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News Release

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California Table Grape Growers Estimate 25 Million Boxes Lost to Hurricane Hilary

Fresno, CA – Hurricane Hilary delivered wind and rain to many of California’s table grape vineyards at peak harvest time for most of the 90 varieties grown in the state. The immediate aftermath of the hurricane brought additional rain and humidity to many growing areas, compounding problems and loss. “The impact of the hurricane and its aftermath is devastating and heartbreaking,” said Kathleen Nave, president of the California Table Grape Commission. “To say that the grower and farmworker community is in shock is an understatement.”

With approximately 30 percent of the crop harvested when the hurricane hit, it is projected that 35 percent of the remaining crop – 25 million boxes – has been lost. “The revised estimate for the California crop is 71.9 million 19-pound boxes,” said Nave. “The last time the crop was under 75 million boxes was 1994.”

Noting that it is typical for California to ship over 65 percent of its crop after September 1, Nave said that based on the revised estimate there are still over 45 million boxes of grapes the industry plans to ship. “Reaching consumers at retail stores is a major focus of the work done by the commission,” Nave said. “Partnering with retailers to get grapes on store shelves and to promote them to consumers is work that will continue throughout the season.”

Nave said that retailers understand the damage the storm caused and the many ways that labor costs will increase as a result. “Retailers understand that even with skilled workers it will take more time to harvest much of the remaining crop and that accordingly, to keep grapes on the retail shelves throughout the fall the price paid to growers will need to be enough to make it worthwhile to harvest.”

Nave said the industry plans to continue assessing the situation in the weeks ahead, providing updates as needed, and that the commission will continue its retail promotion activities and consumer advertising campaigns throughout the season.