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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**YUBA CITY, CA, February 7, 2005**— Prune Day in the Yuba-Sutter region attracts farmers and industry members from throughout the state each year. This year the event will be held on March 2 in Yuba City. The region is home to the greatest concentration of practical knowledge and expertise in the growing and production of dried prunes of any place in the world.

Each year at Prune Day, the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) provides the latest advances in growing techniques, new varieties, and pest management to the farm community. To encourage farmers to participate and improve their competitive edge in the global marketplace, the Prune Bargaining Association (PBA) will hold its annual meeting following the UCCE presentations and serve lunch for the event. Everyone is welcomed to attend the PBA meeting.

The prune business is experiencing major changes in industry structure, and in the growing and marketing of the product. “We hope to encourage all prune farmers to attend Prune Day this year,” said Greg Thompson, general manager of PBA. “There is important information and some good news to be shared at this meeting after years of oversupply and poor returns. With the Association’s meeting following the UCCE program, growers will have a convenient way to get a complete overview of what’s happening in prunes.”

Prune farmers suffered through the lowest production since 1918 last year due to adverse weather during bloom. Yet industry members are optimistic about the prospects for 2005. “Prune farmers have had their share of tough going,” said Keith Larrabee, PBA president. “Last year’s disaster crop was the last straw for some growers who are switching to other crops or getting out of the business altogether, but we see a silver lining in the elimination of excess inventory and improved prices. We are bullish on the future.”

Farmers, pest control applicators, prune processors, bankers, suppliers, and other related industry members are encouraged to attend the half-day event in order to get the latest information on prune growing and outlook for the future. “We are trying some new things this year to make the program more interesting,” explained UCCE farm advisor Franz Niederholzer. In addition to adding the Association meeting to Prune Day, this year researchers will have poster displays of current projects and UC farm advisors will be present to answer questions during the morning break. Program presentations will include information on advanced biological control of aphids and other pests, and an assessment of the plum pox threat to California among other topics.

Special guest speaker for the event will be Roger Wasson, President of the California Strawberry Commission. Mr. Wasson’s exceptional background includes over 30 years of experience in helping farmers market their crops. He will speak on the promising opportunities that the fields of science, health, and nutrition are providing to California specialty crops, and the ways that farmers and processors can work together to promote the healthy aspects of their crops.

The Prune Day program begins at 8:00 am and concludes at 1:30 pm in the Yuba City Veterans Hall, located at 1425 Veterans Memorial Circle. Lunch is \$10 per person. For more information on the UCCE portion of the program, contact the Sutter County UCCE office at 530-822-7515. To make lunch reservations, or for more information regarding the PBA Annual meeting, contact the PBA office at 530-674-5636.