



**TESTIMONY OF
TRENT MASON**

Pecan Federal Marketing Order Hearing

Docket No. AMS-FV-15-0023; FV15-986-1

Eastern Region – Tifton, Georgia - July 27, 28 and 29, 2015

My name is Trent Mason. It is spelled T-R-E-N-T M-A-S-O-N. I live in Kathleen, Georgia. My family started buying orchards in the late 1990s. In 2003, when I returned home from college we had 400 acres in production and today we have 2,600 acres of improved pecans in various stages of growth and production. A copy of my resume is attached.

We would be considered a large pecan grower under the Small Business Administration (gross revenue from pecans greater than \$750,000).

In recent years, I have seen wide variation in the prices we have received from our pecan crop. Such wide variation in pricing makes it extremely difficult to plan for the future operation of our farm. While prices for pecans go up and down dramatically from year to year, our cost of production has steadily increased.

Today, and historically, the entire pecan industry guesses at production numbers and prices. We have to do better. The lack of accurate market information on the anticipated size of the pecan crop in any given year makes it difficult for us to negotiate a fair price for our crop and to make reasonable

business decisions about investments in our farm. Increased price stability and more accurate market information would greatly benefit my farm. I am very hopeful that implementation of the federal marketing order for pecans will provide price stability through better market information for the industry.

I think my farm and the industry would also benefit in the future from grade, size, quality, packaging, shipping protocols, and other handling requirements as we compete with other tree nuts for shelf space and consumer attention.

I also understand that under the proposed order, only growers with more than thirty acres of pecans or more than 50,000 pounds of average production per year over the last four years will be allowed to vote on the proposed order. In my opinion, this threshold is reasonable because a grower that does not meet this threshold is not a commercial grower. Any grower that is smaller than the proposed threshold could not justify the cost inherent in such a small production. I am not aware of a single pecan farmer in my area who has a commercial farm that is smaller than thirty acres or produces less than 50,000 average pounds per year.

I have reviewed the economic analysis summary prepared by Dr. Marco Palma, specifically, the projected average price increase from promotion of 6.3¢ per in-shell pound versus the average 2.5¢ per in-shell pound cost. Overall, I am aware of the costs that a federal marketing order may impose on my farm and I do not believe those costs are unduly burdensome. Further, I believe that the benefits

of the federal marketing order to my farm will greatly outweigh any costs associated with it.

We support the Georgia 1¢ per pound check-off program. But this, by itself, will not produce enough money to effectively market the entire pecan crop along with other research objectives and goals for this same money. Better marketing and more marketing is key. When you look at what other tree nut groups spend on marketing, we are not in the game. We need to get in the game.

Also, we do not have an organization that listens to, responds and leads on pecan issues. The American Pecan Council will be that organization. We really need the unity of one organization that addresses all pecan industry issues. Not simply regional grower and sheller organizations.

The American Pecan Board has kept our organization informed about its efforts to propose a federal marketing order. They have attended our grower meetings and I know several Board members of the American Pecan Board.

I am Vice President for the Georgia Pecan Growers Association and I am deeply committed to the success of our farms and the whole industry. I fully support the proposed federal marketing order for pecans and encourage the Secretary to implement the order as proposed by the American Pecan Board.

I would be glad to answer any questions anyone may have.

Trent Mason

Kathleen, GA 31047

EDUCATION

2002- 2005

Bachelor of Arts in Business Management

Macon State College, Macon, GA

2001-2002

Building Science

Auburn University, Auburn, AL

1997-2001

College Preparatory High School Diploma

Westfield High School, Perry, GA

WORK EXPERIENCE

2003- Present

General Partner of Mason Pecans

Fort Valley, GA

- Grown operations from 400 to over 2,600 acres
- Oversees the growing of crop. This includes creating and maintaining spray, fertilization, and irrigation programs
- Implemented and maintains compliance with the H2A Program
- Coordinates and manages the proper planting of orchards
- Manages harvest operations and coordinates the transition from tree to cleaning plant
- Interacts with brokers and sellers
- Markets and sells harvested crop

ORGANIZATIONS/PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

2004- Present

Georgia Pecan Growers Association (GPGA) Board of Directors

- 2014- present Vice President of GPGA
- 2011- present Co-Coordinator of the GPGA Golf Tournament

HONORS/AWARDS

2013

GPGA Grower of the Year Award

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS/PANEL APPEARANCES

- **2015 GPGA Annual Conference– Topic: Hedging**
- **2012 Alabama Pecan Growers Association Annual Meeting**
- **Hosted 2011 GA Annual Fall Field Day**
- **2014 Southeastern Pecan Growers Conference- Topic: Fertigation**
- **Given estimate of GA crop to the SEPGA since 2010**