Western Growers Association Meeting:

Western Growers represents local and regional family farmers growing fresh produce in Arizona, California, Colorado and New Mexico. Members and their workers provide over half the nation's fresh fruits, vegetables and tree nuts, including nearly half of America's fresh organic produce. Some members also farm throughout the U.S. and in other countries so people have year-round access to nutritious food. Western Growers is engaged in the defense of critical crop protection tools and remains active at the federal, state and local levels. When restrictions are necessary, they work with regulators to ensure they are based on science and that they protect public health without diminishing efficacy in the field.

The President and CEO, Tom Nassif, held many positions in the Reagan Administration, including Deputy and Acting Chief of Protocol for the White House, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian affairs, and from 1985-1988 served as Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco.

Potential Agricultural Interests

Chlorpyrifos Petition Denial:
Western Growers had a March 30th blog post noting that "EPA's decision is good news for agriculture because it was based on applicable regulatory procedures and sound science—something that Western Growers continually advocates for."

Pollinators
Western Growers recognizes the critical role of honeybees. A complex set of stressors has been associated with honey bee declines, including loss of habitat, parasites and disease, genetics, poor nutrition, bee management practices, and pesticide exposure. No single factor has been identified as the cause. The EPA has been working aggressively to protect bees and other pollinators from pesticide exposures, while continuing to make regulatory decisions under the risk-benefit parameters FIFRA.

In 2016, EPA finalized a registration for Sulfoxaflor that included some restrictions on use due to the concern for pollinators. Western Growers was critical of these restrictions and hopes that with more data EPA will allow increased use and flexibility. Dow AgroSciences is in the process of developing additional data that, once submitted and evaluated, may allow for an expansion of the use of sulfoxaflor and removal or reduction of some of the current use restrictions.

In January 2017, EPA announced a policy that all chemicals that are acutely toxic to pollinators and are labeled for use on crops that may use contract pollination services, applications at bloom should be prohibited if the application rates exceed EPA's level of concern. EPA has begun implementing this policy.

Certification and Training of Pesticide Applicators
On 1/4/17, EPA issued the revised final C&T rule. The revised Certification and Training of Pesticide Applicators (C&T) final rule requires stronger standards for people who apply restricted use pesticides (the most hazardous products). Stronger standards help to ensure applicator competency to protect farmers, farm families, and farmworkers from the risks of illness, injury, and crop damage. It also creates a healthier agricultural environment, which means fewer lost wages, medical bills and absences from work.

EPA received feedback from states and stakeholders that more time and resources are needed to prepare for compliance with the rule. The extended timeline would enable EPA to work with states and provide adequate compliance and training resources. On May 12th, EPA proposed a 12-month extension for implementation of the revised final Certification and Training of Pesticide Applicators (C&T) rule.

Worker Protection Standard (WPS)
The Worker Protection Standard (WPS) seeks to protect and reduce the risks of injury or illness to agricultural workers (those who perform hand-labor tasks in pesticide-treated crops, such as harvesting, thinning, pruning) and pesticide handlers (those who mix, load and apply pesticides), resulting from use and contact with pesticides on farms, forests, nurseries and greenhouses.

The final rule was issued November 2015, and established staggered compliance dates for implementation. Phase one went into effect January 2017 and phase two goes into effect January 2018. Several State Departments of Agriculture notified EPA they were not prepared for the 2017 implementation date, and NASDA petitioned EPA to delay the implementation dates. EPA is granting the request to extend the implementation of all revised provisions to the agricultural WPS rule until the necessary guidance and training materials have been completed which would allow state pesticide agencies to successfully implement the rule changes. EPA will soon begin the regulatory process to formally extend the compliance date.