

About the Cooperator

Name of Cooperator:

The California Prune Board

Date of foundation:

1952

Web address:

<https://californiaprunes.org>

Social media handles:

LinkedIn USA: [California Prunes](#)
LinkedIn EU: [California Prunes Europe](#)
Twitter: [@CAforPrunes](#)
Facebook USA: [California Prunes](#) (@CAPrunes)
Facebook EU: [@californiaprunes](#)
Instagram USA: [@caprunes](#)
Instagram EU: [@californiaprunes](#)
YouTube USA: [@CaliforniaPrunes](#)
YouTube EU: [@CaliforniaPruneEU](#)
Pinterest: [@CAPrunes](#)

About the sector

Definition:

The California Prune Board represents California's prune growers and processors, promoting the consumption of California prunes and supporting the industry's growth and sustainability, developing both domestic and international markets.

Acres of land covered:

Over 35,000 bearing acres of California prune orchards (as of 2022)

600+ growers, 27 handlers

Number of businesses:

People employed [direct/indirect]:

7,080 full-time jobs created and sustained by California Prune growers and handlers.

Annual output [eg tonnes of grain]:

The California Prune industry produces an average of 78,000 short tons per year (5-year average).

Value of sector:

California Prune growers and handlers generate more than \$717 million in business activity within the state, according to a recent economic impact study. Of this business activity, a large proportion (44.3%) is represented as additional business across many economic sectors of the state.

California is the largest producer of prunes in the world, growing around 40% of global supply.

% of global market:

California Prunes export to over 60 countries globally

Export value:

About Sustainability

Vision/ mission statement:

For more than 100 years California Prune growers have been responsibly producing premium prunes. While sustainable farming is as unique as the diverse family farms that make up the California Prune industry, the unifying factor is a commitment to continual progress. History proves that California Prune growers have been cultivating responsible, safe, and environmentally friendly practices for the land they steward, the people they employ, the markets they feed, and the communities where they reside for generations. Under robust regulations and changing dynamics in

Key areas of focus:

The California Prune industry focuses on three key areas:

People – *Benefiting the California Prune community by doing right for those who power it and delivering health and wellbeing to consumers around the world with a healthy nutritious fruit.*

Planet – *Beginning in the orchards with environmental protections of the land, air, and water, the California Prune industry implements thoughtful and scientifically based practices to ensure their orchards are helping to preserve and benefit the planet while operating under robust federal and state requirements.*

Prosperity – *Creating economic viability and business resilience to keep growing California Prunes for future generations.*

California Prune growers and handlers actively implement a range of practices to help ensure environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Below are examples of key sustainable practices implemented today:

Smart Pest Control

California Prune growers use Integrated Pest Management as an ecosystem-based approach to pest management, minimizing risks to people, and benefiting plants, animals, and the overall environment.

Cover Crops

California Prune growers use cover crops to help maintain nutrient-dense soil and improve irrigation efficiency.

Habitats & Biodiversity

Maintaining riparian habitats, perching owl boxes among the trees to help keep pests from invading the orchard, and leveraging apiaries for crop pollination are just a few ways that California Prune growers work in partnership with nature on their family farms.

Soil Health Improvement

Combining beneficial bacteria into their orchard soil, while also incorporating nitrogen through a double-line drip irrigation system, California Prune growers improve their soil health to keep trees healthy and productive.

Economic Impact

California Prune growers and handlers spend more than \$391.5 million locally on employee wages and benefits and purchase a wide array of goods and services needed for operations. As a result, they return a substantial portion of the revenues they generate back into the state.

Renewable Energy

Using renewable energy is top of mind in prune production. California Prune growers and handlers have made significant investments in solar energy to decrease carbon energy use in their daily operations.

Water Conservation

Using precise micro-irrigation systems, California Prune growers have reduced water usage by 30-35% on their farms.

Fair Wages

The industry strives to provide fair wages and labor practices. Recognizing that the health and safety of those involved with the industry is of utmost importance, most growers, producers, and processors offer medical benefits for employees.

Life Cycle Assessment

In a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of the production of California Prunes conducted by U.C. Davis, computer modeling systems analyzed inputs and yields used in prune- growing regions to quantify the industry's effect on global warming.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

In partnership with the Foreign Agriculture Service/USDA Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops

Accomplishments with historic/trend data:

The California Prune industry has invested millions of dollars in orchard management and sustainability, as well as human health and nutrition research.

In 1952, the industry launched a production research program to support growers and handlers in cultivating responsible, safe, and environmentally friendly practices to produce a premium product.

In 1985 a varietal selection program was implemented to make orchard management more efficient and reduce environmental impacts.

In 1995 the development of Integrated Prune Farming Practices centred around IPM providing the tools to know when and how to control pests with the least environmental impact.

For over 3 decades, growers have been implementing micro sprinkler irrigation, to deliver water to each tree with its own sprinkler, to conserve water, eliminate irrigation runoff and feed precise amounts of fertilizer to the trees. This practice results in a highly efficient way of getting nutrients right to the roots of the tree. Using precise micro-irrigation systems, California Prune growers have reduced water usage by 30-35% on their farms.

In a 2016 a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) done by a researcher at UC Davis, calculations showed that prunes produced in California are responsible for substantial environmental benefits, including the production of biomass co-products that can be used for renewable energy generation, temporary carbon storage in standing biomass, and long-term carbon storage in orchard floor soils. Findings also show that prune orchards are very high biodiversity systems with a lower carbon footprint per yield than other major perennial orchard crops in the study. Today these findings are providing the data necessary to ensure continuous improvement in how prune growers and handlers can contribute to a better environment.

Since 1997, CPB has invested in nutrition research guided by a Nutrition Advisory Panel to provide sound scientific evidence about how prunes favorably contribute to human health and well-being. A healthy sustainable diet should consider total impacts from the carbon footprint to the nutrition security provided by the food. California Prunes are nutrient dense and have high-quality carbohydrates that naturally help sustain energy levels. As a dried fruit, prunes are shelf stable, so there is less energy used in transportation and storage, and less food waste overall. With a focus on research in gut, heart, and bone, CPB has taken on significant research in bone health as a growing body of evidence shows that prunes are considered a promising functional food for maintaining healthy bones.

Comparison of standards with the rest of world:

The California Prune industry is recognized by the trade and consumers as a premium producer of prunes and consistently exceeds standards. California Prunes are among the sweetest, largest and more consistent in premium appearance and taste than any other prune grown around the world. This results from an exacting process of sound orchard practices, a commitment to grow larger prunes, discipline to harvest the fruit only when the sugar (brix) levels are high enough to ensure premium taste, and the use of climate-controlled drying tunnels, which California growers have honed into a precise art, of balancing temperature, humidity, and time to deliver quality assurance

Current activities / future activities [eg. research, white papers, speaker platforms, planned events, exhibitions, etc]:

Prune Drying Innovation – The California Prune industry recently collaborated with Nitin Nitin, Ph.D. and Fidele Abedi of UC Davis to research innovative prune drying alternatives. One of the biggest assets, and expenses to the California Prune industry is tunnel drying technology. Our drying process is a pivotal part of the California Difference, setting us apart from our competitors. As energy regulations grow stricter, so does the urgency for innovation and alternatives to natural gas. Both of these scholars will use their expertise in dehydration and rehydration to develop a proposal for the California Prune industry this fall.

Varietal Research – The California Prune industry is making significant long-term investments in developing new varieties that are designed to improve efficiencies in harvesting, pruning, and drying time. These improvements will reduce costs and prepare for the future through diversification of the species. They also will modernize the industry for a new generation of growers.

LCA Research Project – The CPB started Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of Prune Production in 2016. Even though a detailed LCA was done for prunes, we continue to do additional work in this area. In order to understand the full environmental impacts and benefits of perennial agroecosystems, a life cycle assessment (LCA) is necessary. This approach relies heavily on the availability of accurate, up-to-date information on industrial and agronomic processes, as well as the chemical and built environments which support agricultural production.

Resources

Key reports and sources:

Sustainability Brochure

- https://californiaprunes.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CPB_Growing_For_Life_Grower_Profile_FINAL_PRINT.pdf.pdf
- https://californiaprunes.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CPB_Growing_For_Life_Nutrition_half-page_FINAL_PRINT.pdf.pdf
- https://californiaprunes.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CPB_Growing_For_Life_FINAL_PRINT.pdf.pdf

Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LtjsQPAG0qc>

Image library:

Some images already provided – thank you!

Media contact:

Initial contact : Esther Ritson-Elliott global@californiaprunes.net

Spokesperson(s):

Donn Zea, Executive Director, California Prune Board

Yes (pending the communication)

Willingness to include USSA boilerplate on relevant sustainability comms output: