15	FY 2015/16	FY 2016/17
Assessment Rate:	2¢/carton	2¢/carton	2¢/carton	2¢/carton	2¢/carton
Total All Income	\$442,811	\$429,533	\$428,483	\$427,411	\$423,000
Expense:					
Administration	\$102,486	\$92,247	\$86,698	\$86,062	\$105,200
Food Safety	\$109,108	\$150,607	\$125,858	\$124,369	\$120,000
Promotion/PR – Net	\$61,030	\$119,074	\$77,084	\$77,109	\$97,900
Total Spent on Promotion/PR	\$101,155	\$206,158	\$190,679	\$129,698	\$97,900
Specialty Crop Block Grant funds*	(\$40,125)	(\$87,084)	(\$113,595)	(\$52,589)	0

*Grant income received to offset CCAB Promotional spending.

CANTALOUPE FOOD SAFETY

The California Cantaloupe Advisory Board's mandatory food safety program has been in place since 2012 to verify that all California cantaloupe producers are following a set of science-based food safety practices. The program requires government auditors to inspect cantaloupe farms and cooling facilities to verify they are operating in compliance with a series of required food safety checkpoints.

The purpose of the CCAB food safety program is to continually improve the safety of California cantaloupe. Although California cantaloupes have never been associated with a foodborne illness outbreak, California producers are committed to protecting public health and improving consumer confidence in cantaloupes.

Results of the government audits conducted through the CCAB indicate that California cantaloupe producers have been making significant improvements in implementing the science-based food safety practices established through the program. The system of government audits, corrective action and worker training has consistently lowered the number of times auditors are finding that proper food safety practices are not being followed. In fact, it is now common among California cantaloupe handlers to achieve what is called a "clean" audit, which means that auditors did not find the need for any corrective actions during an audit. This is impressive.

Clean Audits



2014
18 out of 100



2015
51 out of 91



2016
65 out of 97

Please note that, as required by the CCAB Food Safety Program, handlers are required to correct any violation of the food safety practices so that, ultimately, all handlers must be in 100% compliance with all checkpoints included in the audit. If they are not, they must take corrective action and then be re-audited to verify corrections have been made. The "clean" audits do not require a re-audit because the handler is in full compliance when the auditor leaves the premises.

About the CCAB Food Safety Program

MANDATORY FOOD SAFETY PRACTICES

The CCAB food safety requirements were developed based upon 25 years of university research along with input from government, food safety and farming experts. CCAB's government audit includes practices in five different categories: General Requirements; Environmental Assessments; Water Use; Soil Amendments; and Worker Safety, Hygiene and Training. The program allows for these standards to be updated as new information or science becomes available. The practices are reviewed and updated, on an annual basis.

by the CCAB in an open and transparent process. The current required practices are posted on the CCAB website and can be found [here](#).

GOVERNMENT AUDITS

CCAB food safety audits are performed by independent food safety auditors employed by the California Department of Food and Agriculture and certified by the USDA. Every California handler is audited at least once during the short cantaloupe season, and those who are in production for a longer period will be audited every 6 to 8 weeks. Handlers who produce in more than one growing district are audited in each district where they produce cantaloupe. Every cantaloupe grower is also audited at least once per year. In addition to regularly scheduled audits, every handler is also subject to at least one unannounced audit.



The CCAB food safety audit is conducted in two parts. One part involves food safety practices at the field and harvest level, while the other part concerns practices at the packing house or cooling facility. The California Cantaloupe Advisory Board's food safety program is the produce industry's only mandatory food safety program that invites government auditors to inspect all aspects of their operations.

CHECKLIST AND CHECKPOINTS

Each government audit includes a checklist of specific required food safety practices, or checkpoints. In a regular audit at the field and harvest level, the checklist is made up of 97 individual checkpoints. The checklist for the packing house or cooling facility has 118 checkpoints. Unannounced audits are meant to be a spot check to ensure handlers are following procedures on a regular basis and are a bit shorter with 40 checkpoints at the field and harvesting level and 76 checkpoints at the packinghouse and cooler level.

To become certified by the CCAB, handlers must be in compliance with 100% of these food safety checkpoints. If even one of the checkpoints is found to be out of compliance with the required practice the handler is issued a citation and the practice must be corrected. Some citations are minor enough that they can be corrected during the audit. For other citations, handlers are allowed up to five days to take corrective action and CDFA must verify the corrections were made. In the end, each handler must be in 100% compliance with all food safety checkpoints.

DEVIATION LEVELS

CDFA categorizes citations, or deviations from the required practices, into four different levels depending on the seriousness of the infraction and its potential to create a food safety risk. The four levels are as follows:

Minor Infraction: A deviation from the Marketing Order's standards which does not necessarily increase risk of a food borne illness. The infraction can be corrected before the inspector leaves the premise.

Minor Deviation: A deviation from the marketing order standards which can be addressed within 5 days of the inspection and the practice did not necessarily increase the risk of a food borne illness. Corrections will be verified at the next regular audit.

Major Deviation: A violation of the marketing order standards that may inhibit the maintenance of food safety, but does not necessarily result in unsafe product. Handlers must submit a plan to correct the deviation within five days and be re-audited to verify corrections have been made.

Flagrant Deviation: A violation where the preponderance of evidence shows that the Handler knew, or should have known exercising reasonable diligence, that the practice did not conform to the measurable standards established by the CCAB, and the violation significantly increased the risk of delivering unsafe product into commerce.

Please note that CDFA auditors are required to notify public health officials directly whenever they encounter violations that are unsafe or could put consumers at risk.

DECERTIFICATION

Handlers can be decertified from the CCAB food safety program for a flagrant deviation that poses a safety risk. They can also be decertified for failure to correct a citation. To date, no California cantaloupe handler has been decertified from the program.

Handlers who have been verified as compliant with the mandatory food safety practices of the California Cantaloupe Advisory Board are published in a list of Certified Handlers on the CCAB website [here](#).

A handler who has achieved certification the previous season will be included on this list at the beginning of the following season. These handlers will remain on the list unless they are decertified from the program. Buyers should be assured that handlers who are listed on the CCAB Certified Handlers List have been found to be in full compliance with required food safety practices.

Certified Handlers 2016 Season

ATB Packing
Creekside Organic
Del Bosque Farms
Del Mar Farms
Devine Organics
DFI Marketing
Ernie Strahm & Sons
Fisher Ranch

Five Crowns Marketing
Imperial Sales
Lawrence Cox Ranches
Legend Produce
Mainas Farms
Mike Abatti Farms
Palm Tree Packing
Pappas & Company

Riverbend Fresh
Stamoules Produce
Turlock Fruit Company
Van Gronigen & Sons Inc.
Vessey & Co.
V.H. Azhderian
Westside Produce

HOW THE AUDIT PROCESS WORKS

In general, the CCAB food safety audit program works as follows for a regular audit:

- CDFA auditor contacts the handler to schedule an audit. (3 to 5 days in advance)
- The auditors conduct the audit of the cantaloupe handler's operations. (1 day)
- Any Minor Infractions found are corrected immediately and verified by the auditor.
- CDFA auditor prepares an audit report noting any citations issued and submits it to the handler and to the CCAB's Compliance Officer. (within 2 – 5 days of the audit date)
- The Compliance Officer reviews and prepares a report of the findings for the handler (within 2 to 4 days of receiving the audit report from CDFA)
- Handler must submit a Corrective Action Plan which outlines how deviations will or have been corrected. (within 5 days of receiving their compliance report)
- The Compliance Officer reviews the Corrective Action Plan to make sure the actions are adequate to address the problems. (2 – 4 days after receiving the Corrective Action Plan)
- The handler is re-audited to ensure all citations have been corrected.

THE COMPLIANCE OFFICER

CCAB's Compliance Officer is Jonathan W. Field. Field operates as an independent contractor and is considered a neutral third-party who acts as a liaison between CDFA and the cantaloupe handlers. The purpose of the CCAB Food Safety program is to ensure that handlers are in compliance with the required food safety practices. Field works cooperatively with California cantaloupe handlers. However, if repeated violations, serious infractions or disregard for the process are found with any handler, it is the Compliance Officer's duty to report the handler to the Board and to government regulators or to suggest decertification action be taken.

Jonathan Field is an experienced professional and has spent his career working for both government agencies and California commodity groups. He also serves as the Compliance Officer for the California and Arizona Leafy Greens Marketing Agreements.

California Cantaloupe Advisory Board Citation and Compliance Record

During the 2012 cantaloupe season, California handlers were subject only to what is called an informational audit so the industry could learn what would be expected of them through the new mandatory program. The first official CDFA audit of a California handler occurred on May 20, 2013. Since 2013, California cantaloupe handlers have been subject to scheduled and unannounced audits each year. The audits have been divided into two major categories—one category for field and harvest operations and another category for the packing and cooling facilities. Therefore, there are actually four types of mandatory audits each with a different number of important checkpoints. The four audits are: Scheduled Field and Harvesting Audit; Unannounced Field and Harvesting Audit; Scheduled Packing and Cooling Audit; and Unannounced Packing and Cooling Audit.

Over the course of the past five years, California cantaloupe producers have significantly decreased the number of citations issued during the government audits. On the chart below you can see a continual drop in the number citations issued over the five-year period. The percentage of checkpoints that are found to be non-compliant compared with those that are in compliance has always been less than 5%. This past season that percentage has dropped to less than 1% and there were no flagrant or major deviations issued.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Audits					
Scheduled		53	58	41	54
Unannounced		46	42	50	43
Total	0*	99	100	91	97
Total Checkpoints					
	0	8,184	8,473	7,038	8,266
Citations					
Minor Infraction	NA	94	67	96	30
Minor Deviation	NA	258	207	98	45
Major Deviation	NA	4	5	6	0
Flagrant Deviation	NA	0	0	0	0
Total		356	279	200	75
Clean Audits					
	NA	0	18	51	65
Non-Compliance Rate					
		4.3%	3.3%	2.8%	0.9%

*Informational Audits only conducted in 2012.



Rebuilding Consumer Confidence in California Cantaloupe

Following the establishment of the new food safety program for California cantaloupe in 2012, the Board set out to tell the world about the great things happening in the California cantaloupe industry. In 2013, a new logo was created and a website was developed to serve as the hub of

all things California cantaloupe. That year, the California Cantaloupe Advisory Board and its public relations agency were able to secure funds to help the Board achieve its communications goals. The funding, in the amount of \$294,000, came from the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Specialty Crop Block Grant program with the goal of helping California cantaloupe producers regain consumer confidence in cantaloupe following the devastating Jensen Farms outbreak.

Over the course of this grant period and through today, CCAB has worked each day to build a robust outreach program that engages with consumers about the health, safety and versatility of cantaloupe. This effort reaches thousands of consumers and has created loyal fans and cantaloupe lovers. Content included on the website and social media channels is aimed not just at informing consumers about the efforts of California cantaloupe farmers to produce a safe product, but also to encourage consumers to buy and enjoy cantaloupe all summer long.

In the past five years, CCAB has gone from a situation where we were unable to effectively reach consumers to having the ability to speak directly with thousands of consumers at any given time. Our social media channels on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram have regular followers totaling over 25,000 and thousands visit our website to learn more about California cantaloupe. Our website includes the following:

- Details of the mandatory food safety program, including a list of certified members;
- A recipe database with over 30 new recipes using California cantaloupe;
- Videos on how cantaloupe is grown; how to safely handle it at home and ideas on creative ways to use cantaloupe;
- A regular blog that provides information on fun recipe and usage ideas; stories of our farmers and more information on our industry's efforts to produce safe food.

In addition, each year CCAB sponsors a host of consumer contests designed to create excitement about our product to encourage them to buy California cantaloupe, visit our website or follow us on-line. In short, this program provides a means of connecting cantaloupe producers with consumers in a way we have never been able to before. The future possibilities and benefits of this program are truly endless.



CCAB Supports Research to Make Cantaloupe Even Safer

For over 25 years, California cantaloupe producers have been leaders in food safety research and in adapting their growing practices to ensure cantaloupes are safe. We continue this commitment today by investing in new research through the Center for Produce Safety (CPS). Established in 2007, CPS provides the produce industry with credible, independent, science-based research. Each year for the past five years, the California cantaloupe and melon industries have donated \$50,000 to CPS to facilitate new food safety research. This collaborative investment is paying off.



Recently, a team of scientists has been studying potential pathogen transfer from and to contact surfaces throughout the cantaloupe food chain. The research focuses on *Salmonella* and *Listeria monocytogenes* transfer. The goal is to develop best management practices the industry can use to significantly reduce the potential transfer of pathogens to or from surfaces that cantaloupe may contact – both in production and at retail.

Cantaloupe producers are welcoming this kind of research with open arms, because it is exactly the kind of information that may have prevented something like the Jensen Farms outbreak from occurring. This kind of work protects both consumers and producers. Collaborating to provide adequate funding through the CCAB is really the best way to get the answers we need.

ALWAYS BE PREPARED

We know that California cantaloupe has never been associated with a foodborne illness outbreak. To make sure, the industry has committed itself to the CCAB's mandatory food safety program. Despite all this, cantaloupe producers should always be prepared to deal with a crisis should one arise. For this reason, CCAB retains a top-notch crisis management firm; regularly updates its Crisis Plan and ensures immediate access to media, consumers and retail audiences through the website and social media program. This is a critical function of the CCAB. Good crisis preparedness can make or break an industry. It can even save lives.

As a member of the California Cantaloupe Advisory Board, please rest assured that your interests are being protected when it comes to reducing the impact of a crisis on cantaloupe sales.

