

SUPPLY & DEMAND

Critical News for Growers & Packers

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Government Funds May be Lost

The application deadline for the USDA Tree removal is Thursday, January 31. Funds will be lost if growers do not fully subscribe to the Program. While over 300 applications have been received by the PMC, millions of dollars remain unallocated and will be lost if growers do not sign up by the 31st.

In order for the industry to return to a balance supply and profitability, all of the funds need to be allocated. Growers are urged to submit an application or this opportunity will be lost.

Applications must be received in the PMC office by the 31st. Growers are encouraged to send in their application even if they don't have all the supporting documents. These may be provided later.

Application Tips

PMC staff have provided the following tips for growers filling out the USDA tree removal application:

Line 5, producer's status. If a box other than owner operator is checked, be sure to get the signature of the other party involved as well as the applicant's signature.

Line 11, total net planted acres. Include total acres less roads, ditches, etc. of the block or blocks represented by the P-1 gradesheets that you provide. Unless you have indentifying block names on your P-1's, you will probably need to submit all the P-1's for your production in the county that the block is located in.

Line 17, enclose P-1 Forms and Crop Insurance Statements for 1999 and 2000. Growers may contact packers if they don't have copies of their P-1's, or send a letter to the PMC requesting copies of their P-1's.

The crop insurance forms are the production and yield reports. Claim

forms may be submitted in addition to the production and yield reports to support the fact of a crop loss for a given year, but are not required.

Line 18, documents enclosed. A plat map is an official map from the county tax assessor. Two documents with an APN are required.

Supplemental Industry Program

Growers who feel they may not qualify for the USDA because they may not have the required historical production or the number of trees required by the USDA are encouraged to apply to the USDA program anyway. Growers who apply to the USDA and are rejected may then be eligible for a supplemental industry program. The joint tree pull committee of PBA and Sunsweet met recently and suggested that if any remaining funds in the industry program are to be made available for an additional program, those funds should be made available only to those growers who have applied to the USDA and have been officially rejected.

South Sacramento Valley Lags State—Meetings to be Held

On a percentage basis, growers in the north Sacramento Valley and the San Joaquin Valley have participated to a greater degree in the tree removal application process than have growers in the major grower region of the south Sacramento Valley. Since this is one of the older grower regions, industry members have expressed concern that growers in the region may be misinformed about the program.

The Prune Bargaining Association is holding two meetings to explain why full grower participation is necessary,

how the plant back restriction can work to a grower's advantage, and the possibility of a supplemental industry program. A PMC representative will be available to accept applications. Growers should bring as many of the required documents as possible to the meeting to expedite the application process.

All prune growers are invited to the free meetings. Tuesday's meeting will begin at 10:30 a.m. at the Gridley Inn & RV, on Highway 99. The Yuba City meeting on Wednesday will also begin at 10:30 a.m. and will be held at the Ag Commissioner's Office on Garden Highway.

If I pull Prunes, What am I going to Plant? Answer: A Cover Crop

Some growers are hesitant to put acres into the tree removal program because they are unsure what they will plant back, and/or the soil may be best suited for prunes in their location. If the orchard is near the end of its economic life, the plant back restriction may not be the stumbling block that some think. By using the fallow period to their advantage, growers can address soil borne pests and diseases in an economical fashion. In addition, funds may be available from local Conservation Resource Districts to help with the costs of planting cover crops and other expenses.

Orchard soils that have a long history of tree crops will benefit from a fallow period. Many locations suffer from nematode infestation, compaction, or poor soil tilth. If you have looked into the cost of fumigation of an orchard site, you know that it is becoming so costly that it may not be economically feasible for your operation to

consider, yet soil borne pests have such a detrimental impact on tree growth and orchard establishment that it is foolish to plant a new orchard on such soil without addressing these pests first.

A fallow period and planting the right cover crop can address many of these issues. Recent research has shown that IPM techniques that involve cover crops and a fallow period can be used to reduce or eliminate the damage from certain key soil pests. In fact, one key pest, ring nematode (causative agent of bacterial canker) can really only be fully addressed by the use of a fallow period in combination with a cover crop such as sudan grass. More information will be available at next week's meetings.

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