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## **CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION SEATS NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS** *First Female Chairperson Elected in Organization's History*

**FULLERTON, Calif. (January 12, 2026)** – The California Avocado Commission recently conducted Board of Directors elections, which were confirmed by the California Department of Food and Agriculture. The Board elected new executive officers including Board Chair Rachael Laenen, who has served on the CAC Board for since November 2020, with three of those years as an executive officer. Laenen is the sixth generation of her family to farm in Ventura County and the fourth generation to grow avocados. She now manages the family's avocado enterprise. Before her farming career, she worked in international motorsports, managing global sponsorships for some of the world's most valuable brands as well as delivering high-level events and hospitality. Rachael is the first woman to chair the California Avocado Commission Board of Directors.

"Being the first female chair of the CAC Board of Directors is not what matters to me," said Rachael Laenen. "Doing an excellent job representing California avocado growers and the premium avocados we produce is paramount. With that said, I'm proud of the contributions California's female growers have made and continue to make in our industry."



Also elected to the Commission Board executive committee were Vice Chair Ohannes Karaoghlanian, Secretary John Berns and Treasurer Maureen Cottingham. Board members serve two-year terms and the executive officers are elected annually.

This California avocado season, the California Avocado Commission will support the CA Grown program and its initiative promoting the role of women in the agriculture. The United Nations declared 2026 the International Year of the Woman Farmer, a historic milestone recognizing women's vital role in agriculture worldwide. Supported by 123 countries and led by the United States, the resolution represents a global pledge to promote equity, visibility and opportunity. California is home to one of the most diverse and productive agricultural economies in the world and has experienced steady growth in the number of women farmers - up 13% in the last decade - a sign that more women are stepping into roles of ownership and influence. With 63% of California farms being female-operated, women are often leading in soil health, water conservation and long-term orchard management.

"The Commission has supported the CA Grown program for many years because being locally grown and grown in California is a strong purchase driver for California avocado customers and consumers," said Terry Splane, CAC vice president of marketing.

The International Year of the Woman Farmer highlights that agriculture encompasses more than mere production; it centers on individuals who nourish and support their communities. CAC's support of this CA Grown initiative will include PR and social media content promoting the impact of California's female avocado farmers.

#### **About the California Avocado Commission**

Created in 1978, the California Avocado Commission strives to enhance the premium positioning of California avocados through advertising, promotion and public relations, and engages in related industry activities. Ethically sourced California avocados are sustainably farmed and locally grown for exceptional quality and freshness, by about 3,000 growers in the Golden State. The California Avocado Commission serves as the official information source for the California avocado industry. Visit [CaliforniaAvocado.com](https://CaliforniaAvocado.com).

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