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## News

### International Avocado Research Consortium Key to Future - 09/03/2012

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Over the last year the grower organisations from Australia, California, New Zealand and Mexico have formed an international consortium, the Avocado Research Consortium (ARC), to fund key avocado research. The formal agreement between the four organisations was signed in early September 2011 at the VII World Avocado Congress in Cairns, Australia.

The four consortium partners have in the first instance committed research funding to the key issue affecting all aspects of the avocado supply chain; 'alternate bearing'. Avocado trees in all producing countries suffer from varying degrees of alternate bearing and the impact on growers, marketers and consumers is severe.

"Fluctuations in production and therefore supply create the worst conditions for industry growth," explained Ms. Jennifer Scouler, CEO of the New Zealand Avocado Growers' Association, "growers have up to 90 percent variation in crop yields and even variations in yield of 15 percent can reduce profitability to zero."

"We recognised two things in looking for solutions to this key avocado grower issue," explained Mr Antony Allen, Chair of the International ARC and CEO of Avocados Australia, "firstly the alternate bearing issue was a global problem and secondly the research base is shrinking and each country's avocado researcher base is smaller than five years ago."

"We needed to combine our financial and researcher resources to be able to work on this key avocado grower issue and in the process give the research community a good reason to focus on avocados as a career," explained Mr Tom Bellamore, President of the California Avocado Commission.

Last year the first call for research funding proposals was made and there are a number of very clever and innovative proposals submitted in response. Each proposal has ensured that the growers from each of the countries of the Consortium partners will receive direct on the ground benefit from the research as soon as possible.

The first proposed ARC project is one that extends the work of Dr. Carol J. Lovatt from the University of California, Riverside. Dr Lovatt is one of the world's leading avocado researchers and she is partnering with Dr Samuel Salazar-García of INIFAP-Campo Experimental Santiago Ixcuintla in Mexico.

"We have all recognised that we have to expand our research base and train new researchers in each of our countries, and this is one way that we can improve the international networking of avocados researchers," explained Mr Jose Orduña President of Asociación de Productores y Empacadores de Aguacate del Estado de Michoacán (APEAM), Mexico.

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Avocados Australia Limited is the Peak Industry Body in Australia for Avocados. We are a "not for profit" membership based organisation. Our members are Avocado growers along with associated businesses and industry people.

Avocados Australia seeks to work with all parts of the chain from production through to the consumer. By working together we seek to continually improve the ability of growers to provide a healthy, profitable and safe product for all consumers. As part of this continual improvement we guide a "research & development" and "marketing and promotion" program for the Australian Avocado industry.

The Australian Avocado industry comprises 1100 growers across the country and produces **68,500 tonnes of avocados each year worth \$AUD215 million at farm gate and \$490 million at retail level.**

Key growing areas are North, Central and Southeast Queensland, Northern and Central New South Wales, the Sunraysia or Tristate area (South Australia, Victoria and South Western New South Wales) and Western Australia.

For more information Media Resources or Avocado News or contact Avocados Australia at [ceo@avocado.org.au](mailto:ceo@avocado.org.au)

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