

TALKING AVOCADOS

**Australian Avocado Promotions
for 2009/2010**

Phytophthora Trunk Canker

**Freshcare – the National On-Farm
Assurance Program**

Verticillium wilt more severe in 2009

SUMMER 2009/10

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Chairman's Perspective

It is with mixed feelings that I write this report. Many of you would already know that, after three years as Chairman of Avocados Australia, I have decided to stand down from this position. The timing of my decision was based around appropriate succession planning and to ensure stability of Chair and Board, leading up to the VII World Avocado Congress in 2011. Jim Kochi has been elected as the incoming Chair, and he will take over on 1 January 2010. I will stay on the Board as a Director until the next AGM, which will be held in the latter part of 2010.

During my time as Chair, my two main themes have been smarter marketing, for both the domestic and international market, and embracing change and the opportunities it brings. I am more and more aware of the power blocks of avocado growing countries such as Mexico, Chile and more recently Peru, who are aggressively looking to export around the world to established and potential new markets. And of course there are the more established exporters such as South Africa, Israel and our neighbour New Zealand. We need to learn from all these countries. It is disappointing to see us competing for external markets, sometimes with overt disharmony and sometimes looking to cannibalize each other.

I read with interest recently about a parallel example in the aviation industry, where an alliance has been struck between Jetstar and Air Asia. These two airlines are very definitely competitors, but now have also become collaborators, looking for economies of scale in the procurement of equipment, major assets and in sourcing maintenance. It is these 'left field' examples which are so inspiring and can teach us that being a competitor does not automatically mutually exclude also being an ally or partner. I am sure there was a great deal of discussion and likely some 'argy-bargy' before the deal was struck, but in the long run it must have been agreed that the commercial imperative outweighs the risks.

Let's continue to look for similar opportunities to move our industry forward in quantum leaps. There are so many ways our industry can take advantage of economies of scale, think outside the square and let go of any perceived 'baggage' which may be preventing a move forward in positive and proactive directions.

I believe that our industry has come a long way, and is often

compared very favourably to many other horticulture industries. Avocados Australia is managing the biggest domestic marketing budget ever, allowing a successful and highly regarded marketing campaign. This has been made possible by an impressive increase in production, and by new levies which are now firmly in place. We also have a significant research and development budget and many innovative programs in place. Avocados Australia is always looking for the best investment outcome for the levy dollar.

I would like to pay particular tribute to Antony Allen and the staff in the Avocados Australia office, who do an outstanding job managing our industry. All these people work tirelessly to keep the avocado industry on track with horticulture trends and developments. Their huge effort to ensure the Australia/ New Zealand conference in July 2009 was such a stunning success was simply outstanding, and they deserved all the accolades which came their way.

I am most appreciative of the support I have received during my time as Chair, particularly from the Avocados Australia office and the Avocados Australia Board. The last three years have been interesting, exciting, challenging, invigorating and sometimes a touch frustrating. I have certainly enjoyed seeing the implementation of many innovative changes that have occurred. I feel very confident that the future of our industry is in safe hands with our new Chair, Jim. I am sure you will all offer him a high level of support and appreciation, especially in the lead up to the VII World Congress to be held in Cairns in 2011, details on page 25.

Finally I offer my very best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a joyful 2010 to Antony and his staff, to the Avocados Australia Board members and their families, and to all of you who are reading this issue of Talking Avocados.

Henry Kwaczynski

Henry Kwaczynski
Chairman, Avocados Australia



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Peter and Sandra Young
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Turkinje Nursery

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100 Henry Hannam Drive

Walkamin Qld

Ph: 0419 781 723



Industry Matters

Written, edited and compiled by
Antony Allen, CEO of Avocados Australia



Development of Education Materials for Packhouses, Wholesalers and Retailers

Avocados Australia, in partnership with Queensland Primary Industries are currently developing a series of handling guides for avocados for use across the supply chain, specifically in packhouses, the wholesale markets and in retail stores.

Retail quality survey results have shown that the biggest quality issues for avocados in Australia are bruising, followed by body rots and vascular browning (see figure 1 below). These results have been used to ensure that the educational material produced addresses these underlying issues.

How avocados must be handled to maintain quality is directly related to their level of ripeness therefore the first piece of material to be produced is a general guide for all industry sectors illustrating the different levels of avocado ripeness and the colour stages that are most common at each level. This ripeness/colour guide is now in its final stages of completion (see draft below) and will be widely distributed in the New Year.

With the avocado colour and ripeness chart forming a foundation, separate handling guides are currently being developed specifically for packhouses, wholesalers and retailers to assist each of the three sectors in addressing important quality issues. These guides will be displayed in a similar format to the colour/ ripeness chart including the use of our new avocado mascot (still to be named). These materials will be available for the 2010 Hass season. Source: Avocados Australia

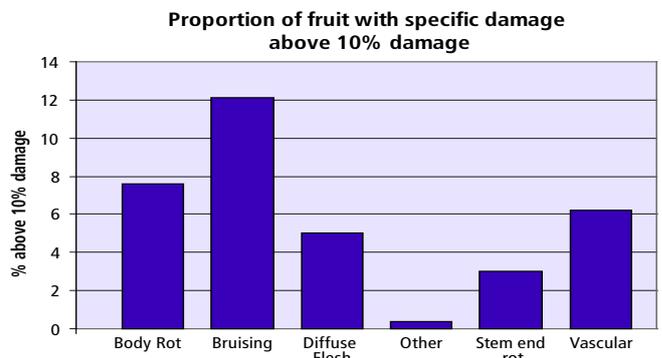
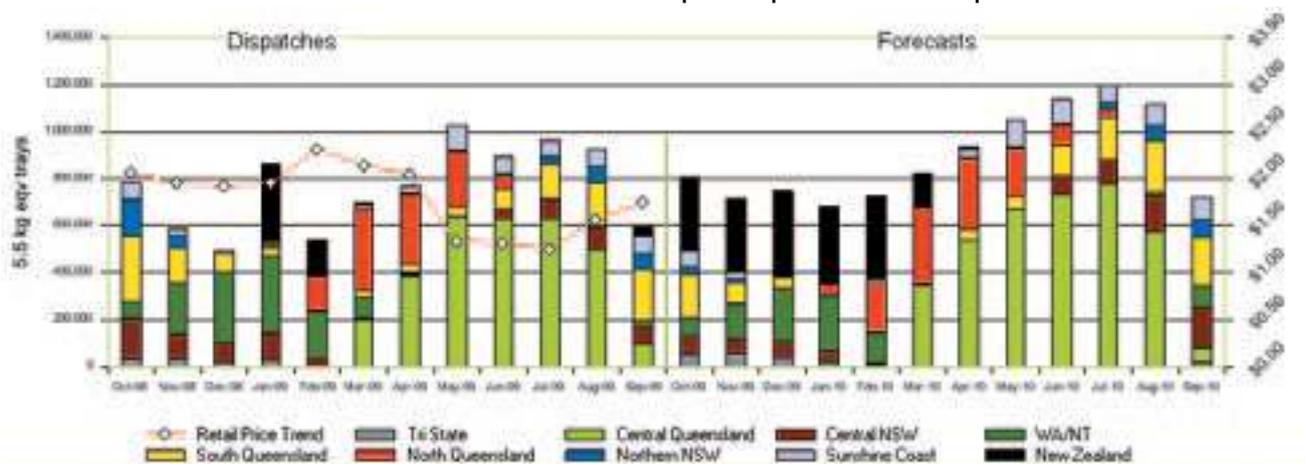


Figure 1

Infocado Update

Australian & New Zealand Avocados Oct 08 to Sept 09 Dispatch – Oct 08 to Sept 10 Forecast





Oct 08 to Sep 09 Dispatches & Oct 09 to Sep 10 Australian Avocado Production Estimates 5.5kg eqv trays

Region	Oct 08 to Sep 09	Oct 09 to Sep 10
North Queensland	1,090,587	1,190,765
Central Queensland	3,089,342	3,696,011
Sunshine Coast	564,377	651,860
Southern Queensland	1,280,120	1,183,107
Northern NSW	402,679	230,710
Central NSW	799,444	778,671
Tri State	116,975	201,935
WA	1,263,321	918,529
Total	8,606,845	8,851,588

So far this season (up to mid December) approximately 910,000 trays of avocados have been imported into Australia from New Zealand. This is approximately 45% of what New Zealand has forecast they will export to Australia up until April 2010.

Below are extracts from the October Infocado quarterly report. Dispatches from May through August 2010 are forecast to be significantly higher than actual dispatches in 2009. We will have a much clear indication as to whether this is still the prediction in January when the first quarterly report for 2010 is produced.



Orchard Profile (Avocado) - Screenshot of a software interface showing a table with columns for Grower, Address, Date, Ref No, and various production metrics. The table includes data for different orchard blocks and their respective yields and harvest dates.

Orchard Profiles

Growers in Northern New South Wales, Sunshine Coast and Southern Queensland will have recently received their orchard profile form for the 2009 season. Your assistance in completing this form (see cropped example below) and sending it back to Avocados Australia by the due date is greatly appreciated.

FarmReady Reimbursement Grants - Support for Freshcare Training

Growers new to the Freshcare Program, and existing Freshcare members moving to the 3rd Edition Code of Practice, are now able to apply for funding to cover their training costs through the FarmReady Reimbursement Grant Program. The FarmReady Program is a Federal Government initiative, providing grants up

to \$1,500 per year to eligible primary producers to undertake approved training courses.

The following Freshcare Training Courses are eligible for FarmReady Funding:

- Freshcare On-Farm Assurance – Quality & Food Safety (Fresh Produce)

Training designed for growers new to on farm food safety and quality. A one day workshop (8 hours), with a follow-up visit on farm/remote support to assist with system implementation.

- Freshcare On-Farm Assurance – Quality & Food Safety (Fresh Produce) – ‘Transition Training’

Training designed for Freshcare members moving from the 2nd

Industry Matters continued

Edition to the 3rd Edition Code of Practice; also suitable for growers moving to Freshcare from other on farm food safety/ quality programs. A one day workshop (6-8 hours). Talk to your Freshcare Trainer or visit www.farmready.gov.au for further information. Source: Freshcare

Accuweigh Weigh Labellers and Price Labellers

Weigh labellers and weigh price labellers automate the process of weighing and labelling of trays, packages and boxes.

The Dibal weigh price labeller provides the ideal weighing and labelling solutions for a wide variety of fresh products such as meats, fruits, vegetables, bakery products, as well as frozen and chilled products.

The label printing on the Dibal weigh price labeller is performed by a thermal printer and these weigh label applicators have the capability to accept multiple print heads for adding extra labels to the packages.

PC label software is available for configuring the weigh price labeller and for management reporting. Labels are blown onto the product by a patented Air Jet system on the label application machinery, guaranteeing maximum protection for the product while also firmly adhering the label. Source: Reed Business Information

Latest in Liquid Inkjet Printing Technology

The latest addition in high resolution inkjet printing solutions for direct case coding from Markem-Imaje, features liquid piezo technology delivering the best value to print high quality graphics, text and readable barcodes.

The 5600 High Resolution, Liquid Inkjet Printer utilises competitive glycol-ether (Quick Dry) ink, providing a high quality, economic, and efficient answer for manufacturers who need to maximise contrast, while minimizing the ink deposit required.

It is ideal for porous corrugate cases and trays.

The 5600 Liquid Inkjet Printer combines advanced functionality with a compact design for a uniquely competitive cost-per-print coding solution. Markem-Imaje's patent pending quick-drying liquid ink delivers superior opacity and can print on a wide range of porous substrates in environmental conditions from 0 to 40 degrees Celsius at printing speeds up to 182 m/minute.

Efficiency features include a rigid ink management system, which consists of a large capacity, self-contained cartridge, which was designed to recover purged ink and to be easily replaced during production. Printhead care can also be programmed to occur at the users' convenience, reducing downtime. The 5600 Liquid

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Inkjet Printer offers a unique complement to the existing 5000 Series printers, which also includes the next generation user interface, usability and integration features, and lower energy consumption to meet current market requirements.

Similar to the company's 5800 Touch Dry® Hot Melt Printer, the 5600 Liquid Inkjet Printer works as a stand-alone or completely integrated unit, and can be used in conjunction with CoLOS® Enterprise software. Intuitive icon-based user interfaces, provide a familiar platform, and USB connectivity simplifies file data transport. This system can also be equipped with an optional printhead slide assembly for precise print gap control to ensure optimal print quality. G. Scott Wood, Product Marketing Manager at Markem-Imaje says adding this technology to Markem-Imaje's high resolution family makes the company the most comprehensive direct case coding partner in the marketplace. "Whether you need compliance or decoration, we can now provide the best value for your application," he says.

Federal Government backs down on quarantine subsidy cuts

The Federal Government has agreed to a multi-million dollar reform package for Australia's quarantine and agricultural export system.

In September, the Opposition blocked a Government decision to remove a 40 per cent subsidy for quarantine inspections and reforms to the export system. Two months on and after extensive discussions with the Greens and Opposition, Federal Agriculture Minister Tony Burke says the 40 per cent rebate will continue for a further two years, and more than \$40 million of reforms will be carried out.

However, new fees and charges, with, on average, a 66 per cent increase, will be put in place from mid-2011. The whole package is worth more than \$127 million and includes money for reforms and redundancies to streamline the export system, as recommended in the Federal Government's Beale review. Source: ABC

Burke orders review of R&D corporation budgets

Federal Agriculture Minister Tony Burke has accused some research and development corporations of wasting farmers' levies on executive pay and agri-politics, and has ordered a Productivity Commission review.

The review examine whether the \$460 million of government money and farmer levies are spent appropriately by the 16 corporations, which include Meat and Livestock Australia and Australian Wool Innovation.

Mr Burke says he raised the issue of executive salaries, duplication of resources and agri-political activity with the corporations earlier this year, but is yet to see any progress.

CEO of the Council of Research and Development Corporations

Chairs, Sue McCluskey, says they are looking at how the RDCs can work together more efficiently. But she's not willing to join the debate over executive pay. "Look, because these RDCs do have independent boards, it really is up to those independent boards to be able to set that," she says. "And they would consider the marketplace and other issues in relation to that, but I certainly couldn't comment specifically on that." Source: ABC

Prices soaring for avocados

The price of avocados has hit a record high, with a major drop in supply seeing consumers fork-out up to \$5 a piece.

Cold winters and hail storms in Western Australia and New Zealand have hit the industry hard, and with avocados only coming from the two sources during the Christmas season, it means demand is outstripping supply. Western Australian packers said the market price is about \$60 a tray, up from \$30 the year before.

Jennie Franceschi, who co-owns a packing shed in Manjimup, in southwest Western Australia, said prices are at a record high.



Avocados Australia has for a number of years paid a large amount of money for the industry's right to use the **Heart Foundation "Heart Tick"** on avocados.

If you are using a "Heart Tick" logo from anyone other than the label companies Label Press, Spicer Labels, Sinclair International and Warehouse Packaging and Design you are acting illegally.

No other label printers are able to legally print the "Heart Tick" for use on avocados. Avocados Australia is undertaking a clean up of the "Heart Tick" printing. We will lose access to the "Heart Tick" logo if it is used illegally.

Avocados Australia, AUF and the Heart Foundation will enforce their Registered Trademark rights to the fullest extent.

If you have non-genuine labels do not use them. If you know of label companies offering to print non-genuine "Heart Tick" labels for you please let us know on **1300 303 971**, so we can all help keep this valuable tool.

All growers could lose access to the "Heart Tick" logo if you don't act now.



CERT TM

Industry Matters continued

“We’ve never seen prices as high as they are, ever, and I’ve been in the industry for 36 years,” Ms Franceschi told AAP. Western Australia experienced a cold winter in 2009, and avocado trees are currently bearing less fruit that are smaller than average.

Australia’s peak avocado group, Avocados Australia, said production is down slightly on forecasts. Ms Franceschi said there is not enough volume for demand.

Hail storms in New Zealand during winter has also led to a drop in imports. New Zealand’s peak avocado group, the Avocado Growers Association, said the industry is producing less export grade trays and has had to stop exporting to the United States and Japan.

CEO Alan Thorn said New Zealand was forecast to produce 2.4 million export trays this year, but with only about a month to go in the export year, production is looking to be down 300,000 trays. “The storms blemished the fruit and they haven’t been able to meet strict export standards,” Mr Thorn told AAP. “Exports to Australia have been reduced a little bit this year.” The drop in supply is having a knock-on affect in Australia’s supermarkets and market stalls.

Woolworths spokesman Luke Schepen said the volume of avocados is well down from expectations. “There is a bit of pressure on price at the moment,” Mr Schepen told AAP. “It comes down to supply and demand.” Mr Schepen said supermarkets that run out are getting topped up daily “but in less quantity than

we had earlier in the year.” The price for one avocado varies from store to store, but some green grocers in Brisbane are selling the fruit for \$4.99.

Avocados Australia said prices will come down in the coming months. Program manager Joanna Embry said the Tablelands in far north Queensland will start picking Shepard avocados next month and Hass will be on the market in April. She said she doesn’t think the current high prices will hurt consumer confidence in the industry. “The die hard avocado consumer will always eat them no matter the price,” Ms Embry told AAP. “The truth of the matter is people still want them and it’s driving up demand, there is little we can do about that.” The peak production for avocados in Australia is from May to September. Source: news.ninemsn.com.au

Fruit-packing grant to boost jobs

Tropical Fruit World will create five new jobs after receiving \$1 million from the New South Wales government. Duty MLC for Tweed Amanda Fazio announced the funding yesterday to help expand the Duranbah facilities.

“This Regional Business Development Scheme will help this family-owned company invest the \$1 million on a new on-farm produce packing, a processing facility and an upgrade to its power supply,” Ms Fazio said. “This well-known business already employs 28 people and as a major Tweed tourist attraction it helps provide indirect employment for many more.”

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The new processing facility will include a fresh fruit washing, grading, weighing and packing line; a leaf processing and drying room, a commercial kitchen for processing fruit and producing jams and sauces, and cryovac packaging equipment. Tropical Fruit World will use the new facility to undertake contract packing, especially for local avocado growers. Source: Tweed News

Pacific seasonal workers available to growers across Australia



The Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme is open to all growers across Australia who are unable to find suitable local labour. The Pilot, designed to be a straightforward way for growers to access reliable seasonal labour, is now in Phase 2 and the remaining 2400 visas can be issued. Pacific seasonal workers can remain in Australia for up to seven months and they have the opportunity to return for following seasons to apply the experience and training they have gained as Pacific seasonal workers.



The Australian Government announced the Pilot in August 2008 to respond to industry claims that up to \$700 million of produce rots due to a lack of reliable seasonal workers. The first Pacific seasonal workers, a group of 50 Tongans, arrived in Australia in February 2009. During their time on an almond plantation in Robinvale (Vic), workers achieved outstanding productivity, working an average of more than 40 hours per week in the first month. The group left Australia in September 2009, after six

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Industry Matters continued

months of work that included harvesting and pruning of almonds, picking of citrus, and pruning of table grapes.

Growers are all too familiar with the frustration of spending valuable time and resources training people who only work for a few days before moving on. It is vital for growers to have a stable source of dependable labour, particularly during their busiest periods – and Pacific seasonal workers may be able to provide this continuity.

Only approved employers (ie. labour hire companies) can recruit and place Pacific seasonal workers with growers. Employers pay wages, superannuation and taxes, and manage the recruitment, employment, placement, pastoral care, health insurance and transportation of Pacific seasonal workers. Employers are also responsible for paying half of the workers' airfares.

Australians will not be displaced by the Pilot and Pacific seasonal workers only come to Australia when growers can show they have unmet demand.

Growers in the horticultural industry who are having difficulty sourcing local labour can talk about their seasonal labour requirements with an approved employer. For more information you can visit www.workplace.gov.au/pswps or email seasonalworker@deewr.gov.au

Managing Climate Variability

The Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) Industry Forum, held on November 18, 2009, featured presentations from experts on climate change. The information below is a summary of the key points from Colin Creighton's presentation on Managing Climate Variability which is a joint research program of Grains Research and Development Corporation, Meat and Livestock Australia, Sugar Research and Development Corporation, Dairy Australia, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation [and previously the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry and Land and Water Australia]; as well as HAL via Woolworths Drought Action project and Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation at project level.

Other than Antarctica, Australia's climate is already the most variable in the world, and with climate change is predicted to be more variable. Agriculture is already and will continue to respond to climate change through adaptation to our increasingly variable climate within the short term (seasonal) and/or long term (10 year) investment timeframes.

The notion of 'average rainfall' has always been dubious for Australia, both agriculturally and ecologically. The real story is in the variance, not the mean, and how farming systems and the ecosystems respond to extreme events – the droughts and floods.

Climate models do not agree on whether there will be increased or decreased incidence of El Nino events in the future. However, the majority of models predict that the pattern of future climate change in the Pacific will be more "El Nino-like" – in other words,

drier for Australia's east coast.

A comment Colin Creighton says he often hears from farmers regarding climate variability is "*just tell me when it's going to rain*".

"Improvements continue to be made in the realm of forecasting and this is an area that will make a tangible difference to growers," Colin says. "The improved skill in forecasting will come from global circulation models. "Global Circulation Models take a systems view of oceans and atmosphere and, through a wide array of sensing devices inputted into supercomputer driven models, predict climate. Getting the global circulation model right for Australia is a major research challenge and Managing Climate Variability is investing about 55 per cent of its resources to meet this challenge."

Global Circulation Model approaches have the capability to improve the skill of our forecasts, including providing us with an immediate opportunity for more skilful multi-week forecasts, which is a key opportunity of value to Australian Horticulture. Multi-Week Forecasting is breaking down the barriers of weather and climate and is fostering 'in crop' climate risk management. This kind of tactical farming is increasingly the norm, be it the wheat industry, dairy or horticulture.

Australia's Global Circulation Model is called the Predictive Ocean Atmosphere Model for Australia (POAMA). Experimental products already on the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website generally have a 70 per cent skill out to one month, being far better than the statistical forecasts that are already being used by many growers. An example of the benefit of this month-out forecast is the use of early irrigation to mitigate against plant stress caused by heatwaves – this was used successfully by grape growers in South Australia in the heatwaves of February and November 2009. For POAMA experimental products visit <http://poama.bom.gov.au>

"The thing growers must take on board is that climate experts never expect 100 per cent correct forecasts. Many of the benefits for agriculture will accrue with a degree of accuracy at around 70 per cent," Colin says, "and this is the skill we are rapidly approaching for our POAMA derived multi-week forecasts."

Horticulture co-investment in research to improve forecast skill through the Managing Climate Variability Program is welcomed for the areas of multi-week forecasting, east coast climate systems, especially lows, and better prediction of the northern Australian monsoon.

"As we develop skill in our climate forecasts we also have to make sure we make readily available the climate products that farmers will use. At this stage, climate forecast products may not be of the right time frame or attribute to support horticulture practice decisions. Managing Climate Variability would welcome a process whereby the key climate risk management decisions are identified by all horticulture sectors and from that the climate products required are specified. These products would then be added to

the 'Water and the Land' (WATL) component of the BOM website - www.bom.gov.au/watl/."

The challenges do not stop at forecasting skill and value. Managing Climate Variability recognises that knowledge, adoption and communication are fundamental to any research program. Two subsequent initiatives being implemented by Managing Climate Variability, in addition to WATL, are:

- **Climate Kelpie** – rounding up and presenting climate information, a one-stop shop
- **Climate Champions** – fostering farmer leadership in applying climate risk management, trialling and sharing innovations.

Expressions of interest are currently being called for farmers to nominate as Climate Champions. "It would be great if among the mix we included several horticulturalists", Colin said. Farmers interested in nominating to become a Climate Champion should complete a short form at www.climatechampions.net.au or call Colin to discuss – 0418 225894. Source: HAL

Horticulture and the Climate Change Challenge.

What are we looking at?

Farmers deal with climate variability every day of the week and

are constantly adapting their farming practices to accommodate changes in environmental conditions. They always have done.

Looking ahead, growers will need to continue to manage the changes to environmental conditions within an increasingly variable climate. Moderate temperature increases over the next 20 years are predicted to be approximately 1°C warmer than it is now at any given time of year. Significantly, the number of hotter days will also increase in number. For example, Mildura currently experiences temperatures greater than 35°C on 31.8 days per year. In 2030 the number of 35°C-plus days is projected to be 38.5. Similarly St George, Queensland will go from 46.7 35°C-plus days to 63.1 days per year.

On top of this, rainfall events are expected to become polarised based on geography. Essentially the north is expected to become wetter while the south is expected to become increasingly dry, however predictions show an overall drop in rainfall across Australia. For example, by 2030 Brisbane's annual rainfall is predicted to have dropped by 3 per cent annually, with a 6 per cent drop in winter and spring. Perth is facing even dryer times with a predicted average drop of 6 per cent, including a 9 per cent reduction in spring.

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Industry Matters continued

What do we do?

The simplest adaptation strategies are already being employed by growers, which has enabled them to maintain production levels in current locations. Some measures taken include:

- Planting more adaptable cultivars
- Changing the time of year for planting
- Improving practices such as irrigation and integrated pest management

“Growers are adapting to the climate quite well and will continue to do this autonomously until around 2030,” Peter Deuter said.

Carbon footprinting?

According to Peter Deuter carbon footprinting is still a hot topic and there are benefits in growers proactively pursuing it for their business.

“It could have an implication on exports in the future as there’s a growing trend in Europe and the US at the moment for products to feature their carbon footprint,” Peter says. “Tesco in the UK has begun using a footprint logo on products in store to promote the concept of carbon footprint awareness to consumers. Similarly, Wal-Mart in the US has instigated a Greenhouse Gas Scorecard.

Should horticulture proceed with calculating carbon footprints for each of its individual products, it will compare extremely favourably to other food sectors’ green house gas (GHG) emissions. Beef emits 10,571 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e-) per \$1 million of revenue while fruit emits 33.7 CO₂e- and vegetables emit just 18.8 CO₂e- per \$1 million of revenue, according to a study published by the Australian Farm Institute in 2008.

Why reduce this very small footprint?

The main source of GHGs from horticulture production is nitrous

oxide (N₂O) from fertiliser use. The motivating forces behind attempting to reduce horticulture’s carbon footprint are:

- Climate change and carbon footprints are hot topics with the media, policy makers and the community. The industry needs to engage with the media, policy makers and the community using factual information about GHG emissions.
- Carbon footprinting has some similarities with the introduction of quality assurance – the industry sees a need to be well-placed to proactively respond to consumers’ ‘need’ for carbon footprint labelling.
- Reducing the carbon footprint would have benefits to growers through efficiencies and subsequent cost savings on fuel, electricity and nitrogen fertilisers.

The lowest GHG emitters in horticulture will be those farming systems which minimise tillage operations and better manage nitrogen fertiliser applications.

The Horticulture Climate Change Action Plan

The Horticulture Climate Change Action Plan was produced as a component of the Across Industry project *Australian Horticulture’s Response to Climate Change and Climate Variability*. The action plan focuses on three areas: adaptation, mitigation and awareness and communication, and details the desired outcomes, priorities and actions that need to be implemented in order to increase the resilience of the horticulture industry into the future.

The plan is available at the climate section of the HAL website - www.horticulture.com.au/areas_of_investment/Environment/Climate/climate_change_action_plan.asp?src=side

A major challenge for the horticulture industry is to identify current ‘at risk’ locations and then develop adaptation strategies for the crops at those locations.

It is estimated that until about 2030, growers in most horticultural industries and regions will continue to adapt well to ongoing climate change, through their current mechanisms of responding to risk. Currently this has been to utilise all the well understood technologies such as very efficient irrigation and pest management systems, modern high yielding cultivars which are acceptable to the market, and changing planting and harvest times in response to changes in temperature and rainfall.

Certainly after 2030 the industry will require more than just autonomous adaptation, and right now the industry has the opportunity to gear up for the challenges of the future. Between now and about 2030, a more proactive approach to adapting to another 1-2°C increase in temperature will need be part of the R&D plans of the majority of Australia’s horticulture industries.

Source: HAL

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Around Australia

North Queensland Report

By Jim Kochi Avocados Australia Director for the North Queensland Growing Area



Misty eyes and itchy fingers are two of the conditions affecting North Queensland avocado growers in January. Misty eyes because they wish for a chance at getting a little bite of the \$ 35-\$40 return that is on offer in the central markets at the moment. For NQ anything in the \$30's is a gift from Santa and even anything in the \$20's is considered a little luxury. So, why is this difference in returns so severe? I wish I knew but there are some figures and theories that I will bring up for your consideration.

At College I vaguely remember something about macro economics and supply and demand theory. It goes like this: If the supply is tight and demand is high then prices can increase until the purchaser feels they can pay no more and stop buying, so then if supply continues there is an oversupply (to demand) and the market has to drop prices to clear stock, if there is still some sort of demand. This is our situation. In January consumers want avocados for their summer salads. New Zealand, Western Australia and some other Aussie regions have avos hanging waiting for this market. In the past this fruit has been "old" or over mature but the demand is so high and the volume of supply is low enough to create a high price situation. As the summer extends to February this late season Hass is getting older and more tired and everyone, (consumers and retailers) starts complaining about quality and so the high prices stabilise and start to drop slowly as demand from consumers eases off.

So now its itchy fingers time. The central market agents are running out of fruit to sell so they are on the phones trying to get avos from NQ offering prices in the \$ 30's, (last week's prices). NQ growers go all misty eyed and send avo samples to DPI & F for maturity testing. Some tests come back at 14-17 % dm but the occasional early set fruit can be at 21% or even at 23 %. Perhaps we can pick this early set fruit and send that down to persisting

most generous favourite agent? Great plan, now for the picking staff training. "Pick the large fruit" is the instruction so off the pickers go and after going once around the tree and picking a few fruit they go around again and pick the "big fruit again".

Well, it is difficult to see the difference second time around when you have misty eyes. I just know that you all know what is going to happen next. My theory is that the market is going to get a slug of fruit of mixed maturity at somewhere between 14 and 23 % with most at below the recommended 21% for Shepard and the market will react badly and prices will drop below last week's price promise and will head for the low \$20 or even below that. This surge of under mature Shepards added to a flush of late season old Hass kills consumer confidence and demand just drops dead.

In late February / early March there is never enough supply to satisfy the demand so prices should be reasonable and stable. Last year, like all years before, it was the surge of poor quality of Shepards and Hass that affected demand from the consumer. The fruit did not ripen properly and did not cut well and did not taste good as well. With all those problems is it any wonder why the consumer stopped buying for a few weeks. Fruit continued to be sent to market in spite of requests to slow down from the agents and so fruit started to back up and slowly turn to absolute rubbish in store. Many growers got very poor returns, and rightly so because the fruit was of such poor quality that the market just did not want it. It should never have left the farm. Unfortunately some good fruit suffered as well and that is how this problem affects all the growers.

We are the luckiest industry ever because our consumers are so loyal that they cop this rubbish for a while and then drop out but somehow they know that avocado quality will get better and they wait until March when dry matter is at 21% or better and consumption picks up again and prices stabilise.

I and the whole avocado industry hope that growers, in all regions, understand that consumers cannot eat rubbish and will not buy rubbish more than once. This supply of known poor

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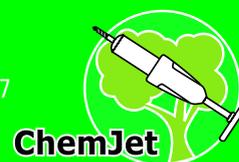
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Around Australia continued

quality fruit is the millstone around our industries neck. Avocados consumption in Australia will not rise quickly enough to match the rising production while growers continue to supply poor quality under mature, over mature, poorly graded, or poorly handled fruit to the consumer.

At the moment I will guess that consumption is running at about 15 % behind the growth in production so we have to be really vigilant about and quality issues that can affect consumer confidence.

After all this, usually about 30 days after the first shipment growers will experience itchy fingers again as they dial up their agents to ask why the tax recipient invoice does not have a 3 or a 2 anywhere on it as promised and then come the misty eyes as the sad story is related all over again, and again as it has been for the past 40 years.

Do the dry matter tests following the correct procedures and base your picking programme on those results.

We are growers of the most wonderful, most nutritious fruit on earth and we should be proud of that, but only if someone can eat it and enjoy it regularly.

PS. As I send this report off my phone rang to advise me that the first trays of Shepards have reached Brisbane's Rocklea Markets (30 December 2009). Now, as an optimist I really want to believe that this fruit is ready.

Central Queensland Report

By Lachlan Donovan and John Walsh Avocados Australia Directors for Central Queensland Growing Area



Dry Dry Dry, with no decent rain since May for most of the area, irrigation is going flat out. Despite water allocations being between 50% and 85% in the district, depending on the location of the farm, growers are just able to keep up. Hopefully be the time this article is read we have had some decent rain. It is of interest to most irrigators how the water level in the Paradise Dam is up on this time last year but allocations have not increased in the same proportion.

The crop is now just starting to show itself amongst the leaves and estimates across the board are around average to slightly better depending on the farm. Quality should be good as we have had no significant rainfall to impact on it.

There was a good level of attendance at the field day held at Lachlan Donovan's property at Childers the other day. The scope and level of presentations was well delivered and the practical demonstrations well received by all. As a note the feed put on for lunch was also well enjoyed. Thanks must be again given to the Donovan's for providing a host venue.

With the volumes put through the system and the pricing achieved

this year the future must be encouraging for all growers. This is also a reflection of the programs being run by industry, the retailers and independents in driving the increase in consumption of avocados. It is reward for all the effort that growers put in on their own farms to deliver a quality product to the marketplace. Still though there is room for improvement for us all throughout the chain and all those involved in the industry must take a cooperative approach to achieving this.

Sunshine Coast Report

By Henry Kwaczynski Avocados Australia Director for the Sunshine Coast Growing Area



If you have read the Chairman's report at the start of this magazine, you will be aware that I am stepping down as Chair of Avocados Australia and Jim Kochi will take over from 1 January 2009. I will remain on the Board as a Director until the next AGM to be held in the latter part of 2010.

The Sunshine Coast season has been a mixed bag, with variable reports of crop size and the good news that returns have been buoyant. The not so good news is that the fruit set for next year seems to be lower than expected. Several theories have been offered for this, including weather (what a surprise!!), with high daytime temperatures and unusually low night temperatures during fruit set, high levels of dust in the atmosphere and high winds. The latter two can certainly have a profound effect on bees and their flight patterns, particularly impacting on effective pollination. The range of temperatures would naturally have impeded appropriate cross pollination.

You may have heard of the many years of discussion and planning for the Traveston Dam, to be located between Nambour and Gympie in the Mary Valley. Many communities in that region were up in arms, many studies announced that the designated location was not going to work, much land was purchased by the Queensland State Government and many lives were seriously disrupted by the planned dam. This was clearly indicated by the many serious and sometimes humorous signs on the highway heading north out of Nambour ("Save our Mary"). A final decision was handed down recently by the Federal Government that this dam will NOT proceed because of environmental concerns, and there was generally much celebration and sighs of relief from local residents.

Still on the subject of water, one of the outcomes of the amalgamations of Councils across Queensland was the loss of the management and control of local Sunshine Coast water and the revenue it brought to local governments. Once this transition takes place, there will again be community concern and outrage, as local residents who have in the past had relatively plentiful water, with water restrictions seldom being applied, will now be aligned to the water restrictions which are all too common in Brisbane. It is probably fair to say that this reality has not

yet hit many residents, either in terms of the principle or the financial impact as the cost of water rises significantly. I do find it difficult to understand that our region, with an annual rainfall close to 2,000 mm, will now be subject to restrictions based on the vagaries of suburban Brisbane water usage. Will this lead to harsher water restrictions for agricultural usage??

So the next chapter in the saga will be to watch the State Government's next move in its attempts to solve the ongoing water challenges and controversies.

On a brighter note, I sincerely wish all of you a very Happy Christmas and New Year – may your lives be filled with peace and happiness.

South Queensland Report

By Daryl Boardman Avocados Australia Director for the South Queensland Growing Area



Well Christmas again it seems to come quicker each year. What's happened in the Last 3 months?

In Southern Qld district we had the last of Simon Newett study group meetings. This was held at Hampton and the topic was

canopy management. Hugh and Leonie Brassey hosted the day with a farm walk over the road at Brendan Burtons property.

The day was a great success with around 46 people attending from the local area, Kumbia and Mt Tamborine. It was interesting to see the ideas both of these young farmers have implemented on their properties and I think that between them, John Leonardi, Simon and Peter everyone went home with some message from the day.

Also there was equipment on display relevant to canopy management with some demonstrations held during the farm walks.

I guess the message I took from the day was that these groups have been a terrific way for growers to network and exchange ideas, as well as being able to take home something worthwhile and relevant to their business. I would like to thank Hugh, Leonie, Brendon, Lizzy and Steve for making their properties available for the day.

Fruit set in the region seems a bit mixed with some areas looking very good with others down a bit due to temperature at flowering and dust storms. Over the past few weeks with the hot weather trees that have a big load are feeling the heat and the fruit drop has started to happen. Summer storms are about but don't seem



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Around Australia continued

to want to drop much decent rain, I hope that we do see some rain and the hail stays away.

I would like to congratulate our new board members Nick Hobbs from the Tri State Growing Area and Russell Delroy from the Western Australia Growing Area and I look forward to working with you on Avocados Australia.

I hope that everyone has had a safe Christmas and have a wonderful 2010 Avocado year.

Tamborine and Northern Rivers Report



By Tom Silver, Avocados Australia Director for the Tamborine and Northern Rivers Growing Area

Apologies to Northern Rivers and Tamborine growers for not getting their last growing area report in spring's TA, but as you could appreciate, things were flat out with harvest, and like Douglas Adams I also like the whooshing sound of deadlines as they go flying by.

Firstly, congratulations to growers and supply chain participants for a second successful season. To produce and market such a big crop whilst returning acceptable and fair prices is quite an achievement. A special big thankyou needs to go to the hard working staff at Avocados Australia who bring it all together. Fruit generally seemed to flow well through the supply chain with few problems of back up and associated quality issues that have plagued previous years. This is highlighted when talking to friends in the cities and towns who notice and appreciate good quality fruit and make repeat purchases accordingly.

Though flowering for the 2010 crop was a big one, fruit set is a little disappointing; owing to cool weather around the beginning of September. Growers enjoyed a very mild winter and quite a

warm spring with below average rainfall. The 2010 crop is filling out rapidly and more fruit seems to appear as the days pass. Insect pressure is tolerable though monolepta beetle swarms are prevalent and require regular monitoring.

In September Tamborine - Northern Rivers growers were treated to the last of their Simon Newett run field days. The subject, Integrated Pest Management, was interesting and very successful. Thanks to Warren and Lynda Rixon for their hosting, immaculate orchard and exquisite avocado ice cream. Thanks also to Simon and his team as well as all speakers and growers for attending. Sadly, Dr Henry Drew was also to speak on the day. His passing is a great loss to our industry both through his knowledge and just being such a great, approachable bloke. He will be sorely missed.

I wish all growers a successful and safe 2010.

Tri State Report

By Nick Hobbs Avocados Australia Director for the Tri State Growing Area

Firstly I would like to extend sincere thanks to Colin for his service to this region on the national board. It is important that we have representation at this level so we are not forgotten and Colin has achieved this for the past ten years.

Well, things are not getting any easier. We have just had in late November another record heatwave, the third in three summers, March 08, Feb 09, Nov 09, makes you wonder what is coming next summer. This has coincided with a heavier than normal leaf drop leaving fruit with reduced cover and higher levels of sunburn on current seasons fruit.

The heat has severely affected the fruit set on citrus crops such that early estimates suggest the lowest crop on record may occur. It seems to have affected later setting fruit more.

Unfortunately reports are indicating significant shedding of fruit on avocado trees of what was looking to be a fantastic flowering and fruit set. Like citrus, it is particularly the late fruit set that has been lost. The loss looks to variable across varieties and patches depending on tree health and management. I have had reports on the losses varying from not too bad through to near total loss. Certainly younger trees that are more healthy and vigorous seem to be able to withstand the heat better than older trees particularly those not in tip top condition which has implications when looking at orchard rejuvenation and replanting. With the rest of summer still to come growers need to focus on getting irrigation right to hold what is left and assess crop levels at the end of summer.

I would like to wish every grower a happy and prosperous new year and no matter how frustrating it can get unlike wine grapes we have a product in strong and growing demand and a bright future if we can stick the fruit on the trees

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Western Australia Report

By Russell Delroy Avocados Australia Director
for the Western Australia Growing Area

At the time of writing it is a week before Xmas and in the West we are mid way through our season. Growers north of Perth have experienced very good returns and early sales of south west fruit likewise. The market remains very strong for Australian fruit even with combined Australian and New Zealand supply being in the 150,000 – 200,000 5.5kg tray equivalents range over the last 8 weeks. Western Australian (WA) volumes from the south west appear to be even lighter than expected and maintaining retail programs has been difficult – another reminder of the problems biennial bearing causes us all.

Flowering and fruit set is now behind us and it would appear at this stage that WA has the potential for a very good crop next year – although northern areas have lost much of their initial set and their crop will be lighter next season. Conditions during flowering were generally very good although much of the set was late and this traditionally has a habit of shedding – we will have to wait until March to see what remains. Large new plantings over the last 5 years will begin to bear significant volumes and this will see the crop next season more than double the current volume – planning

for marketing of this increase will need to begin as soon as this harvest is completed.

Water is the life blood of all avocado growers. Avocados have one of the highest water requirements per hectare of all tree crops. The current WA Government has recently issued a discussion paper for water resource management options with the intention of developing new legislation and long overdue water reform to bring us into line with the National Water Initiative. Our industry needs to be very aware and active in this discussion process to ensure our future access to the very life blood of our orchards. This is an opportunity to secure our future and we should not get sidetracked by issues such as a modest fee for service to cover licensing provided we gain security of title for water allocations and a better balance in allocations between the environment and irrigators, particularly in the Manjimup/Pemberton area. Apathy will be no excuse once new legislation is enacted and it will determine the future potential of our industry – I urge you to support overdue reform and ensure our future water.

I wish you all the best for the remainder of the season and trust the fruit set you have sticks and holds till next year.



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More “Take Home Messages” from Avocado Study Group

By Peter Rigden and Simon Newett,
Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries,
Nambour, Queensland

This is another in the series of articles featuring the “take home messages” that have been developed from the avocado study group meetings. These messages are intended to capture the most critical issues on the subject and to act as a quick reference.

Soil and orchard floor management and weed control (Central Queensland)

- **“If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it”** - simple tools and methods can easily be used to monitor the health and properties of your orchard soil.



Fig 1: Growers at a recent Central Queensland meeting used simple equipment and methods to assess soil characteristics such as soil texture, compaction, water infiltration and pH

- Encourage the establishment of suitable inter-row vegetation, it will encourage micro flora and fauna, reduce erosion and compaction, increase soil organic matter and improve soil structure.
- Avocados need mulch, use coarse material with a Carbon:Nitrogen ratio of between 20:1 (eg coarse grass cuttings) and 100:1 (eg woody prunings). Maintenance of a mulch cover will create a more favourable soil environment for root growth, assist with *Phytophthora* root rot control, and improve soil structure, organic matter levels, water penetration and nutrient uptake.
- Management and machinery can be used to reduce the cost of mulching. Improve the growth of non-competitive inter-row vegetation by reducing the frequency of slashing (eg slash only every alternate inter-row in each round), this will encourage more ‘stalky’ vegetation which can be thrown under the trees by side-throw mowers. ‘Bale-buster’ machines can be used to significantly reduce the cost of applying brought-in mulch; ‘bale-busters’ pull hay bales apart and throw hay under the trees.

- Consider new technology for weed control and orchard floor management. ‘Weed-seeker’ technology is able to detect and spot spray individual weeds thus significantly reducing weedicide use compared with blanket spraying the whole under-tree area.

Marketing (Sunshine Coast)

- Good quality produce generates repeat purchases and attracts new customers.
- ‘Infocado’ can provide your business with comprehensive market information and forecasts.
- The export and domestic markets are not interchangeable. Export markets need to be developed on a disciplined and structured basis and they should not be used as an ‘overflow’ for the domestic market.



Fig 2: Louis Grey, General Manager of the Avocado Export Company briefs the Sunshine Coast study group on avocado export market developments at a meeting held at the Brisbane Markets in November

- Proximity to Asian markets gives Australian grown fruit a significant advantage over fruit from the Americas and Africa whose growers are also targeting this market.
- A satisfied customer tells two others about their experience, but a dissatisfied customer tells 10!
- There is power in the market from having long lines (season-long production) of supply and high volumes of product.
- There are two options for marketing fruit (a) go for a niche market eg farmers markets or specialised wholesalers or (b) enter into collective market arrangements to gain access to large market outlets such as the main supermarkets.
- Supermarkets want to provide ‘ripe-n-ready’ fruit of uniform colour to their customers.

Avocado growth cycle and physiology (Tristate)

- A successful local grower considers the top 4 priorities for growing avocados to be: 1) Water, 2) Water, 3) Water and then

p meetings

- 4) Nutrition. He stated “The better I water the better I do” and “The longer I can keep the stomata open the better”.
- Learn to use and “read” the avocado growth cycle (for your region and variety) to carry out critical farm management practices at the right stage of growth.



Fig 3: Growers at the 3rd Tristate workshop split into groups to construct growth cycle models and discuss timing of management practices

- Rootstock selection is very important. As well as selecting for root rot tolerance, avoid incompatible rootstock/scion combinations where known and remove non-performing trees that show graft union incompatibility.
- Balanced nutrition (especially N:Ca) is necessary to achieve good quality fruit.
- The most critical time for the development of fruit size and quality is within the first 6-10 weeks after fruit set. During this period there must be adequate levels of calcium in the soil solution and a complete absence of water stress.

Rootstocks (Western Australia)

- Control of Phytophthora root rot remains the highest priority on most Australian orchards
- Good drainage is the essential first step in the management of Phytophthora root rot
- The selection and use of superior rootstocks has the potential to greatly assist in:
 - the battle against Phytophthora root rot
 - the improvement of fruit quality and post harvest storage, and
 - the lifting of yields.
- Differences exist between the 3 avocado races in terms of

Phytophthora root rot tolerance

- The ongoing rootstock project has been successful in developing rootstocks with commercially useful levels of resistance to Phytophthora root rot



Fig 4: Tony Whiley and West Australian growers inspecting the Pemberton rootstock trial

- Seedlings or clones? It is too early in the life of the trials to make judgements.
- There appears to be more than one type of ‘Velvick’ rootstock.

Next meetings

Workshops are now complete for Central Queensland, Sunshine Coast, West Moreton, Northern NSW, Mid North Coast NSW, Central Coast NSW and Tristate. Another 3 meetings will be held before the project finishes at the end of May 2010. These meetings are detailed below.

Study group	Time of year	Topic to be addressed
North Queensland - 6th meeting	Early May	Canopy management
West Australia - 5th meeting	March 2010	Nutrition (especially nitrogen fertilisation)
West Australia - 6th meeting	May 2010	To be decided

Acknowledgements

These workshops are a team effort between our hosts, guest speakers, group co-ordinators, board members, Avocados Australia and growers. Thanks to everyone for making them successful and to the funding bodies for providing the means - Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries (Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation), Avocados Australia and HAL, plus the support of the Department of Agriculture & Food WA, NSW Department of Industry and Investment, and EE Muir & Sons.

Australian Avocado Promotions for 2009/2010

On the back of two successful years, the national avocado marketing campaign gained further momentum in 2009/10 as it continued to build brand awareness and provided consumers with information designed to encourage increased consumption.

June 2010 will see the end of the current three-year marketing strategy, designed to highlight the versatility of avocados through inspiring recipes.

Consumer research conducted during 2009 showed that almost one in five consumers were aware of the advertising for Australian avocados. Magazines performed particularly strongly in the area of awareness. Research also showed 98 per cent of consumers recalled 'versatility' as the advertising's key message.

Research results show the campaign has effectively tackled barriers to consumption, with fewer barriers to purchase reported in 2009 than in 2005. The research found that on average there are now only 1.8 reasons not to buy, versus 2.3 reasons in 2005. In addition, less than one in five consumers say 'not having enough recipes or ideas' is the main barrier to purchase, compared to more than one in four in 2005.

The avocado industry has an integrated marketing campaign that incorporates a mix of TV, print and web-based advertising, public relations and promotion to both consumers and the food service industry.

Media

To reach avocados' core consumer target – primary grocery buyers aged between 18 and 39 – a mix of media is used. This ensures the key message repeatedly reaches the core consumer target from multiple sources.

The media mix used in 2009/10 has included television, both free-to-air and subscription TV; print advertising in prominent food and women's magazines (*Delicious*, *Donna Hay*, *Mother & Baby*) and the internet. The campaign commanded a strong online presence, focusing on editorial content, rather than just display advertising, through sponsorships with three large publishers – Fairfax Digital, Yahoo!7 and News Digital.

To date the 2009/10 television activity has reached 1.1 million grocery buyers aged between 18 and 39. The magazine activity reached 654,000 people an average of 3.5 times. Online efforts are predicted to deliver more than 922 million impressions (viewings by consumers) and are currently tracking with a click through rate of 0.24%. (The click through rate is calculated on the number of impressions or banners that appeared by the number of people who actually clicked on those banners.)

PR- Add an Avo to Footy Entertaining

The inaugural Australian Avocados recipe competition was launched in 2009. It aimed to increase the frequency with which 'occasional' users purchase avocados and establish the fruit as a regular menu item for entertaining and everyday at-home use.

The competition exceeded expectations, receiving an impressive 5,504 votes.

More than 129 magazine, radio, TV and online spots or articles promoting the recipe competition and avocado footy party were secured with a value of more than three quarters of a million



July 2009 to June 2010	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	5
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Lifestyle FOOD - The Best in Australia O&C Billboards												
Key Support Schedule												
Free To Air TV												
Food Safari												
Food Safari - O&C Billboards												
Food Safari - Overhead voiceover												
ONLINE												
Food Partnerships												

dollars. The total audience reach of the campaign was almost 48 million. (This figure includes repeat exposure).

Launched on Channel 9's *Today Show*, the Australian Avocados recipe competition was a health initiative of Australian Avocados and the National Rugby League's (NRL) not-for-profit program, One Community. It replicates the successful US initiative in which the HASS Avocado Board and the American National Football League's Super Bowl formed a partnership to encourage consumers to eat more avocados on Super Bowl Sunday, the second-largest U.S. food consumption day in the US, and second only to Thanksgiving.

The centerpiece of the Australian promotion was a recipe competition that saw all NRL teams create a team recipe which was endorsed by the team's health ambassador (who is also a current first grade player). Fans voted for recipes, giving them a chance to win Grand Final tickets and a signed NRL jersey. A cash grant of \$5,000 was also awarded to the winning clubs' One Community program.

The more successful clubs also ran supporting campaigns to drive votes – for example, the Canterbury Bulldogs offered fans who voted for the 'Bulldogs Avocado Bruschetta' the chance to win a dinner with health ambassador Michael

Hodgson.

The NRL recipe competition was featured on the NRL, One Community, and NRL Kids websites as well as each club's individual websites and in two NRL Insider newsletters. Both *Big League* and *Junior Rugby League* magazines featured advertisements for the recipe competition. In July, *New Idea* featured a special NRL cover-wrap which included information on the recipe competition. (Cover-wraps - a 4 to 6-page "cover story" around a magazine - are proven to be an effective way to get messages across with high recall rates).

One Community ambassador, Mario Fenech, and all of the NRL health ambassadors threw their efforts behind the recipe competition using their celebrity to promote the competition to media. Cronulla Shark Ben Ross appeared with avocado nutritionist Zoe Bingley-Pullin in a 'how to' video on preparing avocado and basil bruschetta which was posted on the avocado consumer website. Additionally, Sydney Rooster Craig Fitzgibbons hosted an hour-long forum on the website discussing football and healthy entertaining.

The recipe competition was supported by an extensive media relations program which kicked off with a media release targeting national news, food and sports media. Throughout the rugby league season a number of media releases were issued to drive votes and encourage use of avocados in at-home entertaining.

The Canterbury Bulldogs won the recipe competition and directed half of the \$5000 grant to their Bulldogs Eco-league program which promotes environmental awareness and the remainder was directed into their community relations program.

Avocados were also promoted as a healthy alternative at footy final parties, extending the campaign beyond the life of the recipe competition. Avocados were showcased in footy final food features in key magazines including *New Idea* and *Woman's Day*. Channel Seven's *The Morning Show* did a week-long promotion that gave viewers the chance to win the ultimate footy party package including an entertainment unit and party food pack including a tray of Australian avocados. The competition attracted 6,094 entries.

Website

The internet is becoming an increasingly important marketing tool as more and more Australians are exposed to it. At the end of June 2009, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there were 8.4 million active internet subscribers in Australia.

One of the core features of the marketing strategy was to support the delivery of relevant and inspiring recipes and content through the Avocados Consumer Website and 2009/10 saw a content-rich program of activity.

Through the opportunities that the medium offered, interactive functionality was used to help build awareness of key brand messages. From the site consumers can now join the Avo Club,



Australian Avocado Promotions for 2009/2010 continued

comment on and rate recipes, SMS recipe shopping lists to their mobiles, participate in topical avocado and lifestyle related conversations, watch quick and easy video cooking demos, and even download and store favourite personal recipes in a desktop web application, called a widget, allowing easy access to the information.



These developments have had a significant impact on the website. More than one in two consumers surveyed in the quantitative survey of main grocery buyers were fans of the website, and heavy avocado buyers, were even more likely to like or love the website, with 75 per cent of heavy buyers claiming to be fans. The end of December also saw a substantial increase in the consumer database. Just over 1300 widgets were downloaded, and there was a 43 per cent increase in website traffic compared to the same six month period in 2008.

The 2009/10 campaign will bring to an end the three-year marketing strategy that has been in place, but has also laid the

foundations for a new strategy that looks to evolve the marketing activity over the next three years.

Avocados in early childhood initiative

In 2009 a scoping study was completed which identified the best and most effective way for the avocado industry to engage with children in educational settings for the purpose of encouraging the consumption of avocados.

The primary school curriculum is overwhelmed with many competing demands and the opportunities for meaningful real food experiences in the classroom (or canteen) are limited. While the original intention of this scoping study was to investigate the primary school setting for opportunities for avocado education, it quickly became clear that there was a better opportunity in an earlier learning setting.

The task of influencing children's eating preferences is complex. The best place to attempt this task is while food/taste preferences and habits are being formed, which is before children reach school age. Research suggests that 70 per cent of food preferences are established by the age of three years and that children need up to 10 experiences of an unfamiliar food before they are willing to try it.

With behaviour change as the avocado industry's goal, the most important component of an avocado education initiative must be samples of real avocados - for children to be able to taste, touch, smell, prepare, share and enjoy avocados in a positive, fun, social learning setting over a number of weeks. Long day care centres provide the ideal opportunity to offer children this experience as many centres employ an accredited cook to prepare daily meals and snacks.

Using the expertise of two noted nutrition educators, Shelley Woodrow and Nadine McCrea (each with more than 20 years experience in school or early childhood education), an avocado-focused education resource is being developed with the preliminary title of "Eating my colourful plant-foods. An avocado sampler for young children ages three to five years".

The resource will include a book of learning activities for early childhood educators as well as other colourful learning resources including a poster, a rainbow colour swatch, an avocado-shaped food finder and a DVD.

To ensure support from key early childhood agencies, the resources present avocados in the context of broader nutrition issues. The concept of 'Eating the rainbow everyday when choosing fruit and veg' provides an aspirational and fun framework within which avocados can be experienced and explored by young children. Other key messages include 'Try new food – start with green!' and 'Eat more plant food'. The learning activities are also strongly linked to the curriculum, especially language development and literacy as children explore the sensory qualities of avocados and other plant food, plant an

avocado seed, find the colours of plant foods and prepare a snack. Recipes with avocados as a key ingredient provide young children with the opportunity to participate in food preparation, tasting and sharing.

The resources will be trialled in 10 Early Childhood centres in April 2010. The final pack as well as trays of avocados will then be offered to a selected 440 centres in three states with first round offers for the September 2010 program to specific metropolitan regions of Melbourne and Sydney and Armidale, NSW. The second round of offers will be to specific metropolitan regions in Adelaide, Brisbane and Sydney for the May 2011 program.

The program will be further supported by a website and telephone briefings about the program to local Early Childhood support agencies such as local councils, private providers, area health promotion officers, early childhood nurses, TAFE Early Childcare and Hospitality course providers and food educators.

Foodservice Program



While they are loved by consumers, avocados have not been adopted by chefs and consequently have limited visibility on menus. This gap presents a potent opportunity for avocados. Australian Avocados has embarked on a program to engage with the food service sector (restaurants, cafés, clubs, hotels, pubs) to increase the use of avocado in their menus.

A campaign has been developed with leading chef Victor Pisapia, of Victor's Food, www.victorsfood.com.au, to run peer group avocado master classes for chefs.

The first phase of the master classes (from January to June 2010) will target restaurant chefs, executive chefs of major hotels and stadia, catering groups that provide food and contract catering services (primarily to industry and institutions), pub groups, clubs and cafés.

Demonstrating recipes and uses for avocados is central to inspiring chefs to think outside of their current range of avocado dishes. Recipes that could be used in the various food service

segments are being developed and these will be provided to chefs participating in each master class as reference for their kitchen teams.

The resource files also contain information on seasons, handling, storing, purchasing, myths and tips. At the end of each master class participants will be asked to fill out a questionnaire to gauge their level of interest during the class, the event's effectiveness and the likelihood of their inclusion of more avocados on their future menus.

In January 2010 Chef Pisapia will conduct the first Australian Avocados' Fresh Avocados Master class at Canterbury League Club, in conjunction with the club's executive chef Simon McNamara. With a staff of 400 and a kitchen brigade of 27, the club produces a high volume of food seven days a week, making it an ideal venue to debut the program.

The second master class will be held in an executive chef club event at the Sydney Hilton, involving chefs from star-rated hotels and some restaurant groups. In February Chef Pisapia will team with the Hilton Hotel's executive chef Gary Johnson to present a similar program. The Hilton chefs will interpret the recipes and create their own avocado dishes to be tasted by their peers at a chefs' table in the Hilton kitchens. Later, the participating chefs will be served a series of avocado dishes while Chef Pisapia gives a running commentary on each plate and discusses the process of ordering and handling avocados, and the multitude of potential uses in recipes.

Dove-tailing with the master class program will be a communication program aimed at those who make purchasing decisions in food service environments. It will announce the master class initiative and will follow the program's progress from one food service segment to another, reporting on successes, including stories of menu adoption by participants after they have attended the master classes.

Promotional Activity for 2010/2011

During 2009 research was conducted in three stages. Stage two was an evaluation of the new creative direction for avocados moving into 2010. This was done using a qualitative methodology. Four focus groups of light to medium avocado users reported their behaviour.

Based on the research results, over the next three years the new strategy will specifically target light and medium users of avocados, aiming to shift the fruit from being a versatile product ingredient in the kitchen to an indispensable ally, a must-have.

The promotional activity will be in the marketplace from July 2010.

New creative has been developed for this year's promotion, with the campaign line evolving to '*Add an Avo Every Day*'. This new campaign line will strengthen the call to action. New advertising material has been created demonstrating how avocados can be

Australian Avocado Promotions for 2009/2010 continued

used in a variety of useful, easy and everyday ways, in order to drive more regular use.

A new media strategy has been developed that looks to move the advertising placement from food orientated titles and environments, to environments where the target audience would be looking for food solutions. These environments include TV, print, online, word-of mouth and sampling with a focus on integration across the channels.

The advertising collateral has again been designed to drive consumers to the avocado consumer website where the focus will be on demonstrating how easy it is to 'add an avo everyday' through quick and simple recipes, snacks and meal ideas.

In 2010 Australian Avocados will also build on the 'footy/at-home entertaining' campaign established last year.

Due to changes within the NRL sponsorship category, Australian Avocados will now host the season-long recipe competition and NRL clubs will be approached with an individual sponsorship opportunity to fully leverage Australian Avocados' marketing budget.

To support the new format, Australian Avocados will build a recipe competition micro site where consumers can vote, interact with players and download recipes. The 2010 competition will aim to surpass the success of the 2009 program and reinforce avocados as a routine choice for entertaining and 'at-home' use.

The foodservice program will also be built upon in 2010/11 and TAFE cooking schools and apprentice chef training groups will be included in the master class program.

New Zealand launches their Australian consumer promotion program

The New Zealand Avocado Industry Council (AIC) has negotiated the use of Avocados Australia's 'Add an Avo' marketing material for use in the Australian market this summer.

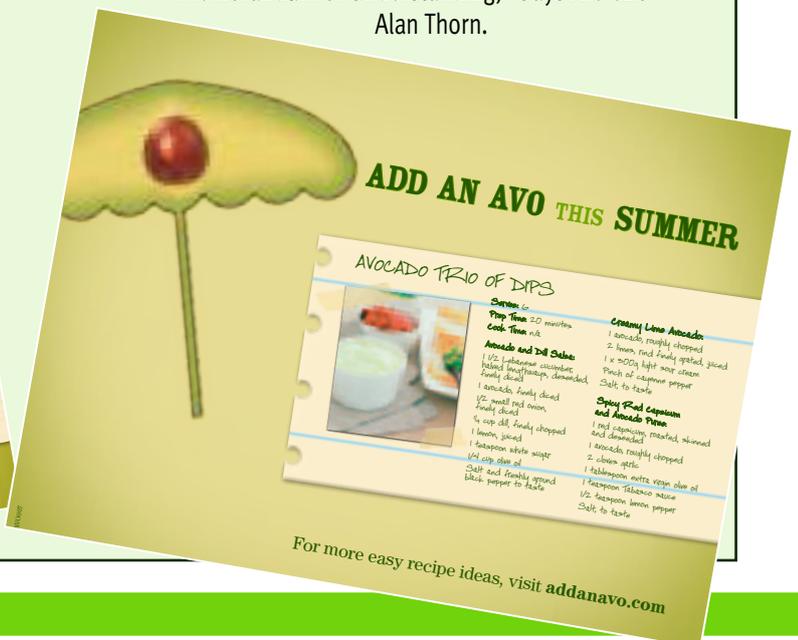
"New Zealand is committed to investing in promotions in Australia" Says AIC CEO Alan Thorn. "It makes sense to continue the use of the "Add an Avo" material – why introduce a completely new concept when Avocados Australia has researched the market then developed and demonstrated an approach that works."

The campaign is being managed by the AIC and uses the same promotional agencies employed by Avocados Australia for their promotional requirements.

The AIC campaign has taken the 'Add an Avo' slogan and added a summer twist to it – 'Add an Avo this Summer'. The imagery chosen includes existing Avocados Australia morphs. The AIC have also invested in the creation of two new shapes – a prawn and a sun umbrella which are now added to the pool of available shapes.

The adverts are mostly placed in print media – newspapers and magazines alongside advertorials giving recipes and ideas on how to incorporate the avocado into daily meals. An online presence through the Avocados Australia Website (www.addanavo.com) and through advertising on various foodie/lifestyle websites is also a vital component of the campaign.

"Collaboration with Avocados Australia is the way forward. We already collaborate on conferences, share market information, and align our research programmes so this is just another logical step down the path to advancing the industry in Australia as a whole – essentially it is putting effect to our Memorandum of Understanding," Says AIC CEO Alan Thorn.





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Dear Industry Member

On behalf of the VII World Avocado Congress Organising Committee it is our great pleasure to invite you to Australia in 2011.

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This Congress will provide you the opportunity to catch up with old friends and maintain your industry networks, to meet new people and make new friends. Researcher and grower networks and the exchange of information have grown considerably over the last 4 years, we are confident this congress will assist in strengthening these relationships.

To keep updated with the VII World Avocado Congress, programs, registrations and other activities please sign up the Congress's email update [here](#).

We sincerely hope you will enjoy the VII World Avocado Congress in 2011 in Cairns, Queensland Australia!

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Phytophthora Trunk Canker

By Elizabeth Dann, Luke Smith, Ken Pegg,
Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries,
Indooroopilly

Several *Phytophthora* species have been implicated as causes of *Phytophthora* trunk canker in avocados around the world, however only *Phytophthora cinnamomi* has been reported as the cause of trunk cankers in Australia. We need to continue to monitor trunk cankers in Australia and identify the causal agent(s).

become significant in some production areas following cyclonic weather. This is because canker development is favoured by wounding of the trunk and saturated soil pores which are ideal for zoospore dispersal and infection. The growth rate of cankers is faster where trunks are constantly sprayed with irrigation water from sprinklers. Mulching materials should not be placed up against the trunks. Injections, foliar sprays and bark applications of phosphorous acid will arrest canker development. We have found that Mexican rootstocks are more susceptible to trunk canker caused by *P. cinnamomi* compared to Guatemalan or West Indian rootstocks.



Figure 1. Trunk canker of avocado tree (rootstock 'Thomas') caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi* at Duranbah.

Trunk canker

Avocado growers are well aware of the impact of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* on the health of their trees. They know that the pathogen is widespread and that poor soil drainage and low organic matter contribute to serious root disease and occasionally trunk canker development. Phosphorous acid is an effective and affordable means of managing the disease, when used correctly. It is used in conjunction with cultural practices e.g. improved drainage and mulching which increases the activity of micro-organisms capable of suppressing *P. cinnamomi* and encourages the feeder root systems' regenerative capacity.

Trunk canker is regarded as a minor disease in Australia but it can



Figure 2. Trunk canker caused by another species of *Phytophthora*. Canker is not restricted to the lower trunk as occurs with *P. cinnamomi*. (Photo: Randy Ploetz)



Species of Phytophthora causing trunk canker

Besides *P. cinnamomi* more than 30 species of *Phytophthora* occur in Australia and four of these have been implicated as a cause of trunk canker in avocado in other producing regions of the world (Table 1). Unlike *P. cinnamomi* they do little damage to the feeder roots and therefore, at the present time, are not as important as *P. cinnamomi* to the avocado industry. Two of them have only been found in the wild in Australia (Table 2). These other species of *Phytophthora* may not yet have come in contact with avocado trees in Australian production zones. Soilborne organisms such as these are not ubiquitously distributed but occupy habitats which are suited to their establishment and survival.

Until recently *P. citricola* was regarded as the primary cause of trunk canker of avocado in California. As this species is present in most Australian states, having been reported from cultivated land as well as native vegetation (Table 2), it was puzzling that we had not isolated this species of *Phytophthora* from avocado cankers in Australia. However, with the aid of molecular diagnostic tools, the pathogen causing trunk canker in Californian avocados has recently been redescribed as belonging to a new species called *Phytophthora menzei* sp. nov, and not *P. citricola*. This may explain the absence of 'citricola' canker from avocado trees in Australia as *P. menzei* is not known to exist in this country. There is a continuing need to investigate instances of trunk canker in Australia and identify the causal agent.

Table 1. Causal agents of avocado trunk canker.

Species	Production region
<i>Phytophthora boehmeriae</i>	Mexico
<i>Phytophthora cinnamomi</i>	Australia, Brazil, Cameroon, South Africa, USA
<i>Phytophthora citricola</i> (<i>Phytophthora menzei</i>)	Mexico, USA
<i>Phytophthora heveae</i>	Guatemala, Mexico
<i>Phytophthora palmivora</i>	Honduras

Table 2. The distribution in Australia of *Phytophthora* species causing trunk canker in non-avocado tree hosts.

○ = in agriculture ● = in native vegetation¹

Species	Qld	NSW	Vic	Tas	SA	WA	NT
<i>Phytophthora boehmeriae</i>	●	●				●	
<i>Phytophthora cinnamomi</i>	○ ●	○ ●	○ ●	○ ●	○ ●	○ ●	○
<i>Phytophthora citricola</i>	○ ●	●	○	○	○ ●	○ ●	
<i>Phytophthora heveae</i>	●	●			○		
<i>Phytophthora palmivora</i>	○ ●				○		

¹ This does not represent the extent of their distribution in each state. They will occupy sites suitable to their establishment & maintenance.



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Freshcare – the National On-Farm Assurance Program

Freshcare launches 3rd Edition Food Safety & Quality Code

Freshcare has officially launched the new 3rd Edition of their Food Safety and Quality Code of Practice.

Now in its 10th year, Freshcare has become the largest on-farm assurance program for Australian growers; providing food safety and environmental certification services to over 4200 members nationally.

The involvement of key stakeholder groups throughout the development of the 3rd Edition of the Food Safety and Quality Code was critical to its final acceptance by the marketplace. A representative from each of the major fresh produce retailers (Coles, IGA and Woolworths) was involved in the Code review process.

“With a significant percentage of Australian fresh fruit and vegetables ending up on the shelves of the major retailers, the input of those customers was critical to ensure that the 3rd Edition truly met market requirements”, said Clare Hamilton-Bate, Freshcare’s National Program Manager.

“For our grower members who make a large investment in implementing and maintaining their Freshcare systems, the

ongoing approval of the market is essential”, explained Clare. “It is important that we keep Freshcare up to date with the latest food safety research and for growers to continue to meet their customers’ requirements - Freshcare is an important tool to achieve this”, said Clare.



The code review for a 3rd Edition provided the opportunity to make some significant changes to the structure and include additional guidance and information that growers and customer groups wanted. The 3rd Edition has a more logical structure, is more user-friendly and includes improved hazard analysis tools and guidance information plus practices for managing emerging issues such as allergen control. Code elements from the 2nd Edition have also been reviewed and strengthened.

Woolworths

For Woolworths, Freshcare is an important part of their supply chain assurance.

“The majority of our indirect fresh produce suppliers are certified to Freshcare”, explained Nadene Smith, Woolworths Senior

Avocado Growers



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for Australian Growers

Business Manager QA. “With the changes in both the content and format of the updated 3rd Edition, Freshcare has provided industry with a really effective tool to manage on-farm food safety and quality”.

“The quality and rigour of the supporting programs that underpin our own WQA standard is critical for Woolworths” said Nadene. “We’ve been really pleased to be involved in the Freshcare Code review process. Freshcare have listened to our requirements in the development of their 3rd Edition Code, providing an ideal on-farm system for our indirect suppliers.”

Coles

Freshcare is now an option for a large group of growers supplying fresh produce direct to Coles Supermarkets. Previously only those Coles suppliers who provided low or medium risk product packed in the field were able to use Freshcare under the Coles Program.

“With the increased HACCP component, the inclusion of clear critical limits and a greater focus on postharvest handling and packing requirements, Freshcare now provides a practical option for both our direct and indirect suppliers of fresh produce” said Jackie Healing, Coles Quality Manager. “Coles was delighted to have our Supplier Management and Produce Team heavily involved in providing feedback and technical input into the new Freshcare 3rd Edition Code”, said Jackie.

In addition to achieving certification against the selected external standard, all Coles direct fresh produce suppliers must meet the ‘Coles Supplier Requirements’ – details of these requirements can be obtained from <http://supplier.coles.com.au/quality/supplier-audit-requirements.aspx>

Coles have set the deadline of 1 March 2010 for their direct suppliers to move to the Freshcare 3rd Edition.

Coles Supermarkets - Standards Matrix - Whole Fruit and Vegetables

Coles additional Supplier Requirements PLUS one of the external standards as applicable		Freshcare 3rd Edition	SQF1000 Level 3 5th Edition	SQF2000 Level 3 6th Edition	BRC-Global Standard, Food
Produce Grower	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Produce Grower- with Packing Facility Volume packed must not be more than 50% of other grower's produce	✓	✓	✓	Packing Site Only	Packing Site Only
Produce Grower- with Packing Facility Volume packed greater than 50% of other grower's produce	✓	Growing Site Only	Growing Site Only	Packing Site Only	Packing Site Only
Produce Packing Facility (only)	✓	X	X	✓	✓
Agent/Broker (Handling product)	✓	X	X	✓	X
Virtual Broker (Not handling product)	✓	X	X	✓	X
Distribution Centre	✓	X	X	✓	X

KEY	
✓	Mandatory Coles Supplier Requirements
X	External standard – Not applicable
✓	External standard - Applicable

The above matrix is applicable for Whole Fruit and Vegetables. Processed/Value Added Produce inclusive of mushrooms (whole/ sliced) sprouts and shoots are detailed in the Coles Standards Matrix - Manufactured Products. Details can be obtained from the Coles website.

IGA

For IGA Fresh, Freshcare is an approved food safety standard for produce growers supplying whole fruit & vegetables direct into all of its 12 Distribution Centres nationally, as well as for those growers delivering direct to store in regional areas.

“We were pleased to be involved in the development of the Freshcare 3rd Edition Code of Practice, through the industry steering group” said George Passas, National Quality Assurance Manager, IGA Fresh. “As a practical industry program Freshcare helps to underpin our overall business strategy for supplier assurance.”

“In addition to certification, our Growers must also submit an annual MRL test on their produce, a verification of their use of chemicals on farm. Without a Freshcare certificate and regular

MRL testing it is not possible for IGA Fresh Buyers to proceed with a Terms Agreement with the supplier/grower,” he said.

Freshcare is pleased that the consultation process with these important customer groups has resulted in significant improvements in the new 3rd Edition Food Safety and Quality Code.

Transition to the 3rd Edition

As with any new code edition, there will be a transition period before growers currently certified to the 2nd Edition will have to upgrade to the 3rd Edition.

From July 2009 to March 2011, current Freshcare members have a choice of being audited to the 2nd or 3rd Editions of the Code. All audits after 1st March 2011 must be against the 3rd Edition.

Freshcare – the National On-Farm Assurance Program for Australian Growers - continued

In some instances, (e.g. Coles' direct suppliers) customer requirements will alter this timeframe.

Freshcare Training

All Freshcare training delivered after 1st August 2009 must be to the 3rd Edition Code.

3rd Edition training will be required for all existing Freshcare members as they move to the new Code; following the code development trials, the training requirement was identified as essential to ensure effective implementation of the 3rd Edition Code. All existing Freshcare members must complete training and move to the 3rd Edition by 1st March 2011.

Freshcare food safety and quality training will continue to be delivered in a variety of formats by the Freshcare approved trainer network for both new and existing Freshcare members:

- **Regional Workshops – ‘Transition Training’** - for existing Freshcare members + growers transferring from alternate on farm assurance programs - FarmReady Approved.
- **Regional Workshops + farm visit / remote support** – for growers new to on farm assurance - FarmReady Approved.
- **One on one training**
- **Distance Education** – online (late 2009)

FarmReady Approval for Freshcare Training Workshops.....

Growers participating in Freshcare training workshops in all regions are now eligible for funding through the FarmReady Reimbursement Grant Program.

Both existing Freshcare members undertaking a ‘Transition Training Workshop’ and new Freshcare members undertaking the ‘Full Training Workshop + Follow-up Session’ will be fully funded by FarmReady.

Ensure you speak to your Freshcare trainer and register with FarmReady BEFORE your training.

For more information visit www.FarmReady.gov.au

Freshcare Certification

Certification to the 2nd Edition was an Annual Certification, requiring members to successfully complete an audit in every 12 month period from March – March; based on this audit outcome, certificates were then issued annually on the 1st March ‘Certification Anniversary’.

The Annual Certificate Model, whilst addressing the problem of certificates expiring mid season for short season crops, did present a number of problems, including difficulty in audit scheduling, audit declines and confusion as to when audits were due.

Certification to the 3rd Edition Code of Practice will be for 12 months, based on the **date of audit**. When Freshcare members successfully complete an audit against the 3rd Edition code, they will automatically be issued a new 3rd Edition Certificate.

In addition to the actual audit date, the 3rd edition Certificates will show the re-certification audit due month, and a certificate expiry month. For example:

Audit Date: 12th November 2009

Re-certification Audit Due: November 2010

Certificate Expires: December 2010

The certificate expiry month is set as the month following the audit due month, to allow time for audit reporting / processing and the issuing of a new certificate.

The last 2nd Edition (Annual) Certificates will be issued on the 1st March 2011.

What’s new in the 3rd Edition Code?

Whilst Freshcare has always been HACCP-based, the 3rd Edition includes more HACCP structure and terminology in the risk assessments; and new elements to cover emerging food safety issues. It may look, at first sight, like a simple repackaging exercise - but take a closer look and you will find many changes in the structure and content.

The 3rd Edition Code adopts a new structure where the code elements state the overall intention and outcome to be achieved while the compliance criteria identify the specific practices required to demonstrate compliance.

A new set of hazard analyses have been developed; these replace the risk assessments from the 2nd Edition. The hazard analyses are a simple way of helping a grower work out if certain hazards are significant to their business.

Key structural and content changes in the new edition are:

Management

The Management section of Freshcare includes a new element called ‘Scope and Commitment’. Records and Document Control are now combined under one element called Documentation. There is no longer a requirement for a Document Register.

Element M5, Customer requirements, is a revised version of element F1 Product and Handling Specifications, from the 2nd Edition.

Chemicals

The previous Freshcare code editions had a separate section titled “Chemicals”. The elements from this have now been included under the section titled “Food Safety”. C1 is now found in F2 Growing Site and C2, C3 and C4 are now located under F4 Chemicals. The requirements for chemical use largely remain the

same but with increased detail around many of the practices for storing and applying chemicals.

Hazard analysis

Known as risk assessments from previous code editions, these have been significantly reworked. These hazard analyses assist growers to identify and assess the risk of food safety hazards occurring on their property. By answering a series of questions, a grower can determine if specified hazards are of low or high significance to their operation. If the hazard analyses determine the significance of a hazard is high, specified control measures, monitoring and verification activities will need to be implemented.

Microbiological critical limits

Scientific research into causes of food safety problems has identified incidences of microbiological contamination of produce arising from the use of untreated animal manures or contaminated water. This research has also indicated that these microbes have the ability to survive in soils, water and on/in fresh produce.

Due to this research, microbiological critical limits for fertilisers and soil additives of organic origin, water sources used pre and postharvest, and produce have been established and are clearly stated in the Freshcare code.

Fertilisers and soil additives of organic origin

The 3rd Edition introduces tight restrictions on the use of **untreated** fertilisers and soil additives of organic origin (e.g. untreated animal manures). Untreated fertilisers and soil additives of organic origin must not be used within 90 days of harvesting produce. This time limit may extend to 180 days for those growers who have assessed this hazard as being of high significance to their operation.

Treated fertilisers and soil additives of organic origin may be used within these time limits. A grower must, however, be able to demonstrate that the treated fertiliser or soil additive meets the specified microbiological limits of *E. coli* $\leq 100/g$, Salmonella Not Detected/25g. This is done by either obtaining a Certificate of Analysis for each batch of product purchased or produced or by purchasing the product from a supplier that has a certified treatment process and obtaining an annual Certificate of Analysis for each product.

Water

The need to ensure produce microbiological limits are met (*E. coli* $\leq 10/g$; Salmonella Not Detected/25g) mean an increase in testing required to demonstrate water sources are safe when water comes into contact with the edible part of the produce.

The testing frequency and required microbiological limits for water used prior to harvest will depend on the results of the hazard analysis. Some growers may only be required to test their

water sources annually to ensure it meets the specified limit of Thermotolerant coliforms $\leq 1000/100ml$. Other growers will be required to test all water sources contacting their produce every 3 months until the water source is 'historically proven' (4 consecutive tests conducted quarterly) to comply with the new water quality limit of *E. coli* $\leq 126/100ml$.

All postharvest water used on produce that has an edible skin and is generally eaten uncooked must be potable or treated to a potable standard. For all other produce the final wash/rinse water must be potable or treated to a potable standard.

Allergens

An element about allergens has been included to address the increasing concerns in the food industry about allergy-causing agents contacting produce.

Suppliers

Growers rely on external businesses to supply materials and services. Some of these materials and services may have an impact on food safety, for example packaging, agricultural chemicals or pest control. The 3rd Edition of Freshcare now requires growers to identify which of their suppliers may have an impact on food safety, and put a process in place to minimise this risk.

Summary

Although there are a number of new elements in the 3rd Edition Code, the changes remove the 'grey areas' of previous editions of the Freshcare Code of Practice. These changes will help growers, customers, trainers and auditors understand exactly what good agricultural practices must be implemented and maintained by a Freshcare certified business.

"The Freshcare Program provides industry with an independent certification service to demonstrate food safety and quality standards are maintained on-farm" said Freshcare Chairperson, Vikki Kippin-O'Connor. "It is important that, as an industry-owned organisation, Freshcare maintains the initiative of self-regulation in compliance with community and government standards" said Mrs Kippin-O'Connor.

Freshcare have been busy preparing for the national roll-out of the new code. Freshcare Trainers and Auditors have participated in a national series of workshops to ensure that everyone involved in the delivery and support of the program is up to speed, prior to the roll-out.

How do I find out more information?

Information can also be obtained from the Freshcare website www.freshcare.com.au.

The Freshcare Office can be contacted on 1300 853 508.

Verticillium wilt more severe in 2009

By Elizabeth Dann, Luke Smith, Ken Pegg,
Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries,
Indooroopilly

Summary

Verticillium wilt, which is generally regarded as a minor disease, can become significant in orchards where tree thinning and selective limb removal are carried out in winter. Disease incidence can also be high when new orchards are planted on sites where other susceptible crops have been grown.

Introduction

There has been a high incidence of avocado trees showing symptoms of Verticillium wilt in August and September this year. The leaves wilt suddenly, turn brown and remain attached to affected branches for several weeks (Plate 1). In older trees usually only one or several branches are affected, but sometimes the entire tree will show these symptoms (Plate 2). Young trees may be killed. When the bark of affected branches is peeled away, a brown streaking of the vascular tissue is evident (Plate 3).

Trees usually send out new vigorous shoots below the affected branch within a few months of the initial wilting. Such growth is usually healthy and the trees if managed correctly will generally

recover completely and may show no recurrence of the disease. However, in some trees symptoms may reoccur for several years in succession.

Understanding the disease

Verticillium wilt, a soilborne disease, is caused by the fungus *Verticillium dahliae*. This disease often arises in soil where other hosts of *V. dahliae* have recently been grown, for example tomato, eggplant, potato, cotton, strawberry, peanut, olive and many flower crops. There are also many susceptible weeds. *V. dahliae* survives in the soil for ten or more years as microsclerotia (small 1-2 mm diameter, dark, hardened, compact masses of mycelium), which are stimulated to germinate by root exudates. The spores and mycelium can also survive within infected branches. It infects healthy or injured feeder roots and colonises the water-conducting vessels (xylem) in spring. The fungus prefers cool (<25°C), acidic and wet soil conditions which favour high water flow and movement of spores in the tree. In response to this invasion the tree produces tyloses or gums that plug vessels and reduce water flow in the tree resulting in the external wilt symptoms.

High summer temperatures arrest infections and trees recover by producing a new ring of water conducting vessels. Symptoms that reoccur after one or more years of remission are the result of new infections spreading from the roots. The fungus is spread





Plate 2
Photo: Eddy Dunn

by water and wind-blown spores, in soil particles and decayed plant tissue infested with microsclerotia and hyphae, and with grafting wood and seed from infected trees. Any level of infection will result in increased inoculum (e.g. microsclerotia) in soil, such that in subsequent years, under favourable conditions, the disease will be more severe and widespread. In Australia serious outbreaks of Verticillium wilt have been triggered in spring in mature orchards when tree thinning or rejuvenation pruning involving major limb removal has occurred in winter. These canopy management practices apparently stress or injure feeder roots thus exacerbating disease.

Management

It is very difficult to control vascular wilt diseases, as roots are initially infected followed by growth and spread of the pathogen internally, so that use of foliar protectant fungicides is not effective. The longevity of inoculum, particularly microsclerotia, and their rapid increase in soil and infected branches also contribute to making Verticillium wilt extremely difficult to manage where outbreaks have been severe.

- Do not plant avocado in land previously used for susceptible crops or interplant young avocado orchards with such a crop.
- Prune out dead wood once dieback has ceased and vigorous young shoots have appeared. Pruning will not eliminate the fungus since new infections originate from the roots.

- Do not chip and use infected wood (e.g. prunings) as mulch; dispose of it by burning. Infected wood contains abundant inoculum.
- Promote rapid growth in trees with careful irrigation and appropriate nutrition.
- When selecting grafting wood or seed avoid trees which have displayed symptoms of the disease.
- In areas where Verticillium wilt is present delay canopy management operations and tree thinning until warm weather when temperatures do not favour the fungus.
- Fungicides which are effective against the disease do not exist.
- Fumigation with chloropicrin or metham sodium is not practical for entire fields but can be used to fumigate sites where trees have died before replanting.
- Mexican rootstocks are reported to be more resistant than Guatemalan rootstocks and the former should be used when planting areas known to be infested with *V. dahliae*.



Plate 3
Photo: UC Davis

UC Statewide IPM Project
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News from Around the World

Chilean Avocado Marketing Team Tours Chilean Groves, Packing Houses

The Chilean Avocado Importers Association (CAIA) marketing team recently visited Chile to experience the fruit harvesting first-hand and to become Chilean avocado experts, thus resulting in more effective and innovative consumer marketing strategies. The team included representatives of CAIA's PR agency, Sahlman Williams, Tampa, Fla.; ad agency Evans Hardy and Young, Santa Barbara, Calif.; point of sale/retail agency Augustine and Associates, Sacramento, Calif. as well as three of CAIA's four regional merchandising representatives. Maggie Bezart, marketing director and leader of the marketing team, and CAIA's executive director Xavier Equihua, were also a part of the tour group.

"The members of this team are an integral part of CAIA's success," said Jorge Covarubbias, CAIA chairman of the board. "Witnessing first-hand how our avocados are grown, harvested and packed in turn gives them the ability to educate others about our state-of-the-art practices and quality of our fruit from the avocado tree in Chile to the shelves of U.S. supermarkets."

The marketing team visited the avocado growing regions, including new avocado groves, terraced into the foothills of the Andes. Additionally, the group toured several avocado packing houses located north and northeast of Chile's capital and largest city, Santiago. Grower and exporter families hosted the team at exceptional meals in their homes and in the groves, giving the marketers a very personal taste of Chilean hospitality and food.

"At the conclusion of our tour, the team agreed that they had a heightened understanding of the quality of Chilean Hass avocados and renewed commitment to communicate that message to CAIA's retail and foodservice customers and consumers," said Maggie Bezart, CAIA director of marketing. "The time spent during the tour has been an important part of our planning process, as we continually work to integrate all our marketing programs to benefit growers, exporters and importers, as well as our customers and consumers. Source: CAIA

Avocados from Mexico

Avocados from Mexico execute extensive marketing program to support volume and increase market demand. Avocado movement to be strong during one of the top promotional periods of the year

The Avocado Producers and Exporting Packers Association of Michoacán (APEAM) are projecting that more than 92 million pounds of Avocados from Mexico will reach the US market in the first 5 weeks of 2010. To support volume and build demand, Avocados from Mexico is promoting heavily and offering retailers merchandising support to keep movement strong throughout the first quarter of the New Year.

"Promotable volume in desired sizes and the proximity of the

growing region to the US market is what makes Mexico the preferred source for fresh avocados during the Super Bowl season," said Emiliano Escobedo, APEAM's Marketing Director. "Avocados and guacamole are now synonymous with the Super Bowl making this the ideal time for Avocados from Mexico to build market demand and support retailers through marketing and merchandising efforts."

For three weeks leading up to the big game, Avocados from Mexico will be airing TV and radio spots targeting General Market consumers and Hispanics in Chicago, Houston, Dallas and San Antonio as well as on the Internet. Moreover, Avocados from Mexico will be advertised in the top national magazines targeting women shoppers who seek a healthy start to the New Year. (The new TV and radio spots promoting avocados from Mexico can be viewed at www.avocadosfrommexico.com/trade)

In addition, starting the week before Super Bowl weekend through April, in store advertising utilizing floor talkers will be automatically installed in front of the avocado displays in 18 Chicago and East Coast retail chains.

Additionally, retailers can tie into major sales increases during football playoffs and Super Bowl by giving customers free recipes from Bravo's Top Chef Master Rick Bayless. Avocados from Mexico is offering a variety of free POS materials on their website for retailers to order as needed, including a new avocado secondary display bin, which provides opportunities for cross merchandising avocados from Mexico with other complimentary items for big game parties such as chips, beer or salsa.

Historically avocado sales and volume index higher during the month of January. Last year 60% of avocado retail volume was sold on promotion during the 2 weeks preceding the Super Bowl.

In order to gain insights on best practices for promotions, APEAM contracted with the Perishables Group and found that increased promotions equal increased profits. To maximize sales in developed avocado markets, retailers should promote Avocados from Mexico as follows:

- Promote avocados consistently — 30 to 40 times per year in developed markets to provide optimal category dollars and volume
- Run promotion discounts from 11% to 30% to optimize dollars and volume
- Occasionally feature multiple avocado items in the same promotion, including bulk and packaged avocados. This can include small along with large sized avocados at different price points
- Whenever possible combine circular promotions with in-store price reductions
- Stock and promote key sizes to give customers options — Large (4225) and Small (4046) sizes represent 85% of sales.

Source: APEAM

Hass Avocado Board to promote nutritional benefits of Hass Avocados during National Nutrition Month

Through the Hass Avocado Board's (HAB) ongoing marketing efforts, it consistently works to educate consumers on the nutritional benefits of incorporating Hass avocados into their diet. During March's National Nutrition Month, HAB will put an even stronger focus on spreading the word about the fruit's nutritional attributes through the implementation of an integrated marketing initiative that will reach consumers through retail-level promotion, public relations and online activities.

"Our industry works to highlight the nutritional aspects of Hass avocados in all of our marketing efforts" said Jose Luis Obregon, managing director of HAB. "We believe that National Nutrition Month offers a great tie-in to consumers' increased awareness of the foods they are eating and offers us an opportunity to encourage sales by reinforcing the benefits of including avocados into an overall healthy diet."

To leverage the media's heightened interest in nutrition during National Nutrition Month, HAB will distribute information to the media on the nutritional benefits of Hass avocados and offer tips and recipes to inspire consumers' inclusion of the fruit into their meals. The campaign will include the distribution of a

mat release presenting a new avocado-centric recipe, "Tropical Salad with Hass Avocados and Grilled Shrimp," along with the dissemination of a radio news release featuring HAB's nutritional expert, Julie Upton, MS, R.D., CSSD, who also will post an article about National Nutrition Month on her Health.com blog during the month.

HAB's consumer Web site, avocadocentral.com, will continue its focus on promoting the nutritional aspects of Hass avocados. During National Nutrition Month, the site will launch new nutritional content including an avocado nutrition quiz that visitors can take to see how well they know the benefits of the fruit. Traffic will be driven to the site through promotion at retail, incorporation in media placements, inclusion in HAB's subscriber recipe e-newsletter and online advertising efforts.

HAB's merchandising team will expand the promotional efforts at the retail level by offering nutrition-themed point-of-purchase materials to retailers to encourage consumer purchases of Hass avocados throughout National Nutrition Month. These materials will be available to order at avoHQ.com/research-marketing/post-order-form.

HAB also is outreaching to key foodservice media, who will receive an "edible" mailer, which will include Hass avocados and nutrition information. Additionally, HAB will encourage foodservice operators to incorporate Hass avocados into

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Marketing avocados and selected subtropical fruits

News from Around the World

their menus throughout the month and beyond. The effort includes the promotion of ideas for foodservice menu items that tie into the National Nutrition Month time period and the availability of promotional tips on the HAB foodservice site www.avocadocentral.com/foodservice. Source: HAB

U.S. gives final OK for Peru avocado imports

Peruvian avocado farmers can once again peddle their black-pebbled fruit in the United States despite lingering concerns among California growers, under a long-delayed rule made final by the Agriculture Department.

The additional imports of Hass avocados could mean lower prices and bigger selections for U.S. consumers. The Agriculture Department's decision will also please Peru, which has been trying to crack the U.S. market for many years.

"(Our avocados) will enter one of the largest markets in the world," Peru Agriculture Minister Adolfo de Cordova enthused in a prepared statement. "This will expand our market, benefiting thousands of producers."

Peruvian growers estimate they might ship 19,000 metric tons of Hass avocados to the United States annually, amounting to about 5 percent of U.S. fresh avocado consumption. Agriculture Department economists predict consumers will benefit as market prices could fall somewhere between 1 percent and 6 percent.

"It will provide Safeway Stores and our customers with a new source for Hass avocados during the spring and summer months, a period when consumption of avocados is at its highest while supplies are at their lowest," Mariano Cruz, Safeway's national commodity specialist, advised the Agriculture Department earlier this year.

Jose Luis Obregon, managing director for the Irvine, Calif.-based Hass Avocado Board, added that "there's still a lot of room for the market to grow, especially on the East Coast."

But even as Peruvian officials were convening a celebratory news conference in Lima, U.S. growers were still chewing over the Agriculture Department's decision. Some have feared domestic groves might be in danger, despite extensive anti-pest protections imposed as part of the agreement to admit Peruvian avocados.

"We have concerns about the unknowns," California Avocado Commission president Tom Bellamore said, adding that "some kind of track record will bolster everyone's confidence."

At the same time, Bellamore added that "we welcome" protective measures imposed by the Agriculture Department and the "consideration" officials have given to the economic threat posed by the Mediterranean fruit fly and the avocado seed moth.

California accounts for 86 percent of U.S. avocado production, including nearly all of the country's Hass avocado production. Most of the 4,801 California avocado farms are clustered in San Diego, Ventura, Riverside and Santa Barbara counties, although

there is some commercial production still taking place in the southern San Joaquin Valley.

Citing similar concerns about the introduction of foreign pests, California growers had previously raised concerns about allowing imports of Hass avocados from Mexico. For both Mexico and Peru, U.S. officials imposed systematic inspection, packaging and sanitation requirements as a condition of allowing the imports.

Agriculture Department officials noted that over the past nine years, more than 28 million Hass avocados from Mexico have been inspected. Dangerous pests were found only twice. The rules that take effect Feb. 10 are somewhat stricter than those proposed a year ago. Source: KansasCity.com

Good avocado and mango market

Westfalia, the South African avocado and mango specialist, is busy just before the holidays. As usual there is a big demand for exotics just before the festive season. This year as well there is a good market for avocados and mangos. According to Arnaud Degener of Westfalia more people will get busy in their own kitchen. "Exact figures are not as yet known, but the signs point to approximately the same turnover as previous years." Also the prices are satisfying according to him.

"At the moment we import Kent mangos from Peru and avocados from Spain and Chile" Arnaud tells. The Kent mangos from Peru are of excellent quality this season. The supply from Peru is good and Hass avocados from Chile arrive regularly as well. Arnaud tells that the Hass avocado grows in popularity. "Here in the Netherlands we are used to the dark skinned Hass avocados, but in Germany there was no interest for a long period of time." According to Arnaud the Hass avocado is becoming more and more important next to the green varieties.

Next to Germany, Scandinavia is an important marketing area for Hass avocados of Westfalia. Arnaud tells that sales to Scandinavia are really starting now. "Traditionally Scandinavian people eat mainly fish at Christmas time, however, after these days the demand for avocados increases, so that Westfalia still expect a busy sales period till the end of this year." Source: Westfalia

Record production for Mexican avocado

Due to favourable weather conditions and the increased use of phytosanitary programs for pest control, the production of Mexican Hass avocados is predicted to increase to a record breaking 1.18 million MT for the market year 2009/10. The export of Hass avocado to the US is expected to reach 304,000MT with a total export of 400,000MT. In the case of California Hass avocados exports to Mexico are forecast to fall to 100MT in 2009/10 due to higher prices and smaller crop. Source: USDA

Grower Member Application Form continued

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News from Around the World continued

“It is with great regret that I had to make the decision to close our doors. Our employees are all Produce Industry professionals and experts in their fields. I am confident each of them will find employment in our Industry,” stated Avi Crane, Founder and President of Prime Produce International, LLC. Further, Crane stated that: “To our avocado suppliers and friends in Australia, California, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, South Africa and Spain, I extend my gratitude for your support of my Company during the past 6 years. To our customers, it has been my honor to be part of your avocado procurement program. We will work with you to find alternative sources for your avocado requirements”.

Crane further stated that “The Crane Family has been in the Produce Industry for over 3 decades. We are currently pursuing opportunities that will utilize our relationships and product knowledge. We plan to spend many more decades in the Produce Industry- it’s our passion”. PPI was founded by Avi Crane in March 2004 after Crane left his position as Vice President of International Sales at Calavo Growers, Inc. Previously; Crane was General Manager of Chiquita Avocado Operations and Vice President of the California Avocado Commission. Crane has been in the Produce Industry since 1973. Source: perishablenews.com

New Zealand Avocado industry declared free from costly disease

The avocado industry has been declared free from a disease that could have meant heavy costs for growers, after years of confusion over whether it was present in orchards in the first place.

Avocado Sunblotch Viroid is a virus that can reduce production. It causes blotches on the fruit’s skin that can make it unsellable. The Avocado Industry Council says the disease was detected when tests were first carried out nine years ago at 70 - 80 orchards. At the time 33 tested positive.

Chair John Schnackenberg says these sites have now been retested by Biosecurity New Zealand using advanced DNA sampling, which has confirmed its absence. Source: Radio NZ

Factory puts pressure on to extend life of avocados

New Zealand avocados could be sold in prepackaged halves or as guacamole that can be stored for as long as 60 days if a company aiming to match the industry’s \$50 million export value achieves its goals.

Fressure Foods, a new company set up mainly to help cope with an oversupply of avocados expected in about two years, is planning to set up a factory in Pukekohe with technology that can double the shelf-life of a stored avocado.

The company is seeking investors - some of whom will come from

within the avocado industry - for the \$15 million it needs to open the factory. Company director John Schnackenberg, speaking independently from his roles as chairman of the Avocado Industry Council and Avocado Growers Association, said he hoped the factory would be up and running by August next year.

He said the technology was expected to boost the avocado industry's profits by about \$16 million within its first year, and aimed to match the industry's annual export value of \$50 million within five years.

Mr Schnackenberg said the technology could also provide benefits to other growers because the company planned to expand its processing capabilities to other fruit which could include passionfruit, mandarins and feijoas.

He said avocados that otherwise would have flooded the local market would be packaged and sealed in plastic bags before being treated under pressure so high it is equivalent to being in extremely deep seawater.

The pressure of up to 87,000 pounds per square inch would kill any bacteria on the avocados without changing the texture, flavour, consistency or nutrients in the fruit.

Alan Thorn, chief executive of the Avocado Growers Association and the Avocado Industry Council, said the amount of avocados produced in New Zealand was expected to double within three years. He said the ultra-high-pressure technology would assist

in attracting better fruit prices for the country's 1673 growers. Mr Thorn said avocado growers made the most profit by selling fruit for export, and the new process would help increase the value of their fruit.

Any fruit that did not measure up - for example an avocado that had a blemish on the outside but was fine inside - ended up being sold much cheaper locally, or for avocado oil. Mr Thorn hopes the chilled, processed fruit will become a popular way to buy avocados in the same way that people can buy fresh or frozen products such as peas.

High-tech

How ultra-high pressure works:

- Subjects products to 87,000 psi, or pounds per square inch - the equivalent of being in very deep sea.
- The pressure is so great that food-borne pathogens such as listeria, E. coli and salmonella cannot survive, without the need to add preservatives.
- The technology is being used overseas for seafood, ready-to-eat meats, processed fruits and vegetables, fresh juices and smoothies.
- Products would be sold processed, packaged and chilled.

Source: NZ Herald

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