



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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contact: Jonathan Field

info@walnutbargainingassociation.com

Walnut Bargaining Association Optimistic About 2023 Crop Quality and Grower Pricing

Based on a revised volume estimate and superior quality for the 2023 California walnut season, the Walnut Bargaining Association (WBA) has updated its minimum price recommendation to 70 cents per pound in-shell. The price is based on Jumbo/Large Chandlers of good quality.

“In September, our Board recommended handlers pay growers a minimum price of 60 cents per pound in-shell,” said Donald Norene, Chairman of the WBA. “On October 4, the USDA National Ag Statistics Service issued a revised estimate lowering expected volume down to 760,000 tons.

“Inventories from the 2022 crop are also significantly reduced, and as growers begin harvest throughout the state, they are reporting quality is vastly improved over the past two seasons. In fact, many are saying the 2023 quality may be one of the best in recent memory,” continued Norene. “For these reasons, we are encouraging handlers to structure grower returns to reflect a minimum price of 70 cents per pound and we urge walnut growers to demand this be the starting point for pricing of this year’s crop.”

The WBA is a grower-owned agricultural cooperative, which exists to help farmers receive a fair price for walnuts. Each year the WBA issues a minimum price recommendation based on current crop and economic conditions. The WBA Board met this week in Sacramento to revise its minimum price recommendation in an attempt to address the grower return crisis of the past two years which has already put many California walnut farmers out of business.

“The primary factor in USDA’s lower estimate for crop volume is the removal of a significant number of walnut orchards this past season,” said Norene who noted the California Walnut Commission has contracted with a firm called Land IQ to gather accurate data about walnut acreage currently in production.

According to California Walnut Commission CEO Robert Verloop, the latest information provided to USDA “does not take into consideration the acres that appear to be abandoned or stressed, which could lower the crop size further.”

Verloop noted that another acreage update from Land IQ will be available in early November, which will likely reflect even fewer producing acres and, potentially, even lower crop volume.

“It’s very important the entire industry work together to help walnut growers work their way back to profitable levels and that we stop more orchards from being pulled,” said Jonathan Field, Executive Director of the WBA. “Most California walnut farmers need to receive at least 60 to 80 cents per pound in order to break even.”

Field noted the WBA plans to conduct a series of activities to help growers establish fair contracts with their handlers and that handlers provide greater transparency to their growers when it comes to pricing. Walnut growers will be hearing more about this effort soon.

“Walnut growers simply cannot survive on the prices paid during 2021 and 2022,” said Field. “Quality is a huge factor when it comes to the value of walnuts. We haven’t had great quality for the past few years, but this year we do. Sellers should be able to get more money for walnuts this year and farmers deserve to be paid accordingly.”

For more information about the Walnut Bargaining Association, please visit www.walnutbargainingassociation.com