



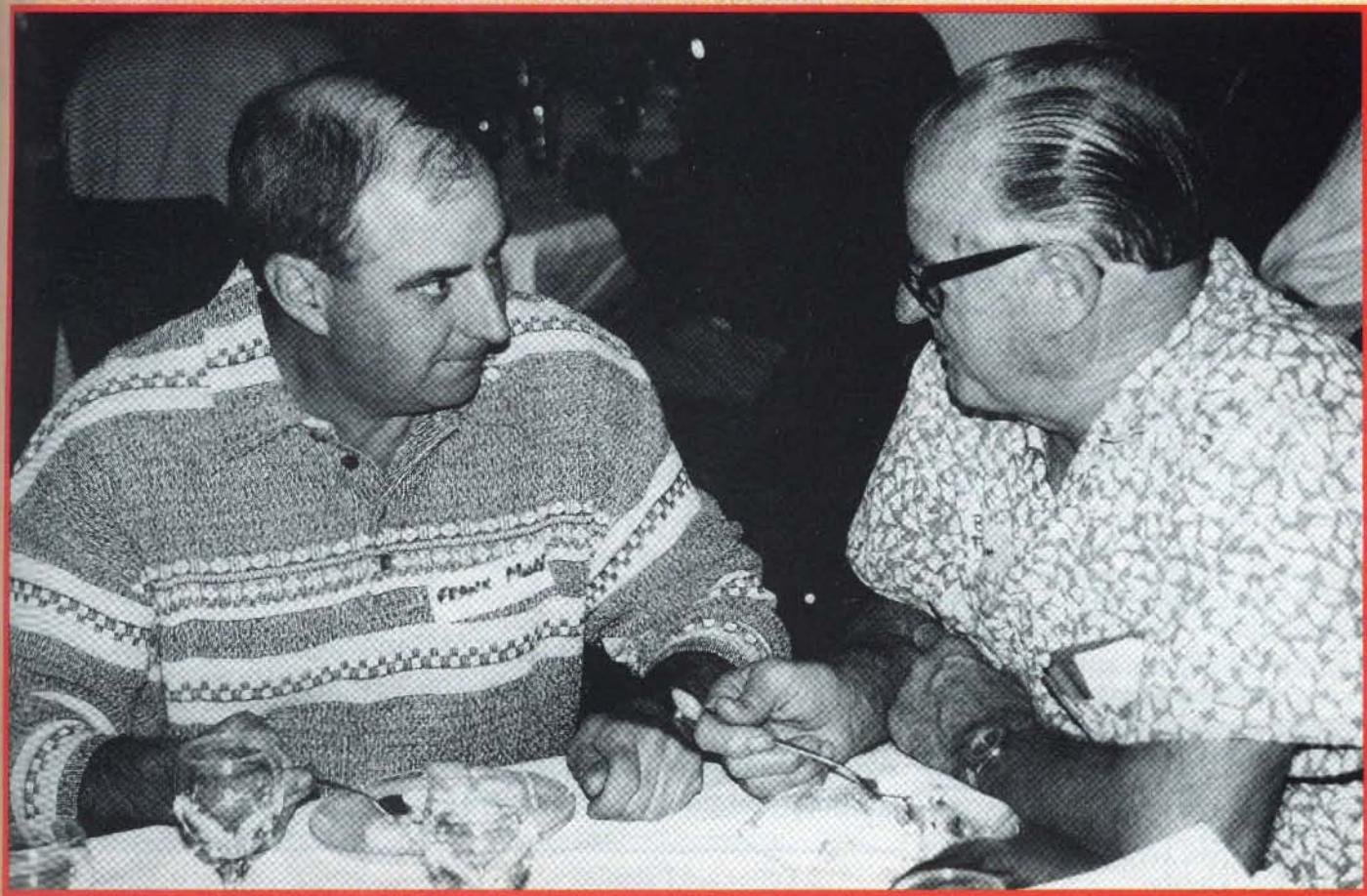
The Australian Newsline

Vol 7 Number 3



Talking Avocados

September 1996



NSW President Frank Moore (left) talking to Coffs Harbour grower Brian Pilgrim

- Review of AVOMAN
- Office Management
- Avocados in New Zealand

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Table Of Contents

NZ AGA Annual Conference and Meeting	3
New Telephone Numbers	3
From Your Federation	4-5
Summary From The Consumer Perceptions Research Report .	5-6
Tour - An Insight Into NZ Horticulture Business Strategies	6
Have Your Say	7
Australian Round-up	8-9
AVOMAN	
AVOMAN ... 'The First Review'	10
New AVOMAN Released	11
HRDC	
HRDC/Avocado Industry-funded Projects 1990-1995	12
ANVAS Accreditation Applications Due	12
World News	
Marketing In The UK	13
Office Management	
Computer Update	14-15
Computer Hardware And Software Requirements	15
FARMWEATHER	15
AHC	
Industry Managers Say	16-17
Horticulturalists To Focus On Export Markets	17
Avocados And The Dairy Corporation Advertisement	17
New Zealand	
New Zealand Horticulture From An Australian Perspective..	18-22
Team Avocado: Big Changes In The New Zealand Avocado Industry	23-24
Avocados Having Super Season	24-26
Horticultural Computer Systems In New Zealand	26-27

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Talking Avocados is the official magazine of the Australian Avocado Growers' Federation and in conjunction with the Australian Horticultural Corporation is published four times a year (March, June, September and December).

This publication is distributed upon the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in legal, cultural or other professional advice. The Editor, Directors and Executive Officers of the Australian Avocado Growers' Federation Inc (ACN Number 1A 5122) do not accept any liability for and/or necessary enclose and/or concern and/or support any of the claims and/or statements made and/or views and/or opinions expressed anywhere in any edition of "Talking Avocados".

Calendar of Events

September

- 11 Atherton Tableland Avocado growers' Association - Field Day on irrigation at QDPI commencing 9.30 a.m.
- 16 Australian Avocado Growers Federation - Varieties Committee and R, D & E Subcommittee meetings, QFVG building at Brisbane Markets commencing 1.30 p.m.
- 17 Australian Avocado Growers Federation - Annual General Meeting QFVG building at Brisbane Markets commencing 8.30 a.m.
- 17-18 Australian Avocado Growers Federation - Board Meeting QFVG building at Brisbane Markets commencing 10.30 a.m.
- 18 Bundaberg & District Orchardist's Association - meeting Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Office, Barolin St. Bundaberg commencing 7.30 p.m.

October

- 1 Avocado Growers Association of WA - meeting Conference Room, Market City commencing 5.30 p.m.
- 16 Bundaberg & District Orchardist's Association - meeting Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Office, Barolin St. Bundaberg commencing 7.30 p.m.

November

- 5 Avocado Growers Association of WA - meeting Conference Room, Market City commencing 5.30 p.m.
- 20 Bundaberg & District Orchardist's Association - meeting Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Office, Barolin St. Bundaberg commencing 7.30 p.m.

December

- 3 Avocado Growers Association of WA - meeting Conference Room, Market City commencing 5.30 p.m.

Front Cover:

NSW President, Frank Moore (left), talking with Coffs Harbour avocado grower Brian Pilgrim at the Coffs Harbour Branch "Dinner with Peter Young".

Back Cover:

"Avocados Really Make a Meal" says it all in the new avocado promotion campaign for this season. Posters, information leaflets and PR program will focus on the health benefits of using avocados to make a really special meal. [see page 16]

New Zealand Avocado Growers Association Annual Conference and Meeting

By Rod Dalton, President AAGF

As President of the AAGF, I was recently invited to attend and speak at the NZAGA Annual Conference at Tauranga (2-3 August). The two days, including technical presentations by researchers, workshop sessions planning for the future and their Annual General meeting, were well attended by some 60-80 growers.

In a joint presentation with Ron Bailey, Chairman of NZAGA, entitled 'Political Linkages And Markets - Stronger Or Weaker', I addressed a range of topics including:

- Production increases in Australia.
- Quality and Fruit Maturity concerns in the Australian market.
- Wholesaler and Retailer training.
- Potential for joint Research and Promotion.
- AVOMAN - the possibility of international licensing.

Ron Bailey addressed issues of mutual interest such as Mexican imports, potential export markets and the advantages of the industries working together.

Other topics covered during the conference included:

- Market access and Phytosanitary barriers.
- Crop estimates into the future.
- Post harvest diseases of Avocados - meeting the challenges of the future.
- Meeting our post harvest requirements into the future - pre ripening.
- Stretching shipping life.

It was of particular interest to me that the topics being discussed and the issues

which were of concern for the future were very similar to those identified by the Australian industry.

The AAGF proposal to conduct its next Avocado Conference in New Zealand in 1997, with a marketing theme, was very well received by the Kiwis. Final arrangements and dates for this Conference will be confirmed at the next AAGF Board meeting in September. I would recommend that you pencil into your diary a trip to NZ for late September early October 1997. I expect there will be a pre and/or post Conference Tour to enable you to visit the major production areas and to enjoy some of the sights of NZ. Obviously if you have the time and the budget this trip would be an ideal opportunity to visit other areas of NZ as well.

The importance of the relationship between Australia and NZ is emphasised by the fact that nearly 60% of NZ avocado production is currently exported, with Australia last season receiving 95.8% of the total 452,000 trays exported.

USA, Hong Kong and Korea were their only other outlets of significance.

Last season there were 23 export packers with ten exporters, and five of these exporters were responsible for 90% of exports. The crop estimate for the 1996-97 season indicates that they will have 410,000 trays available for export.

Overall it was a very useful trip, although fleeting. I would like to thank the New Zealand industry for the invitation, the openness of discussions and their hospitality.

New Telephone Numbers

Due to the updating of the Telstra telephone numbering system, the telephone numbers for Talking Avocados have changed again. The new numbers are:

Telephone	03 6423 3230
Fax	03 6423 3917
Mobile	0419 365165
Email	orf@southcom.com.au

From Your Federation

By Astrid Kennedy, Executive Officer

In this report I will outline the recent developments in the "Improving the Management of Avocado Quality During Marketing" project; Mexico's drive to expand its avocado consumer market and the current position of the HRDC/AHC proposed merger.

Quality Project Research

Consumer research to ascertain consumers' perceptions of avocado quality was conducted in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane in late May 1996.

The research which was part of the "Improving the Management of Avocado Quality During Marketing" project was conducted by way of focus groups and collected qualitative data for comparative purposes. The exercise will be repeated at the end of the project.

The focus groups were each asked a series of standard questions and participants were encouraged to discuss and build on each others answers. In this way information on consumer perceptions as well as excellent marketing material surfaced. The marketing information will be provided to the Avocado Marketing Forum for its consideration. A Summary from the Consumer Perceptions research report is reproduced opposite.

Quality Project Funding

The Quality Project was funded by the Agri-business program, growers levies and a component of cost recovery.

Agri-business has threatened to withhold the final funding instalment because in their opinion the project was not achieving its objectives. The project's management committee has met and developed a case for continuing the project.

Of the five project objectives it can be shown that four and a half have been achieved. The outstanding half lies with the retailers—the chain stores to be precise—they are not supporting the training workshops. This matter will be addressed personally by Federation President, Rod Dalton. Mr Dalton is planning to visit key personnel within the major chains and will demonstrate to them that:

1. inappropriate handling at retail level was damaging the avocado and affecting consumer confidence in the product;
2. the AAGF can provide information to help alleviate the problem thereby increasing consumer confidence which would increase sales; and

3. the AAGF wished to discuss how its offer of assistance could fit in with their current procedures.

A full report is being prepared for Agribusiness.

The Mexican Threat

Earlier this year your Federation became aware of a number of matters all related to Mexican imports. Firstly, there was renewed interest in our domestic fresh fruit market by some of the major Mexican exporters. Mexico currently exports mangoes to Australia. Secondly, the government of Mexico redoubled its efforts to gain access to the New Zealand market for avocados, and finally, the Californian avocado industry has been fighting hard to keep Mexican avocado fruit out of the United States and that a Mexican petition before the U.S. Department of Agriculture was still pending.

The situation is of serious concern because if the New Zealand application is successful it is highly likely that Australia would be the next target.

Should Mexican avocado fruit be allowed into New Zealand and given the fact that New Zealand exports avocados to Australia, it would be very difficult to detect Mexican fruit entering this country. There is the potential risk of introducing pests and diseases of avocado which the industry does not currently have to contend with. California is deeply concerned about the Mexican application to New Zealand and sees it strictly as a political move.

At date of writing, the Californian Avocado Commission has successfully demonstrated that Mexico cannot be relied upon to accurately represent or manage the pest risks associated with exporting avocados. New Zealand has successfully presented Sunblotch Viroid and Cercospora leaf spot as major hurdles for the Mexican industry to overcome. AQIS has advised that as of 27 August no formal application has been received from Mexico.

We now have a three way exchange of information between New Zealand, California and Australia and your Federation is in possession of a substantial amount of technical information regarding the pest risk associated with Mexican avocados.

HRDC/AHC Proposed Merger

Background in Brief

Senator David Brownhill met with the Boards of Directors of the AHC and the

HRDC in April 1996 and suggested that they consider a merger

with the view to reducing costs. Senator Brownhill allowed 90 days for the organisations to consider the suggestion. Recommendations were to be presented to him by the beginning of August 1996.

The Process

Your President, and the Executive Officer together with representative from four other AHC member commodities attended the Industry Leaders meeting organised by the AHC. The meeting was held on 3 June at the beginning of the Marketing Edge Conference. Mr James McGeogh, Director of both the AHC and HRDC Boards outlined the steps and timetable in the process that was being followed in order to comply with Senator Brownhill's request:

- A committee comprising selected Directors and personnel had been formed.
- The committee's task was to consider and prepare a joint issues paper.
- The Boards of both organisations were to endorse the completed paper.
- In early July the paper was to be circulated to interested parties, including member commodities.
- By July 18 a member of the committee would meet with member commodities and interested parties in each State to answer questions and receive input.
- The completed document containing recommendations was to be presented to the Senator on 1 August 1996.

Industry Expressed Concerned

Attendees of the meeting expressed concern with the process and in particular took issue on two matters:

1. A two week consultation period was much too short to allow peak industry bodies to discuss the matter with growers and formulate a considered response.
2. The paper was being prepared by the AHC and the HRDC and would portray the issues as viewed by those organisations. That viewpoint may or may not reflect the needs of the Horticulture industry.

On the first point the AHC has advised the AAGF verbally that Senator Brownhill has agreed to extend the timetable by two months. The final report is now due to reach the Senator on 1 October.



On the second point, your Federation initiated a meeting of thirteen horticulture commodities who are users of either the AHC and/or HRDC services and who were present at the Marketing Edge conference. The meeting was called to set the framework to prepare an issues paper from Industries point of view on the proposed merger.

Since the commodities meeting, fourteen commodities—twelve of the thirteen present at the conference and a further two contacted independently—have exchanged

their views and position on the proposed merger. While it is unlikely that a horticulture industry response will be formulated, commodity groups within the industry now know each others views and can formulate their submissions accordingly.

Your Executive has sought input from AAGF representatives and will prepare a submission in due course. You are urged to obtain a copy of the AHC/HRDC joint issues paper and make your view known to either your AAGF representative or the Executive Officer for inclusion in the Fed-

eration submission. Alternatively, a well argued submission from you sent directly to Senator Brownhill could be very effective and growers who feel strongly about the proposed merger are encouraged to pursue this alternative.

Meeting Dates

The Federation's Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday, 17 September 1996 commencing 8.30 a.m. in the QFVG building at Brisbane market. A general meeting will be held after the AGM and conclude on Wednesday at 5.00 p.m..

Summary From The Consumer Perceptions Research Report

By Competitive Edge (Asia) Pty Ltd

1. There were no major differences in the research between the consumer behaviour of respondents in Brisbane to those in Sydney or Melbourne. The only difference related to pricing, and the way in which avocados were used. The positives and negatives were similar through all groups, indicating that a common marketing strategy can be utilised on the Eastern seaboard.

2. Fresh fruit and vegetables were purchased on a weekly basis, and purchases occurred every 3-4 days. Avocados would be included in these purchase cycles.

3. Unusual fruit or vegetables were those fruits or vegetables that are different, and not used daily or year-round. Where there is little information about the preparation, or use of the fruit or vegetable then they became unusual. Avocados are not seen as unusual.

4. Consumers are confused as to whether avocados are a fruit or a vegetable. Most consumers consider them to be a fruit. It is important to establish avocados as a fruit, especially as our research confirmed that it is used more as a "fruit with salad" or "snack" item than as a vegetable.

5. Fruit generally takes a large percentage of the fresh food budget per week. It averages between 60-70% overall, and for this reason as well, avocados should be positioned as a fruit. Children have a great influence on the purchasing of fruit, and schools and women are also major influencers as to the expenditure on fruit. Women are the major purchasers of avocados.

6. The average family expenditure on fruit in Queensland is around \$25 per week. For Sydney it is between \$25-\$30, and for Melbourne it is \$20-\$25.

7. Avocado is a fruit which is purchased all the year round, and there is low awareness

of any seasonality for the product. It is not exotic because usually products that have short seasons tend to be expensive and exotic.

8. Avocado is treated and accepted as a luxury purchase. The price, plus the risk of obtaining good quality ripe avocados when required, especially for dinner parties, creates this sense of luxury. In addition, its price in relation to other products, and in relation to the total budget, also creates a sense of luxury.

9. Avocados are a fruit that is well liked. Avocados are liked as much for their texture, which is described as smooth and creamy, as they are for their taste which is described as something between bland and slightly nutty by respondents. The fact that they are different and unique means that they become an acquired taste. Their blandness however, is a positive, in that they can "partner" other food items and create a harmony of texture and flavour without over-powering other flavours.

10. Avocados have a distinct negative in the market. The inability of consumers to tell when they are ripe, and to evaluate from a purchase of multiple avocados when each of them will become ripe for use, creates a high risk purchase. The purchase of avocados can lead to disappointment, and at the price paid this creates some frustration for consumers about repurchasing.

11. There is a requirement for a "ripe tonight" or "ready to eat" product category that is preselected by the industry or the retailers for consumer comfort and insurance. This can command a premium price.

12. There is a need to educate consumers as to the best selection method, and to make them aware of varieties so that they can exercise a better selection criteria and be more satisfied with their purchases.

13. For immediate use, the retail chains are at a disadvantage because they are seen as providing a firmer green product that will ripen in the future. Purchases here mean a ripening process at home by a more educated consumer.

14. Independent retailers are in a strong position with the "ripe tonight" market because they can give advice on the spot, and because they are seen as ripening the avocados over time.

15. They will be preferred for special occasions and dinners where it is important to have a number of avocados ripen simultaneously and present well to guests.

16. Retail chains will be used for purchases of avocados for use in 2-3 days time, or for purchases when product is on special. The consumer can afford losses because of the cheaper price paid, especially where the product is in a packaged format.

17. Independent retail stores have a greater chance of influencing impulse purchase through the use of point of sale material than retail chains. Because of the lack of education, they can influence purchase selection and storage and therefore ultimate consumer satisfaction.

18. The lack of selection does lead to a number of avocado purchasers seeking specials because of the anticipated loss, rather than the need to buy at a cheaper price. This leads to a devaluation of premium product in the market because it cannot be selected and recognised for its quality.

19. Green skins (pear shape green skinned avocados) have the best shape and traditional profile for individual use at special functions. They are also preferred for individual "treats". Hass is gaining some ground in terms of individual indulgence

On the second point, your Federation initiated a meeting of thirteen horticulture commodities who are users of either the AHC and/or HRDC services and who were present at the Marketing Edge conference. The meeting was called to set the framework to prepare an issues paper from Industries point of view on the proposed merger.

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and "treats". It is also used for dips, but will not be chosen for parties or special occasions in the majority of cases. Cocktail avocados are finding favour in the dip and home use market, especially as there is no pip.

20. Retail chains need more information to back their product. Without this, they cannot maximise their potential market share. This can be enhanced by better education, in-store advice, naming of varieties, and some discreet, but professional point of sale material regarding recipes, nutrition, storage and use.

21. A brown paper bag should be used to accompany the purchase. This promotion used successfully with mushrooms will provide avocados with a natural storage and ripening zone when a banana or apple was added to the bag. In addition, the paper bag could carry nutritional facts, storage, "use information", and recipes to assist in the consumption of avocados, based on varieties.

22. Consumers are not brand conscious. They could become brand conscious in the sense of supporting one variety. This means removing the risk associated with selecting and using the product. Developing knowledge on varieties is important as a basis for long term branding strategies.

23. The preference is to purchase avocados individually. While kilograms could be acceptable, and could be a basis for providing a pricing strategy, invariably the kilograms will be determined by measuring the individual cost of each avocado in the kilogram weight.

24. A "ripe tonight" strategy would require different sections within the store. This section, plus the home ripening market, would be differentiated by point of sale material and by education and promotional communication strategies.

25. Avocados lend themselves to impulse buying based upon the display and the assistance in selecting the product for storage or immediate consumption. This will require assisting retailers to "market" avocados supported by educational and

promotional material and successful retailing concepts.

26. Avocados are known to have a high fat content. Their fat is seen as "nature's fat", and is not described as dangerous on an individual avocado basis.

27. The "no cholesterol" claim is a good claim and should be reiterated in point of sale material. Overall, health claims for avocados can be supported by the Heart Foundation tick.

28. Delineating individual health claims regarding fibre etc. would not be an advantage as the purchase of avocados does not equate with apples and other items where there are greater health attributes.

29. Avocados are an acquired taste. Children today are more likely to eat avocados than their parents at childhood. The future growth of the avocado market can be ensured by educating children to acquire the taste at an early age.

30. The person to target for purchasing, either on an impulse or habitual level within the fruit purchasing cycle, is the female household buyer.

An Insight Into New Zealand Horticulture Business Strategies For International Competitiveness

Due to popular demand Piccone PHC introduces two study tours for people interested in a first hand, close look at some of New Zealand's leading horticultural enterprises and industries—particularly those involved in the production, distribution and marketing of fruit and vegetable products or related services.

New Zealand is recognised internationally as being one of the world's most innovative and successful exporters of horticultural products, despite its relative geographic isolation and small population. As the Australian industry gears up for increased competition on both domestic and export markets there is much to be gained from assimilating some of the New Zealand experience.

These tours have been designed to stimulate and inform participants from all sectors of the Australian industry and have been put together due to demand from people within the industry. Piccone PHC has a strong background in horticulture on both sides of the Tasman and we have drawn on this experience and our linkages in putting together a "behind the scenes" itinerary that is relevant, topical and will be thought provoking for all involved.

Tour Dates

Tour #1 will run from Sunday 9 February until Sunday 16 February 1997 inclusive.

Tour #2 will run from Sunday 13 April until Sunday 20 April 1997 inclusive.

Both these New Zealand tours will be

organised and conducted by Piccone PHC. Anybody interested can contact Colin Bunt for bookings or further details at: Piccone PHC, 201 Bruce Highway, Edmonton QLD 4869. Ph: 070 453277 or FAX: 070 453613.

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TALKING AVOCADOS - HAVE YOUR SAY

Dear Sir,

Roger Lee, President of the Bundaberg Orchardists Association made a very strong case for "SALE BY WEIGHT" of avocados in his letter to the Editor in your June 96 edition. I know that many others support his recommendation.

However, and for a variety of reasons, there has not been a concerted effort by the avocado industry to introduce SALE BY WEIGHT at the retail level. Surely, it is time to initiate a campaign, through our industry organisations to introduce SALE BY WEIGHT as standard retail practise. The benefits to growers, retailers and consumers are worthwhile.

It is worth looking at the main benefits of SALE BY WEIGHT, which are:

- It is the fairest method of selling. The "5 for \$2" sign on size 36 avocados is actually about \$2.75/kg and really is misleading when advertised in the media. The total absence of any size or weight description means the retailer is actually saying "for \$2 I will give you 5 things called avocados with no guarantee on size or weight... take a chance!". In these days of QA and consumer protection practices, the "5 for \$2" must surely be unacceptable.
- SALE BY WEIGHT takes the emphasis off carton count. At present there are preferred sizes because retailers want to keep the price per avocado at a certain point. For example "Avocados..99¢" is a popular price point. So as the price varies in the market we find retailers switching their preference from 20s to 22s to 25s to allow them to maintain this retail price point. This preference leads to a decline in price for the non preferred sizes. Under SALE BY WEIGHT there are still preferred sizes but to a far less degree than unit pricing. This means the wholesale price for the wider range of preferred sizes and even non preferred sizes tends to be higher than under unit pricing.
- BAR CODING. If unit pricing continues then growers, when bar coding, will need to have a different bar code for each size or couple of sizes and grade combination. This in turn means the average packhouse will need to have at least 12 bar code labels AND can only apply them after the fruit is size and quality graded. So even automated operations will need 12 bar code sticker applicators. However with SALE BY WEIGHT the most that is needed is one PLU (Price Look Up number) created by the retailer which

simply says "avocado". If the retailer wishes to sell 2 or 3 varieties of avocado (an unusual scenario) then the retailer need only create 2 or 3 PLUs to suit AND they do not get applied to every piece of fruit as do bar codes.

- COMPARISON SHOPPING. When the shopper is looking at avocados and comparing their value to other produce the problem gets complex. Here are avocados at \$1.49 each (size unspecified, weight unknown) and here are tomatoes at \$4.99/kg. Which gives me best value and most importantly which should I buy? In fact, if the avocado is a size 20 then the price is about \$4.50 to \$5.00/kg. In other words the avocado stands up well to price comparison BUT the average shopper will never know because the basis for making a comparison is denied them through inconsistency in pricing methods. Never forget our market surveys have repeatedly told us that avocados are considered to be "expensive"—the reason? unit pricing! We all see grapes at \$7.99/kg, tropical peaches and nectarines at \$8.99/kg and so on... the average shopper seeing these prices simply says "Oh I guess I won't buy as many". In short, the avocado is being severely disadvantaged by the use of unit pricing when 95% of other produce sells by weight.

- FRUIT DAMAGE. Why do avocados get handled so much in retailers stores? There are two reasons. Firstly, the buyer is looking for ripe or near ripe fruit. Secondly, when buying by the PIECE the buyer wants to find the BIGGEST piece possible thereby getting better value than taking the smaller fruit. Usual practice at retail level is to combine at least two sizes, and, given any size carton will have one or two fruit from the size above or below THEN the retail display can have fruit from 18 to 25 selling at the same price PER PIECE. Consumers will NOT just take the first piece of fruit their hand falls on in these circumstances. They will rummage around the display. After being handled 50, 60 or 100 plus times the small fruit is looking fairly sad. The end result is greater wastage at retail level than would be the case with SALE BY WEIGHT.

To conclude, Roger Lee's letter is spot on. It now remains for us to follow through and raise the matter with AAGF through our local associations and press hard to get SALE BY WEIGHT introduced. At the Avocado Association of NSW Annual

General Meeting, Wayne Prowse of AHC was present and having had the case made to him, undertook to establish a trial this year of SALE BY WEIGHT. However, it is still necessary for the AHC to see that the industry wants a change to SALE BY WEIGHT.

So growers, if you want SALE BY WEIGHT you had better let your representative on the AAGF know. YOU will not get it by silence or indifference.

*Signed by R. Paine on behalf of:
R. Mosse, K. Johnson, S. Mills, B.
Gillespie, R. Rawlins, P. Silvers, and*

Dear Sir,

The Federal Minister for Primary Industry and Energy has postulated a merger between those well known Quangos AHC and HRDC.

My personal view is that the merger would be bad news. HRDC has its shortcomings and makes mistakes (like the FSB—debacle). But it does communicate and achieves successes at a tolerable expense to growers levies. Importantly, it appears to accept that it exists to serve Industry.

The AHC has no such virtues. We can be forgiven for thinking that we exist to pay AHC wages from our levies. For all the work that AHC does, I have great difficulty in identifying a single achievement of tangible benefit to growers. Its waste of our levies is intolerable. Its promotion work in support of avocados is largely subcontracted to QFVG.

The single passive benefit is that AHC is the vehicle for the collection of a national promotion levy (as opposed to a Queensland only levy). This levy funds the business of AAGF and the Talking Avocados magazine.

Were the two bodies to merge, I believe HRDC work would suffer badly as resources were diverted to the personality struggle between the executives of the merging body. Furthermore there is a danger that the HRDC service philosophy would be compromised.

It should not be beyond the wit of the Minister's Department and the Parliamentary Draughtsman to devise a formula, with appropriate safeguards, thus allowing the Levies Management Unit to collect the levy, and for its total administration by AAGF. AHC could then be allowed to suffer the fate it richly deserves which is to sink quietly without trace.

*Ralph Hoskin
Palmwoods*

Australian Round-up



Bundaberg & District Orchardists Association

The AVOMAN Program was launched in Bundaberg on the 8 August by DPI Officers, Dr. Tony Whiley, Simon Newett and Gary Fullelove.

Bundaberg growers are fortunate that Gary is stationed here and is arranging a computer course for local growers. We are all hoping to rapidly become proficient in the use of this powerful new aid to growing avocados.

At the Association's AGM, Col Scotney resigned as Secretary. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his service over the years and wish him every success in the future.

The Bundaberg Office of the QFVG has, in effect, become our Secretariat with consequent gains in efficiency and closer ties between the two grower bodies.

Fuerte and Sharwil are now flowering profusely but not enough fruit has set to indicate the size of next year's crop.

Sunshine Coast

All affected Growers have reason to be alarmed at the outlook for dealing with Fruit Spotting Bug (FSB). In response to pressure from the ignorant, the National Registration Authority (NRA) has conducted a Review on the use of Endosulfan, our "main armament" in the struggle against FSB. Intelligence suggests that we will probably be allowed to continue using Endosulfan for at least three years but not more than five.

South East Queensland is particularly badly affected by this pest and the pressing need for an alternative solution has long exercised our minds.

We are astounded to learn recently of the miserable progress made to date in finding a solution to this pest. It appears that all the major authorities concerned have "stuffed up" to such an extent that their professional credibility is in question. Shame on QDPI, CSIRO, HRDC, UQ and CRC for their performance.

What is particularly galling is that alleged progress has been based on the use of pheromone attractants. There has been a recent professional challenge to this hypothesis. If the challenge is upheld, then

we are still on square one after a mint of dollars and years of work.

Admittedly our commodity is a minuscule user of Endosulfan with the likes of King Cotton using tonnes where we use litres. But it is depressing to hear growers in positions of authority and influence advocating that we have nothing to fear from NRA because major users have the political clout to override any objections to the use of Endosulfan. Maybe they do, but the moment they find a genetic solution to their problems, we will be stranded. A classic example of the ostrich syndrome?

Atherton

A somewhat mild winter has encouraged a profusion of flowers with some farms having a good percentage of very early fruit set.

The 13 June Field Day was a great success. The morning was spent at DPI with the AVOMAN team. Everybody was impressed with the quality of the new AVOMAN Program, so much so, that it was agreed that ATAGA would provide funds for someone to undertake the work needed to complete the crop cycles for North Queensland.

There were two venues for the afternoon session. First the group visited Atherton Avocado Plantations where Marie Piccone spoke on orchard irrigation and the results being observed from the Enviroscan installed in the orchard. The next stop was Ian Steinhardt's farm where Ian explained

some of his alternate methods of orchard management.

Ron Butler is the first avocado farmer to receive his Certification Assurance. Congratulations Ron. Farmers are urged to do as much preparation as possible now, to avoid delays later.

September 11 is the next date to remember. A Field Day on irrigation will be held at the DPI commencing at 9.30 a.m.



Quality Conference

Thirty two growers, wholesalers and retailers gathered in Perth on 7 August to discuss a range of issues and concerns surrounding quality of avocados grown and distributed in WA. Chaired by Ron Hansen, the half day session achieved strong support and commitment to improving avocado quality.

Speakers were Alec McCarthy, Agriculture WA Research and Development Officer who provided a background on the current industry situation. With a prognosis of expanding supplies and diminishing returns, Jeff Boughey outlined the experiences of wholesaler Quality Produce International in developing pre-ripening systems for avocados in conjunction with Woolworths.

Woolworths Merchandise Manager for Produce, Michael Batycki continued by detailing the successful outcome of a program undertaken with Team Avocados, the

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NZ suppliers and QPI. This stringent pre-ripened quality system had achieved remarkable sales results by providing customers with fruit of desired size and ripeness for use the same day.

Paul Ryan, Quality Manager with AGWEST then lead the group in an analysis of the industry's strengths, weakness, opportunities, threats and problems.

Jim Pollitt, table grape and avocado grower followed with an account of his experiences in establishing a SQF2000 certification program for table grapes in early 1996. Jim outlined the benefits in terms of efficiencies, improved production on farm and the positive responses from the distribution and consumption sectors.

After discussing the likely costs, time and level of industry commitment required, the Conference voted to pursue the advancement of a quality management program for the WA avocado industry.

Gwen Society

In July, a Gwen Society was formed at a meeting held in Mildura attended by sixteen growers. With other interested growers who couldn't attend, they have over 7000 trees in the ground.

After a lot of discussion we decided to start Gwen promotions in Sydney. Only one agent will handle the promotion.

The Gwen Society was formed with Sunraysia and South Australia Riverland growers, as we have a similar climate and soil structure. Some WA growers have shown interest in joining the Society and growers from other areas are encouraged to join in with us. Those interested can Fax Colin Fechner 085 412819

The NSW Avocado Association has begun this year on a positive note after an alarming drop in membership numbers two years ago. The NSW Avocado Association Committee is in the process of rebuilding its membership by reaching out to growers at a "grass roots" level.

Northern NSW is broken up into four Branches: Tweed, Brunswick, Richmond and Coffs Harbour. The Association Committee is encouraging each Branch to put on an event (field day, dinner with guest speaker, etc.) once a year. This will provide us with four Branch meetings of substance throughout the year. In addition to these events, the NSW Avocado Association Committee will organise an end-of-year dinner (with guest speaker) at a date yet to be set. Growers from all Branches will be



Greg Ireland (right) introducing Peter Young at the Coffs dinner

notified well in advance and we hope all growers will participate.

Our last Branch function was put on by Coffs Harbour, the occasion was "A Dinner With Peter Young" on 25 July at the Catholic Club. The afternoon commenced at 4 p.m. and after Peter's talk, we were treated to a superb meal in the "Pink Room". Special thanks must go to Greg Ireland (NSW Agriculture) and Andrew Wright (President of the Coffs Harbour Branch) for organising the night.

With 70 people, it was very pleasing to see so many in attendance. However, it was not surprising as there truly was a quality guest speaker in Peter Young. Peter and his wife Sandra, own and operate the Birdwood Nursery, Nambour. Peter had recently returned from the World Conference in Israel. Thank you Peter for attending and

passing on some of your valued experience. Topics Peter spoke on included:

- Spacing, pruning, canopy and tree management.
- Tree establishment.
- Pollination.
- Flowering and foliar applications of boron.

The NSW Farm Produce Act is to be repealed at the end of the year. Growers will have to join a scheme called the "Prompt Payers System" if they want indemnity against non payment for produce by market traders. It looks like the cost of the scheme will be a one-off fee of \$50 and an ongoing fee of \$1 per consignment regardless of consignment size.

Agents fees, currently pegged at 10%, will become deregulated and growers will have to negotiate an acceptable rate.

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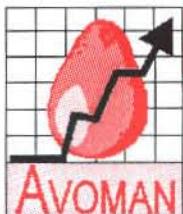
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AVOMAN ... 'The First Review'

By Alec McCarthy, Agriculture West Australia

'Monkey - Button - Banana', no this is not a statement about the AVOMAN team but rather a comment used by a grower to explain their thoughts regarding the ease of use of AVOMAN. Loosely translated, it means you do not have to be a computer wizard to use it, with a bit of practice and perseverance you will find that using AVOMAN becomes second nature.

Thanks

On behalf of the AVOMAN team and the Avocado industry I would like to thank all reviewers of the AVOMAN package who returned their evaluation forms for the first prototype. Without such feedback, we (the AVOMAN team) have only our own instincts to go by and though we may be invaluable, infallible we're not!

Some Feedback Facts

A total of 40% of evaluation forms sent out were returned completed. Although we had hoped for a greater response, this is actually not a bad return rate for a survey.

The following statistics are based on the results we received on the evaluation forms.

- The level of computer experience amongst reviewers was fairly evenly distributed between those with lots (28%), some (36%), little (26%) or nil (11%). Therefore, just because you are not confident on the computer you should not be deterred from test driving the second version of AVOMAN.
- In answering question, 88% said they did not have any difficulties installing the software, 96% found the program easy to use and 85% found entering records quite acceptable.
- Only 57% referred to the release notes (manual) and of these, 85% found them to be OK. I would recommend that everyone at least flip through the manual (which is considerably more comprehensive this year) so that they know what is in it. This is especially recommended for the second AVOMAN prototype which is somewhat larger than the first one.
- 94% looked at AVOMAN's recommendations with 40% of growers altering their practices as a direct result of AVOMAN recommendations. While grower acceptance of the AVOMAN recommendations is pleasing, the

AVOMAN team would like to point out that these early versions are prototypes. As there could be the odd bug present growers should use the recommendations with caution.

- 85% of growers who checked the rootrot recommendations and 71% for zinc had current practices similar to AVOMAN's recommendations. A good result all around.

With nitrogen and boron, there was an even spread of growers with similar and different practices to AVOMAN recommendations, indicating a level of differing opinion between the AVOMAN team and some growers. This will require further assessment and clearly demonstrates the need for AVOMAN.

- Only 40% of respondents were recording their own growth cycles. Of the growers not recording, 61% indicated that there were no suitable cycles for their area and/or variety. There were many and varied reasons for not recording growth cycles, but the simple fact is that more growth cycle recording is required by more growers. The cycles are an integral part of the AVOMAN software and are particularly helpful in the area of timing of different orchard practices. Growth cycle recording also gives growers the opportunity to get to know and understand their orchards and their seasonal cycles better. Recorders are more likely to observe changes and events that occur within their orchards that may otherwise go unnoticed.

- Probably the most interesting responses in the questionnaire were growers' comments in answer to the last question: "*In what ways do you expect the AVOMAN software to impact on the management of your farm?*"

- 49% of respondents believed that AVOMAN was going to be useful as a decision aid and result in better management.
- 36% believed it would result in better record keeping.
- 28% thought that it would provide more specific management assistance.
- 15% said it would save time.
- 15% believed it would result in

better timing.

- 13% said it would save money.

There were other positive but less frequent comments too. Overall these comments were very pleasing because these answers indicate that we are starting to address some of the main aims of the project.

Progress

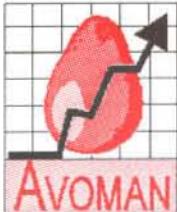
The AVOMAN team is pleased with the feedback from the first prototype. For the most part grower comments were constructive and addressed real issues. All of the questions, requests or problems concerning the first prototype raised in the evaluation form have been assessed, with nearly all being incorporated or solved by the new prototype.

Getting the Second Prototype

Everyone that completed the evaluation form indicated that they would like a copy of the new prototype. These people will automatically receive a copy of the second prototype once it has been officially released in their State (about August/September, 1996). Others need to notify the AVOMAN team if they would like a copy. Please start evaluating the second prototype as soon as you receive your copy. Also don't forget that we need more growers to record growth cycle information. For further information or for copies of the recording kits contact Simon Newett at the QDPI, Ph 074 412211, Fax 074 412235 or Email newetts@dpi.qld.gov.au.

Evaluating the Second Prototype

In the mail out of the second prototype we will be enclosing several copies of a simple feedback sheet along with the disks and the manual. This sheet is designed to make it easy for you to note down important comments as you come across them (save you trying to remember them later!). Please fax or post them to us as soon as they are written and make more copies of the form as required. Later in the year we will mail you a detailed evaluation form for the second prototype and we strongly urge you give it the attention it deserves. The more you put into this feedback the more useful and appropriate we can make AVOMAN for you. It is your project too!



New AVOMAN Released

by Terry Campbell, DPI Mareeba

The latest version of AVOMAN, the computer program to help avocado growers with crop management was released nationally at a field day in Mareeba on 13 June.

Sixty Tableland growers attended the release of Version 2.0 of the program.

According to DPI horticulturist and project leader Simon Newett, the release gave growers hands on experience with the new prototype and feedback from first time users will now be used in release of the prototype in other growing areas. "We were very happy with the release" he said.

"Many growers responded that the new prototype was vastly superior to the earlier version with a single tool bar to easily control the whole program."

Mareeba grower Mary Ravanello also gave the program the thumbs up. "I really liked this version. It is practical and easy to use for all farmers" she said. Mary particularly liked the block recording chart and hers is covered with the brightly coloured stickers. Mary has one recording sheet down in the poison shed and she has found the men do actually fill it in for each block. It is her role to transcribe the information onto the computer. Mary is looking forward to her own copy of the software as she recognises that it will be perfect to record information for the Shepard Australia QA system.

One of the resolutions from the field day was that northern growers no longer have an excuse to give computers a wide berth. Walkamin grower and industry identity Don Lavers says the new program has finally given him the tools he needs to plan operations on his orchard. Until now I've felt hamstrung, a grower who cannot plan is like a businessman who cannot budget. Don claims "growers now have no excuse not to become computer literate, just in record keeping I've saved 2-3 times the cost of the hardware". Don suggests the new prototype is easy to use because all the little things which bugged him have been ironed out and with the training given by the AVOMAN team it should be just the nudge growers need to use a tool that every other business takes for granted.

The new prototype has also impressed growers association chairman Ron Knowlton. "The only thing it lacks" according to Ron "are growth cycles for the Tablelands". Of course this is central to the timings in the system so the Atherton Tablelands Avocado Growers Association is now paying for grower member Mike Hodgson to collect the growth cycle for three cultivars on sites across the Tablelands. Mike Hodgson is enthusiastic about the new program but provides one word of caution, he had put all his farm records onto the first version and has found that it cannot be read by the new version. "We need to remember that even AVOMAN Version 2.0 is still a prototype for trial and should not be relied on just yet" he said.



Mary Ravanello and her son Giovanni inspect the AVOMAN recording sheet. Mary keeps one sheet in the "poison" shed for the men to record farm operations.



Tableland farm manager Mike Hodgson says he enjoys playing with the new AVOMAN version. He warns other growers that it is still a prototype and growers should not commit all their records to it just yet.



HRDC/Avocado Industry-funded Projects 1990-1995

The following is a complete list of final reports sponsored by the HRDC and Avocado Industry during the period 1990 to 1995. These reports are available from the HRDC at a cost of \$20.00 to cover copying, handling and postage. Requests should be addressed to: HRDC, Level 6, 7 Merriwa Street, Gordon, NSW 2072, Ph 02 418 2200, Fax 02 418 1352.

Project	Description	Researcher	Institution
AV004	Population dynamics and biological control of the avocado leafroller in North Queensland	Mr B Pinese	QLD Department of Primary Industries
AV010	Curing Hass avocados for cold storage disinfestation against Queensland fruit fly	Mr AJ Jessup	NSW Agriculture
AV033	The relationship between carbohydrate levels & productivity in the avocado and management practices	Mr AW Whiley	QLD Department of Primary Industries
AV128	Development & support of marketing groups in South East Queensland avocado industry	Mr AG Banks	QLD Department of Primary Industries
AV207	Biological control of Anthracnose of avocado	Dr LM Coates	QLD Department of Primary Industries
AV401	Fruitspotting bug in Avocado	Mr GK Waite	QLD Department of Primary Industries
AV403	Improving Australian avocado production and quality through the application of current R & D (1995 workshop proceedings)	Mr D Duncan	Australian Avocado Growers' Federation
AV505	Attendance at the Avocado World Congress III, Israel	Mr SDE Newett and Dr T Whiley	QLD Department of Primary Industries
AV511	Avocado R&D Planning Workshop, 1995	Mr R Dalton	Australian Avocado Growers' Federation
AV513	Commercialisation strategy for anthracnose biocontrol	Mr C Cooke	HRDC
AV514	Australian avocado growers' study tour of Chilean avocado industry & production methods	Mr WM Reynolds	Mr W M Reynolds

ANVAS Accreditation Applications Due

Applications for ANVAS accreditation for 1997 are now being called.

If you are in a position to supply the industry with trees that are free from Phytophthora and other fungal root pathogens and that have been propagated from registered true-to-type virus indexed scion material, you are invited to become an ANVAS nursery. Please apply for accreditation to the Registrar, Astrid Kennedy, ANVAS, c/- QFVG, G.P.O. Box 19, Brisbane Markets, Qld 4106 (Telephone 07 3213 2477, Fax 07 3213 2438 or Ph/Fax 07 3273 8144 a/h), and supply the following information:

Name of nursery

Postal address

Location of nursery (if different from postal address) ...
Estimated nursery production of avocado trees for the calendar year 1997 ... (This estimate is confidential and is for administrative purposes only)

You should also sign and date the statement - I hereby apply for accreditation in the Avocado Nursery Voluntary Accreditation Scheme and agree to abide by its guidelines.

An inspection of your nursery will be arranged by a Departmental Officer.

Fees remain the same as they were for 1996, that is a levy of 10¢ for every avocado tree in the nursery at the time of inspection. Departmental fees apply and will be invoiced direct to the nursery.

Applications must be received by 15 October 1996.

World News



Marketing In The UK

By Colin Taylor, Piccone Horticultural Consultancy, Edmonton Qld

Death of the wholesale markets—Hello to super powerful retailers, exacting food safety regulations, retail-producer alliances and fresh produce sold as a convenience or snack food.

This is a taste of the 'European Experience' savoured by participants on the UK and European Horticultural Value Chain Best Practice Study Tour completed in April.

Developed and managed by Piccone PHC and sponsored by DPIE, AUF and RaboBank Australia, the eight participants led by Colin Taylor of Piccone PHC visited sixteen of Europe's leading organisations involved in fresh produce wholesaling, retailing, importing/trading/value adding, transport and distribution, production and legislation.

The fresh produce market in Western Europe is dominated by the large Supermarket retailers. This is perhaps most developed in the UK where supermarkets account for 72% of all fresh produce sales (up from 44% in 1985).

This market dominance has led to some great benefits particularly in the areas of produce price, quality, safety, ranges and development of value added convenience products. Strawberries or exotic fruits and vegetables available every day of the year in a central London store, spinach and a knob of butter in a microwaveable plastic pack cooked to perfection in the home in 30 seconds. All in the one stop shop. Supermarkets have changed in response to customer demand for quality, convenience and price.

"The wholesale markets dead in 5 years" became a recurrent theme in the UK.

Supermarkets, keen to gain competitive advantage over rival chains wanted the wholesale markets to provide more than just produce. They wanted produce differentiation; value adding and other services. The markets failed to grasp the opportunity and their inflexibility spelt their downfall.

In the UK, the wholesale markets now service niche markets, small hotel and catering groups, sole traders particularly

from the ethnic minorities providing traditional produce, and some government institutions such as schools. The produce quality viewed was variable, but more poor than good. This is hardly surprising.

The gap left by the markets was filled by highly professional produce wholesalers and distributors such as Geest and Mack Multiples who set up businesses to procure and present in any form desired, any type or amount of fresh produce required by their supermarket customers.

Produce failing to meet the exacting quality requirements are immediately consigned to the wholesale market. The markets are now in many cases acting as a dumping ground for produce rejected from within the supermarket produce supply chain.

It was clear from the tour that the five UK supermarket chains are extremely aggressively competitive. This has been manifested in battles for sites, expansion of floor space, price wars, increasingly improved product quality and 'convenience', better service, customer loyalty awards, and the development of technology to monitor customer purchasing patterns. Any angle to gain competitive advantage over rivals.

Throughout these developments, the aim has been to cut costs and rationalise wherever possible. This has created some very powerful and profitable retail organisations and considerable benefits for customers.

Superior quality has been increasingly used to develop market share and the superbly clean, blemish free produce seen on shelves during the tour was very impressive. Supermarkets demand fresh produce of the highest quality and yet do not pay any type of top quality premium.

Increasingly, the onus is being passed on to suppliers and producers to ensure produce is 'clean' and is being handled and packed to standards already exceeding the exacting food 'safety' legislation present in the UK.

Retailers can both make and break their

suppliers and the trend has been to source from fewer, larger suppliers. Smaller suppliers or producers have been squeezed out with the loss of many traditional produce varieties and the flexibility small organisations often inherently possess, apples being an excellent example.

Refreshingly, a visit to J. Sainsbury, the second largest supermarket organisation, suggested that the retail trade was aware of some of the negative implications and perceptions of how it was developing.

Sainsbury are to trial the formation of alliances with producers where the entire crop produced would be purchased. It is early days yet and details are being developed but an association where everyone is in a "win-win" situation now appears possible.

Smaller growers are to be encouraged and will receive both technical and financial support and the producer no longer has the uncertainty of whether his crop will be acceptable and what to do with the remainder.

Where will this lead retailers? Who knows: possibly contentment with this integration followed by a period of consolidation; or 'ever onward' into value adding and produce merchandising for instance.

In the past, supermarkets have had a tendency to integrate with other sectors of the market and then take over their role.

What is the message for the different sectors within the Australian Horticultural Value Chain? Self assessment I think.

Is what has happened in the UK likely here? Is it happening already and if so, is that the direction your organisation should follow?

These questions need addressing within the industry as a whole where conflicting objectives will make any debate contentious. However, what was clear from the UK was that sectors were becoming more aware of the need to develop business relationships in a sustainable manner.

For further information, telephone Colin Taylor on 071 453 277.

Computer Update

By Orf Bartrop

In the August 1994 edition of this magazine, there was an article on Office Management describing the various parts of a computer. That article was part of a series that in the May 1995 edition culminated in suggesting the minimum requirements for computer hardware and software necessary to adequately service the needs of an avocado grower.

Those growers who purchased a computer system, or upgraded an already existing system during 1995, should now be reaping the benefit of a sophisticated office management tool.

But times change and none more so than in the computer industry. Progress over the last 16 months has seen technology take a giant leap forward while at the same time prices have dropped dramatically. What was suggested then is no longer available in the market place. The 486SX33 computer has gone the way of the T Model Ford—into oblivion. Although software has fared better, all the suggested computer programs have been replaced by upgraded versions that are much more powerful.

Therefore, the time has come to suggest new minimum standards for those contemplating buying a computer system or considering upgrade their current system. This does not mean that if your system is below the standard suggested here that it is no good. Even the May 1995 suggestions still hold but may not run some of the more modern software on offer.

If you are in any doubt about what is being discussed in the following paragraphs, dig out those old copies of "TA" and brush up on the terminology used and how the original requirements were derived.

Well what is required!

Firstly, the cost of hardware has been reduced dramatically. The price of some memory items has dropped 30% in the last four months, others 60% over the last two years.

The price of most software has also decreased. With the ever increasing use of computers, the number of units of software being sold has increased, which means vendors can reduce the price without sacrificing profit. Added to that, as competition increases, so the price falls.

All told, a buyer today can purchase a computer system that is much more powerful and considerably cheaper than was the case a year ago.

Now down to business. Both the 486SX and 486DX processing units are no longer manufactured. A whole new concept in computing hardware has been developed that runs much faster and more reliably. It's called a "Pentium computer". A Pentium does things differently to the 486 series computers. Not only is the processor unit different but other parts of the computer are handled differently.

Like its forebears, there are different Pentiums available. Some have already gone the way of the 486 and are no longer manufactured. Others are still being developed.

Safe to say that a Pentium 100 is the minimum that should be considered. This machine will adequately cope with today's, as well as the foreseeable future, software needs. Better still, if you can afford it go for a Pentium 133.

Several other pieces of hardware were mentioned in the Hardware and Software Requirements listed on page 10 of the May 1995 issue. The Pentium takes care of most of these and they are not as critical as on the older systems.

One exception is the amount of RAM memory required. Originally 8 Mb of RAM was suggested. Although 8 Mb is sufficient to run most software, "Windows 95" (a Microsoft operating system) runs much better with 16 Mb of memory. The added RAM is well worth the expense.

With the ever increasing size of software, the hard disk needs to have greater capacity. Originally a 200 Mb hard disk was suggested. About the smallest size made today is a 500 Mb disk. For a few dollars more it makes sense to go for a hard disk that can hold 1000 Mb, or 1 Gb (Gigabyte) as it is known.

The need for a bubblejet or inkjet printer still holds good, they are even better and cheaper today than they ever were.

Software

Microsoft's Windows 95 has already been mentioned as the operating system. Most vendors producing software today are creating products to run under this system. Many no longer produce or support software designed for Windows 3.1 or

Windows for Workgroups version 3.11. Therefore, it would be unwise to consider any other operating system. Most computers today are sold with Windows 95 already loaded and ready to go. With Windows 95, a DOS operating system is not required.

One benefit that comes from Windows 95, it is a lot easier to learn and use than its forebears.

The accounting package "Quicken for Windows" has been upgraded to Quicken version 5. Quicken is still one of the best and easiest software programs for small business such as farming. For those that have access to the World Wide Web, check out <http://www.agriculture.com/markets/flagship/cookbook.htm> for information on using this program for farm finances.

Microsoft have upgraded their Works program to Microsoft Works for Windows 95. This program has a simple word processor, spreadsheet and database, all handy items for small business.

Extras to Consider

CD-ROM

Some would say that having a CD-ROM drive is essential. Well nearly!

Today's software comes on floppy disks and sometimes on CD-ROM disks. The CD disk is far easier to handle and often costs less than its floppy counter part. CD's usually have additional software, such as tutorials, that are not normally supplied on a floppy due to space restrictions.

AVOINFO, part of the AVOMAN package, is due for release later this year or early next year. Initially it will be released on floppy disk but when the diagnostic features are added there will be so much information that it is more than likely it will have to be released on a CD. Therefore, no CD-ROM drive, no AVOINFO!

Like other parts of the hardware, the cost of a CD-ROM has fallen considerably in the last year.

Modem

The August 1995 edition of TA deals with electronic marketing. This type of activity, along with other communication activities, require the computer to be connected to a telephone line. To do that, a device called a "modem" is used.

A modem allows a grower operating a computer not only to access the World Wide Web but also send and receive electronic mail (Email) and join in news groups.

In addition, a modem can turn your computer into a Fax machine. Any document that is created using the word processor or other software can be Faxed directly from the computer. Likewise, the computer can receive a Fax message that can then be printed out on the printer.

Although not an essential piece of equipment at this point in time, it is a very handy tool allowing the user to gain knowledge from all over the world.

A modem can be added at a later date because most are attached to the computer externally and only need to be plugged in. They are usually sold with the necessary software to operate the facilities mentioned above, however, this software does have to be loaded and initialised.

A consolidated list of today's requirements is given in the box below.

Hardware And Software Requirements

Readers wishing to buy a computer to run the office management software reviewed previously in Talking Avocados should look for an IBM compatible computer with a minimum of:

Hardware

- Pentium 100 or better;
- 16 Mb of RAM memory;
- 1 Gb hard disk drive;
- 3.5" floppy disk drive;
- 14" 70 Hz VGA colour monitor;
- "Windows Accelerator Card" with at least 1Mb of memory;
- MS compatible mouse; and
- Bubblejet or inkjet printer.

Optional Hardware

- Quad speed CD-ROM drive;
- 28,800 bps modem;

Software

- Windows 95;
 - AVOMAN;
 - Quicken for Windows version 5; and
 - Microsoft Works 95 for Windows.
- Consider buying Plug and Play hardware when buying a computer system. If required, it will be easier to add components, such as a modem, at a later date.

Weather is one factor that is most important in any farming enterprise. While one can look out the window in the morning and try and judge what the day will be like weatherwise, this does not allow planning for farm activities the next day or next week.

The Bureau of Meteorology has a facility called "FARMWEATHER" whereby weather forecasts can be obtained by facsimile. These forecasts not only give details of expected weather, weather patterns and rainfall over the next 4 days (day by day), they also give rainfall over the last 24 hours, average temperature for the half month, the chance of rainfall, and a picture

of the current cloud pattern over Australia.

To obtain this service, from the Table below select a town near you and telephone the associated number from your Fax machine (costs 55¢/minute). If you have a handset on the Fax, listen for a voice telling you what to do. If you do not have a handset, perform Receive Polling using the instructions given in your Fax handbook.

For details of what facilities are available from the Bureau, Freepoll 1800 630100 for a copy of their Weather by Fax service.

For those growers with access to the Internet, try the Bureau's Home Page at <http://www.bom.gov.au>. There is no limit to the amount of information available.

TOWNS	FAX NO.
Queensland	
Burketown, Mt Isa, Boulia, Windorah, Cunnamulla, Georgetown, Hughenden, Winton, Longreach, Blackall, and Charleville	019 725 383
Monto, Gayndah, Kingaroy, Bundaberg, Maryborough, Gympie, Sunshine Coast, Gatton and the Gold Coast	019 725 384
Moranbah, Clermont, Emerald, Springsure, Baralaba, Theodore, Biloela, St. Lawrence, Rockhampton and Gladstone	019 725 385
Injune, Taroom, Roma, Miles, Surat, St. George, Goondiwindi, Dalby, Toowoomba, Warwick and Stanthorpe	019 725 386
Cairns-Mossman, The Tablelands, Innisfail-Tully, Herbert Valley, Townsville-Giru, The Burdekin, Charters Towers, Collinsville, Bowen, The Whitsundays, Proserpine and Mackay-Sarina	019 725 387
New South Wales	
Wyalong, Griffith, Young, Narrandera, Wagga Wagga, Tumut, Albury and Cooma	019 725 375
Moree, Wee Waa, Narrabri, Gunnedah, Tamworth, Bourke, St George, Dalby and Goondiwindi	019 725 376
Nyngan, Coonabarabran, Dubbo, Condobolin, Parkes and Forbes	019 725 377
Scone, Newcastle, Williamtown, Cessnock, Orange and Mudgee	019 725 378
Tweed, Murwillumbah, Lismore and Grafton	019 725 384
Victoria	
Mildura, Swan Hill, Bendigo and Horsham	019 725 362
Wodonga, Shepparton, Wangaratta and Mangalore	019 725 363
Hamilton, Warrnambool, Ballarat and Geelong	019 725 364
Yarra Glen, Wonthaggi, East Sale and Bairnsdale	019 725 365
South Australia	
Renmark, Keith, Naracoorte and Mt Gambier	019 725 366
Port Augusta, Clare, Maitland and Kingscote	019 725 367
Ceduna, Kyancutta, Cleve and Port Lincoln	019 725 368
West Australia	
Dalwallinu, Bencubbin, Merredin and Northam	019 725 370
Geraldton, Morawa, Dalwallinu and Moora	019 725 371
Narrogin, Katanning and Lake Grace	019 725 372
Mount Barker, Ravensthorpe and Esperance	019 725 373
Bunbury, Margaret River and Manjimup	019 725 374



Industry Managers Say.....

By Wayne Prowse



In five months working with the Avocado Industry I am pleased to have been able to visit many of the major growing areas. It was good to meet with a large group in Mareeba in July for the launch of the updated AVOMAN. In the last few months I have also been to Bundaberg, Mt Tamborine and Renmark and enjoyed meeting with growers and getting to know more about your concerns and visions for the future. We are placing a high priority on face to face communication since it is something that you have asked for through our survey earlier this year.

Back at my desk (yes the one in the ivory tower that I visit when I'm not in the field) my main focus has been on ensuring that the marketing program is up and running. I have worked closely with QFVG to ensure that this happens on time and within budget. In store Demonstrations and Public Relations are the key elements and as promised I have included a schedule of how your levy money is being spent in these areas.

Recently I worked with Anne Story to arrange some consumer research. We arranged for groups of 10 avocado consumers to meet and discuss their likes and dislikes of avocados as part of the retail quality project. The research also provided some valuable marketing information that we have used in preparing the new point of sale leaflets and Public Relations Press Releases. Consumers want more factual information on nutrition, storage and handling of Avocados. The new leaflets will make this information very clear.

Another topic of interest is the issue of whether to sell Avocados by weight or piece. I have spoken to several people

about this and put the question to consumers in the research groups. Consumers, used to buying by the piece, said that buying by the kilo would be a new way to get used to and would initially convert the price back to a piece. They would not necessarily buy more or less than normal. Growers I have spoken to are in favour of selling by weight whilst retailers clearly want to leave pricing by the piece. I would welcome your comment and support to further this issue.

The AHC has recently responded to an appreciation paper advocating a draft plan to withdraw from the AHC prepared by the Queensland Avocado Subcommittee.

In our response the AHC urges the avocado industry to carefully consider the fact that in the last 12 months the AHC has gone to great lengths to meet industry needs. We have significantly improved the communications and industry accountability for the marketing budget and programs. This was not reflected in the Queensland paper. Also consider the benefits brought by the AHC through access to the national levy system and the ability to support a strong peak body.

The AHC sees its relationship with all participating industries as one of PARTNERSHIP, working together for the benefit of Industry. All of us at the AHC want the partnership with the avocado industry to be strong and effective as we approach challenging times with industry growth and the threat of more imports.

Your Levy At Work

In store Demonstrations for 1996-97 have commenced.

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA*	WA
July			7		N/A
August	8	6	10	14	N/A
September	8	7	10	11	N/A

* SA demonstrations are 1 x 4 hours. There will be an Avocado stand at the Adelaide show 5-6 September.

These cost approx. \$200 for 2 x 4 hour in store demonstrations and are a very effective way to introduce consumers to avocados and reinforce the health message.

Public Relations

The Corporate Advantage (Qld) is arranging most of the PR activities. The campaign will focus heavily on the health benefits of avocados and will specifically

target population groups most concerned about health issues such as senior citizens and career singles. Media targeted will include health magazines, Health Fund newsletters, senior citizen magazines as well as regional media and general consumer magazines.

Recently "Stop worrying and start living" was released to focus on the advantage of the B group vitamins in avocados that assist in maintaining the nervous system. Next will be "Aussie Goodness - treat yourself" to take the view that an Australian Avocado is full of goodness and a treat in itself.

Heart Health Magazine

We have taken some advertorial space in the Heart Health magazine which is distributed to 10,000 people per month who visit Heart Health clinics to have their blood cholesterol measured. Heart Health Mobile Units visit major shopping centres around Australia for a few days each week. The units will be in the following "Avocado" regions in the coming months.

City	W/C*	Location
Bundaberg	2 Sep	Hinkler Plaza
Noosa Heads	16 Sep	Noosa Fair
Maroochydore	23 Sep	Sunshine Plaza
Lismore	18 Nov	Lismore Square
Grafton	25 Nov	Shopping World
Pt Macquarie	2 Dec	Settlement Shopping Centre

* Week commencing

This exercise will directly reach a target market of consumers concerned about their health enough to have their cholesterol tested. They will receive this free magazine which will contain a very strong health message about avocados as well as our new consumer recipe leaflet. The magazine is also distributed to major medical centres.

New Avocado Leaflet

New recipes and posters (see back cover) have been printed that will give consumers practical information and serving suggestions. Simple and factual information gets a clear health and nutrition message that achieves our strategy to focus on health.

Avocados Taste Bland - But

The recent consumer research conducted for the retail quality project highlighted various reasons that drive consumers to

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Horticulturalists To Focus On Export Markets

The great potential for Australian horticultural industries to increase profitability through exports was highlighted by Senator David Brownhill during his speech opening the Australian Horticultural Corporation's Marketing Edge Conference held recently at the Gold Coast.

Senator Brownhill, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, said the majority of horticultural industries have focused their activities on the domestic market but he was pleased to see recent changes in some sectors.

purchase avocados. Avocados have an "indulgent" image that justifies a higher price.

There is a trade off in how many avocados a consumer will "risk" buying at a price, and at what price will an avocado be "over the top". The "risk" is related to previous unpleasant experiences of disappointing eating quality.

The avocado consumer almost expects that one in four avocados will not be edible, although, as they love avocados they will take that risk to a price. And that price varied between regions and reason for buying with \$2.50 being absolute tops. Above that it wasn't worth the risk to buy.

So why do they "love" avocados. Top of mind descriptions of taste were that they are "BLAND" —hardly a taste to write home about. More probing and the creamy texture came out as being what makes avocados stand out from other fruits to the extent of an "indulgent" image not unlike a \$2+ Magnum ice cream. As for that "bland" taste, it turns out to be another advantage. Lets say it's a "subtle" taste (in marketing jargon) and the "subtle" taste actually complements and brings out flavours in other foods served with avocados while the texture adds a new dimension to the mouth feel.

The cholesterol message was certainly getting through too. Most consumers in the research groups understood that avocados had little or no cholesterol (No being correct) and as for fats, yes they were the good fats that can help lower blood cholesterol. And with the "indulgent" image a high fat content suddenly does not seem a major issue when you are not eating 5 a day! Or do we want them to.

"The citrus industry is a good example because it has begun to change its focus from an inward-looking sector to one which, with Government support, is actively targeting new markets with excellent results," he said.

"Citrus exports have increased from 79,000 tonnes worth \$67 million in 1992-93 to 108,000 tonnes worth \$101,000 in 1994-95.

"Current forecasts indicate this trade will grow to be worth \$111 million by 1996-97.

"Other sections of horticultural activity with a longer history of success in international markets are the wine, dried fruit and canned fruit industries."

However, there were some hurdles to overcome if success was to be achieved, Senator Brownhill said.

"The Coalition Government is committed to working with horticulture to help those involved overcome problems limiting their competitiveness."

"I believe a co-ordinated Research and Development program is one of the cornerstones for an internationally competitive industry.

"Without an effective R&D program the vegetable industry, for example, will be left languishing behind its international competitors."

Senator Brownhill said longer term planning, overcoming quarantine and other market access and improved infrastructure were also vital components in the push towards making horticulture in this country among the best and most competitive in the world.

Avocados And The Dairy Corporation Advertisement

Many growers have expressed concern over the portrayal of avocados being shown as having a much higher fat content than milk in the Dairy Corporation TV commercial.

The facts are that the commercial is technically correct. Avocados do have a 26% fat content and milk has a 4% fat content. This is the message that the advertisement communicates very effectively.

The advertisement does not compare saturates v mono-unsaturates, nor does it discuss cholesterol levels and nutrition. It also does not put average consumption per serve into perspective. It does not have to and if it did, it would completely destroy the message.

Lets put a few things into perspective. Assume that an average person would drink one 250 ml glass of milk per day. Also assume that an avocado consumer

would eat half an avocado per day (90 g edible portion). Based on these assumptions the volume of fat consumed would be as indicated in the Table.

Our marketing program emphasises the health benefits of avocados. We want to ensure that consumers and health professionals clearly understand that avocados have NO CHOLESTEROL and have a high proportion of mono-unsaturated "good fats" which actually helps prevent heart disease.

So next time someone reminds you of that Dairy advertisement putting avocados high on the "fat" scale, put consumption into perspective. Tell them that most of the avocado fat is "good fat" and that you would consume more saturated "bad" fat in a glass of milk than an avocado half, plus 35 mg of cholesterol. Avocados have no cholesterol.

	Milk (250 ml glass)	Avocados (90 g half avocado)	
Fat (total)	9.5 g	23.4 g	
Saturated	6.7 g	4.6 g	(bad fats, to be avoided)
Mono-unsaturated	2.6 g	13.2 g	(avos have the good fats which we should consume more of)
Polyunsaturated	0.3 g	2.4 g	
Cholesterol	35 mg	Nil	(avos have NO cholesterol)
Vitamin C	2.5 mg	8.0 mg	(avos are a better source)

A Study Of New Zealand Horticulture From An Australian Perspective

By Colin Bunt, Marie Piccone and Graeme Munro, Piccone Horticultural Consultancy, Edmonton Qld

This article consists of excerpts from a 62 page report analysing the New Zealand horticultural industry as an example of best practice in export marketing, quality management and industry development. Although it uses the Kiwifruit industry as an example, the principles equally apply to the avocado industry. Readers interested in further details, or a copy of the full report, should contact Marie Piccone Ph 070 453277, Fax 070 453613 or Email piccone1@internetcnorth.com.au.

Industry Development

New Zealand is fairly unique as a horticultural producer as the small population forces its large fruit and vegetable industries to be very much export dependent.

New Zealand's history as a horticultural exporter goes back to 1888, when the first shipment of fruit was consigned (ironically!) to Chile.

Fruit exports have grown steadily over the past 100 years and in the 1980's increased at almost three times the rate of other exports. The projected value of fruit exports alone by the year 2000 is estimated at \$1.76 billion (all figures in Australian dollars).

Fruit makes up 80% of horticultural exports, with kiwifruit and pipfruit (apples and pears) totalling 64% of this figure.

The New Zealand Fruitgrowers Federation has provided a forum for New Zealand fruit growers for over 75 years where issues could be debated and information disseminated. The primary role of the Federation is to provide a voice for industry at the political level.

A political swing over the past 15 years towards "user-pays" and industry self reliance has seen New Zealand horticulture become increasingly self-sufficient with subsidies and grants being significantly reduced in the last 10 years.

Horticultural Exports

Horticultural exports represent a significant percentage of New Zealand's total export sector. Horticultural exports (including both fresh and processed products) for the year ended 30 June 1994 earned \$1.1 billion. This represented 6.5% of the total value of New Zealand exports.

New Zealand fresh fruit and vegetable exports in 1992-93 amounted to \$832m with avocados being \$5.8m F.O.B. [\$9.2m in 1995-96. Ed] By comparison, Australian fresh fruit and vegetable exports totalled \$320m.

New Zealand's major horticultural export markets are Japan, the UK, Australia

and the USA. In 1994, these four markets represented 55% of total horticultural exports.

Australia's major fresh fruit and vegetable export markets are Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Japan and Indonesia.

For New Zealand horticultural industries to be viable beyond the obviously very limited confines of supplying a domestic population of just over 3 million people they have to seek out, access and develop export markets.

Couple this to the inherent disadvantage of being a small country in comparative isolation from the rest of the world (with all the difficulties and costs associated with distance) and you can begin to appreciate the challenges facing New Zealand producers and exporters.

Australia's comparatively large domestic population base and the relative absence of fresh horticultural imports has in essence "cocooned" Australian producers and marketers from many international trends, particularly in the areas of marketing, quality and operations management.

Decreasing margins on domestic markets are now a reality for many, if not most commodity groups in Australian horticulture. The reasons for these shrinking profit margins include improvements in production techniques leading to larger yields and less crop failures. Corporate style enterprises are also becoming increasingly evident. These organisations operate on the basis of greater economies of scale and vertical integration. Consumers are also becoming more fickle and are being offered an ever increasing product range by retail chains who vigorously compete for market share.

These types of production and domestic market issues have been the spur for many Australian horticultural producers to at least consider the potential for exporting their products.

Compared to our major southern-hemisphere competitors however, we are starting at a disadvantage. With a few

exceptions we are beginning the race for market share in potential export markets without the credibility, experience, knowledge or infrastructure of our competitors. What we have learnt operating within the relatively cosy and predictable Australian market will be of limited value offshore.

Marketing Boards

Rabobank in their report titled "The World Fresh Fruit Market (1993)" depict Marketing Boards as follows:

"Marketing Boards are public bodies established by governments in order (in this instance) to export fruit. They receive sorted fruit direct from the grower, transport the products to the importing countries and organise negotiations in these countries. The fruit is normally dealt with by panelists, importers and/or wholesalers selected by the Board."

"The Marketing Board option is particularly relevant for countries which are situated far from consumption centres. By collective delivery of a high quality product, including packing and transport to the importer, the greatest possible marketing power is generated. Efficiency in transport is encouraged, and a distinctive product in the market, partly based on high quality, is supported through the promotion of an own brand, essential to provide sufficient income for the grower once high transport costs have been deducted. The monopoly position that the Boards have achieved on behalf of governments must also be viewed in this light. Such a monopoly creates stability and optimisation of prices for the fruit grower, this position, however, is currently under pressure in a number of countries. Using market research, the Boards also provide advice to producers on a range of issues, including which variety to grow."

"Countries making use of Marketing Boards include New Zealand (the New Zealand Apple and Pear Marketing Board and the New Zealand Kiwi Marketing Board), South Africa (Unifruco), Israel (Agrexco), Morocco and Algeria."

The Kiwifruit Industry

Of the two Marketing Board operating in New Zealand horticulture, we chose the New Zealand Kiwifruit Marketing Board (NZKMB) as a marketing case study. This is mainly because the New Zealand Kiwifruit industry's history is relatively compact with enormous growth as well as highs and lows concentrated into a comparatively short and well documented time frame.

The NZKMB as a Marketing Organisation

Significant grower support for the establishment of a single-desk marketing organisation saw the formation of the New Zealand Kiwifruit Marketing Board by government statute in 1988.

The NZKMB has a grower, government and commercial (in the broader sense) Board make-up. The NZKMB must market all product meeting specification for export i.e. the total crop, and has the authority to do that internationally, excluding the Australian market.

The NZKMB's responsibilities go well beyond simply selling the product. Its roles include setting all product specifications, shipping, off-shore storage, market distribution, accessing marketing intelligence, market access negotiation, finance and administration, development and operation of quality systems as well as creation and maintenance of information systems and networks.

The financial interactions between the Board, its grower suppliers and other on-shore parties, (such as packhouses and coolstores) are summarised as follows:

- Growers sign a contract with the NZKMB pre-season to supply an estimated volume (by tray) for export.
- Growers also enter into contracts with packhouses and coolstores to pack and then store fruit prior to shipment.
- The NZKMB pays packhouses on behalf of growers an advance which covers base packing and cooling costs—hence they act in part as the growers' "bank" to provide the cash needed for harvesting, packing and onshore cool-storage.
- The NZKMB in turn contracts coolstores to hold product on-shore based on a per-pallet rate. The Board takes responsibility for the product at cool-store.
- Ongoing growers' payments are made over the selling season based on market returns and subject to a pooling system.

This entire system operates on very clear criteria based on documented requirements and responsibilities for all parties. The NZKMB's financial activities remove

a large element of risk for supplier businesses such as packhouses who otherwise would have to seek direct payment from growers rather than via the Board's pre-season payment system.

Product specifications and handling requirements are clearly stated and monitored. The design and effectiveness of the NZKMB's quality system allow these arrangements to work.

The advantages of this infrastructure include:

- **Centralising of finance** Gives minimisation of individual risk, minimal duplication and competitive credit rates due to the financial scale.
- **Clarity of organisation** Everyone knows what is required, systems are objective and a branded product of predetermined known quality eventuates.
- **Economies of scale** For example, packaging companies know what the packaging specification for export trays are going to be and can supply that packaging at a competitive rate due to very long runs of one line.
- **Unity of purpose** There isn't 4000 or so growers making 4000 independent decisions about marketing issues. As grower suppliers they have input into the policies and direction of the Board but the Board is empowered to make the decisions that suppliers then act on and follow—and can enforce compliance if necessary for the greater good.
- **Meeting of minds** Collective strength isn't simply "hard" power such as numbers of units or percentage market share. It's also "soft" power such as can be generated by a large number of individuals working towards common goals, be it in research, systems management or market development.

Market Trends And Resultant Strategies

The 1992-93 marketing season was a watershed for the New Zealand kiwifruit industry and the NZKMB. An unprecedented New Zealand crop saw over 65 million trays (227,500 tonnes) packed. This coincided with global over supply of all fresh fruit, including kiwifruit, especially in the second half of 1992. This supply was not matched by demand. Therefore returns were poor, which had a serious impact on the industry as a whole and high debts resulted.

The NZKMB was able to structure a financial plan and against many expectations put into place strategies to overcome this debt. The primary actions taken to ease pressure created by over-supply were to increase the stringency of product grade

standards so as to effectively reduce the crop and raise overall product quality.

This further differentiated the product quality advantage over other producer nations that the NZKMB had actively promoted with the branding of their product as "The World's Finest" in 1991.

Kiwifruit had traditionally been perceived and promoted as an exotic product line. The huge increases in world supply in the late 1980s and early 1990s had seen this perception change to the point where kiwifruit was perceived as a commodity line by consumers in major markets.

This change in consumer perception required a change in direction in terms of promotion, based on market research.

Given that real power in terms of market share and sales was seen to lie with the retailer, the NZKMB has focused much of its energies on better understanding their requirements so as to better service retailers and supply product that meets optimum quality criteria.

The NZKMB has attempted to provide product and services that both maximise consumer demand whilst integrating distribution channels, packaging requirements and the like so as to best service the retailers themselves.

In-market Alliances

One of the most innovative and interesting strategies taken to achieve those aims has seen the NZKMB form distribution alliances with Dole in Japan and Geest in the U.K. The purpose of these alliances being to maximise marketing efficiencies and gain better market intelligence without losing marketing control or brand integrity. These exclusive distribution arrangements are also targeted at expanding market share whilst ensuring in-market distribution structures best meet the specific needs of individual market places.

These alliances allow both partner organisations to gain the benefits associated with the existing relationships, reputations and infrastructure of each party. Under these arrangements the NZKMB remains the importer and marketer, whilst Dole in Japan and Geest in the U.K. provide an exclusive, national, wholesale distribution service.

Kiwigreen

An example of a production strategy, very much drawn from the market has been the development and success of the NZKMB "Kiwigreen" program over the past 3 years.

The events that triggered the development of the Kiwigreen program included

pressures from wholesalers and retailers in Italy, who wanted environmentally produced, residue-free fruit. Fruit being marketed into Italy met EEC maximum residue levels, but Italy had set nil residue levels for some chemicals so it refused to accept New Zealand kiwifruit.

Instead of simply applying pressure on the Italians to accept the EC residue limits, the NZKMB decided to take a more proactive and market-driven stance based on actually giving the market what it wanted!

A non-chemical pest and disease program was developed in 1992 involving research scientists, consultants, volunteer growers and NZKMB staff. Based on crop monitoring and the use of non-chemical insecticides (such as oils) post-flowering, the program allowed residue free fruit to be produced. The term "residue free" obviously cast aspersions on the balance of the crop so the term Kiwigreen was coined and promoted.

The program began with a small number of growers who simply had a philosophical affinity with the concept—they didn't like using chemicals and were conscious and interested in alternatives, provided they were economic.

The program has been so successful that over 17.5 million trays of Kiwigreen fruit were estimated for the 1995 season, with the entire European market likely to be supplied with Kiwigreen fruit in 1996.

Food safety concerns as well as measures being taken by other innovative producers such as Israel to develop residue free horticultural crops will likely see legislation becoming increasingly stringent regarding chemical use. The Kiwigreen program has given the New Zealand kiwifruit industry a jump on its competitors in this regard.

The benefits of this program include:

- product differentiation relative to competitors;
- improved market access;
- grower benefits due to reduced spraying and (at worst) similar production costs; and
- community benefits due to less spraying and employment of crop monitors, meaning money is spent on jobs rather than chemicals.

Kiwigreen is not only an example of a production initiative, driven by the market, it is a good example of grower responsibility and the team work concept working to good effect. Growers take all the risk with this program, there is no "bail out" clause if pest problems were to see fruit downgraded. No government subsidies were

involved, the initiatives were industry driven and industry funded.

Many people surveyed made the comment that the beauty of the program and the secret of its success was the determination of the initial grower group, the researchers, Marketing Board staff and consultants to get stuck in and work together. This allowed the program to be designed, developed and implemented within such a relatively short time frame, be seen as credible, then grow rapidly.

A Maturing Industry

It is interesting to note that as the industry has grown it has had to increasingly formalise its structures and better manage its activities in order to remain internationally competitive and viable.

In the "early days", a group of people could meet around a table and informally liaise to good effect about marketing and about production and promotion issues. As the industry grew in terms of production volumes and the number of participants involved, growers saw the need to put in place measures to essentially protect themselves from themselves in terms of underselling and divisive activity.

Although the NZKMB operates by government statute its existence and its activities are owed to and driven by the grower base. It is growers who have begun the initiatives that have led the industry evolution. It is now however the requirements of the market place that are primarily dictating the policies and action of all sectors of the industry.

The New Zealand Horticultural Export Authority

The New Zealand Horticultural Export Authority (NZHEA) provides an interesting case study of a partially disciplined marketing model without total centralising of control, as with a Marketing Board system.

The NZHEA although operating and governed by a Government Act, is based essentially on co-operation between exporters and growers. This marketing system is one that ensures at least dialogue between industry sectors and an element of discipline—without restricting exporter distribution strategies or restricting grower choice as to who should market their product.

The New Zealand horticultural industry itself drove the initiatives that led to the creation of the NZHEA under act of parliament in 1987. This push from industry came about due to the desire to see greater co-operation between exporters and co-ordination of activities in export markets.

The New Zealand experience as a primarily export orientated economy has proven to most New Zealanders the futility of "kiwis underselling kiwis" in the international marketplace. Most producers understand that they are small fish in a very large pond and at least an element of co-operation is mandatory in order to be competitive.

The following document excerpt outlines the primary concerns leading to the establishment of the NZHEA as well as the key features of the Act, as reported in the Performance and Efficiency Review of the NZHEA published in December 1994.

"The Act established the primary aim of the NZHEA as being to promote the effective export marketing of horticultural products. It was set up in response to widespread concerns in horticulture which included the following:

- Many industries were fragmented and lacked cohesion between growers, exporters, packhouses and other related groups.
- Exporting lacked discipline with accusations of price undercutting and unnecessary damage in the market place.
- There was a tendency to be grower driven with not enough focus on exporting.
- Inadequate attention was being paid to research and development and raising funds for this type of work was problematic.
- There was a lack of appreciation of the need for quality.
- Quality standards either did not exist or existed but could not be enforced.

The key features of the NZHEA Act are:

- the establishment of a multi-exporter marketing model;
- the establishment of the concept of prescribed products with industry groups being established as Recognised Product Groups (RPG) representing the full range of interested parties including growers, packers, exporters and processors;
- the concept of an export marketing strategy (EMS) to be adopted by each RPG;
- the establishment of a process to license exporters;
- the establishment of a process to:
 - provide a forum for the exchange of information;
 - encourage and undertake market analysis and research into exporting;
 - collect, co-ordinate and disseminate information;
 - liaise with appropriate parties with respect to:
 - distribution, transportation and packaging;

NEW ZEALAND HORTICULTURE

- trade barriers and their removal;
- a co-ordinated strategy for horticultural export;
- liaise with other organisations over participation in international trade exhibitions;
- advise the Ministers;
- approve export marketing strategies;
- approve the licensing of exporters;
- promote compliance with grade and quality standards;
- promote compliance with the EMS.

The NZHEA Board is made up of five members appointed by government. It is staffed by a General Manager and a small team who perform both statutory functions and product group management activities.

For a product to come under the NZHEA umbrella, a strong level of product sector support must be made evident to government. Government then, under an Order of Council, declare that commodity a prescribed product at which point growers form a RPG.

RPG's include summerfruit (stonefruit), squash, avocados, table grapes, garlic, persimmons and boysenberries, amongst others. Each RPG is responsible for developing a suitable EMS covering issues such as quality systems, terms of trade and grade standards as well as roles and responsibilities for each sector of that product group e.g. growers, packhouses, coolstores, exporters.

The NZHEA Board has responsibility for critiquing and ultimately approving each EMS before it is adopted and implemented. Part of this responsibility includes ensuring that adequate consultation and "homework" has gone into the development of the strategy.

The NZHEA licenses exporters on the basis of their ability to adequately handle and market that product. Licensing criteria includes marketing experience, product knowledge, financial status and the views of the product group regarding the applicant organisation.

The primary advantage of the licensing system coupled to registration of export growers and packhouses and exporters is to provide an element of accountability. A clear audit trail allows traceability of product from the farm until final point of sale if needed.

A wide range of views were canvassed in New Zealand as to the worth of the NZHEA and its impact. Some people believed that the NZHEA was too much of an "each way bet" between the single desk option and open slather and that it lacked any real "teeth". The majority of people

though believed that the NZHEA provided an excellent forum for discussion, better understanding and often a more co-operative and managed product group.

The NZHEA plays a valuable facilitation role which encourages people to better communicate and co-ordinate activities towards common goals.

The NZHEA's location in Wellington (New Zealand's capital) was also seen as advantageous as it allowed ready and regular dialogue with government and government agencies. The NZHEA could also be considered a cost-effective licensing, facilitation and management option given its small team of staff and total operating budget of approximately NZ\$600,000 per annum. The NZHEA's operating budget in 1993 constituted only 0.59% of export sales from all its product groups which totalled NZ\$100.3 million for that year.

The review of the NZHEA carried out in 1994 has made several recommendations as to its future restructuring. The two key recommendations regarding the marketing of export products were that:

1. The NZHEA should be restructured as a stand alone export licensing service.
2. That the product group management functions as with all other non-licensing, non statutory functions be put on a contestable, fully commercial basis. This could include establishment of a joint venture consultancy company with the New Zealand Fruitgrowers Federation so as to offer these services to industry.

From an Australian perspective, I would suggest that the most valuable lesson we can take from this case study is that

organisations such as these, because of limited size and ultimately limited power, operate only as well as the level of commitment, focus and co-operation of the people involved.

The NZHEA couldn't ever solve a major problem through forceful action or wielding of power, but what it does is provide a forum and working environment where problems can be addressed and hopefully solved via consultation and voluntary action.

The NZHEA model works best when genuine commitment and goodwill is exhibited amongst the various sections of a product group. Without that commitment and open mindedness little can be achieved.

Supplier/Customer Co-dependence

So far, we've looked at marketing strategies developed and operating within the bounds of a formal, regulated structure. However, New Zealand horticulturists don't all operate within these parameters. There are many product groups and independent farming ventures operating simply on the basis of supply, demand and open competition.

Relationships

Often the history of Australian horticulture has seen evidence of the win/lose principle—growers actively competing with other growers on the same markets for example. For you to have a "win" probably someone else had to have a "lose". Such an environment wasn't conducive to rationalisation of marketing activities, market

22

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development or most importantly trust.

Glenn Pearce in an article titled "Relational Marketing for the 90's" published in the February 1993 issue of Good Fruit & Vegetables discusses the thinking behind developing positive business relationships as the concept might apply in Australian horticulture. It's worth considering some of these ideas when looking at examples in New Zealand horticulture where the cultivation of win/win relationships has been a primary business strategy.

Glenn Pearce makes the point that the traditional view of marketing revolves around a seller identifying and satisfying the need of a buyer—often "the consumer". Relational marketing however takes the view that buyers and sellers don't simply sell to or buy from one another—they form business to business relationships. Therefore the interaction between these two parties is the key—how the relationship is formed in the first instance, then how the relationship is maintained and ideally, built on.

Two key factors to consider are: how much each business understands about the other, given that the greater the level of understanding the more likely each can interact effectively; and the issue of dependence. If both businesses have some dependence on each other, then the relationship tends to be mutually beneficial and therefore more easily managed.

If however, one business is significantly more dependent than the other in the relationship or if the relationship is carried out without meaningful understanding of each other's business practices, then it is unlikely to develop or run smoothly.

Successful Business Interaction

Following is an outline of one set of views and experiences regarding business to business relationships.

Earnsey Weaver is a third generation summerfruit and cherry grower and packer in the Central Otago region of New Zealand who has exported his products to the U.S.A., Australia and Asian markets. Although Earnsey mainly consigns his fruit to exporters who market the product, he believes that it is imperative that he knows who the end buyers are. He believes that it is his prime responsibility as the grower to ensure that product reaches the end buyer in the desired condition, as it is his product reputation at stake.

This is not a criticism of his exporters but rather a indication of how he feels the interactions between producer, marketer and buyer can work to best effect.

As the producer, he is best placed to understand what impacts on fruit condition, the critical factor as he sees it is fruit quality.

Grade standards as enforced by quarantine agencies don't accurately measure fruit condition or more importantly the environmental factors and handling practices that impact on fruit condition. In a practical sense this means it is necessary to "follow the product through" and get right alongside his buyers. This way he gets an understanding of their requirements and their business practices.

Doing this ensures that what he is doing as the "manufacturer" of the product complements the buyer's needs. This is also an opportunity to form personal relationships with these people. This personalises the business relationship, which Earnsey is convinced gives his brand greater credibility as well as helping all parties better communicate. Earnsey's actions show the buyer that he is taking responsibility for his product and an interest in his customer. It also means there is far less chance of avoidable product quality failures happening as it allows him the opportunity to critique the distribution and marketing system and where necessary or possible, take corrective action.

The exporter's role is to develop markets and establish the distribution networks as well as obviously negotiate price and volume. The relationship between producer and exporters is formalised but this is no substitute for trust and commitment both ways—hence again the need to understand the roles each "player" in the relationship must play.

Earnsey's appreciation of how his buyers' businesses operate highlights to him the need to attain certain levels or standards. For example, visiting his supermarket clients in Australia showed him that these stores simply don't have the room, the staff or the time to repack or sort fruit—it must be up to scratch each and every time. He is also able to gain from these customers a better understanding of their customer's requirements, which will have a bearing on his production strategies, perhaps relating to varieties grown.

The relationship concept also includes visits to Earnsey's property by his buyers so that they can gain an appreciation of what he is doing and the constraints he has to deal with. This also consolidates the personal aspect of the relationship.

Maintaining and building business relationships also involves actively networking with other New Zealanders as well as growers, researchers and the like offshore.

This sharing of information works both ways—it's not a matter of "bleeding" someone else for information, but rather sharing experiences for mutual benefit.

Earnsey uses the crops he is currently growing to partially offset the cost of developing new crops and product lines. As he sees it, his future viability and indeed New Zealand's future viability is all about keeping the novelty factor going continuously.

Identifying new products or differentiating established products and getting into markets with these lines before they become simply another commodity is a key business strategy based on market intelligence.

The relationships Earnsey has created and developed play a critical role in accessing that market intelligence.

Conclusion

Market alliances and production, distribution and communication technologies in a deregulating global market are opening up new marketing opportunities for some, whilst creating new threats for existing market suppliers. Australia can reasonably expect significant competition for potential Asian markets as well as existing domestic markets from both southern and northern hemisphere producers and marketers.

Change is the only constant. Horticultural production and marketing have always been dynamic—the extent of this dynamism however is rapidly increasing due to technological advances and internationalism of trade.

Many in the New Zealand horticultural industry are all too aware of these trends and are actively and diligently changing their business practices to suit.

Those that are able to be *proactive* rather than simply *reactive* stand the best chance of remaining viable—it is the essence of modern business practice.

New Zealand's small population, limited resources and relative geographic isolation have created the climate for and in most instances forced the direction of industry development. However, it is a "shrinking", increasingly more homogenised global marketplace that is the new primary driver of change.

How both New Zealand and Australia react to this challenge will ultimately determine the balance achieved between their being *marketers of product* or *product markets*.

Team Avocado: Part Of Big Changes In The New Zealand Avocado Industry

By Rosalie Smith, *The Orchardist*

The avocado industry is showing that growers, if they work together, can profoundly influence the marketing of their crop even in a multi desk system.

The 135 growers who form the Team Avocado Trust will produce more than 40% of the national crop this season.

By providing a consistent supply of even quality well-branded and ready to eat product, together with an integrated marketing package, growers in conjunction with Woolworths Australia's produce team, have dramatically increased sales of New Zealand avocados across the Tasman.

In Woolworths Victorian Safeway stores sales are up by an incredible 500%. Sales have doubled in Woolworths' New South Wales stores and significantly increased in all other states except Tasmania which is not supplied. Team Avocado now supply 38% of the preferred supermarket sizes of New Zealand export avocados going into Woolworths stores in Western Australia.

Using a similar marketing program they have achieved sales increases almost as good in New Zealand supermarkets, especially in the lower North Island and South Island.

The results of the marketing package have exceeded Team Avocado's highest expectations. Exports began a month earlier than usual. By the week before Christmas the Team had exported more fruit than in the whole of last season. It seems likely that the Team's exports will total about 160,000 trays, well up on last season's 88,000.

Until this season Team Avocado was the Harvestpac Trust, based on a Tauranga packhouse. It already was owned by growers who appreciated vertical integration and grower control of their own destiny.

Team Avocado could not have achieved its dramatic results without an enthusiastic marketer. Alistair Young who, while named Managing Director insists he is "just an employee of the Trust", is the marketer. He gained marketing experience while working for Fruit Fed when it was a major fruit exporter. He also owns an avocado orchard situated between Katikati and Tauranga. Together with Trust's Chairman Hugh Moore of Katikati and Jim Clark of

Far North Packers, he was instrumental in developing the Team Avocado concept.

Last spring expatriate South African avocado expert Jonathan Cutting was employed as consultant with responsibility for improving orchard yields and quality and post-harvest quality. He is spending 1000 hours this season working for the Team. His educational program for growers includes field days and seminars. He is working with growers on a total quality management system to ensure customer satisfaction. He offers them an ambitious target: increasing production from the present average of five tonnes a hectare to 20 tonnes a hectare by improved nutrition, disease control and orchard management. He also monitors product quality from each of the Team's seven packhouses.

"We encourage our growers to be committed professionals producing high yields of a quality product," Alistair said. "All must commit their product 100% to Team Avocado because we must protect our branding and our information. This basic principle ensures continuity of supply, too often lacking in the past as growers switched from exporter to exporter in search of the highest dollar. Our big strength is our ability to flow product on to the market as required."

"Previously, the season picking programs were set in place. Now, our growers are picking to a flow plan, not picking when the mood takes them."

Team Avocado's seven packhouses are situated between Awani in the Far North and Opotiki in the Eastern Bay of Plenty. This geographic spread maximises the length of the selling season and ensures that seasonal fluctuations are kept to a minimum.

The marketing program centres on the Team Avocado name and the icon of a colourful avocado person. Eighteen-page, full-colour manuals have been prepared for both the Australian and New Zealand markets. Packaging, labels and point of sale material carry the same brand images. Large individual fruit labels feature a different colour for each fruit size for easy differentiation of product. These labels are applied after packing so all are visible and facing the same way. They are big enough

to hold the numbers which form "price look up" codes which may be keyed into supermarket computers to give the per-piece price in addition to the usual bar coding.

Branding has gone a long way down the chain. A total of 2500 branded knit shirts have been produced and distributed, the packhouses carry huge Team Avocado signs, even the Trust's vehicles carry colourful signage. Cycling, soccer and bowling teams have been sponsored with the provision of Team Avocado clothing.

Promotional costs have been large but manageable in view of the volumes being sold.

Team Avocado is the major supplier to Woolworths, Price Chopper and Big Fresh in New Zealand and to Woolworths Australia across the Tasman. In addition it continues to supply one major agent in Brisbane and one in Sydney, a sharp reduction in its agent numbers.

"We have learned the hard way to keep control of our product till it reaches the retailer," Alistair said.

Almost every New Zealand supermarket produce manager receiving Team Avocado's product attended pre-season training sessions. They were introduced to the program and the manuals and advised how to handle avocados. They were enthusiastic. "Why didn't you do this years ago?" they asked. "Nobody ever gave us this information before." Similar sessions in the Australian States were also well attended breaking new ground for the industry.

Alistair said talking to the managers face to face and having the opportunity to tell them that avocados are living things was worth far more than thousands of written words.

At the beginning of the season the industry was forecasting a record crop of more than 400,000 export trays, more than a third up on the previous season. The two industry organisations, the growers association and the export council, planned closer co-ordination of the dozen exporters and hoped for the best.

While the export return has dropped a couple of dollars a tray, the decline is not

AVOCADOS IN NEW ZEALAND

23

as severe as some pundits feared and the season has been far more successful than the last big season, in 1991-92.

Team Avocado aggressively sought new grower suppliers and increased crop share from 28% to more than 40%.

"For a total marketing package a supplier must have a significant volume in today's selling climate," Alistair said. "Supermarket chains are so big they are not interested in dealing with small operators."

Store managers have found pre-ripening reduces waste as well as increasing sales.

"The fruit just disappears as soon as it is displayed," Alistair said. "Customers take it home and eat it that night then perhaps shopping for more, instead of leaving it to sit in a bowl for several days. So they are making more frequent purchases."

"Managers are reporting fantastic sales increases. Many have doubled sales. We employ a woman three days a week to visit supermarkets in New South Wales and report on fruit quality just before purchase. She reports any cases of product failure or losses and we can follow up on handling procedures. But mostly there have been few or no complaints of waste."

Even with its greatly increased product base, the Team has been struggling to meet the unprecedented demand across the Tasman. Because stocks have never accumulated in its Australian facilities it has had to use air-freight when sea-freighting would have cut costs.

Tony Ponder of Team Horticultural Services is contracted to provide marketing and operational services to the Trust. Six days a week pre-ripened local market fruit is sent to Woolworths service centres in Auckland, Palmerston North, Wellington and Christchurch. Six days a week Australian supermarkets are supplied from ripening centres in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. Tony has arranged and done the paper work for 130 consignments to Australia and more within New Zealand.

"We have employed an Australian specialist to export our fruit to Asian markets this season but only small volumes have been sent because of our difficulty in supplying our Australian market," Alistair said.

Several seasons ago a move was made by the industry to use bushel packs to supply the local market. Team Avocado has chosen to supply its ripened fruit in its colourful 5.5 kg trays except for the smaller 28 and 32 count fruit.

Yet another method of adding value in Australia is the pre-packing of 28-count fruit in threes in red netlon bags with a colourful sticker included. The bag is fastened with an equally bright tag using a machine specially purchased for the Team Horticulture packhouse near Tauranga. Both sticker and tag have recipes on the reverse side. The use of recipes on point of sale material is an opportunity for cross-merchandising with other products such as nachos or crackers.

The export season ended when Australian new-season Shepard avocados came on the market in mid-February. Then the Team was scheduled to look back over the season and discuss all their ideas for next season. Already a video is being prepared aimed at store managers and consumers.

"We aimed to be the dominant brand in the Australian retail avocado market and we have achieved that aim," Alistair said. "Developing branding is opening up one opportunity after another for us. We believe there is huge untapped demand in Australia and our experience this season is endorsing that view."

The Trust is controlled by its directors, three from the Bay of Plenty, one from Whangarei and two from the Far North. Money returned from sales goes into the Trust's account before disbursement to growers. One-third of the commission paid by growers is spent on promotion, quality control and market development.

Coincidentally, or as a result of pressure from Team Avocado, momentous changes are taking place in the avocado industry.

Moves by the Avocado Growers Association to set up the Avocado Industry Council (AIC) were well under way while Team Avocado was only a gleam in Alistair's eye.

Jonathan Cutting was appointed technical director for the AIC shortly after he took up his consultancy with Team Avocado, committing 1000 hours a year to each organisation.

Exporters are coming together into groups or pairs to co-ordinate their marketing and several of the smaller exporters have been inactive this season. There are now only five seeable export operations.

Fewer brokers are handling product in Australian wholesale markets resulting in more stable pricing and less speculative buying.

Growers are becoming more professional. Many Bay of Plenty growers have at last followed the example of Northland growers in select picking three or four times during the season rather than strip picking, thus increasing average fruit size and decreasing volumes of low value small fruit, but they still have to be more disciplined. By the end of the third week in January only 2.8% of the Far North crop was 28 or 32 count. Eight per cent of Whangarei fruit fell into that category but the Bay of Plenty was still supplying 21.4% of small fruit.

Even in the best growing areas Phytophthora root rot has infected many trees but dedicated growers have now controlled the rot by regularly injecting trees with phosphorous acid and should therefore enjoy increasing yields in the future. Even on prime sites mulching round the trees has become commonplace as growers have realised the importance of protecting delicate surface roots. More attention is being paid to plant nutrition.

Avocados Having Super Season

By Rosalie Smith, *The Orchardist* March 1996

The avocado industry is having a "cracker of an export season," according to the Avocado Industry Council's technical manager, Dr Jonathan Cutting.

"Look at the volume that has been exported, 350,000 trays by the end of January, compared with 194,000 trays at the

same time last season," Jonathan said. "We were faced with a 40% crop increase over last season. The season began a month earlier than usual. There have been very few audit failures and prices have held up remarkably well. The average price may be down but growers should be looking at

their orchard income, not their tray income. Most have a much bigger crop this season."

Jonathan was appointed technical manager last June. He brought 15 years of avocado research and consulting experience to the industry, emigrating from

AVOCADOS IN NEW ZEALAND

South Africa two and a half years ago. He has completed two years as a senior research fellow at Massey University, mostly working on pipfruit, and has now moved to Tauranga, devoting all his energies to the avocado industry.

Avocado Industry Council chairman Ron Bailey says the industry is fortunate in gaining a technical manager of the high calibre of Jonathan.

"He is a world authority on our crop," Ron said. "When I was in Australia recently I met Professor Nigel Wolstenholme of the University of Natal. He spoke highly of Jonathan and hoped he would continue to be involved in science because he had so much to offer."

"He has brought an objective view to the industry. He has the ability to look at it with fresh eyes, at the science providers, quality management, transport system and post-harvest handling systems and does not take for granted that they must remain unchanged."

"I believe the establishment of the post of technical manager has been a vital factor in the smooth running of this record export season. With his expertise Jonathan has been able to sort out technical problems quickly."

"Turners and Growers, Freshco and Team Avocado have ripening programs in place in Australian markets. The latter two might have been reluctant to take the plunge this season without the security of his support."

"In his private consultancy he has shown growers aspects of the South African model of managing the pH level and providing more nutrients. Till now we have been more familiar with the Australian model of keeping the pH down and not feeding the trees to the same extent as the South Africans."

"It is too early to judge the effects of his advice on orchard management but, certainly, more growers are now seeing the need to apply more nutrients."

Jonathan graduated from the University of Natal and then worked with avocados at the Nelspruit Citrus and Subtropical Research Station for eight years during which time he achieved his doctorate. After carrying out research in Germany for a year he spent two years at Stellenbosch University and then returned to the University of Natal as a senior lecturer, fully involved with avocado research and supervising several graduate students.

During this time he worked directly with 16 growers with plantings as big as 600 ha but mostly ranging between 80 and 120 ha, advising them on orchard management.

He has made regular academic visits to California and Israel. His most recent of many contributions to international scientific literature was a paper on pre-harvest effects on post-harvest avocado quality presented to the Third International Avocado Congress held in Israel last October.

After two and a half years in New Zealand and eight months as avocado technical manager, Jonathan's experience here has reinforced his views that the New Zealand industry can learn much from others around the world.

"If you understand the principles then information is transferable," he said. "But different fine tuning is required from country to country."

"For example, phosphorous acid controls phytophthora in every country, but the concentration and timing are unique and specific according to economic and physiological perspectives of each country, or even district."

Industry Assets

Looking at the New Zealand avocado industry he sees several strengths:

- its new political structure: the Avocado Industry Council (AIC) is in place, acting upon policies set by the executive of the Avocado Growers Association;
- four grower directors sit on the industry council, compared with three on its predecessor, the Avocado Export Council, giving greater grower participation in decision making;
- the Horticulture Export Authority and Primary Industry Management Services are doing a good job in managing the clerical and accounting function of the industry;
- the openness of discussion among council members is positive and refreshing; and
- New Zealand is a great place to grow Hass avocados, one of the best in the world.

Jonathan, personally, is enjoying the three-way split in his employment. He is also contracted by Team Avocado as their technical manager, mostly working with their quality systems, and he is an independent consultant to about 50 private grower clients, including four in South Africa whom he visits two or three times a year. So he keeps in touch with developments in the South African industry.

On The Debit Side

Many growers, especially in the Bay of Plenty, could be more professional. For example, growers were not willing to pick

between Christmas and the New Year even though packhouses were willing to pack.

Too many are fashionable, not professional.

"It appears fashionable to go for the best price in the short term," he said. "These growers will tend to neglect the export market if the local market offers better returns, when, as an industry, we should be looking to develop long term markets."

"They must be prepared to dedicate a fixed volume of their production to the export market. Growers will hurt a lot more in the future if they do not take a long term view now."

"What is more, the so called 'best price' does not exist, except in an exporter's or grower's imagination. Too often best prices are quoted as average prices and these become the norm and cannot be matched in reality."

"Few growers I have met are young and some older growers proudly say to me they can pick, say, 50 bins a year off their orchard with minimal inputs. That is not professional growing. It is not sustainable; they are mining their soil and cannot go on doing that indefinitely."

"On the other hand, most Northland growers are highly professional."

Jonathan is not certain that our major export market niche in Australia is sustainable if the export crop lifts above 500,000 trays. Yields varying widely from year to year and do not allow proper market development. Additionally, Australian fruit continues to dribble on to the market during New Zealand's export season and that situation will worsen in the future.

He is disappointed at the lack of transparency within the industry.

"The 'Avo Flyer' that we are publishing fortnightly during the export season, giving average market prices and volumes shipped, is a real step ahead in transparency, though some exporters were initially reluctant to expose themselves, even with industry average prices," he said.

"Industry segments must work more closely together: growers, packers, exporters, service providers, scientists and the industry council. However, I also believe that a good deal of progress has been made in this area recently."

"For example, exporters see the export and local markets as being separate whereas growers see them as one. This is a real conflict."

"While the five major exporters, Freshco, Independent Avocado Exporters, Primor, Team Avocado and Turners and

AVOCADOS IN NEW ZEALAND

25

Growers, as well as Angro Exports regularly attend Avocado Exporters Committee (AVEC) meetings, some of the others have attended none or only one meeting. Commitment to the industry is obviously questioned under these conditions."

The role the AIC specified for Jonathan is manifold:

- to develop a scientific research program. The council knew it wanted change and has asked Jonathan to conceptualise the necessary developments;
- to develop and promote technical transfer through physical contacts with packhouse managers, council members and consultants. He hopes to emphasise the importance of the role of packhouses within the industry and plans a seminar for managers after the export season;
- to co-ordinate AVEC; and
- to carry out ad hoc technical tasks such as developing improved packaging and handling systems, monitoring packhouse outturns and making recommendations on dispensations from the export marketing strategy sought by individual exporters.

He hopes to develop quality systems that do not require substantive changes each

year. A new quality manual was produced for this season but more systems changes are required. For example, the biggest gap in temperature management is between the cherry picker and the tray.

He has been specifically asked not to work with individual growers in council time but plans to hold field days and seminars. For example, Jonathan has initiated a visit to New Zealand by international avocado authority Professor Carol Lovatt of the University of California to audit the new research program. During her visit in February and March she and Jonathan will be presenting nutrition seminars in all growing regions.

The Research Program

The new research program aims to fund research that the industry needs and wants rather than that which researchers would like to do. Jonathan hopes the contracted scientists will become participants in the industry willing to develop long term professional relationships with it.

The program will be integrated rather than being made up of ad hoc projects. Thus an integrated post-harvest research program has been launched this season.

An element of accountability will be added. Scientists will be asked to not only

do the research work but also to interpret it and tell the industry how it can be used. To successfully participate in technology transfer will require scientists to have exceptional knowledge of tree physiology and production systems. This means the industry will have to make an investment in targeted individuals.

Jonathan hopes that growers will be collectively involved in decisions on scientific research. He hopes to send out a questionnaire asking for growers' priorities for research.

His Vision

Jonathan has a vision for the industry: by the year 2000 he wants to be part of an industry that is politically and economically healthy, happy and viable.

"It will not be healthy unless it becomes more transparent and each segment becomes more accountable. It is arrogant and naive to believe that growers are best served by not being informed.

"People must be prepared to admit mistakes. Exporters must be open with their clients and must be prepared to work together and ensure grower loyalty rather than simply sell their fruit. They must see it is to their advantage to co-operate."

Horticultural Computer Systems In New Zealand

Extract from a report on Overseas Travel to the Horticulture and Food Research Institute Of New Zealand, by Shane Mulo, Maroochy Horticultural Research Station, Qld

Horticultural Research in NZ

The Horticulture and Food Research Institute (HortResearch) is one of ten Crown Research Institutes (CRI's) in New Zealand. These CRI's were created from the amalgamation of the former Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. HortResearch is owned by the Government and run by a Board of seven Directors.

The company, whose head office is based in Palmerston North, employs over 500 staff in 16 regional research centres. Its objectives encompass all stages of horticultural production, focusing on the advancement of superior plants and novel crops, improved management methods, better plant health without dependence on chemicals and higher quality fresh and processed export produce.

The institute undertakes research using funding from the government administered Foundation for Research, Science and Technology. It also provides research and consultancy services for commercial clients and works closely with grower organisations and horticultural marketing boards.

The Orchard 2000™ Project

Orchard 2000™ is a suite of computer software programs designed to assist orchard managers produce fruit to specific market requirements. At the heart of this system is a network of automatic weather stations which users of the program can interrogate through the software.

The Orchard 2000™ software comprises the following programs or modules:

Spot Check

This program is an apple black-spot monitor which analyses weather information and simplifies weather calculations associated with predicting black spot risk.

Growing Degree Calculator

This software calculates growing degree accumulations (or heat units) for a given site over any period. Calculations are based on either daily maximum and minimum temperatures or hourly temperatures. Temperature information is provided by access to automatic weather stations.

Weather Link

The Weather Link software is designed to allow rapid collection, storage and retrieval of weather information from weather stations located in the major horticultural regions of New Zealand. Using

AVOCADOS IN NEW ZEALAND



telephone lines, growers can access hourly temperature, leaf wetness and rainfall data. This data can be downloaded into the Orchard 2000™ meteorological database for interpretation by other software modules.

Met View

The Met View program can be used to tabulate, graph and export any combination of meteorological data read from one or more weather stations.

Orchard Diary - Spray Log

This program simplifies the production of spray diaries to satisfy marketing board specifications. In addition to producing printable work sheets, Orchard Diary can be used to develop reports summarising agrichemical use.

Orchard Set-up

The Orchard Set-up program is used to record orchard and block details in a form that is usable by other Orchard 2000™ modules.

The HortNET™ Project

As the name implies, HortNET™ is a horticultural network, designed for the New Zealand horticultural industry. The reason for such a project is similar in many ways to our need for farmer information centres and information products.

Growers in New Zealand are geographically dispersed and present systems of transferring technology and information to the wider grower community are becoming prohibitively expensive and time consuming. Also, although HortResearch is an

information rich organisation, traditional extension and technology transfer mechanisms have not always succeeded.

HortNET™ provides growers with a means of accessing a centralised information facility from their home computer. The underlying aim of the project is to provide a variety of information in a structured and easily accessible way.

Nine major centres of interest are either included in or proposed for the system. These include:

- horticultural news;
- research information and HortResearch contact details;
- industry information from marketers, export authorities and grower organisations;
- events calendars;
- electronic mail;
- weather information;
- library access;
- market analysis statistics; and
- industry services (e.g. consultant columns).

To use the HortNET™ system, growers must have, apart from a suitable computer, a modem for dial-up communication and an account with an internet service provider. Success of such a service relies on good telecommunications infrastructure, an area where New Zealand is well served.

Market Potential for AVOMAN in NZ

As avocado is considered a minor crop in New Zealand, there is limited research funding with which to perform avocado-specific research. The avocado industry is serviced by consultants who fill the gap between research and commercial growers in the absence of extension professionals.

AVOMAN was demonstrated to researchers and a consultant servicing the New Zealand avocado industry during the visit. Based on subsequent discussions, there appears to be potential for both project collaboration and sales of the AVOMAN software in New Zealand.

Scope exists to use the commercial version of AVOMAN as a consultancy tool with potential for adding local value through the creation of customised benchmarking or reporting facilities that can draw on stored information from the AVOMAN farm records database.

Centralised Versus Distributed Information Systems

The internet or World Wide Web as it is commonly called, has generated significant interest among a wide range of companies throughout the world as an information delivery and advertising tool. The HortNET™ system being developed at Mount Albert is an example of a well structured information delivery tool with potentially large commercial appeal. The approach used by the system's developers in charging information providers and advertisers for space is not new to the internet, but is at this stage a novel approach for government funded horticulture organisations.

As a centralised information system, great flexibility is afforded in the structure and content of this system. Real time information delivery of HortResearch and other information is possible at relatively low cost. Maintenance costs are related to the nature and volume of information built into the system. Users pay for access to HortNET™ by annual subscription.

The Queensland Scene

The Queensland Department of Primary Industries has traditionally been limited to distributed saleable information systems (e.g. books, disks, CD-ROM), largely due to a lack of telecommunications infrastructure, both within DPI and in Australia in general. Now however, with the establishment of a distributed local area network (DPINet) by the Department, internal constraints have largely disappeared. Information Systems Division is also undertaking internet pilot projects and has produced a "first point of contact" DPI page on the WWW. With these new facilities, development of similar centralised information systems to NZ is now possible.

The next constraint to overcome is the lack of cost effective regional internet service providers in this country. Client access to centralised DPI information via the internet is dependent on cheap telephone access to the internet. At present, few locations outside of major capital cities are sufficiently serviced with cheap, reliable WWW access. With the explosion in popularity of the internet as an information medium, this situation will change.

Potential therefore exists to cost effectively deliver current and future DPI information systems via the World Wide Web. The AVOINFO packages and AGRILink are two obvious examples of currently static information systems which could potentially be centralised in the future.

Avocados really make a meal.



AUSTRALIAN
AVOCADOS
DELICIOUS ON ANY OCCASION

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New avocado poster for promotional campaign
focusses on the health benefits of using avocados