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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## ***Scarcity of Prunes Prompts Price Increase***

**YUBA CITY, CA, July 18, 2005** – A record low supply of prunes has caused a farmer organization to propose a 50% increase in the price of prunes on top of a 100% increase in the price the year before. The dramatic price increases are due to back-to-back crop disasters in California, an unprecedented occurrence in the history of the California prune industry.

Prune farmers and packers find themselves in an extremely challenging situation: last year's crop amounted to only 47,828 tons, less than one-third of a normal crop, and the shortest crop since 1918. The total supply of California prunes was reduced to a record low of 116,228 tons, shorter even than that caused by the disastrous crop of 1972, and the shortest supply in the 55 years since detailed record keeping began in 1949.

To make matters worse, farmers say the poor crop this year will cause the total supply of prunes to fall even shorter. The light crop increases expenses and reduces revenue for farmers and packers. At the same time, farmers and packers are concerned that there will not be enough prunes to supply all of the distribution channels and some consumers may not find the prunes they are looking for. "We don't want to lose any customers," said Keith Larrabee, a prune farmer and president of the Prune Bargaining Association. "We like to keep our customers well supplied with the best prunes in the world—California prunes."

By the Association's estimate, the total supply of California prunes will be 16,000 tons shorter than last year, and on a global basis, the short crop in California, reduced crops in France and Chile, and nil carry-over stocks will push the total world supply down by nearly 50,000 tons from last year's already tight world supply. The Association projects that the world's supply of prunes will be more than 62,000 tons short of world demand.

The Prune Bargaining Association was formed in 1968 as a grower-owned cooperative to improve the economy of the California prune industry, encourage the production of a quality product and provide a forum for growers to exchange ideas regarding the industry. The PBA establishes the industry's raw product price for prunes.