

# Talking Avocados



The Australian Newsline



*Focus on Marketing*

**SPRING 2001 ISSUE**

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# My Comment



It's a difficult task taking over a new publication at the best of times and more so when you're taking over a publication from someone like Orf Bartrop. Having produced *Talking Avocados* for nine years, everything has been in place for some time and the changes involved can be quite daunting.

There is the transfer of advertising material and copy built up over many years, AAGF has had to also adapt to the change in the flow of information and there is a change in printing and packaging arrangements. Then there is the taking on board of all the contacts and notifying same along with establishing a rapport with people in the industry. Orf has built these up over many years.

I would like to take this opportunity to praise Orf Bartrop's efforts in producing a quality publication for the Avocado Industry over the past nine years. He is a hard act to follow and I wish to publicly thank him for the support he has given to me in taking on *Talking Avocados*.

I have personally known Orf for many years and periodically he has used articles I have published in some of the magazines I produce and edit. I will never forget some six years ago when laid up in hospital, he rang me not only to wish me a speedy recovery but also to make some suggestions on how I could streamline my productions. As you all probably know, he is a wiz with computers and I wished I had followed his advice at times.

In this my first issue for the Avocado Industry, I would also like to thank the AAGF for the confidence they had in my abilities to produce their publication and maintain its high standard. I enjoy a challenge and I consider it an honour to be able to put my stamp on *Talking Avocados*.

For those who do not know me, I wish to give you a bit of background so that you may understand where I'm coming from and, I guess, headed.

I grew up on a family sugar cane farm with cattle properties in Queensland's Bundaberg district. My family has been involved in district's agricultural community for around 100 years with a result I feel very comfortable around farmers. However, I was never a farmer in the true sense. Always had my head stuck in a book and my late father (who called me the professor) had the good sense to steer me in a different direction.

Well, one thing led to another and I ended up producing and editing publications (usually local historical books) which inadvertently led me to the Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetable Association. I produced and edited a large, hard cover historical book for them on the extensive Bundaberg Horticultural Industry.

This in turn led to my being offered the positions of association Secretary and then Executive Officer. I filled that role for seven years and along the way did a two-year term as Secretary of the Bundaberg District Orchardists' Association. During my time with the association I served on many boards and committees – more than I wish to remember but it gave me an excellent insight into an industry which has now dominated my life for some 15 years.

You get burnt out in secretarial roles and when I left the Bundaberg association, I went back to publishing a number of industry publications. Among these are the *North Queensland Horticultural Journal* (founded with the Bowen association), the *Burnett Fruit & Vegetable Grower*, *Mango Matters* for the national mango association, a yearly *National Pumps 'n' Irrigation* for a national irrigation group and *AUF Fresh News* for the Australian United Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Association. It is through my association with AUF that, since the 2 July, I find myself their National Executive Officer and am now based in Sydney.

The last three months have been horrendous what with taking on a position with this national umbrella organization for the horticultural industry as well as relocating my business from Bundaberg. I won't go into all the hassles but will say that finally I can see a growing light at the end of the tunnel – better times ahead.

In this my first issue, I have included some selected articles from some of my other publications which I feel may also be of interest to avocado growers. Some growers may receive some of my other publications and I do trust that you will bear with me in doubling up this information.

Finally and about time I guess some may feel, I trust that in this issue and the issues to come you will find that the high standard found under Orf's stewardship is maintained. This is certainly my intention. And with this *My Comment*, I also trust you know where I'm coming from. You will not be getting this amount of comment from me in the future I can assure you.

Col Scotney – Editor

## Talking Avocados

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**We all make mistakes:** If we make a mistake please let us know so a correction may be made in the next issue.

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## Summer Issue of *Talking Avocados*

Deadline for material - 15 November  
Distribution - before Christmas

WANTED

'Calendar of Events' dates and activities along with happenings in your areas - photos appreciated and desired.

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## President's Perspective

I recently attended the Fresh 2001 *A Fresh Odyssey* Conference in Sydney and would like to share with you some of the key messages which I took away from the program.

In addressing the question *Are Alliances the Answer to Increasing Competition?* John Piper, Managing Director - Food Asia Marketing Ltd, indicated that alliances can be successful if:

1 - There is a realistic evaluation of the common interest/purpose in the development of the alliance; and

2 - A commitment to abide by the terms of the agreement/union is critical to the long-term success of the alliance.

Alliances can take a number of different forms:-

- Supply side alliances – e.g. growers working together in central packhouses or marketing under a common brand.
- Demand side alliances – e.g. retailer buying groups
- Supplier/buyer alliances
- Alliances using intermediaries
- Multifunctionary alliances

### ...as growers we tend to focus on supply side alliances

As growers we have tended to focus on supply side alliances with only a limited preparedness to develop alliances/relationships with the other sectors in our marketing chain. If we accept the reality of an increasingly global and freer market we, as growers and an industry, will need to look for opportunities that may be beyond the scope of an individual entity, but achievable by an alliance.

I encourage all in our industry to review their business plan and marketing arrangements to ensure you are well placed to have a viable future in this industry. If you have concerns, now is the time to take action, rather than when it is too late.

### ...there is a bright future for the Asian markets

John Piper reminded the conference that there is a bright future for the Asian markets and that the fundamentals for economic growth in Asia are still in place. If as expected access to China opens up in the near future, then there will be significant opportunities and impacts for Australian horticulture.

Doug Henderson, Chief Executive - Fresh Produce Consortium from the UK, reported that in Europe 40 companies control 80% of the fresh produce sales. Thus for some 2 million growers, there are now only 40 major buyers. Alliances of various forms are the cornerstone of EU policy and the only way that the growers have an opportunity to survive.

### ...differentiation – key message from marketing presentations

Differentiation was a key message from the marketing presentations. Avocados have always had that distinct marketing advantage in that the product is different and has no direct competition. This also means that we all have a responsibility to attempt to ensure the customers' expectations are met.

The next stage of differentiation with avocados is firstly variety and then brands. Limited effort has been put into these areas to date and the development of brands will be a challenge for avocados as it is for all of the fruit and vegetable industry.

### ...TV Campaign now concluded in Eastern States

The TV advertising campaign has now concluded in the Eastern States with anecdotal evidence being that the commercial and the campaign were well received. A detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of the campaign is not yet available.

The improvement in fruit prices in recent weeks might be attributed to the program by some rather than being a response to the supply and the program.

The planned programs for Adelaide and Perth have been cancelled due to the current market situation and the indications are of a strong demand/short supply situation for the remainder of the season.

We can be proud of the fact that the industry has been able to invest \$600,000 in a TV advertising program for avocados.

I read with interest today that Gillette Australia is spending \$10million on marketing over the next 12 months to launch its "Womens Venus" shaving system. Our limited campaign has a different target market. However, we are ultimately competing for the same consumer dollar. Thus our campaign needs to be focused and well managed if we are to be successful against that level of investment.

*By Rod Dalton, President AAGF - September 2001*

# From Your Federation . . .



Rob Donkin

It is a challenging world. Every day I look around, I find those challenges growing and changing. Sometimes we seem to have few friends out there. At others, there is a big ray of sunshine coming through.

I see our industry trying desperately to cope with many disparate and competing programs. Almost like the mythical Hydra, as we solve one problem another seems to emerge. But at the end of the day, it is in satisfying our customer that we face the ultimate test. Some people will debate who our customer is - the wholesaler, the retailer or the consumer of our avocado.

For me there is no debate, the customer is the consumer who takes home that avocado to eat. And the ultimate test is that each one comes back for more. Before I became closely involved with the industry, I have to admit to being among the many people who do not know how to pick a good avocado. I also have to admit that this was an impediment to buying an avocado. But armed with my new knowledge, I regularly buy avocados and enjoy them at their very best. That knowledge and empowerment is translating to my family as well.

## **...we have to look at the whole supply chain**

So what am I leading to. It is simply this, we have to always look at the whole of our supply chain and understand what our fruit is doing at the end of its life. I know we are doing that, but I think we cannot emphasise it enough.

Root stock, variety, nutrition, chemicals, horticultural techniques, picking, handling, ripening, treatment at the retailers - they all play a big role in what happens to our fruit and how our customer handles it. And what worked this year may not be as applicable next year.

I know that there are many who are doing these things in part or in total. There are however, still many things to learn. Taking a tree and cropping it is much different to allowing a tree to grow and develop freely in our back yard to pick fruit as we want to use it.

None of us have all the answers yet - we may never do so. But we can all search for our information and apply it to our operations. As I said, it is a challenging world - and changing too.

## **...the biggest challenge...understand our market**

I guess the biggest challenge I see is to understand our market. It is the area we have least handle on, it is the one we should come to grips with and it is the one area that we are least able to do so at the moment.

I touched on this last issue. The industry is looking at how we might best understand that market. Sectors of the industry have

some understanding of their particular areas but, there is no complete overview of the market or how it is supplied.

If prices go up we pick - if prices go down we slow down our picking. This year has seen a drop off in supply. Will next year be a bumper year again?

Wouldn't we all like to know with some certainty? Wouldn't we all like to be able to closely predict high supplies and shortages? Our programs would be better set if we could do so.

It will take resources and co-operation to provide some reasonable forecast but we will all gain, right throughout the supply chain. I know I have said this in another way in my previous column but it warrants further development.

## **...replacement conference CD this month**

I will be posting out the replacement conference CD this month. I apologise that it has taken longer than I anticipated but it now includes presentations as well as papers. It is a valuable source of information. For those who were not at the conference, I will have limited supplies available for sale at \$40.00 each.

## **...generic sticker barcodes registered**

On a more practical note, AAGF have registered eight figure generic barcodes for the industry use on stickers for Avocados. We have registered the codes for Hass, Shepard and Other Varieties in Large, Medium and Small sizes.

The labels will contain the National Heart Foundation Tick. Growers/packhouses wanting to use these codes will be required to register with AAGF before gaining access to the codes. The codes will be available from Label Press in Brisbane. We are executing these controls to ensure the quality and readability of the sticker. I will have more on the availability and use of these stickers in the December Issue of Talking Avocados.

By Rob Donkin - Industry Manager

# Welcome . . .

## **Talking Avocados welcomes new Queensland growers to its readership**

**E&F Galea of Kurrimine Beach,  
RG&LF Watkin and Anne  
Tirrell, both of Malanda and  
AJ Martens of Atherton.**

# Smerdon Enterprises

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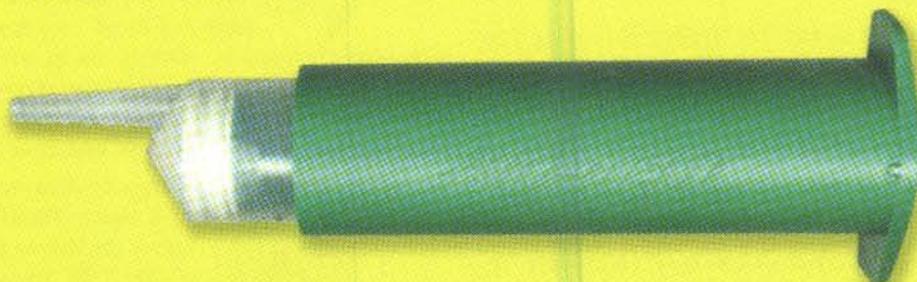


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## 138% more effective Phytophthora control...\*

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The Avo-Ject is now available in Australia

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\* as quoted by Graham Thomas, Industry Consultant at the Australia and New Zealand Avocado Growers Conference, Bundaberg, Australia, 2001.

# Australian Roundup . . .



## From Queensland

### Atherton Tableland

The Tableland harvest had the usual ups and downs. Price fluctuation seems to be the biggest problem. The area put out almost 1 million trays this year and going by the amount of trees planted in the last three years can expect 1.5 million in the near future. Plantings are spread over the whole Tableland, shepard and hass being the preferred varieties.

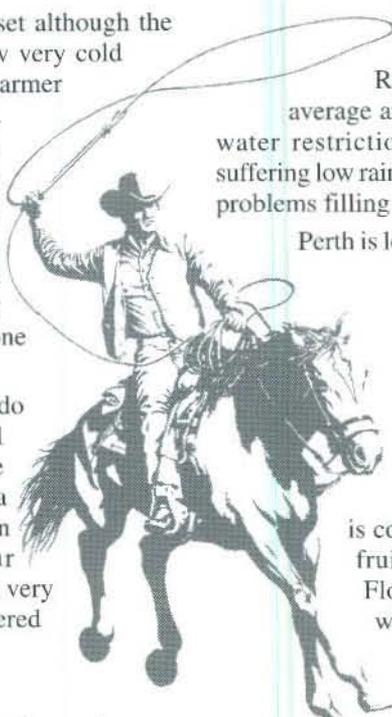
Most orchardists are reporting a good fruit set although the weather does its best to upset things. A few very cold snaps had growers worried but as usual the warmer weather has brought an abundance of flowers.

The local avocado association held its AGM recently and the same committee was returned for another year. It would be ideal if more growers joined their local associations. Current members could attend meetings and contribute to the many discussions concerning the future of our local industry. Water is one issue that comes to mind.

Remember that the person representing avocado growers on a particular issue speaks for all avocado growers in the area, members of the local association or not. Quite often a spokesperson attends a meeting on an important issue which will effect your livelihood with the advice/opinions of only a very few growers because nobody could be bothered attending a meeting.

### Bundaberg Region

Col, hope you have settled in and that Sydney is treating you OK (*it is - Editor*). We have nothing really to report from the region other than flowering is good and we need more rain - any rain. Heard that before!



## Sunshine Coast

QGM and a social get-together (Christmas Function) will be held on the 5 December 2001 from 4pm at the Starkovsky Farm, 75 Fullertons Road, Glasshouse. Details will be published in the December Issue of the SCAGA Newsletter. Among the Guest Speakers are Peter Hoffman on Avocare and Wayne Prowse of HAL on Marketing Strategies. We're looking forward to greet a lot of members and guests.

## From Western Australia

Things have been a bit dry in the West with one of the worst droughts on record. Rain in Perth is well under average and most areas are all ready on water restrictions. The South West is also suffering low rainfalls and a lot of areas are having problems filling Dams.

Perth is looking to be finished harvest earlier than usual with some orchards well down on yield.

## From South Australia

We have had a mild winter and are about to start harvesting our Hass. The crop is way down on last year, but the price is coming up, so the growers that have some fruit on the later varieties should do alright. Flowering is about to start and it is looking good with flowers right through the tree.

We again had a stand at the Royal Adelaide Show. We were in a good position with plenty of room - we needed it! The weather was very changeable, starting warm with a cold wet change for a couple of days, then three warm days and finishing with severe storms for the last days. We, the growers and their Uni Children put in 99 people days and most days they were busy.

We sold/gave away 405 trays of fruit mainly count 25's and gave away 304 10kg cartons of small fruit in the Yellow Brick Road Showbag. 20,000 YBR Showbags were sold, this was up on last year. The Avocados used this year were of very good quality, with less than .5% having to be used in dips. There were a few with Fruit spotting bug stings but it was not a problem.

During the four busiest days, a professional chef held cooking demonstrations in our Hall over a two hour period. He spent a 1/2 hour on each of the 4 commodities, Apple and Pears, Citrus, Mushrooms, and Avocados. There was a lot of interest shown by the public.



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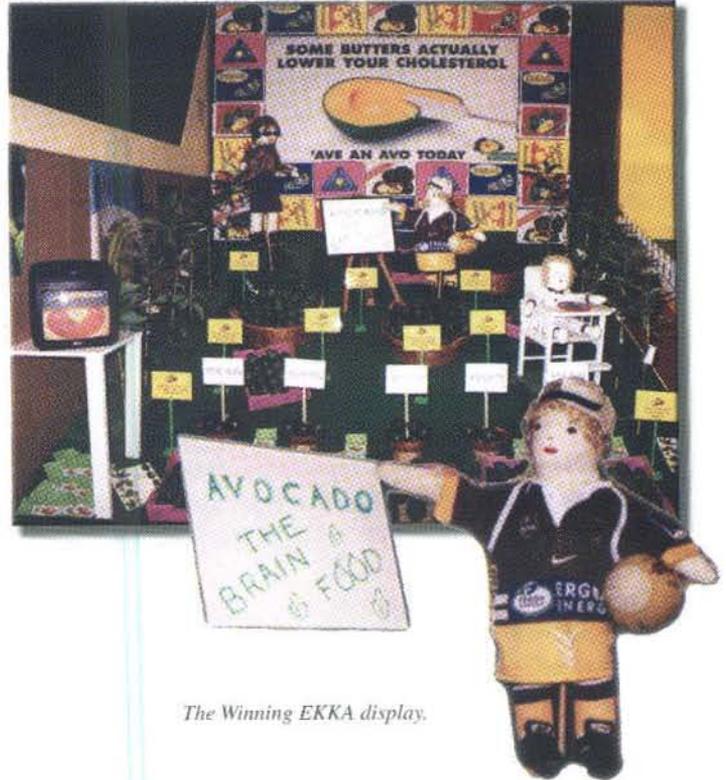
# EKKA 2001 Win...

The Sunshine Coast Avocado Growers Association Inc. is very proud to announce that they have been awarded third prize for their Avocado Display at this year's EKKA. This, they feel, is quite an achievement when considering that, compared to some of the exhibitors, they are quite a small group of growers dedicated, they say, to contribute time and effort for the whole of the Avocado Industry on the Queensland Coast.

Once again SCAGA organised an interactive display. This involved not only children but also adults in a game that pointed out health benefits as well as general knowledge about Avocados.

People were lining up to play the game and quite often they would return to have another go. For successful participants - a small net of avocados was the reward. This fruit was sponsored by the two big marketing organizations on the coast, Natures Fruit Company and AMCL.

SCAGA's says the success shows again that, with a little bit of imagination and a lot of dedication from members, the public can be made aware of health benefits and hopefully motivated to go out and buy more of avocados.



The Winning EKKA display.



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# Brisbane Markets - eDelivery Advice System

Brisbane Market Corporation is developing an on-line delivery advice system using the Internet to expand the service offered to all users of the Market.

The main purposes for considering the introduction of this system are to:

- ❑ Improve the efficiencies and accuracy of receiving data of product entering into the Markets.
- ❑ To enable the unloading services to provide the required amount of equipment and labour to service transport and, in turn, reduce the transport demurrage.
- ❑ Adopt modern technology, which has the capabilities of standardising delivery advices, which are acceptable to the three eastern states' Markets for the benefit of the transport industry.
- ❑ Provide the infrastructure to accommodate the demands of large transporters who wish to add value to their customers by way of electronic communications and business.

We intend to commence a pilot program of the system after receiving comment from the transport industry and other interested parties. The pilot program, involving two large transporters, is expected to commence during August and by the end of this year the eDelivery Advice System will be available to all transporters.

The Brisbane Markets website at [www.brisbanemarket.com.au](http://www.brisbanemarket.com.au) has set up a trial version of eDelivery so that future users of the system can view the system. All web pages are currently static; therefore the adding or editing functions are not implemented. In later stages of the project these pages will be script generated and fully functional.

## login/register

After opening the Brisbane Market web page, select eDelivery System. The first page displayed when accessing the System is the Login/Registration Screen. For the purposes of this demonstration these functions are disabled, allowing direct entry into the System.

When the system goes live it will be necessary to enter your details and send your authorisation request. Once granted, you will have direct access to the System.

## delivery advice add

After logging in, the System moves straight to first screen of the Add Delivery Advice area where truck details are entered. This information is entered once for each Delivery Advice. Each truck will be recorded on a separate Delivery Advice.

When the NEXT button is clicked the System moves on to the main body of the Delivery Advice where all the load details are entered. A sequential Delivery Advice No. together with the Carrier and ETA information will appear automatically at the top of this screen. The Delivery Advice Number becomes the permanent reference for this document.

Information is entered in each of the various boxes in the top section of this page. This information will be displayed as one line of detail entry in the bottom section of the screen when SAVED. A new detail entry line is added each time the SAVE button is clicked.

To edit an existing (SAVED) entry, click on the required record and it will move to the top of the screen where it can then be EDITED. SAVING, in this instance will overwrite the original

record without adding an additional line. To delete a record, click on it, to display it at the top of the screen (as in editing). DELETE will now remove that record from the Delivery Advice.

The Delivery Advice document is compiled progressively as each detail entry is saved. When an Authorised user has completed the document there will be an option to print it out or to e-mail it to a nominated destination.

Authorised users who log in will only be able to view/edit Delivery Advice documents that they create on the current day. Only authorised users can view/edit data that they themselves have entered.

## edit

This option is used to add extra product/pack details or edit product details on a Delivery Advice already entered. Note, it will only be possible to edit Delivery Advices that you have recorded under your login name. After clicking EDIT, enter the Delivery Advice Number to be edited.

## view

Use this option to view details on a Delivery Advice already entered. Note, it will only be possible to view Delivery Advices that you have recorded under your login name. After clicking VIEW, enter the Delivery Advice Number that you wish to view.

## delete

Use this option to Delete an entire Delivery Advice. Note, you will only be able to Delete Delivery Advices that you have recorded under your login name. After clicking DELETE, enter the Delivery Advice Number that you wish to delete.

## add/edit lists supplier

This is the person consigning the produce who may not necessarily be a grower eg. it could be an Agent or Packhouse.

## agents

This is the consignee who may not necessarily be an Agent or Merchant eg. the produce may be consigned directly to a buyer or secondary wholesaler within the market.

## carriers

Likely to be either a Transport Company, or the Supplier

## unloaders

Normally one of the two unloading services in the Brisbane Market but could be the Agent/Merchant, Transport Driver or Supplier.

## pallet types

Type of pallet, eg. Chep, Loscam. At this stage it is not planned to record any bins or other bulk containers

## products

The product descriptions in this list are those that are used by the Official Market Reporting Service in the Brisbane Market. These codes are used to compile the Brisbane Official Daily Market Report and are incorporated in all historical records maintained by the Reporting Service.



# AUCTION

## Turn Streams of Income into Rivers of Abundance



### *Blair Gowrie Farms*

Childers - Queensland

Without doubt, this is one of the most outstanding *Rural Investments* available in Australia. Monthly income, very high production figures and exciting returns on Capital Investment, are the features sure to create interest in this Rural Enterprise.

#### ***Blair Gowrie Farms comprise –***

- 300 acres of rich, red volcanic soil
- 200 acres of sugar Cane Assignment
- 4500 Avocado Trees
- 1000 Llanos Hass Avocado Trees – recently planted
- 2500 Llanos Hass Avocado Trees – to be planted in 2002
- 1000 Lemon Trees
- 483 mg/l water allocation
- 8000 gln/hour bore
- 2 dams fed by free flowing springs
- Magnificent home in Childers

ALL CROPS INCLUDED IN SALE

**AUCTION – Bundaberg R.S.L. Club on 22/11/01 at 1pm**

Will be offered by Public Auction as –

**LOT 1 - All of the above. LOT 2 - Avocado Plantation plus home.**

**LOT 3 - Avocado Plantation. LOT 4 - 200 acres Sugar Cane Plantation.**

**LOT 5 - 100 acres Sugar Cane Plantation. LOT 6 - 100 acres Sugar Plantation.**

Astute investors will have the opportunity to add further income to the substantial cash flow already generated from this enterprise by growing Chicory in the fallow cane land. A \$250 million Chicory Processing Factory is under construction in the Childers Shire and will be ready to process Chicory Tubers in 2002. This exciting Rural Enterprise is for genuine sale as Vendors have decided to retire. QANTAS operate regular, daily flights into and out of Bundaberg and there are excellent accommodation facilities and restaurants in both Bundaberg and Childers. View full particulars on the web plus a very comprehensive Visual tour – [www.raywhiterural.com.au](http://www.raywhiterural.com.au) Ref 202.

Inspections are highly recommended of this outstanding Rural Enterprise and full financial and management details will be disclosed to prospective investors.

**Ray White**

RURAL

**CONTACT – Les White 0407 533 305 – A/Hrs 07 4151 0996**

Email: [leswhite@austarnet.com.au](mailto:leswhite@austarnet.com.au)

## New Product ...

# ADD-G-TATOR 2000

Innovative and specialist designer of agricultural equipment, Tony Denton of ADDS UP Engineering has designed and constructed what he says is an affordable mechanical agitator to mix micro gypsum, magnesium, fertilizers and chemicals for injection into irrigation systems.

Called the *ADD-G-TATOR 2000*, well-known Bundaberg macadamia grower Geoff Chivers has been the first to trial the new equipment. Geoff recently won a water use efficiency program.

He says the new agitator is just what he required for his operation. And he adds, at an affordable price with this having been a disincentive to procuring an agitator in the past.

Tony worked closely with Geoff in designing the specialized equipment which, he says, fills a need for the agricultural industry.

With its highly efficient spherical designed tank bottom and dual S/S impeller, agitation holds products in suspension while mixing and dissolving into the 2000 litre tank.

Tony says that when the injection pump is close coupled to the .55 KW motor, it has a range of 3 litres, 9.7 litres and 28 litres a minute.

"They can be purchased in *poly head* or *brass head* construction," he said.

"For *poly* pumps they can handle up to 250 psi and for *brass* pumps up to 1,000 psi. The piston pumps are rated for chemicals, slurries, abrasives and have dry running capabilities," he added.

And the units are compact, being only 1.7 metres in diameter. They are mounted on a strong, galvanized steel base with large fork lift mounts.

The power source is flexible with the units being able to be set up for single phase or 3 phase motors or even hydraulic drive on the agitation shaft and pump drive.



Geoff Chivers stands beside the ADD-G-TATOR 2000.

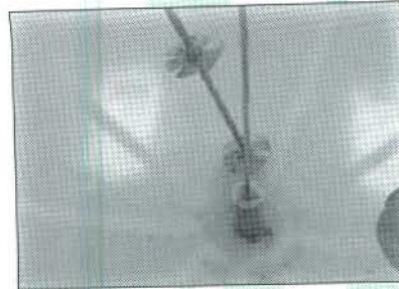


Photo shows the agitator



Photo shows the power unit

As this article went to print, another Bundaberg macadamia grower, Andrew Pearce placed an order for four units – an indication that Tony's new product is quickly finding a place in the industry.

The *ADD-G-TATOR 2000* compliments the diverse range of equipment developed by Tony Denton over the years to suit the specific requirement of growers. His products stand out for their durability and innovation.

For more information phone ADDS UP Engineering on 07 4153 6989 or Fax 07 4153 6489.

## AVOCADO

### OIL PROCESSING PLANT FOR THE SUNSHINE COAST

Sunshine Coast based *Avocado Marketing Coop Ltd*, which trades under the *SUNFRESH* brand, is planning to establish an avocado oil processing plant in time for the peak of next year's crop.

Coop Chairman Ron Lawrence said they had been researching for sometime the processing opportunities of Avocados. "There are presently four plants operating in different parts of the world using the process we plan to adopt. Oil production is a first stage in the utilisation of the fruit described in the Guinness Book of Records as the world's most nutritious fruit.

"Production of avocados," he said, "is now only reaching a level where we have a significant surplus of fruit other than first grade."

Ron says that Australian's production of 36,000 tonnes last season (60% grown in Queensland) is small compared to some of the world's major producers like Mexico with over 800,000 tonnes.

"Our industry has grown primarily to service the domestic fresh market. Only last year, as avocado production moved into

oversupply for the domestic market, did *SUNFRESH* lead a thrust into exports - a move," he said, "that has proved very successful.

"In addition, we have also been researching other marketing opportunities such as value adding and processing.

He spoke of avocado oil having many unique properties. He outlined how the fruit contained monounsaturated fatty acids, which help lower cholesterol, whilst at the same time contributing nothing to bad cholesterol.

"From a cooking point of view it has a high smoking point (a point at which it smokes or burns). Avocado oils smoking point is 271°C compared to olive oil at 176.6°C."

Ron says they see a big future for Australia's own avocado oil and its by-products. "It will become a major industry for the Sunshine Coast drawing its supply from throughout Queensland and New South Wales."

And he adds that *SUNFRESH* with over 100 member suppliers in both states presently markets over 10% of Australia's avocado production.



Sunraysia Nurseries have available for planting this year the following container grown Avocado Trees in 4L Poly Bags:

Bacon, Fuerte, Gwen\*\*, Hass, Hazzard, Reed, rincon, Ryan, Sharwil, Wurtz and Zutano

\*\* PBR Protected

Sunraysia Nurseries  
P.O. Box 45, Sturt Hwy,  
Gol Gol, N.S.W. 2738  
Tel: 03 5024 8502  
Fax: 03 5024 8551

Email: sales@sunraysianurseries.com.au  
Website: www.sunraysianurseries.com.au

"Serving Australian horticulturalists for 49 years"

## ARE YOU PACKING YOUR OWN AVOCADOS?

If so

Join the **SUNFRESH MARKETING GROUP**  
BENEFITS

- Reduced Costs
- The use of the SUNFRESH Brand
- Ease of Marketing
- Established Q/A
- Premium Prices

The **SUNFRESH** Growers working together concept will suit you  
Wherever you are



This is a grower initiative established in 1996

For further information contact the Administration Officer Judy Prosser  
on (07) 54467069 for Fax (07) 54727271 or write to  
Avocado Marketing Co-op Limited  
P.O. Box 300, YANDINA QLD 4561  
www.sunfreshproduce.com

## Maintain your Avocado trees in a healthy state!

- ✓ **HOW?** By monitoring PHOSPHOROUS ACID (phosphonite) levels in your avocado rootlets you will keep Phytophthora disease at bay.
- ✓ **YOU BENEFIT** How? By saving money, by not treating your trees unnecessarily. Decide objectively when the next chemical application should be made. Only treat to maintain the dosage level needed to control the disease.
- ✓ **YOU BENEFIT** How? By not over treating (dosing) you prolong the life of your chemical arsenal by minimising the risk of Phytophthora resistance developing in your Avocado grove.
- ✓ **YOU BENEFIT** How? By reducing the chance of your trees stressing and dropping leaves and fruit by maintaining a strong and healthy Avocado root system. Yield increases follow.

A low cost test is available to monitor PHOSPHOROUS ACID levels in rootlets. Contact Agrifood Technology for a brochure and free sampling kit. Phone 07 46330599

**At Agrifood Technology "Quality Matters" that's what makes us different from everyone else!**



ABN 52 085 032 104

**Agrifood Technology Pty Ltd**  
214 McDougall St. Toowoomba 4350  
PO Box 549 Queensland  
agritech@bigpond.com

**Agrifood Technology Pty Ltd**  
260 Princes Highway Werribee 3030  
PO Box 728 Victoria  
agrifood@awb.com.au

# Food Safety

## Guidelines for On-Farm Food Safety for Fresh Produce

Guidelines designed to help assess the risk of food safety hazards that may occur during on-farm production of fresh produce crops, have been developed and are available now from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (AFFA). The Guidelines aim to overcome the confusion and inconsistencies that result from the numerous food safety/quality assurance (QA) standards and audit checklists faced by growers of fresh produce.

Considerable confusion and uncertainty exists throughout the horticultural industry, particularly in regard to the technical aspects of on-farm food safety. This is exacerbated by the number of food/safety/QA standards and audit checklists that growers of fresh produce currently face.

The AFFA-chaired Working Group on Food Safety and Quality System's Equivalence, established by the Commonwealth minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and forestry, the Hon Warren Truss MP, is a joint government-industry working group that focuses on ways to reduce the problems associated with multiple food safety and quality systems and audits.

One of the key issues identified by the Working Group, is the need for greater consistency in the way these systems are implemented and audited throughout the horticultural industry.

Overcoming the resulting confusion and achieving greater consistency is the aim of the recently published reference document — *Guidelines for On-Farm Food Safety for Fresh Produce*. The development of these Guidelines has involved the collaboration between the Queensland Department of Primary Industries, Tasmanian Quality Assured Inc, NSW Agriculture, Agriculture Victoria and AFFA.

Additional contributions made by major retail/food service and audit agency representatives, horticulture food safety/QA specialists and other horticulture industry stakeholders with responsibilities in food safety, have ensured that the Guidelines reflect the needs of this industry.

The Guidelines are based on up-to-date scientific knowledge and build on existing material, and work in progress to draw together information from a number of sources. They have been developed to provide a single consolidated source of information related to food safety for the fresh produce sector and cover the growing, harvesting, packing and dispatch stages of production.

Specific topics covered by the Guidelines include:

- Food Safety Hazards Associated with Fresh Produce;
- Process Steps and Inputs;

- Assessing the Risk of Contamination; and
- Chemical and Microbial Testing of fresh Produce.

The Guidelines are targeted for use by growers, trainers, facilitators, auditors and customers, to achieve certainty and consistency in the development, implementation and auditing of on-farm food safety programs.

They are designed to help assess the risk of food safety hazards that may occur during on-farm production of fresh produce crops and provide information on the good agricultural practices needed to prevent, reduce or eliminate these potential hazards. To further assist with this, the Guidelines contain a stand alone Review Checklist, which may be used to supplement existing audit checklists used by certification bodies or for internal audits carried out by individual businesses.

*For further information or to obtain a free copy of these Guidelines, contact Leanne Payne on 02 6272 5671 or Email at [leanne.payne@affa.gov.au](mailto:leanne.payne@affa.gov.au). The document is being placed on the AFFA web-site at [www.affa.gov.au/foodinfo](http://www.affa.gov.au/foodinfo).*

## Freshcare Steps to Certification

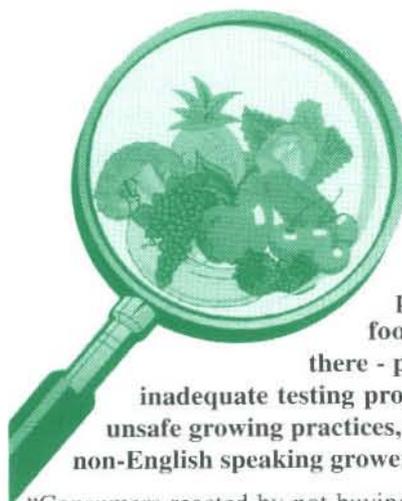
- 1 – Obtain an application form from Freshcare to participate in the program.
- 2 – Complete and return the application form with the \$55 application fee. Freshcare will acknowledge your application and send you a copy of the 'Code of Practice' free of charge and a list of approved training programs and providers.
- 3 – If you haven't undertaken training, attend an approved training course.
- 4 – Implement the practices described in the 'Code of Practice'.
- 5 – Notify Freshcare when you are ready for the initial audit. Freshcare will contact you to arrange a suitable time for the on-sight audit.
- 6 – Complete the audit successfully. The auditor sends the audit report to Freshcare with a recommendation that certification be granted and gives you a copy.
- 7 – A numbered certificate is issued and your name is entered onto a register of certified enterprises. You will be asked to sign an agreement that you will abide by the Freshcare Certification Rules.
- 8 – To renew certification each year Freshcare will contact you to arrange an audit.

### WHERE TO GO FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

Hot Phone Line – 1800 630 890 – Fax: 07 3247 7222  
Email: [freshcare@ausqual.com.au](mailto:freshcare@ausqual.com.au)  
Webpage: [www.ausqual.com.au](http://www.ausqual.com.au)  
Postal Address: Freshcare Ltd, PO Box 3175, South Brisbane Qld 4101.

Source: Mareeba September Newsletter

## Fresh Produce Watch response to tainted food scandal!



*Sydney's tainted food scandal was the front page headlines of the Sydney Morning Herald on Wednesday morning, 18 April 2001. To make matters worse, inside was another one and half pages dealing with the food scandal. It was all there - pesticide contamination, inadequate testing programs, toxic chemicals, unsafe growing practices, peasant class migrants, non-English speaking growers.*

"Consumers reacted by not buying Chinese vegetables and snake beans," exclaimed Lawrie Greenup, Consultant, Fresh Produce Watch.

"This is typical of the problems which Fresh Produce Watch becomes involved in," Lawrie said.

"The issue in the Sydney Morning Herald related to a very small number of migrant growers in Sydney's outer west vegetable growing area. The newspaper assumed that a poor understanding of English could lead to the misuse of pesticides and had the potential to damage their own health and put consumers at risk from chemical residues.

### *...it was really an issue of education and occupational health and safety*

"As you can see it was really an issue of education and occupational health and safety, rather than a food safety concern with pesticide residues," he said.

Residues surveys, over the past ten years, of fruits and vegetables passing through the Sydney Markets showed no problems with fresh produce. These surveys have sampled produce from the Sydney Basin, as well as produce from all production areas of Australia.

Lawrie outlined what happened.

"It became a three-pronged approach utilising the expertise and resources of the Sydney Markets, NSW Chamber of Fruit and Vegetables and Fresh Produce Watch.

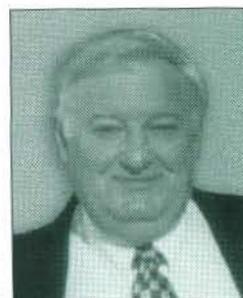
### *approach ensured...industry's views widely distributed*

"Within a few hours, Fresh Produce Watch had prepared a Press Release dealing with the major concerns and had it distributed to the press, radio and TV via the Sydney Market's media network.

"Next, the NSW Chamber and Fresh Produce Watch each sent a letter to the Sydney Morning Herald editor (one of which

was published). At the same time a Sydney Markets representative was interviewed by a major TV channel and, as a result of the Press Release, Fresh Produce Watch was interviewed on several AM and FM radio stations.

Lawrie said that this approach ensured the fresh produce industry's view was widely distributed to both the media and consumers. "All in all, a very successful operation," he added.



Lawrie Greenup

"Whilst this was a New South Wales issue, Fresh Produce Watch has had to respond to pesticide and food safety issues in country and suburban areas in all States and Territories of Australia. It is really easy for a local food safety story to explode into one of State or National importance," he said.

### *GMO is another issue...*

"Genetically modified organisms (GMO) is another issue in which Fresh Produce Watch has been very active. Too often people involved in the GMO industry dismiss consumer views as irrelevant and ignorant forgetting these people are the ones who will make the decision on whether they will buy GM fruits or vegetables."

Fresh Produce Watch has been very careful to listen to what consumer think about GMO's and what are their perceptions and fears, he said.

Working from this consumer information Fresh Produce Watch, in association with The Australian Chamber of Fruit and Vegetable Industries, produced a leaflet which addresses all of the consumer's concerns. The leaflet, *Fresh Fruits and Vegetables - Genetically Modified or Not!* has proved extremely popular with consumers and the fresh produce industry, being praised for its balanced approach and easy reading.

### *Fresh Produce Watch is there to help...*

Lawrie says, "Fresh Produce Watch, is there to help the fresh produce industry respond to food safety issues. Where the industry can help Fresh Produce Watch is by being constantly on the lookout for any food safety issues, regardless of how small, and letting Fresh Produce Watch know as quickly as possible.

"Once the issues are known then a decision can be made on how best to respond. Remember," he said, "a small local residue scare in today's information age can easily blow out to being national disaster!"

Fresh Produce Watch is funded by a number of industry sponsors. More information on Fresh Produce Watch can be obtained by contacting Lawrie Greenup on 02 9746 3685, Fax: 02 9746 3008 or Email: [auffpw@iaa.com.au](mailto:auffpw@iaa.com.au)

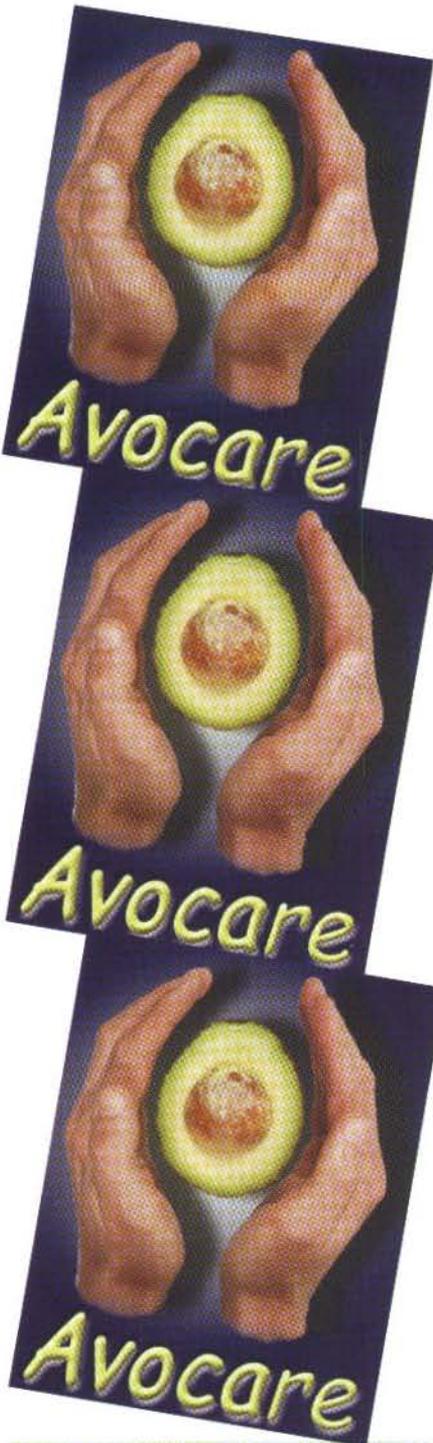
Fresh Produce Watch operates under the AUF (Australian United Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Association) umbrella. AUF is a national umbrella organisation for Australia's horticultural industry.



# Avocare is rolling on

The first “stage” of the *Avocare* program was completed in July this year with the acceptance of the final report. Copies of the report are available from Horticulture Australia Ltd. Some of the project activities are still being finalised:

1. Circulation of the *Avocare* retail poster. This poster was designed for retail store operators, and outlines the practices they can undertake to minimise loss of avocado quality at retail level. It briefly describes the need to sell the fruit quickly, use the right holding conditions if the fruit sales are delayed, and handle carefully to prevent bruising. The poster is presented in the centre pages of this issue.
2. The poster was distributed in July to retail staff by the Horticulture Australia Ltd merchandising team under the leadership of Wayne Prowse. Produce staff in about 600 retail stores around Australia were given these posters, and the responses from these staff were very positive. The posters will be distributed more widely, probably through the retail chains and key wholesalers. Your assistance in distribution to your retailers is welcomed. Posters distributed to retailers are available at no cost (except for postage and handling). Copies are available from Rob Donkin at the AAGF ([aagf@uq.net.au](mailto:aagf@uq.net.au)).
3. The final version of the *Avocare* quality assessment manual is now available. The manual is a joint effort between Australia and New Zealand, and sets a common standard for naming and assessment of avocado quality defects. (Note that defects that are obvious at the time of packing are not included.) Further information on the manual, including ordering, can be made by sending an e-mail to [Avomanual@hortresearch.co.nz](mailto:Avomanual@hortresearch.co.nz). The cost for the manual is AUD\$60.
4. An avocado quality handbook is also available. It provides pictures and descriptions of the avocado fruit defects in a smaller format than the assessment manual, and would be useful for growers, packers, wholesalers, ripeners and retailers. The handbook is available via e-mail to [Avohandbook@hortresearch.co.nz](mailto:Avohandbook@hortresearch.co.nz) at a cost of AUD\$20.



## Future activities

Following careful evaluation of the recommendations from the first *Avocare* project, a project called “Bruising of ‘Hass’ avocados from harvest to the consumer” will be starting in a small way this season, with most of the work occurring in 2002/2003. The project will include the following activities:

### *Farm and packhouse practices*

We think that fruit is more easily bruised during harvesting and packing than previously thought. The project will determine if this is so, and provide revised recommendations. It will also see whether fruit are more likely to bruise at harvest or several hours or days after harvest.

### *Transport and distribution*

A number of grower lines will be followed from the farm to retail stores in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne to determine where bruising occurs, and why. We will also be interacting with a major packaging company to develop better packaging. The project will require close co-operation between suppliers, ripeners/wholesalers and retailers.

# Avocado quality

– how YOU can satisfy your customers

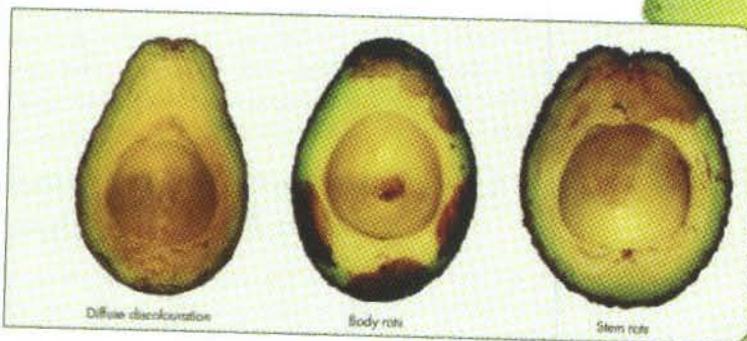
Customers will spend more \$\$\$ at your store if you:

- **sell fruit quickly**  
Maintain good stock turnover through sales.  
Ensure that the oldest fruit are sold first.
- **use the recommended holding temperatures**
- **remove over-ripe fruit**  
These are black, very soft, and are of poor quality.
- **handle fruit carefully!**  
Avoid dropping or squeezing.  
Test ripeness by gentle pressure at the stem end.

*Customers are buying flesh, not the skin.  
Are they buying flesh they can eat?*

## Sell fruit quickly

- Avocados develop more rots and poor flesh quality when held too long.



Diffuse discoloration

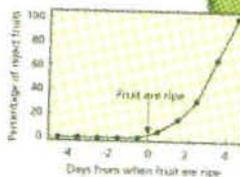
Body rot

Stem rot

Diffuse discoloration occurs when fruit are stored too long at low temperatures.

Rots are caused by fungi in ripe and over-ripe fruit.

*Ripe fruit must be sold quickly or held at 1–5 °C, otherwise quality will rapidly decrease.*



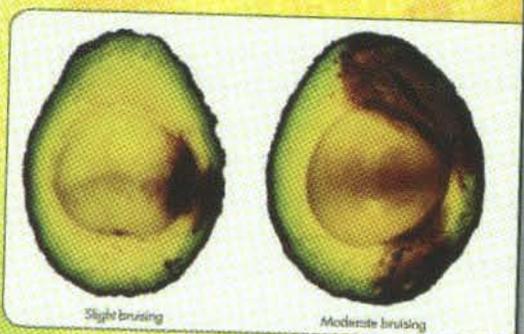
## Use recommended holding temperatures

- Hold sprung/ripening fruit above 15 °C to prevent flesh greying and poor skin colour.
- Hold ripe fruit below 5 °C to reduce fruit rots.



## Handle fruit carefully

- All avocados bruise.  
Softer fruit bruise easiest.  
Bruising occurs by dropping or squeezing fruit.
- Display fruit in original trays.
- Avoid tumble-filling display.



Slight bruising

Moderate bruising

*Ripe fruit dropped from only 25 mm will be bruised!*

Developed by the *Avocare* project team.  
Supported by Horticulture Australia Ltd, Australian Avocado Growers Federation, Department of Primary Industries Queensland, HortResearch and NZ Avocado Growers Association

Horticulture Australia



HortResearch



QLD1011

Queensland Government  
Department of Primary Industries

*A number of Bundaberg Regional horticultural enterprises have grown to be among the best in Australia. The development of Simpson Farms avocado operation at Goodwood has been featured previously in other publications I produce and in the Burnett Fruit & Vegetable Grower some five and six years ago. When I revisited the property recently on a field trip associated with the Australian & New Zealand Avocado Conference, I was truly amazed at the growth of this family enterprise. I felt it appropriate that this publication revisit what is probably Australia's largest avocado growing and packing operation – a real credit to the Simpson family and their drive for excellence. And they are a wonderful, cohesive, unassuming family despite their success. A real credit to the industry and the region's development as one of the major horticultural areas in Australia. Ed.*

Simpson Farms is located near the coastal area of Childers in southeast Queensland on 1600 hectares made up of *Goodwood* and *Redridge* Plantations at Goodwood and also *Avocado Hill* Plantation at Childers.

They are an Australian family company with extensive experience in horticulture particularly in the growing and marketing of avocados, tomatoes, melons, sugar cane and cattle. Simpson Farms two largest crops are avocados, of which they have 200 hectares currently producing 400,000 trays, expanding to 600,000 annually when the orchard is fully mature.

The operation also has sugar cane, harvesting 35,000 tonnes annually. All crops are grown on rich red volcanic soil.

### *...an overall total of 41,500 trees.*

The quantity and varieties of each avocados grown are 6,572 Shepard, 7,475 Wurtz and 27,453 Hass giving an overall total of 41,500 trees. The Shepard variety are harvested from the last week in February to mid April. The Wurtz and Hass are harvested from the second half of April to September. Also planted are 3,000 b74 Mango trees.

The workforce consists of 20 full time staff and at during peak production, a further 40 casual employees are engaged.

Simpson Farms has firmly established its on-farm plan and infrastructure using up-to-date technology in the monitoring and application of production programs.

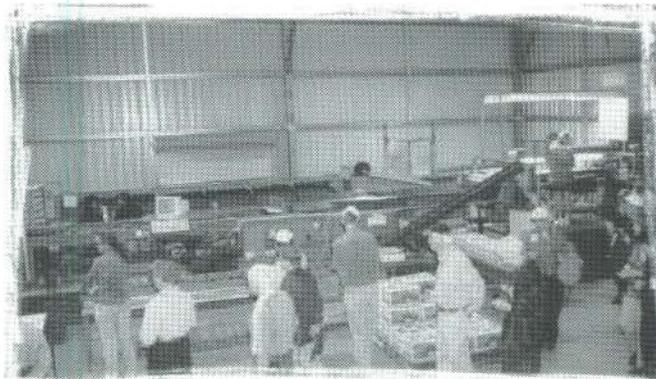
### *...advanced technology monitors water.*

An example is the Enviroscan Water Monitoring System. This advanced technology is used to constantly monitor the water requirements of the crops.

In consultation with Crop Tech Research of Bundaberg, Simpson Farms carries out monitoring of nutrition (using leaf and soil analysis), pest levels and all other aspects of crop production.

### *IPM used to control pests*

Crop Tech/Simpson Farms Integrated Pest Management (IPM) systems are also used to control plant pests, using natural



*Avocado growers inspect the packing shed during the recent avocado conference.*



*Packing Shed*

predators and pheromone traps, maximizing the effective use of chemicals and beneficial insects.

The operation's canopy management system is still evolving with trees planted at 200/Ha on a 10m x 5m pattern and mostly hedge pruned to a 6m height with extensive use of Plant Growth Regulator (PGR) Technology. A significant part of the orchard is also hand pruned and shaped using more traditional methods.

A 1,400 square metre packing shed is used to house the produce during receipt, packing, cooling and dispatch. The shed includes computerized grading equipment and a sealed loading dock, which provides access to the 180 square metre coldroom.

### *...a Quality Assurance program that includes HACCP analysis*

Quality is a must for today's growing and marketing strategy and Simpson Farms has developed a Quality Assurance program that includes HACCP analysis to guarantee high and consistent standards of food quality and safety.

Their marketing plan caters for supplying of the domestic market through direct supply to large retailers as well as selected wholesalers in each state. Simpson Farms also plans to extend its export operations, currently focusing on Hong Kong and Singapore and New Zealand, to other areas of South East Asia, Europe and United States of America when Market access is available.





Kris Gordon beside equipment used for hedging.

**...the first Australian  
avocado grower to supply  
NZ market**

Through a joint venture involving Simpson Farms Pty Ltd, a New Zealand grower based marketing group and a prominent Australia Exporter, they are the first Australian avocado grower to supply the New Zealand market. This involves post harvest treatment for quality and quarantine protocols, handling through the distribution chain and marketing.

Simpson Farms is committed to the production of a high quality and safe product for the consumers.



John Walsh explains the shed operations to a grower during a field visit associated with the conference.

**FAMILY BACKGROUND**

Ron and Fay Simpson started Simpson Farms 30 years ago as a mixed farming business with sugar cane, tomatoes, rockmelons and contract harvesting as their main activities, based on the property at Calavos, Bundaberg.

The business expanded rapidly with tomatoes becoming their main focus. Joining with their new friends Norm and Paula Philip, they established SP Exports. By the early 1990's, SP Exports grew to become the largest producer and exporter of tomatoes in Australia.

As part of this expansion and success, properties at *Goodwood Plantation* and *Redridge Plantation* near Childers (inland from Bundaberg) were purchased and developed with Avocados planted from 1992 onward.

By 1995 the Avocado and Sugar Cane business at *Goodwood* was of such a size that Ron and Fay sold their share of SP Exports to their partners, Norm and Paula, so that they could concentrate fully on *Goodwood*.

They were joined by their sons-in-law, John Walsh and Kris Gordon and have now successfully developed Simpson Farms to a stage where Ron and Fay's vision for the property is just about complete.

To this end, Ron and Fay are handing over the day to day running of this business to the next generation, John and Kym, Kris and Joanne and maybe their younger daughters, Trina and Melanie one day. Ron and Fay say they will still be there to lend a *Guiding Hand* when requested but will be spending more time traveling and at their Hervey Bay house.

**Farm Safety on Demand**

A range of Farm Safety information can be accessed by using a fax back service offered by the Queensland Department of Industrial Relations.

You can access such information as 25 Rural Safety Links and two Rural Guides —*Rural Industry Workers' Guide* and *Introduce Worker Safety*.

Simply use your fax handset to call 1902 941 003. The service costs 82 cents per minute (Including GST).

The same information is available on the Department's new website address at [www.whs.qld.gov.au](http://www.whs.qld.gov.au)

**ATTENTION  
AVOCADO GROWERS**

For the best results and a personalized service

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**W ARKELL & SONS**

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Established since 1892

Proudly serving Australian growers for more than 100years.

Contact Les Hartley (proprietor)

**Phone 07 3379 8122 (work) 07 3371 6087 (a/h)**

**Facsimile 07 3379 4158 – Mobile 042 757 1097**

## Moving Beyond Commodity - Positioning Avocados for the Future



*This paper, by Lisa Cork, provides the background of a presentation on this subject made by her at the Vision 2020 Avocado Conference. Lisa is Produce Marketing Strategist for The Marketing Department Ltd.*

Globally, there is one major trend impacting the way fresh produce growers and shippers are being asked to do business around the world – retail consolidation. The impact of global retail consolidation is far reaching and it is changing the entire nature of the produce industry.

Here are some recent consolidation statistics:

- During 1998 and 1999, there were 1,556 mergers within the US food business. (Source: The Food Institute Report)
- Since 1996, the top 20 retailers have purchased almost 3,500 supermarkets representing annual grocery sales of more than US\$671 billion. (Source: Kaufman, USDA)
- The top eight US retailers accounted for 25% of grocery sales in 1992 vs 42% in 1999. (Source: ERS)
- 23 of the top 25 retailers worldwide are global companies. Kroger Co. now has over 2,200 stores with US\$43.1 billion in grocery sales in 1999. They are responsible for about 10% of overall US food retailing sales. (Source: Dr. Roberta Cook, UC Davis) Kroger and Albertsons are now selling about US\$4 billion in produce annually. The need for produce at this level is driving demand for supply chain management. (Source: Dr. Roberta Cook, UC Davis)

### Demand being placed on suppliers

One of the major impacts of global retail consolidation is the demand it is placing on suppliers – especially in the international fresh produce industry.

In a report released January 2001 by Promar International (UK), they report, –“The basic principal of Category Management is that major retailers are increasingly looking to pass back full responsibility to nominated suppliers (the Category Captain) for all procurement, marketing, logistics, technical support, promotion, market research, training and R&D work.

“Each of the leading retailers is developing its own ‘brand’ of Category Management to suit its particular needs, but a common feature is that they are invariably looking to reduce further the number of suppliers they deal with on a direct basis.”

From the grower’s perspective, what changes is Category Management bringing?

- There are fewer buyers to go after.
- There is a downward pressure on prices.
- There will be tighter relationships between growers, shippers and their customers.
- There will be a supply-side consolidation.

- There will be more direct buying. In 1994, 36% of purchases were bought directly from grower/shippers. By 2004, this is expected to grow to over 50%.
- Growers/shippers will be expected to become solution providers through adding value and taking out costs from the supply chain.
- Growers/shippers will be expected to create opportunities for unique premium products with enhanced flavour, appearance, nutrition and packaging.
- Comprehensive food safety will be even more important.
- Expect to see increased private labeling. Private labeling in Europe is enormous, with 46% share in the UK alone.



Lisa Cork

### Relevance to Australia and New Zealand

While Australia has remained mostly removed from consolidation fever, it is important to realize the drive towards Category Management is present in both countries. Retail buyers are looking for suppliers that are ‘programme focused’ and add value to the distribution and retail channel.

While the impact of Category Management may seem daunting, growers/shippers who strive to understand the changes and requirements will thrive.

### Moving beyond ‘Commodity’ – Nutritionally, Avocados are a Winner.

“Farm-Aceuticals” is the name The Packer recently gave fruit and vegetables because research is increasingly showing that plants contain vital disease fighting compounds called phytochemicals. Phytp chemicals are naturally found, non-nutrient plant chemicals that contain protective, disease preventing compounds.

More than 900 different phytochemicals have been identified as components of fruits, vegetables and grains. To give an indication of how expansive phytochemicals are, it is estimated there may be more than 100 different phytochemicals in just one serving of vegetables.

Pharmacists cannot prescribe phytochemicals. In the United States, Americans spend approximately US\$2 billion a year on vitamin/mineral supplements – soon to onclude phytochemical extracts. However, consumption of supplements containing phytochemicals will only provide selected components in a concentrated form— not the diversity of compounds that occur naturally in fresh fruit and vegetables.

## What do avocados contain?

Here is some recent nutrition information from the California Avocado commission website.

Elizabeth Pivonka, Ph.D., R.D. President, Produce for better Health Foundation states the following:

### phytonutrients

"When Americans reach for an avocado, they're getting more than they bargained for. The avocado is loaded with phytonutrients, which are natural plant substances that work with nutrients and dietary fibre to help fight chronic illnesses, such as heart disease and cancer. phytonutrients, which are natural plant substances that work with nutrients and dietary fibre to help fight chronic illnesses, such as heart disease and cancer.

### beta-sitosterol

"These plant-based phytonutrients recently discovered in the avocado are beta-sitosterol and glutathione. Beta-sitosterol helps lower blood cholesterol levels and is found in fruits like bananas, apples, strawberries and cherries. Ounce-per-ounce, avocados contain four times the beta-sitosterol found in oranges, which had previously been reported as the richest beta-sitosterol fruit source.

### glutathoine

"Glutathoine, another phytonutrients found in fruits and vegetables, acts as an antioxidant. Antioxidants help the body by 'mopping up' free radicals that are known to play a role in

the development of heart disease and some cancers. Avocados, one of the best fruit sources of glutathione, may offer some protection against oral, throat, and other types of cancer.

### vitamins E and C

"Avocados, along with other fruits and vegetables, are nutrient-dense in vitamins E and C" – other antioxidants that help promote healthy teeth and gums, and protect the body tissue from oxidative damage.

### folate

"Folate is another important nutrient that promotes healthy cell and tissue development. Consuming enough folate is essential for pregnant women and women of child bearing age. Avocados contain more folate per ounce than other fruits, so choose the fruit with the most 'phyte' per bite!

### potassium

"Potassium is a mineral that helps the body's fluids and other life-essential minerals stay in balance. The richest fruit sources of potassium are avocados and bananas. The power-packed avocado has only five grams of fat per serving (1/5 of an avocado) and the majority of the fat is monounsaturated; the same type of fat found in olive oil. Studies have shown that monounsaturated fat may increase HDL (good) cholesterol, but has little effect on LDL (bad) cholesterol.

"Avocados are one of nature's whole foods – a natural for today's healthy lifestyle. So give yourself a 'phyting' chance and choose an avocado," she says.

## NZ Avocado Publications



### Avoscene –

*This is the complete industry magazine for all NZ Avocado growers and others in that industry. There are four issues per year.*

**Cost: NZ\$112.55**

### The Avocado Growers' Manual – (Revised August 2000)

**Cost: NZ\$85.50 including p & p NZ**

### The Complete Avocado Cookbook –

*By Christine Heaslip, this is a comprehensive cookbook from entrees to desserts. It includes everything from Avocado Gnocchi to Passionfruit Avocado and yoghurt flan. The 'promo' says – a must for the kitchen.*

**Cost: NZ\$19.95 including p & p NZ**

**Where do you obtain these publication?**

**Try [www.nzavocado.co](http://www.nzavocado.co)**

## What about an Avocado Auction?

Sydney Markets has long been a supporter of children's charities, with the annual *Mango Auction* in September and the famous *Cherry Auction* in October among the highlights. They also support the Strathfield Mayoral Ball's *Youth off the Streets* fundraiser and the ever popular *Fresh for Kids* program.

This year's *Mango Auction* raised more than \$31,000 for the Children's Hospital at Westmead. Top bid for a tray of mangoes was \$16,000 and went to Joe Logozzo of Joe's Fruit World – Weatherill Park.

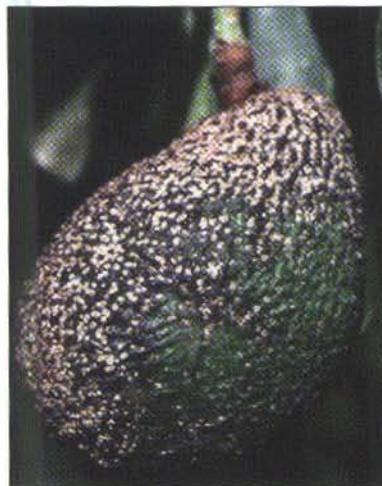
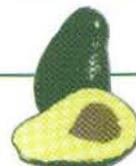
The recent *Cherry Auction* raised \$48,000 for CanTeen. The prized first box of cherries went to Patrick Piromalli from the fruit and vegetable shop —*Patrick on Bellevue* at Bellevue Hill. He paid \$17,000 for this first box of cherries along with being crowned *Cherry King* for 2001.

*Well, how about it – an Avocado Auction? Well perhaps not! They do tend to be available almost all year – maybe not seasonal enough I'm afraid. Ed.*



Cherry King 2001 - Patrick Piromalli

## Registration of Bulldock® for Spotting Bugs – Comes with WARNINGS



Left: An explosion of latania scale on avocado fruit as a result of frequent sprays of a synthetic pyrethroid.

Far Left: Effect on the foliage of frequent sprays of synthetic pyrethroid, branches were killed by an explosion of latania scale and the trees took nearly two years to recover.

### Introduction

Growers in the eastern states will be pleased to hear that Bulldock® 25 EC insecticide is now registered for use against spotting bugs, however use of the chemical is not without a potentially serious downside. Bayer's Bulldock® 25 EC is very effective against spotting bugs and has a longer residual action (7 to 10 days) compared to endosulfan (2 to 3 days). It's active ingredient however, a synthetic pyrethroid called beta-cyfluthrin, is a broad spectrum insecticide, which means it is toxic to a much wider range of insects including beneficial species.

Historically, synthetic pyrethroids also have a greater risk of giving rise to insects with pesticide resistance. Strict adherence to spray guidelines and a greater emphasis on pest monitoring are therefore crucial.

### Toxic to beneficial insects

During the course of the HRDC spotting bug project it was found that beta-cyfluthrin was extremely toxic to the beneficial species tested, viz. Aphytis, lacewings and Cryptolaemus. These three beneficials normally keep avocado pests such as latania scale, red spider mite and mealy bugs under control naturally (Waite *et al.*, 2000).

In a trial at Nambour during the 1988-89 season a similar synthetic pyrethroid, deltamethrin (Decis®), was applied at fortnightly intervals and although it achieved excellent control of spotting bugs the infestation of latania scale increased from virtually zero to extremely harmful levels as can be seen in Figures 1 and 2 (Waite, 1992).

The amount of scale present was enough to kill whole tree branches and severely affect fruit

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appearance. Furthermore treated trees took nearly two years to recover. Tea red spider mite levels also increased and in another trial mite levels increased to levels which produced noticeable bronzing on the leaves (Waite, 1997). Bulldock® is also toxic to bees.

### **Potential resistance to insecticide**

The incidence of the development of pesticide resistance to insecticides is often higher amongst synthetic pyrethroids. To reduce the risk of resistance development, the maximum number of four sprays per season (recommended on the label) and the total amount of product applied to the target crop should never be exceeded.

### **Spray guidelines**

The label states that a maximum of 4 sprays can be applied during the season with a minimum of 21 days between consecutive Bulldock® sprays. The Bulldock® 25 EC rate for dilute spraying is 25 to 50 mL/100 L water (dilute spraying is defined as spraying to the point of run off).

The higher rate (50 mL) is recommended for high levels of infestation or where continuous reinfestation is expected. The withholding period for Bulldock® is 7 days. As with any agricultural chemical, read the label where more detailed information including concentrate spraying, safety directions and export of treated fruit are covered.

We strongly recommend that growers keep the number of Bulldock® sprays as low as possible and that these be reserved for the period of highest spotting bug activity (generally mid-season). At the start and end of the season it is recommended that endosulfan be used instead.

For example, on the Sunshine Coast the greatest spotting bug activity generally occurs during the months of December and January. In a very high pressure orchard a likely scenario would be to apply the first Bulldock® spray on about 10<sup>th</sup> December, a second on 31<sup>st</sup> December, and if necessary a third on 21<sup>st</sup> January. The fourth should be kept as a last resort if monitoring in February indicates significant fresh damage in spite of endosulfan sprays.

In a low pressure orchard one or perhaps two sprays of Bulldock® mid-season are expected to be sufficient (in addition to endosulfan at other times if necessary). The last spray of Bulldock® may achieve some early control of leaf rollers where these pests occur.

In the macadamia industry where Bulldock® has been registered for some time, it has been found to be compatible in sprays with copper oxychloride and copper hydroxide and also with soluble boron. Its compatibility with phosphorous acid has not been established but growers are encouraged to test it on a few trees.

### **Importance of monitoring**

Until Bulldock® has been used for a few seasons we will not know the practical consequences of using this chemical on commercial avocado orchards. It is therefore particularly important that growers closely monitor the levels of pests (particularly scale insects and tea red spider mite) during the season. This will provide early warning of potential problems and give growers a feeling for the effect of this chemical.

Growers are encouraged to report their experiences to the authors of this article so that the recommendations can be improved. It is expected that orchards which already have noticeable levels of scale and/or mites are likely to be at greatest risk from escalating levels of these pests when Bulldock® is used, weather and other seasonal conditions will also have a part to play.

### **What to do if there is an upsurge of scale and mite numbers**

Immediately stop spraying Bulldock®, revert to endosulfan and if necessary apply oil sprays for scale insects (only if daytime temperatures are less than 30°C) and Torque® for mites. Increased levels of scales, mites and mealy bugs may not become apparent on some orchards until the second season.

### **Summary**

Avocado growers now have an effective new chemical to use against spotting bugs. In order that its useful life is sustained and that its advantages outweigh its disadvantages, Bulldock® must be used wisely and sparingly.

Under no circumstances should the rate, the maximum sprays per season, or the minimum interval between sprays be exceeded. It is also essential where this chemical is used, that pests such as mites and scales are carefully monitored. As with any agricultural chemical please read the label carefully.

*By Simon Newett and Geoff Waite - Queensland Horticulture Institute, DPI, Nambour*

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### Shephard Avocado

Twenty years ago, the Ravenellos' farm, some 20 kilometres north-west of Mareeba in North Queensland, was all scrub. They had drawn their farm block in a Department of Lands ballot and set about clearing the scrub and setting up their paddocks and sheds for tobacco production. Those were the halcyon days. Two years ago, the Ravenellos, like so many tobacco farmers, left the industry and moved into alternative crops. The transition was both dramatic and traumatic.

Mary and Natale Ravello's son, Giovanni, was never particularly keen on growing tobacco, and Mary remembers him experimenting with a wide range of alternative plants during his school holidays. "He planted mangoes, he planted pumpkins," he says, "and then together, we planted 500 avocados. I just thought, 'oh, another industry, more headaches.' We knew the tobacco industry and I thought we were just starting from scratch again. But after the avocado trees started to bear fruit I was hooked. I was curious to know why we had this or why we had that." After completing his agricultural college studies, Giovanni worked on an avocado, mango and flower farm for a year before returning home with many new ideas and skills.

The Ravello farm now has 40 acres of crop, with 3,000 avocados, 1,000 mangoes, 200 two-year-old lychee trees and about a half acre of yams. They realised that the tobacco industry was dying, so used their income from tobacco to build up their avocado and mango plantations. "We just plant a few more each year," Mary says of her avocados.

"There seems to be a good demand for them, so we plant what we can, and try to increase our plantation each year. Avocados are usually grown on the tableland (Atherton Tableland) rather than down here on the sandy soils (around Mareeba). That alone has been a challenge because we don't have very deep soil; we have to mound it up into deeper beds for the avocado trees. But we're much the same as the tableland when it comes to diseases and insects. We probably use more water and fertiliser than they do."

Mary believes that they are exposed to many more risks now that they are growing tree crops. Tobacco was a very short production-cycle crop, with only about 12 weeks in the paddock before harvest, then the rest of the work was inside the sheds. "With avocados, we get only one crop a year," Mary says, "and if that crop fails then so does our income for the year. With tobacco, we had the opportunity to grow two or three crops a year. Tobacco was a nice crop in its heyday. We could budget with tobacco because we had an average minimum price. We could do all our budgeting on that price and we knew that if we had a good crop then we could get more for it."

"With avocado, we would just have to send our product to the market and cross our fingers. We could have beautiful fruit when it left our farm, but then it arrived at the market looking completely different. We had to take our chances along with everybody else."

#### Avocado Marketing

After leaving tobacco, Mary became friendly with avocado growers, Del and Don Lavers on the tablelands, who suggested the idea of a marketing group. "I thought that would be a good idea, because I had seen other people get hurt by prices," she



says, "and I wasn't happy with the way avocados were marketed, especially after our experience with tobacco, and the assured income we had there. One thing led to another and soon we had 24 possible members and our marketing cooperative was underway." Mary readily acknowledges the help they received from the Queensland Department of Primary Industries (QDPI) personnel in setting up their marketing group and cooperative.

#### Champion Qualities

- \* Farm diversification priority
- \* Identified opportunity in expanding industry
- \* Focus on quality
- \* Market chain development
- \* Collaborative marketing
- \* Industry leadership role

The cooperative is called Shephard Australia, so-called because the cooperative markets only Shephard avocados, an avocado variety which grows well in North Queensland. "So we had this group together and had decided we were going to market together," she says. "Then Inter Harvest put a proposal to us for the marketing and promotion of our fruit. They spoke to retailers, and in particular Woolworths, arranging contracts for the supply and in-store promotion of our fruit. We wanted to create a market for the most common fruit size we were producing, which was 23/25, and Inter Harvest was willing to take these and to create a market for them. Inter Harvest set up excellent promotional activities, in magazines, on radio, eye-catching displays and free tastings in-store. Shephard Australia marketed 35,000 trays of avocado in the first year, increasing to about 220,000 trays a year now."

#### Quality Assurance

Once Shephard Australia had been operating for a couple of years, they became involved in a quality control program through the QDPI called 'Pallet to Plate'. "We formed smaller groups of about five or six to keep up with quality control," he says. "My group would come here and we'd get up to speed with our spray diaries and all the quality checks. Shephard Australia now has a very good quality assurance manual. All the members aren't accredited at this stage, but Inter Harvest is, and they guarantee the quality of their produce." The cooperative has engaged an independent quality assurance auditor who undertakes random checks on fruit before it leaves the transport depot. Audit checks are also undertaken in Brisbane. Then, at the end of the season, Inter Harvest reports back to the group on the market and audit results and on avenues for improvement.

"We had a few problems for a while," Mary acknowledges, "but these have all been ironed out now." Each year, Shephard Australia arranges for a tour for growers to visit the markets to enable first-hand checks on the progress of his or her product. "We go to Inter Harvest where our fruit is unloaded and on to the ripening rooms, then we go out to the stores and talk to the store managers and the staff. Initially we had problems with fruit arriving in a poor condition, but now we pre-cool everything at the transport depot and then maintain that cool chain through the transport and storage. Before the identification of the problem using the audit, we were packing the fruit into cartons and pre-cooling the packed fruit in the pallet room. But then the centre of the carton wasn't very cool, at least not to the same degree. We'd send it to market and there would be uneven ripening. It might seem unimportant to the grower, but it's the most important thing for the retailer."

The establishment of the cooperative has facilitated two-way communication. Woolworths managers have visited their farms and packing facilities and now regularly address grower meetings.

Mary is very happy with the structure of the cooperative; each member has shares, and elections are held for key positions. Mary believes they are experiencing the benefits of quality control and market strength, and they are now in a position to consider expansion into other varieties. "The co-op is a godsend," she says "because beforehand I would sit for half a day on a phone to see which market was paying the best price for my grade of avocados. Through the co-op we can control the supply of our product over a 12 week period. If we all sent our avocados at the same time the market would flood and the prices would drop. And the bigger stores don't want to buy from 20 different people. They want to have a consistent line. They want to know that we can supply a large market with a quality assured product."

In North Queensland, the avocado trees set their fruit in June or July and picking usually begins in the first weeks of February. The cooperative aims to have its fruit in the market on the fourteenth of February when the in-store promotions begin. "We need to have a date for retailers to advertise in their brochures, which are all produced six weeks out," she says, "and if it's raining on the tablelands, then our group around Mareeba is expected to pick."

The plant root disease, *Phytophthora*, has been one of the major challenges for the Ravello farm. Because they have shallow soil, the trees are not expected to survive for as long as the avocado trees on the tableland. "And it will be very interesting," Mary says, "To see how many years we can get out of our trees. *Phytophthora* is endemic here, and avocados don't have much resistance to it."

## Alternative Crops

The Ravellos also grow yams, for which there is a growing demand in the marketplace, as they are not widely grown in Australia. "I market the yams through the central markets," he says. "The beauty of the yam is that you don't have to spray any insecticide on it because nothing seems to eat it. But I'm sure some bug will eventually find it. They do grow very deep, with lots of hair and very fibrous roots. We shovel them out of the ground, and then take them home to wash. We leave them for a couple of days and then set about pulling the roots off. It's like plucking a chook. I also keep a lot small ones for seed material."

The yams are then packed in boxes, driven to the transport depot and sent to wherever their agent suggests. The yams do not go out under any brand name.

The mangoes are not a favourite crop for the Ravello family. The mango market is extremely competitive and Mary believes

that they planted their mango trees in the wrong spot. "I said to my husband this morning, 'I wish we had never had those mangoes. They're a pain,'" she says. "Depending on weather conditions, they ripen so quickly and if you don't pick them ripe enough, they go on the market green and you don't get much for them. Some people artificially ripen them, which makes them more appealing to the customer."

## The Future

The Ravellos now have plans to diversify even further. A new property has been purchased nearby and they plan to plant sugar cane. "I know the prices are down at the moment," Mary says, "but sugar prices go up and down. Sugar cane will certainly be another new challenge for us, but we'll give it a go. When you start to look at what you have to pay for the farm and for irrigation and machinery, then it's years before you can see a good return on your investment. It will be good to diversify away from a tree crop. Right now, if the avocados fail, we would have a very slim income."

"At the same time, we could go back into tobacco. When accepting the buy-out, we agreed not to grow tobacco for five years. I'm not fussy about the way that industry is going now but in five years time, who knows."

Yet Mary has not idealised the tobacco industry, nor the leaving of it. "People are always moving out of tobacco," he says, "but every farmer needs to thoroughly investigate what they're getting into. The prices might sound good on the market at the moment, but you have to take a longer term view of both the opportunities and the risks. It takes at least five years before tree crops are really bearing, and you've got to look after those trees for that period of time. It's a big capital investment. And in five years time the prices might not be very good. Those tobacco farms might not be worth anything in five years time but there's the possibility of that happening with avocados as well."

## Advice to others

Mary believes that the best things a grower can do are first to do his or her homework and then to work towards establishing an alternative cash flow.

"You really do need some other buffer. I think if you're going to plant a new crop then you've got to become involved with the grower groups to get good information. You need to sort through all the crop information on R (research) and D (development) and marketing. Everything's moving so fast these days."

The Ravellos use the Internet to source production, market and product information. They also read extensively and consult with local QDPI advisers and other farmers. Mary believes that every farmer should belong to a grower group. They should also look carefully at what growers are doing in other industries. When investigating quality assurance systems for the cooperative, Don Lavers and another grower travelled to Perth to see the SQF system in operation first hand.

However, most of the Ravellos' business decisions are made around the dinner table, and farming is really a labour of love for Mary, Natale and Giovanni. "I couldn't live in town," Mary says, "None of us could. There are arguments to see who goes into town. I never want to get away from farming."

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No. UCA 4A, by Keith Hyde

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The Mexicans have long recognised the culinary delights of the avocado and it is increasingly seen as an ideal fruit for the health conscious in many countries.

Now, Olivado New Zealand brings you the best of both worlds - a premium, extra virgin, cold-pressed oil extracted from avocado that is a superb food dressing or cooking oil and also an extremely healthy product that can assist in lowering cholesterol levels and help in the fight against heart disease. It even relieves prostate problems.



### Olivado Gold Avocado Oils

Just added to the range of gourmet oils from Olivado are our two new Gold avocado oils.

As the name suggests, they are gold in colour, instead of the green associated with the original Olivado Extra Virgin Avocado Oil. That's because they have undergone a special process to remove the green colour and have then been infused with special flavours.



Both new Olivado Gold oils are great dressings on salads or pasta. The lemon infused oil is especially good with chicken and seafood dishes. The rosemary infused oil combines beautifully with most red meats and also pork.

With smoke points in excess of 300°C the new Olivado Gold oils are ideal for roasting and barbeques – they'll retain their natural flavours without burning.

### What is so special about New Zealand Avocado Oil?

#### A Healthy Fruit

Research has shown that avocado fruit is full of monounsaturated fats, which are the 'good' fats that help to reduce the 'bad' LDL cholesterol in the bloodstream. The avocado also has a very high content of a natural plant compound called Beta-Sitosterol that not only helps prevent absorption of 'bad' LDL cholesterol into the bloodstream it assists in redressing the balance by promoting 'good' HDL cholesterol.

Tests show NZ-grown avocados have among the highest Beta-Sitosterol levels in the world in this type of fruit - up to 950mg per 100grams content compared to an average of 750mg per 100grams content for typical avocados grown elsewhere (AgriQuality Lab Network, May 2000). This level is preserved in the avocado oil. Compare that to olive oil,

another recognised healthy oil, which has only 250mg per 100grams content and the New Zealand avocado is almost four times superior in this respect.

The avocado is also rich in vitamin E, which is why avocado is used as a base product in many skin and hair care preparations.

In conjunction with Alfa Laval and Bertuzzi of Italy, Olivado has developed a process to extract all this goodness from the New Zealand avocado and produce a premium oil for use in cooking and as a dressing (there's even an Oil of Avocado capsule for those who wish to further supplement their nutritional intake).

### Avocado Varieties

Olivado does not grow its own avocados, preferring to leave that to skilled horticulturalists throughout Northland and the Bay of Plenty who have developed the skills in producing premium fruit in recent years. The most popular variety is the Haas, which makes up more than 70% of the crop in New Zealand. There are four other varieties grown commercially in New Zealand and Olivado intends to trial various combinations to produce avocado oils with different tastes.

### The Olivado Process

Overseas, avocado oil is processed from poor quality fruit and made into a base product for the cosmetics industry by refining, which involves heating and chemical extraction. This process delivers an oil stripped of many excellent qualities and is not suitable for culinary use.

Olivado New Zealand is producing avocado oil in much the same way that olive oil has been made over many centuries in the Mediterranean - by pressing the mesocarp, or flesh of the fruit, at temperatures below 50°C, to drain the precious oil. The average avocado contains between 13-22% of oil. When olive oil is made, the pit and skin are pressed at the same time, but the stone and skin of the avocado must be discarded first before processing as they contain toxic 'persins'.

By pressing at temperatures below 55°C, our avocado oil can rightly be termed cold-pressed. The first pressing of olive oil is known as extra virgin, because it contains the purist, first oil from the fruit. Likewise, Olivado refers to its first pressing as extra virgin - in fact, there will only be extra virgin avocado oil.

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### Stability and Storage

Unlike wine, olive oil and avocado oil are best the day they are made and will not improve with age. They are harmed by light and heat. That is why Olivado New Zealand uses only dark bottles for Avocado Oil and Olive Oil, to prevent



**s u n l i g h t /** fluorescent light from prematurely aging the oil. We also recommend you store your oil in a cool cupboard, where the temperature will

not rise above 30°C, but don't refrigerate or it will solidify.

Olivado New Zealand has also gone a step further in preserving the quality of our product by ensuring that our avocado (and olive) oil is fully stabilised when it leaves our plant. We guarantee its freshness in an unopened bottle for at least one year. It will probably last much longer, but why leave it sitting that long - avocado oil is there to be used.

### 1. Cooking

If you are familiar with olive oil then think of avocado oil in the same way. Avocado oil is not meant as a replacement for olive oil, but rather as a complementary product (we also make top quality olive oil and it, too, is wonderful in many food dishes).



Avocado oil is smooth and rich but does not disguise the flavour of food. Instead, it brings out the natural flavours of the dish you are preparing. That's especially important for foods like fish and chicken, which have delicate flavours that should not be disguised.

If you are keen on French or Asian-style cooking, then New Zealand avocado oil is a must-have in your kitchen. Avocado oil has a very high smoke point by comparison to other cooking oils, even olive oil. It will not burn or smoke until it reaches 255°C, which is ideal for searing meats and frying vegetables and meat in a Wok. You don't get the taste of burnt oil, just the natural flavour of the food.



### 2. Salads and Vegetables

For dressing, pour avocado oil on any salad or vegetable and let it sit for an hour to take up the fragrant and delicate flavours of the oil. Sprinkle a little grated cheese with the salad and you have a wonderful combination.

Instead of pouring butter over hot potatoes and greens, use healthy and natural avocado oil and get the benefit of an enriched flavour from a product that is much better for your body.

### 3. Dipping Oil

For a snack or an entrée to a meal, pour some avocado oil and olive oil into separate bowls as a dip for hot bread, straight from the oven. Delicious. And a great way to demonstrate to your friends the unique difference and flavours of the two oils.

*Olivado Avocado Oil is produced by Olivado NZ Limited, Kerikeri, Bay of Islands, New Zealand. Olivado is a registered trademark.*

## GUIDES FOR IPM

Childers & District Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Association's *Integrated Pest Management Grower Guides* for the fruit and vegetable industry are available in two sets - one for *Vegetables* and one for *Tree Crops*. The *Tree Crops* set consists of 26 cards while the *Vegetable* set contains 23 cards.

The colour guides are designed to be user friendly and fit into a pocket for ease-of-use by growers on the farm.

*For further information on these reasonably priced IPM Guides phone (07) 4126 8214 or write to the association at PO Box 262, Childers, Qld. 4660.*



## AUF products for purchase

AUF Fresh Produce Manual... (out of print)  
Product Description Manual...\$110 (Fruit & Veg.)

Vegies for Aussie Kids...\$37.95

Vegies are Fun...\$48.95

Vegies Twin Pack...\$77

*Note: Prices include GST*

Phone: 02 9763 1767,

Fax: 02 9746 3008

## QUALITY IN DISTANT MARKETS

Dr Henry Pak and Dr Jonathan Dixon

New Zealand Avocado Industry Council

### Introduction

Avocados have a limited storage life and with export to distant markets the majority of this storage life may be consumed by the long transportation times required to reach their destination. Transport to distant markets is also an expensive process, adding to the costs of production. To remain competitive, the exporting country must develop a reputation as a consistent supplier of high quality product. This poses a number of challenges since the fruit not only have to survive the transportation process but must also have sufficient remaining storage and shelf life to pass through the marketing chain and deliver fruit of high quality.

The development of most storage disorders is related to fruit age, that is the length of time since the fruit were picked. Fruit quality deteriorates as fruit age increases. Shorter storage times and transport distances are more forgiving of fruit quality, since fruit can be consumed before storage disorders have an opportunity to develop. For distant markets, however, short of reducing transport times, the only other approach to improve out-turn quality is to improve the inherent quality of the fruit.

Overcoming the quality problems associated with export to distant markets requires a multi-faceted approach. Production of high quality fruit is a continuous process throughout the production chain, with the quality of fruit entering this chain being the ultimate determinant of subsequent storage life. Systems need to be implemented and continually refined throughout the packing and coolstore chains to ensure that fruit quality is maintained.

### The New Zealand Solution

Prior to the start of the 2000 export season the New Zealand industry had only minimal criteria to define fruit quality, a limited understanding of those factors determining fruit quality at out-turn, no methods for monitoring fruit quality through the production chain, and no methods for predicting likely out-turn losses. There has also been no financial incentive for growers to modify their orchard management, as there has been no way of tracking the quality of individual lines of fruit.

Given the limitations imposed by distance from market, and the lack of detailed information on quality problems in the market, the New Zealand Avocado Industry Council (AIC) commenced the 2000 export season on the basis that the better the quality of fruit that leaves New Zealand, the better the quality at out-turn.

The New Zealand industry has embarked on a process to continually improve fruit quality, which is illustrated schematically in Figure 1. A best practice manual has been prepared, which provides guidelines on management practices and handling systems that minimise fruit quality loss at each stage of the handling process from picking to loading on a ship. This manual is provided to all registered packhouses and exporters in New Zealand.

In addition, a library system has been established for monitoring fruit quality for individual growers. Samples are taken from lines of fruit as they are packed and are held in conditions simulating shipping before ripening and evaluation of fruit quality. Results from these library trays identify the quality

problems inherent in the fruit or onshore handling systems before transport to distant markets. Comparison of library samples with samples taken at out-turn in the USA, serves to identify any problems which may have arisen as a consequence of the shipping or handling system, once the fruit has left the packhouse.

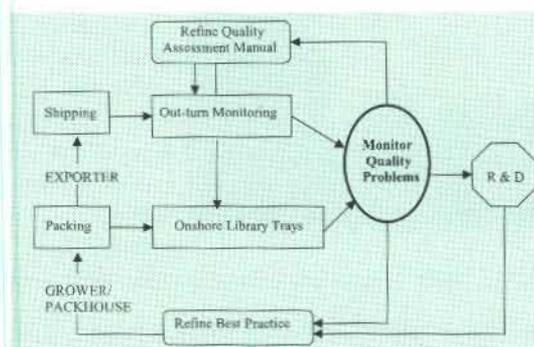


Figure 1. Process for continuous improvement of export fruit quality utilized by the New Zealand industry.

Together the information collected from the onshore library trays and the out-turn monitoring define the exact nature and extent of any quality problems. The stage in the production chain at which quality problems arise can also be determined. Once the nature of the problem has been defined, the R&D programme can be better targeted to develop more appropriate control strategies. Once implemented, these strategies can be continually refined with feedback from fruit quality evaluations.

### Out-turn monitoring

In order to develop appropriate control strategies, it is first necessary to clearly identify the quality issues that need to be targeted. Without good market intelligence it is difficult to obtain accurate information on the extent of any quality problems or their relative importance.

The information gathered by the out-turn monitoring programme has allowed key issues to be identified that impact on fruit quality such as fruit age and shipping systems. For the first time exporters of New Zealand avocados have had detailed information on fruit quality from an independent, impartial source. This allowed the avocado industry and exporters to manage, in close to real time, fruit quality problems as they arose during the export season. Identifying the fruit quality issues and possible causes of quality problems as early as possible, by utilising a scientific approach to fruit quality measurement, has enabled detrimental effects on the market perception of fruit quality to be minimised.

### Fruit quality assessment manual

Assessment of fruit quality is central to the process outlined in Figure 1. For this reason, the AIC has developed a fruit quality assessment manual, which is provided to all registered packhouses and exporters. This ensures that all assessments of fruit quality throughout the industry are comparable. The manual is also updated on an annual basis to ensure thorough coverage of the quality disorders present.

### Onshore library trays

As part of the best practice manual all sheds were strongly encouraged to hold library trays for evaluation of fruit quality. The best practice manual provides a standard protocol for the

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collection, storage and evaluation of library trays. Training was provided to sheds on how to evaluate fruit quality, to ensure that assessments were standardized.

For most growers library tray information is the only feedback they receive of their fruit quality. It also provides a basis for comparison with shed and industry averages. For individual growers, information provided on their fruit quality can provide the stimulus to improve orchard management systems. Once changes have been implemented, the feedback on fruit quality allows growers to determine whether the additional expense has been warranted. This is especially true of preventative fungicide control programmes, where the benefit is not immediately obvious and cannot be determined from packout rates or reject analyses provided by the shed.

### Best Practice manual

At no stage during the handling chain is it possible to improve fruit quality after the fruit has been picked. Instead, the best that can be achieved is to prevent deterioration in quality. Therefore, the best strategies to adopt for improving fruit quality at out-turn is to ensure that only the best quality product enters the distribution chain, and to minimize the opportunities for deterioration in fruit quality at each stage of the fruit production and handling chain. In New Zealand this has been achieved by providing information to packhouses on procedures for handling fruit to minimise harmful practices that impact on fruit quality.

A best practice manual has been developed to highlight those factors throughout the fruit production and handling chain from the orchard to the market shelf, which impact on fruit quality. The cumulative effect of these small improvements in maintaining fruit quality can lead to large gains in fruit quality in the market.

The best practice manual has identified a number of key areas where improvements in practice can be made such as harvesting and handling procedures. The manual is revised yearly incorporating results from the industry R&D programme. The information contained within the fruit quality database, generated from both the onshore library tray evaluations and out-turn monitoring, can be used to measure individual shed or grower performance. This information can be used to identify which fruit production and handling practices are beneficial for maintaining avocado fruit quality and that could be implemented throughout the industry.

### R&D programme

The R&D programme for the 2000 season was focused strongly on the issue of postharvest fruit quality, especially on rots. Major emphasis was placed on the issue of rots developing on green fruit while still in coolstore, a disorder commonly referred to as "measles". Out-turn monitoring and onshore library tray results clearly show "measles" was not a major fruit quality issue during the 2000 season.

The results obtained from the fruit quality database from the 2000 season have highlighted other specific issues that need to be addressed in the 2001 R&D programme. An example is the high incidence of stem-end rots that were recorded in the 2000 season. Priority will be given to developing new control strategies to overcome this disorder.

### Summary

The quality improvement process implemented this past season has undoubtedly been a success. Both the industry structure and the active participation of all the sectors have been major contributing factors to this success. However, the real benefits will accrue in the following seasons, with the systems now in place to capture information on fruit quality and relate this back to handling practices.

## ANVAS Accredited Nurseries

ANVAS accredited trees can be purchased from the following nurseries:

### Anderson's Nursery

Graham and Vivienne Anderson  
Duranbah Road, Duranbah NSW  
Phone: 02 6677 7229



### Batson's Nursery

Merv and Pat Batson  
Schulz Road, Woombye Qld  
Phone: 07 5442 1657

### Birdwood Nursery

Peter and Sandra Young  
71 - 83 Blackall Range Road, Nambour Qld  
Phone: 07 5442 1611

### Rainforest Nursery

Ron and Joan Knowlton  
25 Reynolds Street, Mareeba Qld.  
Phone: 07 4092 1018

## Australian Native Bee

### Crop Pollination Service

Croppoll Pty Ltd

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ph 54623734 (a/h)



*Sydney Markets wholesaler Tony Parrelli of ALLCROPS Pty Limited with the company's speciality - avocados. Avocados represent around 90% of ALLCROPS business.*

## *Talking Avocados*

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