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PMA Fresh Connections 2012: Unique opportunity for avocado growers, packers and marketers - 26/06/2012

PMA Fresh Connections organisers, together with Avocados Australia are encouraging avocado growers, packers and marketers to get to PMA Fresh Connections 2012 and make the most of a visit from one of the keynote speakers at this year's conference and trade show (Melbourne 26-28 June) – Dr Jan de Lyser, Vice President Marketing for the California Avocado Commission (CAC), US Produce Marketer of the Year 2011 and PMA Chair-elect.

In addition to her role as keynote speaker, Jan will be guest speaker at a Special Interest Workshop on "Cutting-edge initiatives to increase avocado sales in the Pacific Rim." Hosted by Avocados Australia, the hour-long workshop is specifically designed to provide detailed and specific information to avocado growers, packers, marketers.

Currently responsible for the overall leadership, management and organisation of the CAC's marketing functions, Jan has helped the avocado industry attain phenomenal growth during her time in the industry and she will offer avocado industry delegates valuable lessons on how this has been achieved.

"Jan will bring to delegates some great insights into successful avocado marketing and really being able to connect with consumers" said Michael Worthington, CEO of PMA Australia-New Zealand. "During her time as Marketing VP, avocados have seen a phenomenal rise in sales. Being awarded Produce Marketer of the Year was highly justified and a reflection of her considerable success and wealth of experience in the avocado industry" he added.

"The Special Interest Workshops (hosted by various retailers, industry organisations and technical experts) are designed to give specific industry segments the opportunity to ask the how, what and why questions that don't usually get asked, and to learn how to apply the most recent techniques into their business environment" said Mr Worthington.

Jan says that there is much to be learned from global alliances, networks and industry peers.

"It makes sense to collaborate globally especially where there is value in learning from each other. As an example, with avocado production research projects we can get a better understanding of and identify solutions for the alternate bearing nature of the Hass avocado worldwide" she said.

"Global alliances can benefit the produce industry in research, marketing and increasing consumption. Even where there is competition for share of shelf and share of stomach, collaboration on increasing demand ahead of the supply can result in a positive outcome in the marketplace" she added.

In her keynote address to all conference delegates, Jan will be addressing the topic of consumers as drivers of change throughout the fresh produce industry in her plenary session and cites interest in locally grown, food safety, and the "consumer voice" as the three main trends influencing change that she has seen in the fresh produce industry in the past decade.

"Do your consumer research, know your capabilities, understand your distribution and then make disciplined decisions based upon your strengths and competitive advantages. Work on building both demand and value" she emphasised. Jan also emphasises the importance of initiatives to increase consumption of fresh produce, and especially avocados.

"Increasing consumption of all fresh produce is very important throughout the entire supply chain, from farm to table. For example, consumer health can be improved with a better diet including more produce. Retailers and foodservice operator profits can benefit from increased consumption of fresh produce, and for growers it is essential to their livelihoods."

"We have seen avocado volume in the United States nearly triple over the last 10 years and it is expected to continue to increase with additional sources of supply. We are now at 1.4 billion pounds and will likely reach 2 billion pounds in the next 5 years. Without the marketing investment made by the California Avocado Commission since 1978 and the Hass Avocado Board since 2004, we would not have seen avocado consumption nearly triple with viable returns to producers. It is significant that the California Avocado industry has realized its two highest crop values on record over the past two seasons" she said.

In addition to Jan's insights, avocado industry members will also benefit from attending sessions on topics such as southern hemisphere suppliers competing for market share in China, food safety, the growing foodservice sector, the battle for retail space, attracting talent to our industry, launching profitable new products and getting the most out of social media.

A joint initiative by PMA Australia-New Zealand and The Australian Chamber of Fruit and Vegetable Industries, PMA Fresh Connections will bring together delegates from across the entire fruit, vegetable and floral industries in Australia and New Zealand and will be sure to inspire, educate and build business connections.

Registrations for PMA Fresh Connections 2012 are now open. To register, and for full information on the event, sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities, please visit www.pmafreshconnections.com.au

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