

We are writing in response to Kelly Heinrich and Lisa Hodenreid's April 27<sup>th</sup> guest commentary regarding sexual harassment in the agricultural industry.

Being a business owner in California means you are held to the most stringent laws and regulations governing worker safety in the country. Grower-Shipper Association members, who represent upwards of 75 percent of the local agricultural industry, take both sexual harassment prevention and worker safety very seriously. By partnering with other professionals in human resource management and attorneys we host 10-12 sexual harassment policy training courses throughout the course of the growing season, three or four of which are personally conducted by the GSA President and General Counsel. These workshops focus on educating the people responsible for the day-to-day oversight and welfare of employees in the field and processing facilities. They are our most well-attended workshops of the year, with anywhere from 50-200 people in attendance per event. Attendees include growers, shippers, foremen, supervisors, labor contractors, and human resource managers. The details of a strong sexual harassment prevention policy and the tools needed to watch out for signs of sexual harassment and how to prevent it are covered in English and Spanish. Materials are translated by companies that understand and communicate using the Spanish dialects used predominately throughout the Central Coast.

We'd like to address a few of the conclusions drawn in the editorial published and present our understanding of the situation. It was suggested that many women don't know their legal rights and have no one to reach out to. At the Grower-Shipper Association, we educate our members about the state mandated reporting requirements, encourage policy handbook updates and that a clearly articulated sexual harassment prevention policy be shared with all employees. We work with our members to develop and implement policies that comply with the law and encourage employees to report any harassment. Statewide policies expressly state that an employee will not be retaliated for whistle blowing on bad practices. Additionally, along the Central Coast there are many female professionals in supervisor roles working alongside harvesters that especially would not tolerate sexually harassing behavior.

These writers stated that there are far too many cases where employers fail to take their obligations seriously. While in any industry there may be a handful of bad operators, the Grower-Shipper Association does not support those companies and will not defend them. The vast majority of operators in this Central Coast are following the law and making sure their employees are protected from sexual harassment.

The Fresno-county based Olivia Tamayo case mentioned is horrible and there's no excuse for it. In the Salinas and Pajaro valleys, as well as San Benito and Santa Clara Counties, we are making sure all of our members have the information they need to create a safe workplace for all of their employees.

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