Western Growers Leadership Program

Class IX



Rob Bache:

Robert Bache is the Division Grower of Martori Farms and has built an impressive career in the produce industry over the past 15 years. In his role, he oversees the vegetable program in Salinas, Calif., and Yuma, Ariz., while also managing melon production in Maricopa, Ariz., and Felicity, Calif. With responsibility for multiple growing regions, Robert works closely with production teams to ensure high-quality crops, efficient operations and consistent supply throughout the season. His extensive experience and hands-on approach have made him a key leader in the successful cultivation and distribution of Martori Farms' produce.



Brooke Becker:

Brooke Becker is Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Mission Produce, where she oversees approximately $2 billion in annual sales across domestic and international markets. During her 16-year career with the company, Brooke has risen from sales intern to senior executive, helping transform Mission from a small private company into one of the world's leading fresh produce organizations.

Brooke leads global sales strategy, customer partnerships and category management initiatives across retail, club, wholesale and foodservice channels. She has played a significant role in expanding Mission’s customer base, driving category growth through data-driven insights, strategic merchandising

and innovative retail partnerships. Under her leadership, Mission has earned industry recognition including Walmart's Supplier of the Year (2025), UNFI's Circle of Excellence Supplier of the Year (2024) and Loblaw's Supplier Impact Award (2026).

In addition to leading commercial growth, Brooke contributes to Mission's global strategy, supporting market expansion and new business opportunities. Recognized for her collaborative leadership style and commitment to excellence, she has built high-performing teams while advancing Mission's position as a trusted global produce partner.

Outside of Mission Produce, Brooke serves on the Peruvian Avocado Board and is an active member of Ventura County Young Farmers & Ranchers. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, is a graduate of the World 50 Next Leader Program and was named to Produce Business magazine's 40 Under Forty in 2026.

With deep experience leading a global sales and marketing organization and driving meaningful growth for customers and partners, Brooke brings valuable industry expertise and proven leadership to the Western Growers Leadership Program Class IX.



Cornelio Blanco:

Cornelio earned his bachelor's degree in plant science from Cal Poly Pomona and his Master of Business Administration from California Lutheran University. He is also a graduate of the California Agricultural Leadership Program, Class 52.

Beyond his responsibilities at Rio Farms, Cornelio serves as Vice President of the CAPCA Ventura Chapter and Chair of Spray Safe Ventura County, where he works to promote agricultural education, pesticide safety and collaboration throughout the industry.

Cornelio is passionate about developing future agricultural leaders, embracing new technologies and supporting the long-term success of California agriculture. He believes that leadership is not just about managing operations, but about leading by example, building trust and treating people with respect.

Outside of agriculture, Cornelio enjoys running, strength training and spending quality time with his girlfriend, Brendy, and making time for the people who matter most to him.



Isaac Chavez

Isaac Chavez is President and CEO of Chavez Family of Companies, an agricultural services group based in California's Imperial Valley. He oversees farm labor, harvesting, transplanting, equipment rental and custom farming operations, working closely with growers and agricultural crews. His approach to leadership is shaped by his family's agricultural roots and his experience managing people, equipment and field operations. Isaac earned a bachelor's degree in business administration with a focus in marketing from Point Loma Nazarene University.



Kristina Federico

Kristina Federico is the sales manager at Wholesum Family Farms. She is an experienced sales leader specializing in the organic fresh produce industry, with expertise in go-to-market strategy, category development, retail partnerships and logistics. Kristina combines deep category knowledge with a customer-focused approach to develop programs that align grower capabilities with retailer and consumer needs. She is passionate about building collaborative partnerships that create mutual value, strengthen categories and deliver long-term growth.



Madu Etchandy

Madu brings more than 10 years of experience in the strawberry industry. She began her career on the processing side of strawberries, working with Cal Pacific and The J.M. Smucker Company (Smucker's), where she gained foundational experience in quality systems and production operations.
She later joined the California Strawberry Commission, contributing to field research initiatives that supported industry-wide advancements. Madu joined Gem-Pack during its startup phase as a Quality Assurance Analyst and steadily advanced through leadership roles to become Senior Vice President of Operations.
Over the majority of her career at Gem-Pack, she has played a central role in scaling operations, driving innovation, strengthening compliance systems and supporting global market expansion. In 2026, the California Strawberry Commission recognized Madu as part of its International Year of the Woman Farmer campaign, which honors women whose leadership is shaping California's strawberry industry. Her background in agriculture, combined with an MBA, enables her to integrate operational expertise with strategic business decision-making. She serves on several industry committees addressing policy and regulatory changes impacting the fresh produce sector. Madu's background and career trajectory position her as a next-generation leader in the fresh produce industry.



Ben Etcheverry

Benjamin Etcheverry holds a master's degree in agricultural economics from New Mexico State University and has 17 years of experience in agricultural operations throughout the desert Southwest. Benjamin began his career with OFI as an Assistant Agronomist and has worked across the company's agricultural operations, advancing to his current position as Ag Operations Crop

Manager. His experience encompasses commercial chile pepper production, applied agricultural research, crop genetics, variety evaluation, pest and disease management and farm food safety.

Throughout his career, Benjamin has focused on translating agricultural research and field observations into practical commercial production decisions. His work includes developing and evaluating production practices, improving crop performance, managing agricultural risks and addressing the operational and regulatory challenges facing agricultural producers.

Benjamin serves on the New Mexico Chile Commission and the board of the New Mexico Chile Association, contributing to industry initiatives involving agricultural research, production challenges, regulatory affairs and the long-term interests of New Mexico's chile industry.



Travis Gumke

Travis Gumke is the Ranch Manager for Bonipak's East Side and Betteravia ranches. His day-to-day responsibilities include managing water and fertility, overseeing bed preparation and cultivation and coordinating with the teams involved in planting, growing and harvesting. His work follows each field's progress, helping ensure the necessary care and preparation happen along the way. Collaboration is a central part of his role. Travis works closely with ground preparation and planting teams, pest control advisors (PCAs), food safety, automation and harvesting. Staying connected with these departments helps align fieldwork with the needs of each crop and the activities of other teams.

For Travis, those relationships are one of the best parts of the job. He enjoys interacting with people throughout the company and being part of a team that feels like family.

The most rewarding part comes when he watches a well-grown field being harvested. Having followed it every step of the way, Travis understands the work behind that moment—and how many people contributed to getting it there.

Travis's role connects the individual tasks in a field to the crop's overall progress. Water, fertility, ground preparation and cultivation each require attention, while planting and harvest involve coordination with

other teams. By overseeing these activities across the East Side and Betteravia ranches, Travis helps keep everyone's work aligned as each field moves toward harvest.



Wils Johnson

Wils Johnson is a Sales Executive and General Manager of the Santa Maria region for Pacific / Dynasty Farms. He oversees crop/demand planning for Santa Maria, Calif., Belle Glade, Fla., Aroostook County, Maine, and Central Mexico, and manages sales for several key accounts. Born and raised in Salinas, Calif., Wils is a second-generation fresh produce professional who started working with his father, Dave Johnson, at a young age in cooling facilities and on ranches in the Salinas area. He graduated from Pepperdine University with a bachelor's degree in economics in 2011 and worked in energy and oil and gas investment banking in Los Angeles and New York City.

Wils moved back to California with his wife in 2017 and began working for Pacific / Dynasty Farms overseeing the Santa Maria region. He and his wife have two young kids and enjoy spending time with friends and family.



Emily King

Emily King serves as Head of Special Projects at JV Smith Companies, where she integrates her background in agricultural operations, workforce management and regulatory compliance to support strategic initiatives spanning policy, marketing and business operations.

King brings more than a decade of hands-on experience across the fresh produce industry, including production, packing, shipping, marketing, food safety and workforce management. Previously, she served as Compliance and Marketing Manager at Fagerberg Produce in Colorado and Post-Harvest Manager at Dixondale Farms in Texas.

Her experience managing agricultural teams, workplace safety and regulatory compliance has shaped her practical approach to leadership, risk management and the challenges facing agricultural employers.

Beyond her professional roles, King has been actively involved in agricultural advocacy and industry leadership. She previously served on the Grower Board of the Colorado Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and chaired its Labor Committee, working closely with Western Growers on agricultural labor policy. She also served on the Board of Directors of Pinnacol Assurance, a workers' compensation insurance carrier, bringing an agricultural employer's perspective to discussions surrounding workplace safety, risk management and organizational governance. Her industry involvement has also included initiatives focused on food safety, regulatory policy and strengthening the fresh produce industry.

Passionate about the future of agriculture, King believes the industry's greatest asset is its people. She is committed to connecting growers, industry partners and policymakers to advance practical solutions that support agricultural businesses and the workforce that sustains them.

King holds a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics from Texas A&M University and a master's degree in agricultural economics from Purdue University. She resides in Southern Colorado with her husband and their two young daughters, where daily farm life keeps the family busy.



Marcus Marderosian

Marcus Marderosian was born and raised in Fresno, Calif., where he grew up working in his family's business, Bee Sweet Citrus, Inc. From an early age, he gained hands-on experience in the citrus industry, holding various positions ranging from general labor to internships in machine operations and field inspections.

In 2018, Marcus graduated from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, with a Bachelor of Science in agricultural systems management and a minor in agricultural business. He later attended San Joaquin College of Law, graduating and passing the California Bar Exam in 2024.

Today, Marcus continues his family's legacy at Bee Sweet Citrus, working alongside his father and siblings as both a Sales Representative and In-House Legal Counsel. His background in agriculture, business and law provides him with a well-rounded perspective on the opportunities and challenges facing the agricultural industry.



Stefanie Pandol

Stefanie Pandol is the Director of Brand Management and Industry Relations at Pandol Bros., Inc., where she leads the company's brand strategy, marketing initiatives and industry engagement. As a fourth-generation member of the Pandol family, she is dedicated to carrying forward the company's legacy while helping shape its future. She is passionate about strengthening industry relationships, advocating for California agriculture, building the Pandol Bros. brand and contributing to the continued growth and innovation of the produce industry.



Austin Reiter

Austin Reiter is Director of Enterprise Strategy at Reiter Affiliated Companies (RAC), where he works across the organization on long-term strategic planning, business performance and enterprise-wide priorities.

Throughout his career, Austin has held a variety of roles across RAC and has also spent time at Driscoll's, giving him broad exposure to the berry industry and its value chain. Austin worked at FreshDirect in New York City as a produce buyer, providing him with valuable perspective on the customer and retail side of the produce business. He later spent several years in Portugal growing substrate raspberries and blackberries, gaining firsthand operating experience and exposure to the European market.

Austin earned his bachelor's degree from New York University (NYU). As a fifth-generation member of a farming family, Austin brings both an operating and long-term perspective to agriculture. He is passionate about supporting growers and farming communities and helping ensure the industry remains healthy and sustainable for future generations.