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Raisin Bargaining Association

Topics of Discussion & Concern RE: RBA Seat Removal on RAC

Topic One:

- Who does the RBA represent?
 - The Raisin Bargaining Association was founded in 1967 because small family farmers were being harassed, targeted, and treated unfairly in the industry. As a result, a group of small farmers founded the Raisin Bargaining Association so they could come together with other disadvantaged farmers and unite as one. Uniting meant that their voice would be heard clearly. It meant that there was a place for the average farmer to go to and raise concerns. It was a way for the “widowed and orphaned” (small, disadvantaged, under-represented) farmers to band together, and make a real difference, not only for their own family, but for the industry as a whole. The majority of RBA members to this day are still small 20–40-acre growers who would lack a voice if not for the RBA.

Topic Two:

- Who does the government lobbying?
 - When the raisin industry needs to push out product due to low sales or overproduction in any given year, the government wants to hear directly from farmers, not from the RAC, not from packing houses, not from other governmental agencies. The RBA and Sun-Maid are the two farmer co-ops that are asked to lobby on the industry’s behalf for government buys. This is because the US government wants to directly assist the farmers, not the middleman, not the distributor, but the actual grower of raisins trying to make a living out on their farm.

Topic Three:

- Who fights for a fair-market price for the industry?
 - The RBA has made it one of their top missions over the last 57 years to negotiate a fair price for all raisin growers. The industry cannot survive if the average farmer cannot afford to stay in business. The industry has no checks and balances when it comes to setting a fair return each season, except for the RBA negotiating with packers to set a floor price. We learned in 2021 that when the packers are not willing to negotiate with the RBA, the wheels fall off the bus. It was disastrous for raisin growers and only further accelerated pull-outs. If the RBA doesn’t have a voice on the RAC, it diminishes the

ability for the RBA to negotiate with packers. Weakening the RBA just weakens growers' voices, and growers' returns.

Topic Four:

- **Shrinking Industry**

- Recently neither the RAC nor the USDA has stepped in to assist the RBA in validating packer acquisitions and holding packers responsible for honestly reporting RBA tonnage. We all know that the industry is shrinking, there is no denying that, but you also can't deny that it is peculiar how the RBA official tonnage has shrunk much faster (which determines how many seats the RBA receives on the RAC) than Sun-Maid or Independent tonnage. In the past, both the RAC and the USDA were cooperative when the RBA would need verification of delivery records on a member, but as of late, it seems not only hostile, but coerced. One can only wonder if the whole point of the hostility is to allow the RBA to shrink more rapidly, and in-turn lose all representation on the RAC.

Topic Five:

- **Conclusion**

- For the above-mentioned topics, it is our conclusion that the removal of the RBA seat on the RAC will only put the RBA at a further disadvantage. It amounts to "TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION". If the RAC removes the RBA seat, then RBA members should not have to pay an RAC assessment fee. The RBA is already the most underrepresented group on the RAC, targeting the removal of an RBA seat that has been on the RAC for decades only discriminates against the RBA, small family farms, and a cooperative association.