



***GAO Report Reveals Dramatic Drop In Ag Inspections***

**SENATORS FEINSTEIN AND DURBIN INTRODUCE AG INSPECTION BILL TO TRANSFER RESPONSIBILITY FROM DHS BACK TO USDA**

U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) have introduced legislation that would transfer responsibility for conducting agricultural inspections at all points of entry in the U.S. from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) back to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). The bill was developed after release of a 2006 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report which validated CAC's long-standing concern about deficiencies in the federal inspection of Mexican avocado shipments entering the U.S.

Although the immediate issue facing California avocado growers is the inconsistency between federal and state policy regarding the regulation of armored scale insects, the GAO Report points out additional problems that have weakened U.S. phytosanitary security. According to the GAO Report, inspection rates at certain U.S. ports of entry have decreased significantly and agriculture inspection specialists are understaffed and underappreciated.

CAC has made sure through its long-standing relationship with Senator Feinstein that recent introductions of armored scale insects into California have been fully illuminated in Washington D.C. Here's what the Senator said after introducing the bill, "We owe it to the American people to make sure our government is doing all it can to control the spread of invasive pests."

APHIS controlled agriculture inspections up until March 2003 when the responsibility was transferred to DHS as part of the Homeland Security Act. That change combined the inspection activities of the Department of the Treasury's Customs Service, the Department of Justice's Immigration and Naturalization Service, and USDA's APHIS into the newly created Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

The text of the legislation will be posted in the Mexican Avocado section of CAC's grower web site at [http://www.avocado.org/growers/reg\\_issues.php](http://www.avocado.org/growers/reg_issues.php).

The GAO report, "Homeland Security: Management & Coordination Problems Increase Vulnerability of U.S. Agriculture to Foreign Pests and Diseases," can be downloaded at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06644.pdf>.

**MEXICO SEEKS TO CIRCUMVENT STATE INSPECTION THROUGH MARITIME SHIPMENTS INTO THE PORT OF LOS ANGELES**

CAC has learned from its sources that a group of Mexican shippers plans to ship containers to California next week via MAERSK Shipping Lines as a means of AVOIDING inspection by CDFA at the border checkpoints. These shippers know that CDFA is without jurisdiction at the federally-operated Port of Los Angeles and are intentionally taking steps to circumvent state inspection.

This action is further evidence that California's plant protection system is unraveling, and underscores the urgent need for modification of the State-Federal Cooperative Agreement governing port of entry inspections. The Commission has brought this offensive act to the attention of CDFA and California's Congressional delegation in Washington, D.C., along with a renewed, and aggressive, push for expedited resolution of the jurisdictional issue between USDA and CDFA.



**TOM BELLAMORE**  
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT & CORPORATE COUNSEL

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Bellamore".

**MARCH 23, 2007**

