

President's Message 9-20

The uniqueness of the year 2020 continues to astound. Apple harvest is usually the craziest time of year. From harvesting, sampling varieties for maturity, moving pickers from block to block, loading bins into the cooler/onto the truck; the work days tend to be very long. But at our farm, things are relatively quiet. On what will most likely be our smallest crop in 20 years, all of the fruit is stacked in the coolers before sunset has even occurred. While this is far from an ideal crop, it has allowed us a unique situation. We have been able to work on side projects that are on the "when we have time" list. This includes maintenance of fence strips, upgrades to facilities, and more. Our industry is built around striving for perfection in what we grow, while also finding ways to make any less than perfect product useful. The same philosophy should be applied to this year. While it is not the season that many of us had hoped for, try to find a silver lining through it all, and tackle a task that you have been putting off.

Even though it has been a trying year, I would like to point out a very important topic as we begin to market our 2020 crop. That is the topic of the "Pennsylvania Apple Program". In several weeks, you will receive your first payment form to submit your assessment fees. I know that with a smaller crop, some will consider delaying their payments into the program. I am asking that you all do your best to submit your payments on time. These funds are used to support critical research programs, as well as our U.S. Apple Membership. Whether a fresh or processing grower, large or small, all of us have benefited from the knowledge gained through research projects over the years. Furthermore, the extensive work conducted by U.S. Apple over the past several months has allowed apples to be included in not just one, but two rounds of CFAP funding. It is incredibly critical for our industry to have a voice such as this at the legislative level. Please see the "Ag Alliance Issue Update" later in this issue and future Fruit Times to stay updated on any COVID-19 issues or programs that may become available.

As you review the "Ag Alliance Issues Updates", many of you have noticed that Brad Hollabaugh has retired as Legislative Committee Chair and transitioned that role to Sara Hricko. On behalf of the entire industry, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Brad for his service and dedication over the past 25 ½ years. The role of Legislative Committee Chair is one that deals with critical industry topics that often take years to show any signs of progress, if at all. From speaking with legislators each year about our industry to updating members every month on how they can help to make a change, these are just some of the tasks that Brad has excelled at over his tenure. He has been an invaluable asset for our industry and I thank him for all of his dedication and hard work.

Ben Keim
SHAP President