

TALKING AVOCADOS

- New BPR training modules
- Colin Fechner wins Order of Merit
- Qualicado wrap-up – (CQ & Tristate)

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



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Cover: *Central Queensland Qualicado Workshop*

Chairman's Perspective

At long last, after a lull of two years, the avocado industry has formed a mechanism to replace the Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) that operated under the Horticulture Australia Limited model.

This IAC was responsible for the direction of the avocado research and marketing for the past ten years or so, for better or worse. I will leave that judgement to the avocado levy payers or your bank managers.

These past few years have been a great concern to me, as Chairman and a grower levy payer, because they have been a period of inactivity and conflict and while a lot of frustration has been vented, the greatest loss has been to our industry in the loss of momentum in our progress and the transfer of control of our industry direction.

The avocado Strategic Industry Advisory Panel (SIAP) has now been formed and will have the first meeting on 20 October, under the auspices of Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited (Hort Innovation).

I have the honour of being selected to participate on the avocado SIAP as a grower but not as Chairman of Avocados Australia.

Hopefully, we can now build a programme for research and marketing to carry our industry forward to meet the challenges to build consumer demand in the face of increasing supply.

This year we have four directors' positions up for election so I extend all my best wishes to all candidates for the upcoming Avocados Australia Limited director elections.

Lachlan Donovan the Avocados Australia director for Central Qld has announced his retirement from the Avocados Australia board after a long and distinguished period of service. Lachlan joined the Australian Avocado Growers' Federation (AAGF) board in the early 2000s and helped manage the transition to Avocados Australia and the campaign to increase the levy to its current level.

Lachlan has served our industry for 13 years and has been a strong voice in the planning, direction and success of our industry and so I extend our appreciation and thanks, on behalf of all growers, for his commitment and service.

Jim Kochi

Jim Kochi, Chairman, Avocados Australia Limited



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CEO's Report



Season update

Avocado supplies moved around quite a lot over the last quarter ranging from 250,000 to 350,000 trays per week.

The harvest is almost finished in all regions except for WA. The major chains' avocado retail prices have stabilised now at about \$2.00-\$2.50 in most cities.

The outlook for the new season crop is promising, with all regions generally experiencing a good flowering. Although it is a long way from harvest, it can only end well if it starts well.

Avocados Australia's website development

Avocados Australia is in the process of developing a new industry website.

Our current website has served us well, but has certainly reached its use-by date. It is based on very old technology, has a very clunky and inefficient back-end system and real limitations for users.

We are very excited about the new website and its ability to deliver improved information services to our stakeholders.

Months of scoping work was undertaken prior to commissioning the development work and we are confident the new website will be an excellent industry resource.

We are hoping to launch the new website in early 2017.

Communication survey results

Thank you to those who completed the 2016 Avocados Australia online communication survey recently.

Again, we were very pleased with the results which indicated that our program is delivering what our stakeholders want. More than 97 per cent of respondents stated that overall, they were either very satisfied or satisfied with Avocados Australia's communication.

This is the highest satisfaction result we have had since we began the survey three years ago.

I believe the management of effective industry communication is one of Avocados Australia's core roles and we are very passionate about excelling in this area and continuing to improve.

Congratulations also to Paul Bartle who won the incentive prize for completing the survey.

New panel to advise Hort Innovation on avocado levy investment

Hort Innovation has now established the new avocado Strategic Industry Advisory Panel (SIAP) to provide advice on the avocado R&D and Marketing programs. (An article which lists the panel members is included on P 20.)

The panel is due to have its inaugural meeting on 20 October 2016 and we are very pleased this group is in place to provide ongoing strategic advice on the industry's behalf.

New Avocado Strategic Plan

As mentioned in the last TA, work is underway to develop a new Strategic Plan for the Australian avocado industry to provide direction for Avocados Australia and the levy investment program managed by Hort Innovation in the coming years.

Workshops have been held with growers in Western Australia and North Queensland, two of our major production regions which also represent the two climatic extremes of the Australian avocado industry. Phone interviews are also being held with a number of individuals across various industry sectors to obtain a diversity of perspectives.

A situation analysis has been prepared and will be made available to industry for comment very soon.

Also, an industry survey will soon be widely distributed for input across the industry. I would strongly encourage you all to participate in this survey and have your say about our industry's priorities.

Once the feedback has been collated, draft strategies will be

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formulated and discussed with the Avocados Australia Board and the new Hort Innovation SIAP.

A final draft of the plan will be made available for comment before being finalising by the end of the year.

Marketing program

The avocado marketing program is currently undergoing a major review in preparation for a new marketing strategy to be implemented next year. Review Partners is a research agency commissioned to undertake this review – this is the same company that reviewed the previous marketing campaign in 2012. This review should be completed soon and will inform the new marketing strategy.

Claire Tindale-Penning was appointed in September by Hort Innovation as the new avocado marketing manager. She is very well qualified for the role and we look forward to working closely with her and the Hort Innovation marketing team to further build consumer demand for avocados. A bit more information about Claire and her background is included on P 16.

The current avocado TV ad got a great plug on the ABC's Gruen Transfer program recently which also gave the industry some great free advertising. One of the panel, Russell Howcroft from

Channel 10 said, "This ad will sell more avocados on the back of it...It shows usage occasions, colour, it will create sales."

Although this program is about entertainment with panellists making some pretty funny comments about the ad itself, it was pleasing to see that the more analytical comments align with the results from all the research around the ad that has been undertaken since the ad was first conceived in 2013.

Avo Alerts

Recently we kicked off a new initiative we've called 'Avo Alerts' which aims to act as a prompt to all our growers about what orchard activities you should be considering throughout the year.

Thanks to DAF Queensland's Simon Newett who has coordinated input of the technical information.

An electronic Grower Update is being sent to all growers every month, with links to the Avo Alert pages for the current and following month.

The Avo Alerts contain links to the Best Practice Resource (BPR) for additional information. These links will take you directly to the specific information in the BPR if you are logged in.

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...ISN'T IT TIME YOU CAME ON BOARD?

*CEO's Report continued***Avocados Australia 2016 AGM**

Avocados Australia's Annual General Meeting will be held in Brisbane on Wednesday 16 November 2016.

This year four Board positions are due for rotation, they are;

- Central Queensland Growing Area (second director position)
- Central New South Wales Growing Area
- North Queensland Growing Area
- Western Australia Growing Area (second director position)

Avocados Australia directors play an important role in guiding Avocados Australia and the industry's direction as a whole.

The avocado industry has been well served with many years of strong leadership and this needs to continue.

I encourage you to talk with your local directors about industry issues, challenges and opportunities so these can be considered and discussed with the Board.

We are pleased two candidates will contest the CQ position and another two candidates will be contesting the WA position. It is great to see this level of interest in Avocados Australia from these two major production regions.

Voting closes on 11 November, so all members in those regions are encouraged to lodge your votes.

**Tri State's Colin Fechner receives Order of Merit Award**

Avocados Australia Order of Merit Award recognises individuals who have made a significant contribution to advancing the Australian Avocado Industry.

I'd like to congratulate Colin Fechner, who was presented this award for 2016 at the Tri State Qualicado workshop.

Colin was one of a handful of the area's first growers who spent many years promoting the fruit to the southerners and working to grow the industry there.

He's made an enormous contribution to the Tri State region since he planted his first trees in 1976. See further information about this presentation on P25.

PHA Levy for biosecurity

The objection period for this proposed levy has now completed and neither Avocados Australia, nor the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) received any objections from any avocado levy payers. These changes will now move through the legislative processes.

There have been further detections of Asian Honey Bees in the Townsville area, but no further detections of the Varroa mite (*Varroa jacobsoni*). Varroa mites are harmful pests to European honey bees and have the potential to severely impact Australia's managed and wild European honey bee populations, and pollination-reliant industries.

A response plan has now been agreed on for the eradication of this incursion and deliberations have been ongoing to resolve the cost-sharing arrangements between the Federal and State governments and the affected industries. The avocado industry will be required to meet its funding obligations and, depending on the share of the costs, we plan to use funds from the new PHA Levy to cover this funding commitment.

October is National Safe Work Australia Month

As October is National Safe Work Australia Month, it seems appropriate to remind growers and packers about the Manage Work Health and Safety information on the Best Practice Resource.

This resource was developed with assistance from the Australian Centre for Agriculture Health and Safety and provides a step-by-step guide to help avocado growers and packers develop and manage their own work health and safety system.

It provides various templates that can be customised for your own business and aims to guide you through the process to develop and manage an effective system.

Work Health and Safety is essential for every business and we put a lot of effort into this initiative to make the module as useful and user-friendly as possible.

I strongly encourage all growers and packers to set aside some time to view this module and adapt the resources for your own business.

Qualicado program wraps up

The highly-successful Qualicado Workshop series completed in August following the Tri State and Central Queensland Grower Workshops and a series of Wholesaler Workshops in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane.

Over the three phases of the program, about 1,820 people attended the Qualicado workshops, and of those who provided formal feedback, almost 100 per cent said the workshops provided useful information and they gained value from attending.

The Qualicado program included 'facility health checks' of packhouses, wholesalers and ripeners, with an expert providing a one-on-one assessment of business's facilities and practices for managing fruit quality. Through this program, 33 pack houses and 13 wholesalers/ripeners have participated in facility health checks across the country.

Before the end of the year, a small number of whole-of-supply chain studies will be undertaken to provide insights into the performance across the entire supply chain from packhouse to retail.

Thailand market access getting close

After effectively losing market access to Thailand in 2013, considerable work has been undertaken to negotiate a workable market access protocol.

We believe we are getting much closer to achieving this. A recent meeting between the Australian and Thai Governments in Cairns in September resulted in the Thai Government agreeing to progress our proposal.

See further details about recent progress on P20.

Mexico imports analysis underway

Research is currently underway to analyse the likely entry of Mexican avocado imports to Australia and the potential implications for the Australian market, if Mexican avocados gained market access.

This research is being undertaken by a small team of highly-qualified analysts and will provide a detailed assessment of the issues for the Australian industry to consider.

Once this important research has been completed, the Avocados Australia board will consider the findings and appropriate responses will be incorporated into the development of the new Avocado Industry Strategic Plan.

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Around Australia

South Queensland Report

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



The Federal Government's recent backflip on the Backpacker Tax has been as good a result as we could have hoped for.

A rate of 19 per cent is still high, but far better than the proposed 32.5 per cent as it means we can still compete with New Zealand and Canada. The feedback we were receiving from backpackers was fairly negative at the time, so let's hope word about the changes spreads quickly and backpacker interest doesn't drop off too heavily.

On a lighter note, flowering occurring throughout Southern Queensland looks quite good on orchards that have kept up their good nutrition programs after a heavy crop this season.

It's also been great to see the region celebrating our fabulous product with the Bloomin' Blackbutt Avocado Festival taking place in September – which I believe will be covered later in this TA edition in more depth. Hopefully this festival will continue to grow and prosper.

It was very disappointing to see some of the supermarkets change over to stocking New Zealand avocados a bit too early in Queensland, while there was still plenty of Australian fruit available.

There were a lot of mixed messages in the media but it was good that the supermarket chain eventually did the right thing by its Australian growers.

Perhaps better communication would ensure this is handled better in the future.

Best of luck to the new nominations for board positions for Central Queensland and Western Australia and we look forward to having some new faces on the Avocados Australia board to keep the industry moving along in an onward and upward direction.

For the directors from the other regions that have gone through uncontested this must mean you are doing a fantastic job on the board and for your region, well done.

Central Queensland Report

By John Walsh, Avocados Australia Directors for the Central Queensland Growing Area



Bundaberg region's harvest finished up with above expected yields and good returns.

The cooler nights and the more open winter we have had has led to a spread in flowering, so it will be interesting to see how the crop set is for next season as there are still some flowers yet to set.

It will be a good four to five weeks before we get some idea

what the crop will be like.

Water supply is again plentiful and at this point in time, weather conditions are indicating good growing conditions.

It's good to see that the SIAP has finally been appointed by HIA – hopefully with the input of those members industry can move forward and develop a new strategic plan and get investment into R&D and Marketing back on track.

At the Qualicado workshop held on Thursday 11 August, there was a very strong turnout with more than 80 people attending to listen to presenters covering a wide range of topics.

From those I spoke to, they found it very informative and a good means of communication with the grower base.

Also on the day, the service of Lachlan Donovan to the avocado Industry and the Avocados Australia Board was recognised. Lachlan has been serving as a board member and director since 2003 and before that as a director of the Australian Avocado Growers Federation.

Again, I'd like to thank Lachlan for his service to the industry over these years.

Voting papers have been sent out for this year's director elections and I would encourage all growers to vote for the area's new representative as this is a democratic means for growers to choose someone to represent them.

North Queensland Report

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



As North Queensland comes out of the flowering event it appears that the season ahead will be a difficult one because of the lack of water availability from the Tinaroo Dam scheme (affecting the Mareeba/ Dimbulah and Kairi areas) and the artesian aquifer in Atherton and Tolga areas.

Water management will be critical until some decent rainfall occurs.

On the experience of growers from this last supply season, it is important for NQ growers to re-check spray equipment and choice of fungicides because visible copper residue on fruit has been a concern in some markets.

Hort Innovation conducted a consultation meeting with growers in Mareeba on 15 September and 19 attended. I was unable to attend because I was overseas on a trip planned months ahead of this meeting's planning.

The meeting was to obtain grower feedback on issues important to NQ growers regarding local or national issues that can be related back to research or marketing programmes.

I thank those growers who attended for their contribution and I look forward to the report.

Good luck to all for the coming summer season.

Tri State Report

By Kym Thiel, Avocados Australia Director for the Tri State Growing Area



Picking and packing is well and truly underway and some growers may have even finished their Hass crops by now.

Fruit quality appears to have been slightly down on previous seasons with blemish and size being the two main contributing factors. This has been a result of heavy crops in some districts for some growers and above average wind over summer/autumn.

However, the heavy rain events in late September, have sized fruit but the gale-forced winds have seen large numbers of fruit hit the ground, which is disappointing.

The rain however is very welcome but if it continues as the weather warms up, growers will have to be vigilant with fungal disease control.

The early season shift by Woolworths to take New Zealand fruit impacted on growers' returns and left the domestic market floors oversupplied with fruit, much of which was discounted as it began to ripen. This was much more evident on the eastern seaboard.

Trees generally look good in the area with those that had a

lighter crop this year budding up early and showing a good flowering.

The Qualicado workshop held back in July attracted a great number once again – thanks to the Marr family in Mildura for hosting us – it's unfortunate the weather was so cold – it was one of the coldest days of the winter.

The industry rootstock trial at Waikerie was harvested in late September and the results will be available once the numbers have been crunched and analysed. Included in the data will be yield analysis as well as tree and trunk size. The harvesting of the trial this year was funded by the South Australian Avocado Growers Association due to the previous national project finishing without any further projects being funded at this stage.

The crop was relatively light but hopefully over the next couple of years some trends will develop.

Tamborine and Northern Rivers Report

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



The 2016 harvest for our region should be now completed.

Though some growers were on an "off" year, many farms still had big crops.

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Around Australia continued

Prices, though not at the level of 2015, were still quite good if you had quality premium grade fruit, whereas Class 1 and lower grades were significantly down in price.

With massive new plantings coming on line and the increase in dominance of the supermarket chains demanding the higher grades, growers unable to produce these high grades will struggle to remain viable.

Every effort needs to be made to have healthy trees and then manage cropping to achieve the best possible quality of fruit. The strongest source of information for achieving this is the online Best Practice Resource, through the Avocados Australia website.

The early changeover of the major supermarkets to NZ fruit has been very disappointing.

Avocados Australia and our industry strives to work as closely with the major retailers as they can, giving them the best available information on supply, however we can never know what is going on behind the scenes, and what is being said by our competitors and those who profit from importing fruit.

Avocados Australia understands that growers alone cannot go public in their condemnation of the chains and rely on Avocados Australia's strong industry voice to do this. There are limited tools in the tool box to do this, however I think John Tyas and his team's response was excellent on this challenging issue.

It appears most orchards (except mine) have big flowerings and are potentially setting up for a big crop.

I again remind growers that in the future only quality fruit will get the good money, so I implore growers to strive for this. Good luck.

Western Australia Report

By Neil Shenton, Avocados Australia Director for the Western Australia Growing Area



It's been a long and wet winter in WA and it's still going on, with more to come, apparently.

While the "younger" generation isn't really used to this, it's still below the long-term averages for rain and I'm sure for temperature too.

The last decade has been drier and with more winter sun and maybe we are reverting back to "normal" – who knows.

I don't think the climate experts know much more than you and I, to tell the truth. Just keep farming until the apocalypse hits and they can say they were right after all!

Picking should start in earnest in October, with some farms holding out until later when prices should be on an upturn.

As you know I am no marketing expert, but it seems the Kiwis stole a march on us by supplying to the supermarkets earlier than normal. Was it the North Queensland crop being later and heavier than normal (Infocado showed that) and a lack of communication? Or was it the Western Australian crop starting

later? Anyway Avocados Australia was on the ball and "fixed" the problem quick smart – kudos to John Tyas and his team.

While the election results won't be finalised until 16 November, WA is expecting to have a second Director on board. Hopefully we will be seeing more young people joining the Board in the future, mixing with the experienced too, those with the long-term memories are also so vital to this industry.

It looks as though the "backpacker" tax is finally done and dusted, the premise being that they spend their earnings locally. This may be true but often that's because they can collect their super on the way out of the country as savings. Now they will need to save and maybe not spend locally!

Central New South Wales Report

By Ian Tolson, Avocados Australia Director for the Central New South Wales Growing Area



The Bellingen – Coffs Harbour region's avocado harvest has finished for the 2016 season.

The local area of Stuarts Point only has a little way to go, while Comboyne and the Mangrove Mountain area will be continuing on for a few months yet.

A few rainy days at the back end of the season hampered harvesting, but on the upside of that it saved irrigating and refreshed the landscape ready for the new growth Spring promotes.

Now with good flowering in the local area, growers are hoping this converts to a good fruit set and are looking forward to the continuation of good seasons.

Growers are encouraged to keep fruit quality first and foremost in their minds.

People buy with their eyes, so this dictates quality standards by which fruit is graded and sold.

It also dictates grower returns.

As an industry, growing consumption starts at the grass roots and all the promotion in the world will not make the consumer purchase fruit if they are constantly experiencing poor quality.



Consumers know the health benefits, so we should strive to produce the healthiest looking product.

Simon Newett will be conducting another workshop in our region and the suggested timing at this stage is early November. The date and venue will be confirmed shortly.

Sunshine Coast Report

By Robert Price, Avocados Australia Director for the Sunshine Coast Growing Area



Well the picking season is all but finished in the Sunshine Coast area, with above average crop production and steady returns for first grade fruit, although the seconds tended to tail off in value.

That said we are now into flowering with some trees flowering earlier, with an abundance of flowers which is promising. Also there is plenty of bee activity and the **Red Shoulder Lycid Beetle** is in abundance this year which is also useful as it is a beneficial pollen and nectar feeder.

Again, the weather for this year has been warm and showery creating different conditions for fruit production but even with the showery conditions, the soil west of the ranges along the coast still need to be monitored as the soil moisture is only

shallow which can dry out quickly if not topped up by irrigation.

It was interesting to see the report from Western Australia on root development improving grain crop production. (This comment may seem a little left-field, but keep reading.)

While writing this report my thoughts were on the coming season and the processes that need to be followed in order to maintain a healthy orchard and high quality fruit, which then led me to think about the use of levies we Avocado growers pay and how they can best be used to return a profitable outcome for producers.

Of course some of that money must be channelled into the promotion of Avocados to raise awareness and build consumption but also, some must be invested in improving productivity.

With ever-rising resource costs it is becoming increasingly important to cut down on the cost of production.

So what avenues are there available to help achieve this goal? Well as fate would have it, I received an article in my email regarding work done in Western Australia to improve the root systems of grain crops, following is a snippet.

'Crop researchers building designer root systems for better access to moisture and nutrients'.

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Around Australia continued



Dr Lee Hickey and his research team from the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation at the University of Queensland have discovered key genes that direct root growth downwards.

Dr Hickey said that way the plant could better access moisture and nutrients to extend the grain fill period and increase potential yield.

“Until now, plant breeding has only optimised the above ground components of the plant, while underground, the plants’ hidden half if you like has vastly been ignored,” he said.

“There are potentially big gains to be made if we can work out how the roots develop and if we can harness these in improved varieties.”

He said field trials in Queensland and New South Wales using the gene that is responsible for deep root growth, have shown yield advantages of up to 10 per cent in some environments.

Source: WA Country Hour By Tara de Landgraft

Clearly this is the type of research which can generate real returns for grain producers.

This led me to contemplate potential ground-breaking research and development for Avocados that has been worked on or should be worked on. I thought what are the main issues that have to be correctly managed with Avocado production because of their physiology? Well I guess there are a few, but the ones which came to mind that I would like to have resolved are outcomes to reduce the demand of resources for both labour and chemicals. Imagine if we had:

- a) a root system that could flourish in the soil without the crippling disease of Phytophthora.
- b) a root structure that could tolerate a greater inundation of water, a root structure that allows the plant to uptake oxygen easier when the ground is wet.
- c) a tolerant fruit that can resist the invasion of anthracnose.

Yes I know that some of this type of research is/was being carried out in Australia already, particularly at the Centre for Plant Science, Queensland University who have excellent researchers such as Dr Vijaya Singh, Alice Hayward, Dr Neena Mitter and Dr Elizabeth Dann and the list goes on.

See: <http://www.qaafi.uq.edu.au/cps-researchers>

Genetic improvement can be a very expensive and long term R&D strategy, but maybe there are other ways to solve these problems. Now that a new structure has been established to provide advice to Hort Innovation about avocado R&D priorities, it is hoped that these resource-demanding issues can again be properly considered for further R&D.

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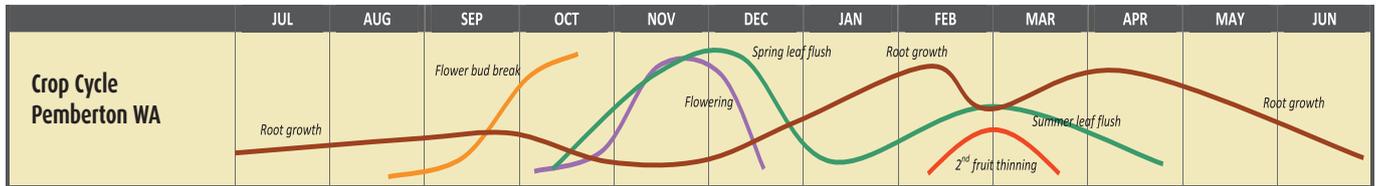
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Industry Matters

Industry Matters includes articles that have been published by various news sources and are acknowledged accordingly.

These case studies are part of a series collated to provide insight into how some growers approach their crop forecasting, which may provide you with some tips or tricks to help your own operation. There will be another two case studies in the next edition.

Crop Forecasting Case Study – Western Australia



Forecasting the crop...

- The same trees in each block are counted every year to develop an estimate of the crop
- More than one person does the counting and a comparison is made

Having a good crop forecast is essential, not only to inform decisions about the marketing program for the coming season, but also to plan for supply chain and logistics requirements for the crop. It is an on-going challenge to make sure the forecast is as accurate as possible and one that the business takes very seriously. In an ideal world, Russell would like to have accurate figures six months out from harvest.

The starting point is having good records of the performance of each block over time. Over the years different approaches have been tried in an attempt to get more consistent figures.

Each season, indicative forecasts of the crop are established early based on the prior performance of the block and the previous season's crop. However, it is not until after the last fruit drop, which usually occurs around mid-April that efforts become more focused.

A grid pattern is used to make a selection of trees in each block. These trees are then marked with white paint so they are easily identified. The same selected trees, which represent approximately 2per cent of the total planting, are then counted every year.

Physically counting the number of fruit on the whole tree is in itself challenging. A process has been developed where counting starts at the base of the tree. As fruit along each branch is counted, the branch is marked to ensure that it is not double counted or missed. Russell is also hopeful that new canopy management practices they are adopting across their operation will mean the process of counting trees will become more accurate and less time consuming in future years.

Usually the count across the block is undertaken by two people separately and the figures are then compared. If the two figures are not within 10% then a further check is made of the block. As well as counting fruit, a method to estimate expected fruit weight at harvest is being refined – this will assist in more accurately determining the size profile and the yield of the block.

All of the collected data and knowledge of the block's prior performance is then used to predict the coming season's crop. Russell admits that even with all the time and effort, forecasting the harvest can still be a challenge and one that requires on-going investment.

Delroy Orchards



About.....

Russell Delroy and his family farm at Pemberton, about 320 km south of Perth. They started planting avocados in 1987. Today they grow kiwifruit and tamarillo. Twelve years ago Russell had just four hectares of productive avocado trees on the first of their farms near Pemberton. Today they have 250 hectares under production, with more plantings planned over the next 2 years. The Pemberton orchards have deep karri loam soils and receive an average annual rainfall of nearly 1200mm, predominantly over the Winter months. Flowering usually start in October through to early December, with the last fruit drop usually around mid-April and the main harvest period from October to January. Delroy Orchards also runs its own packing shed at Donnybrook, south of Perth. They are significant suppliers to Coles, Woolworths, Aldi and Harris Farms.

This information has been collated as part of HIA Project AV12012: Coordination of Data Management and Avocado Quality Improvement and Extension Program. The crop cycle charts used in these case studies have been developed by the Department of Agriculture & Fisheries Queensland as part of HAL/HIA project AV10002. Both projects have been funded by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL)/Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited (HIA) using the avocado industry levy and funds from the Australian Government. More information on crop cycle calendars for different regions is available by accessing the Australian Avocado Industry Best Practice Resources at <http://bestpractice.avocado.org.au/Login.aspx>

Good crop forecasting is a key to efficient supply chain management

By Jenny Margetts, P2P Business Solutions

Over the last few editions of *Talking Avocados* we have looked at the different approaches that some of the better forecasters in the industry use to estimate their coming season's crop. No matter what the size of their operation, all of the growers interviewed recognised the importance of having accurate forecasts. They cited the need to have this information so they could plan their harvest and packing labour, packing material and transport requirements with a degree of confidence as well as plan their marketing programs with customers.

They also acknowledged the difficulties in forecasting and the challenges of not getting it right every year. However all were committed to improve their processes and understanding of how it might be done better, as accurate forecasting increased supply chain efficiency and reduced business costs.

Although most of the growers had a different approach to estimating their crop, there were some key elements that were common across most of these operations:

- Good historical records (usually at a block level) are maintained – and these are used as the basis for decision making.

- A systematic approach to counting fruit on trees and applying it consistently year-to-year has been adopted. Usually this involves counting fruit on individual trees in a block and extrapolating this figure to account for production of the entire block. The selection of the sample of trees to be counted may differ i.e. they may be selected for their heavy, medium or light crop loads, they may be considered representative of the block, it may be random or systematic and / or measuring the same trees every year. Often, where trees are larger and fruit is difficult to identify in the canopy a portion of the tree (¼ - ½) is counted properly, taking into account the need to count different sides of sampled trees so that there is no a directional bias.
- Often more than one person completes the crop forecast assessment and a comparison is made so that a more informed / considered crop estimate can be developed.
- A considerable amount of time is spent in the field and having a 'feel' for the crop, how it is performing, especially in comparison to the previous year, is particularly important.

In future years the industry is likely to see new technologies emerge that will assist with crop forecasting, however at this time, the methods outlined in this series of case studies presented in recent editions of *Talking Avocados* represent proven methods that are serving Australian production businesses well.



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Welcome to Hort Innovation's Claire Tindale-Penning

Avocados Australia would like to welcome Hort Innovation's new Marketing Manager Claire Tindale-Penning who has taken over from Julie Willis to oversee the levy-funded avocado marketing program.

Claire has a Bachelor of Business Management specialising in Marketing.

With more than 20 years of professional experience spanning multiple industries; profit and not for profit sectors, Claire most recently held the position of National Marketing Manager; Foodservice for Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA).

"This role was responsible for the development and implementation of a national marketing strategy targeting chefs and key food influencers across Australia," she said.

"A career highlight while at MLA, was the design and execution of a program aimed at inspiring and educating Australian chefs to use the lesser known cuts on the animal.

"Known as Masterpieces™, the program has been such a success with real growth recorded across the specific featured cuts, that it is now being used in the Middle Eastern market, Europe and Korean markets of MLA as well as much of the content from the platforms used across the Australian Retail materials."



Claire is a born and bred Adelaide girl, but has spent the past 15 years in Sydney and 4 years in the UK.

A fan of travel, the outdoors, great food and conversation, Claire said she is looking forward to bringing those passions and combining them with her skills and experience to deliver some real benefits to the Horticulture industry.

Trees suffering the effects of waterlogging? Sub-surface drainage may be the answer



Drain Tech Land Drainage Systems

Drain Tech uses purpose built equipment to excavate and lay drainage pipes in existing avocado orchards. Our machinery can work within the row spaces, lay perforated pipe and place sand/gravel over pipe in a one pass operation.

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For more information contact **Richard Gloyne** on **0428 528 054** or **richard@draintech.net.au**



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Avo Alert initiative prompts growers



Avocados Australia launched its grower reminder initiative called Avo Alerts in September which has been devised to act as a prompt to all growers about what orchard activities they should be considering throughout the year.

Avocados Australia's CEO John Tyas said these notes have been developed, with technical input coordinated by DAF Queensland's Simon Newett, for all of the major production regions.

"Most growers know what they need to do in their orchard, but these notes provide a timely reminder throughout the year and direct growers to the relevant best practice information," Mr Tyas said.

"This initiative is designed to help growers produce high yields of the best quality fruit they can."

While the initial update was sent out to all industry to notify it of the new e-publication, the future editions will be sent to growers only.

Avo Alerts also contain links to the Best Practice Resource on our website, so any growers who haven't already registered for the BPR should do so to mine the information it contains.

Avo Alerts has grouped the prompts according to region and climate and in some cases, variety.

These include:

North Queensland Shepard

North Queensland Hass

Central Queensland Shepard

Central Queensland Hass

Sunshine Coast and Northern New South Wales Hass

Southern Queensland and Central New South Wales Hass

Tristate Hass

Western Australia Hass

A Grower Update will be sent to all growers every month, with links to the **Avo Alert** pages for the current and following month.

"I would highly recommend growers save these and print them to keep them close to hand," Mr Tyas said.

The first series kicked off in September and October.

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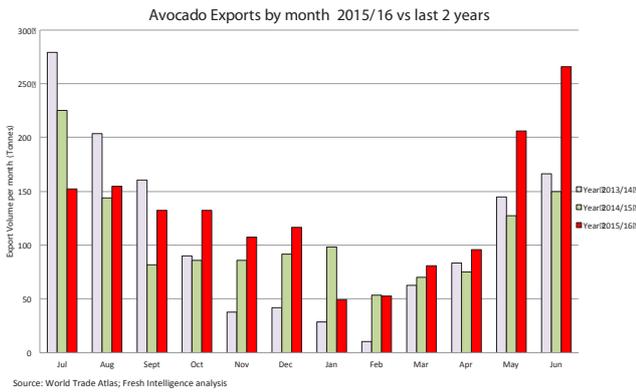


Avocado Exports on the rise

Data and analysis provided by Wayne Prowse, Fresh Intelligence Consulting

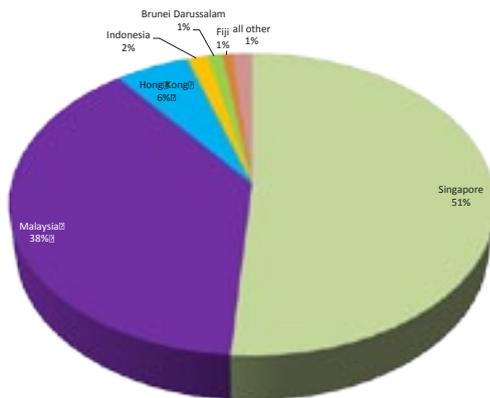
Australian avocado export volumes increased 20 per cent from 1,287 tonnes in 2014/15 to 1,547 tonnes last financial year.

The majority of exports were from Queensland which lifted 23per cent from the previous year to 959 tonnes and accounted for 62per cent of all exports. Western Australia accounted for 26per cent of export an increase 1per cent over the previous year.

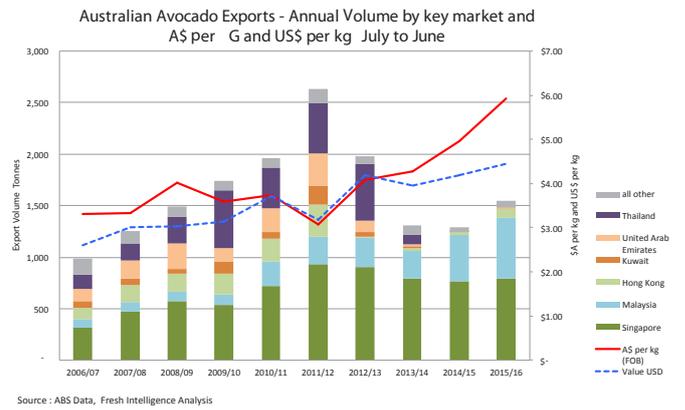


Singapore remains Australia's most significant market accounting for 51 per cent of all export volumes followed by Malaysia with 38 per cent share. Hong Kong increased to 6 per cent share from 2 per cent in the previous year.

Avocado Exports by market destination - 1,547 MT - 12 mths to June 2016



Australian avocado exports were valued at \$9.16m for the 12 months to June 2016 – an increase of 43 per cent over the previous year. Over the five year period from 2011/12 to 2015/16, average returns per kg also increased 93per cent aided by the exchange rate depreciation.

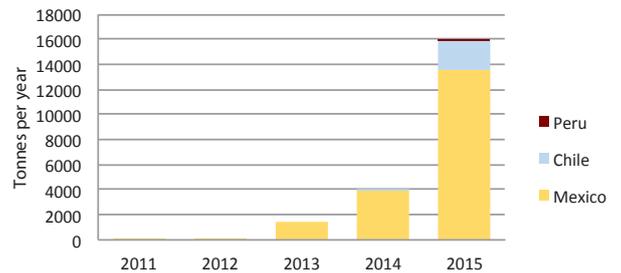


Total avocado imports into Asian markets continued to grow in 2015 to 88,000 tonnes.

The dominant import market was Japan (57,500 tonnes) although China imported 16,000 tonnes (18 per cent share) mostly from Mexico.

The growth in demand in China for imported avocados has grown significantly in the last two years as demonstrated in the graph below.

Avocado Imports by China



There were 13,108 tonnes of New Zealand avocados imported into Australia in 2015/16, which was 33 per cent less than the previous season. This trade was valued at A\$63.64 million.



OrchardInfo Tree Census... it's now easier to enter your data

Be in the draw to win one of four cash prizes of \$250

The request for 2016 OrchardInfo Tree Census data will be sent to all growers.

If you have not received an email please contact Avocados Australia as soon as possible.

Having accurate industry information is essential, particularly as the industry is in a period of increased planting and production.

The new 2016 form is easier to complete, requesting only the variety, year planted, row and tree spacing and number of trees or hectares planted as at 1 August 2016.

For businesses that have previously submitted OrchardInfo data, forms will be auto-populated with data from previous years. If there is no change in the plantings on your property, it is now as simple as ticking the relevant box on the 2016 form.

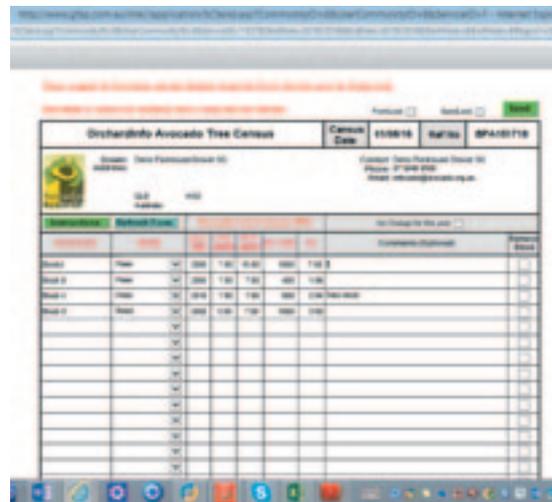
Businesses that provide completed forms will also go in the draw to win one of four cash prizes.

The information collected from the annual OrchardInfo Tree Census is critical to inform industry planning for activities such as domestic and export market development.

An insight into future market conditions also assists businesses in their investment decisions around production, infrastructure and other business development activities.

Having accurate industry information is essential, particularly as the industry is in a period of increased planting and production.

So if you are growing avocados, we strongly encourage you to



Example of new OrchardInfo Tree Census form

respond to the email request to provide data.

All contributors will receive a report showing aggregated data for their region and all regions combined.

If you are having difficulty retrieving or completing forms, which are accessed by the link in the email, Avocados Australia is able to provide support.

Details are provided in the OrchardInfo Tree Census email sent to growers.

Below: 2014 annual OrchardInfo National Summary - All Contributors

Table 3: National Summary Report - All Contributors

Variety	Tree numbers				Hectares			Trees/ha		
	0 to 5 yrs	6 yrs+	Total	%	0 to 5 yrs	6 yrs+	Total	0 to 5 yrs	6 yrs+	Wt Ave.
Bacon	24	392	416	0.04%	0.0	1.5	1.5	800	268	279
Fuerte	542	4,246	4,788	0.45%	2.0	25.7	27.7	272	165	173
Gem	5,895	-	5,895	0.55%	21.3	-	21.3	277	-	277
Gwen	80	4,693	4,773	0.44%	0.1	13.5	13.6	727	348	351
Hass	166,369	641,494	807,863	75.13%	807.1	2,924.0	3,731.0	206	219	217
Lamb Hass	2,428	15,564	17,992	1.67%	5.8	68.0	73.9	416	229	244
Other	14,718	1,059	15,777	1.47%	47.0	5.4	52.4	313	196	301
Pinkerton	200	1,806	2,006	0.19%	0.9	8.6	9.6	213	210	210
Reed	15,979	27,752	43,731	4.07%	35.6	111.8	147.4	449	248	297
Ryan	15	668	683	0.06%	0.1	2.2	2.3	300	301	301
Sharwil	1,298	3,678	4,976	0.46%	8.5	19.2	27.6	153	192	180
Shepard	28,095	119,394	147,489	13.72%	167.2	706.2	873.4	168	169	169
Turner Hass	7,421	-	7,421	0.69%	49.4	-	49.4	150	-	150
Wurtz	3,639	7,732	11,371	1.06%	13.9	35.6	49.4	263	217	230
Zutano	33	50	83	0.01%	0.1	0.3	0.4	275	161	193
Grand Total	246,736	828,528	1,075,264	100.00%	1,158.9	3,921.9	5,080.8			
Yield Contributors	56,354	291,526	347,880	32.35%						
ABS Stats 2012-13	345,156	1,137,387	1,482,543							
ABS Stats 2013-14	296,875	1,195,884	1,492,759							
OrchardInfo as a % of ABS	77%	71%	72%							



More detailed 2014 Annual OrchardInfo regional reports will soon be emailed to contributing growers.

Shaping the Future

The inaugural *Avocado Strategic Investment Advisory Panel* (SIAP) meeting was held on 20 October 2016.

The SIAP has been appointed through an independent recruitment firm that shortlisted applications and an interview panel comprising Richard de Vos (independent), David Moon (Hort Innovation Director) and Tom Silver (Avocado Australia Director), with the interviews facilitated by Astrid Hughes (Hort Innovation Relationship Manager).

Hort Innovation is appointing SIAPs to provide strategic investment advice in relation to the marketing, and the research and development activities funded by industry levies and matching dollars from the Australian Government.

The SIAPs are guided by the strategic priorities set out in each industry's Strategic Investment Plan.

More information on SIAPs is available on the Avocado page at the *For Growers Section* of Hort Innovation's website.

Name	Organisation	Location
Daryl Boardman	Sunnyspot Farms	QLD
Kylie Collins	Blushing Acres	QLD
Jennie Franceschi	Avocado Export Company	WA
Simon Grabbe	Simpson Farms	QLD
Stewart Ipsen	West Pemberton Avocados	WA
Xhemal (Jim) Kochi	Tinaroo Falls Avocado Pty Ltd	QLD
Simon Newett	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Queensland	QLD
Cormac te Kloot	Costa	VIC
Neil Delroy	Jasper Farms	WA
John Walsh	Simpson Farms	QLD



Thai delegation

Export development update

By John Tyas, CEO Avocados Australia

Export development is becoming an increasing priority for the Australian avocado industry, in light of forecast growth in production.

An Avocado Export Plan was developed in 2014 and sets clear export growth targets and priorities around what the industry must do to achieve export growth.

Avocados Australia has an Export Committee to oversee the implementation of this plan, but appropriate resources are required if the plan is to be achieved.

Avocados Australia submitted a proposal to Hort Innovation last year seeking levy funding to undertake a range of export development activities.

This has not been progressed as yet, but hopefully this important proposal will be considered by the new SIAP at its first meeting on 20 October.

Thailand

Avocados Australia has been working with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) since 2013 to amend the (unworkable) market access protocol for Australian avocados to Thailand.

In September, representatives from the Australian and Thailand governments met in Cairns to discuss market access issues and access for Australian avocados to Thailand was a key agenda item for this meeting.

In conjunction with this meeting, Avocados Australia arranged a visit for the Thai delegation to an avocado orchard on the Atherton Tablelands.

This visit was to Golden Triangle Avocados and we thank Alan Poggioli and his family for hosting this important visit.

Alan did an excellent job explaining their business and the management systems they have in place.

It was great to have him explain how they use the ICA-30 protocol for interstate trade.

Given this is the basis of the protocol we are aiming to have accepted by Thailand it was excellent to discuss how this has worked in practice.

Feedback after the meeting was very positive, with the Thai delegates and the senior officers from DAWR most impressed with the visit.

The Thai Government has now agreed to progress our proposal as a priority and we expect to have draft protocol by the end of the year. [Note, this is expected to only be for Hass avocados from Western Australia initially based on conditional non-host status of Mediterranean fruit fly.]

This will be followed by an audit by Thai officials of Australian packhouses and orchards.

We are hopeful we will have a workable protocol for Hass avocados from WA before the next WA season.

Research will be completed next year that will hopefully provide sufficient data to support a Hass conditional non-host protocol for Queensland fruit fly.

Once accepted by Thailand, this will then allow Hass avocados to be exported from all regions of Australia.

Further research has also been contracted to develop a short cold treatment for Shepard and, if this is accepted by Thailand, will enable exports of this variety also.

Japan

A formal submission for market access of Australian avocados to Japan has been presented to the Japanese Government. We are awaiting feedback from Japan on this submission.

China

A new market access prioritisation process has been developed by Hort Innovation to assess market access requests for horticulture products to new quarantine markets.

These recommendations will then be provided to the DAWR who will actively pursue the market access negotiations.

Thailand and Japan are already current priorities that will continue to be progressed.

However, China will be considered as a new request under the new process.

Recently, Avocados Australia submitted a business case to Hort Innovation for avocado market access to China.

This will be considered for prioritisation by Hort Innovation's Trade Assessment Panel.

Given the rapid growth and future potential of the avocado market in China, we are hopeful our submission will be progressed through to action by the DAWR.

The avocado industry has regularly attended the China FVF Trade Show in Beijing, which has been an important event to demonstrate the Australian avocado industry's commitment to the Chinese Government.

This year, Avocados Australia director Daryl Boardman will represent the industry at this event as part of a Hort Innovation trade display.



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Avocados Australia's Election

Avocados Australia's election results will be announced at the AGM on Wednesday 16 November 2016 in Brisbane and CEO John Tyas said he was encouraged by the apparent renewed interest in members getting involved in the Board election

"It's great to see two of the four board positions are set to be contested by two candidates each," he said.

One of these seats is for the second position in Western Australia which has been unoccupied since the previous Director Dave Duncan retired in 2015, while the other is the second seat in Central Queensland which has been held for many years by Lachlan Donovan who is not standing for re-election.

The two remaining growing areas of Central New South Wales and North Queensland remain uncontested with Ian Tolson and Jim Kochi expected to continue in their current roles as Directors.

Mr Tyas encouraged all members to take the opportunity to participate in the election process and encourage others to join.

Voting closes 11 November 2016 (4pm EST).



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Seasol is a concentrated blend of quality kelps providing a range of benefits to all plants. In particular, Seasol stimulates root production as shown in the photograph, and assists plants cope with a variety of environmental stresses, such as drought, heat and frost.

The two tomato seedlings had their roots trimmed & placed in water & the other in a 400 to 1 solution of Seasol.

The results shown here are 14 days. Please watch the **Benefits of Seasol** video in full at www.seasol.com.au

Don't forget to check out the Avocado Industry Retail Pricing data each week.

The latest report (Week 40) shows that Coles has maintained pricing across all major markets (Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth) at \$2 per piece for individually sold Hass fruit since the last week of August.

Over the same period Woolworths pricing has ranged from \$2 - \$3 per piece across the major markets.

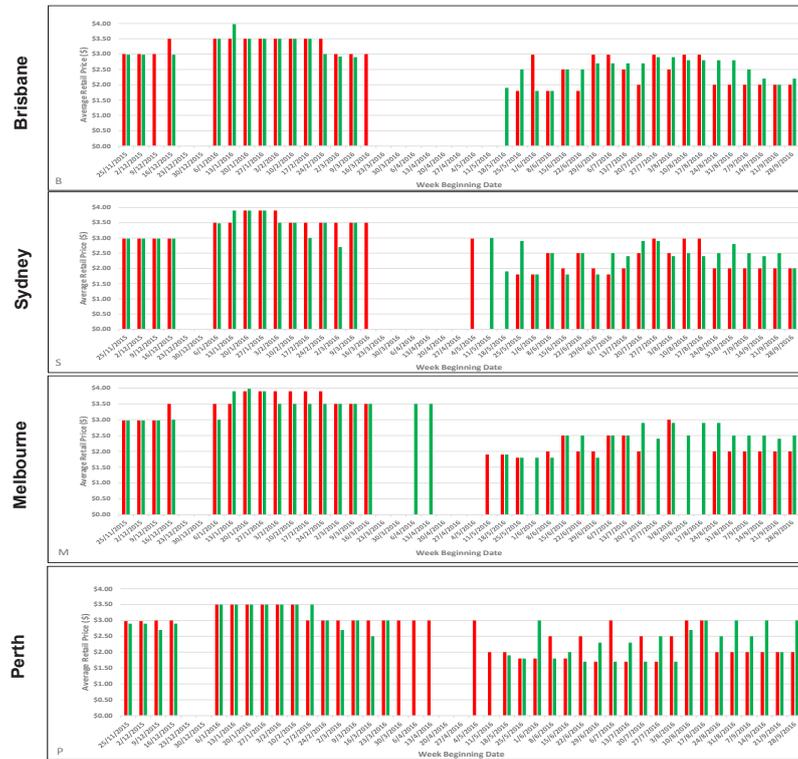
Pricing data is collected from each major market each Wednesday from online sources - shopping sites and online catalogues.

Pricing of single fruit, as well as other product offerings such as multi-buys, packaged and organic avocados is provided.

To keep up to date on weekly prices, go to the 'Services' tab on the top banner of the Avocados Australia website and choose 'Retail Pricing'.

Online Retail Pricing Report for single Hass fruit for week beginning Wed, 28th September 2016 (Week 40)

Woolworths online Coles online



Notes:
15/06/16 (Wk25), 22/06/16 (Wk26) & 29/06/16 (Wk27)
Please note that Woolworths online prices for single fruit purchases in Melbourne differed depending on the store location. In the graph we have shown the higher price. For details of pricing in a given week please refer to previous reports. 27/07/16 (Wk31), 10/08/16 (Wk33) & 17/08/16 (Wk34)
Please note that Coles online prices for single fruit purchases in Melbourne were unavailable for week 31, 33 & 34.

Single, Fruit, Multi-buy & Pack Pricing for week beginning Wed, 28th September 2016 (Week 40)

Retailer	Variety	Pack Type	Description	City			
				Brisbane	Sydney	Melbourne	Perth
Coles	Hass	Single Fruit		\$2.00	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$2.00
	Hass	Multi-buy	2 for \$x	3 for \$4.98*	3 for \$5.00*	3 for \$4.98*	3 for \$4.98*
	Reed	Single Fruit		\$2.00	\$2.00	-	-
	Reed	Multi-buy	2 for \$x	3 for \$4.98*	-	-	-
	Unknown**	Single Fruit	Organic	\$4.00	\$4.00	-	-
	Unknown**	2 Pack	Organic	-	\$5.00	\$7.00	-
	Hass	3 Pack		\$5.90	\$4.90	\$4.90	\$4.90
Woolworths	Hass	Single Fruit		↑\$2.20	↓\$2.00	↑\$2.50	↑\$3.00
	Hass	Multi-buy	2 for \$x	↑2 for \$4*	2 for \$3.30*	↑2 for \$4.50*	↑2 for \$4.98*
	Hass	Single Fruit	Organic	\$4.00	-	-	-
	Unknown**	2 Pack	Ripe	-	\$7.00	\$6.90	-
	Hass	2 Pack	Organic	↑\$4.40	\$4.40	↓\$3.80	-
	Unknown**	3 Pack		\$4.90	3.90	\$4.90	\$4.90
	Unknown**	5 Pack	Mini Disney	\$3.90	↑\$4.90	\$3.90	↓\$2.70*
	Unknown**	1kg Bag	Odd Bunch	5.60 □ 5.90 □	\$5.90	\$5.90	\$6.50

*denotes offer was advertised as a weekly and/or catalogue special
**denotes variety not indicated in online shopping offer
□denotes online pricing for 3 Packs are differing depending on the store location
□denotes online pricing for 1kg Odd Bunch Bags are differing depending on the store location

(Green) + ↑ = increase in price from previous week
(Yellow) = same price as previous week
(Red) + ↓ = decrease in price from previous week

Other information
Note: Online catalogues are published by major retailers each Wednesday.
Prices published in this report are reflective of online shopping and catalogue prices from Wednesday to Tuesday.

Catalogue Offers
Aldi - National - No catalogue offers found
IGA - Brisbane - New Zealand Hass - Multi-buy - 2 for \$3.00
IGA - Sydney - Unknown - Single fruit - \$2.49 - 2 for \$4.00
IGA - Perth - Unknown Australian - Single fruit - \$1.99
Foodworks - No catalogue offers found
Woolworths - Melbourne - Australian Macro Organic Hass - Pack 2 - \$3.80
Woolworths - Perth - Australian Mini Disney Avocados - Pack 5 - \$2.70
Coles - No catalogue offers found



Colin Fechner receives Avocados Australia's Order of Merit

By Caroline Page

Ramco (South Australia) avocado grower Colin Fechner was awarded Avocados Australia's Order of Merit in August.

This award recognises people who have demonstrated exceptional service over a long period of time to the Australian avocado industry and was presented to him in front of more than 80 of the region's growers at an Avocados Australia field day.

Avocados Australia's Tri State Director Kym Thiel presented the award to Mr Fechner and said he was one of the region's first successful growers.

"Colin was one of five or six original growers in this area who because of their hard work, in the early years removed a lot of the trial and error in growing avocados for the rest of us who have followed," said Mr Thiel.

"He not only grows avocados but he also packed them for many of us in the district and he was always a good, genuine packer who sought the best prices he could."

Avocados Australia's CEO John Tyas said Mr Fechner had been



described by the local growing community as the 'glue holding the locals together'.

"Colin has been a highly-respected member of the southern growing community and his hard work educating households about our wonderful fruit is well recognised, particularly from his work at the Royal Adelaide Show."

Mr Fechner said he was thrilled to receive the award.

"I've been in the industry for 40 years – planted my first trees in 1976," he said.

"My Dad and I had a lot of stone fruit – canning peaches, pears, olives – you name it – and when they all went bottom up in the late 70s a friend said, "Why not try some of these?", so I ended up planting 60 trees – some Bacon, Fuertes and Hass, on whatever seed could be found.

"After about 5-6 years we started planting some more, and by the time we got to the mid to late 80s, I found I was earning more money from three acres of avocados than I was from 20 acres of citrus, so over the next 15 years, I changed everything over to avocados."

Mr Fechner spent many years attending the Royal Adelaide Show promoting avocados to its visitors.

"When they first tried the fruit, they had no idea whether it grew on a tree or bush or whether it grew underground," Mr Fechner said.

"In the early days people would taste our avocados and then come back and get more and ask lot of questions and so over the years we were doing it, the consumers' awareness grew and they would be coming along wanting to buy fruit.

We then started teaching them how to choose a ripe one or how to ripen one and a lot of knowledge was going home with them."

Mr Fechner said the beauty of growing avocados in the Tri State climate was the greatly-reduced need to spray for pests; farmers just had to learn to manage the frost and the heat.



Colin Fechner receives Avocados Australia's Order of Merit pictured with Kym Thiel and John Tyas

Kaila wins Rural Spirit Award

North Queensland Development Horticulturalist Kaila Ridgway was awarded the Queensland Rural Ambassador for Community Spirit Award at the Brisbane Ekka in August, after being named the Cairns Rural Ambassador at a local level, to then being awarded the North Queensland Rural Ambassador at Charters Towers earlier in the year.

Ms Ridgeway, 26, works with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in Mareeba and studied a Bachelor of Agricultural Science with Honours at the University of Queensland Gatton Campus.

Along with participating in general community events, Ms Ridgeway is also involved with local grower groups including the Atherton Tablelands Avocado Growers Association where she has been elected secretary.

She is also in the process of developing a 'Next Gen' group for North Queensland, for which she is also secretary.

The Rural Community Spirit Award is a part of the Marsh Rural Ambassador Awards recognising men and women aged 20 to 30 who have a strong commitment to the rural industries and an involvement and passion for the Agricultural Show movement.

The award itself was originally created in 2010 by the Queensland Ag Shows Next Generation Committee as part of the annual Rural Ambassador Awards and was taken over in 2013 by the Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Society's CEO Mark Bryant & partner Debbie Jewlachow.

This particular award recognises a Rural Ambassador Finalist who goes above and beyond the customary support of their community and industries, and displays outstanding fellowship and camaraderie during the Rural Ambassador finals.

She said she has found being the North Queensland Rural Ambassador very rewarding and an educational experience and believes the networks, culture and life skills she has developed through this program are priceless.

"It's my dream to help farmers and the industry move forward," she said.

She said her university study opened the doors to a diverse and exciting world of agriculture, focusing on plant and soil health (agronomy science).

"This, together with my practical industry experience drives my passion to support the food industry to create better quality and nutritious food, while improving the farmers' practices for efficiency, sustainability and profitability," Ms Ridgeway said.

"This is even more vital in our current days of limiting resources, uncontrollable changing weather patterns and increased costs of production, to ultimately feed the world's forever growing population."



DAF Queensland's Kaila Ridgway

Varroa mites found on Asian Honey bee population

From the Federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

Biosecurity Queensland is boosting its efforts to find and destroy Asian Honey bees in North Queensland after the discovery of two varroa mite populations.

The first detection of this exotic pest of bees occurred at the port of Townsville in June 2016 where five mites were discovered in a nest of Asian honey bees in a container stand at the port.

These mites have been confirmed as *Varroa jacobsoni*.

On 17 July 2016, a single Varroa mite, which was also confirmed as *Varroa jacobsoni*, was found in an Asian honey bee nest on a property in Annandale. This property is about 9km south west of the port of Townsville.

During August and September (2016), there were five separate detections of Asian honey bees in the Hyde Park area. No varroa mites were found on bees at any of these sites.

Foraging Asian honey bees continue to be caught in the Hyde Park area which means further detections of Asian honey bee nests are possible.

While Asian honey bees are established in an area around Cairns in Far North Queensland, Varroa mites are not known to be present in that population.

Varroa mites feed on larvae, and a bee hive infected by the pest usually dies within three or four years.

Australia is so far the only continent not infested with the mite.

All nests have been destroyed and a 10km surveillance zone remains in place around each of the current detections of Asian honey bees in Townsville.

In these zones Queensland Biosecurity officers are continuing to look for feral honey bees and check managed hives.

The surveillance activities involve sweep netting flowering plants, setting feeding stations to attract any foraging bees, analysis of rainbow bee-eater pellets collected from known roosting sites, and aerial pheromone traps to detect male Asian honey bees.

Biosecurity Queensland staff are also checking catch boxes and sentinel hives that are set permanently around the port as part of the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program.

A Movement Control Order remains in place, which restricts the movement of bees, bee hives, bee products, and used bee keeping equipment from the 10km zone around the port, to prevent the mite being spread any further.

Under the Movement Control Order, honey or processed products that are free of bees and brood that are fully immersed in honey and are stored in a sealed container can be moved. An example would be a comb that is free of brood in packaged honey.

Bee keepers wanting further information about these movement restrictions should phone 13 25 23 or check Biosecurity Queensland's website at www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au. The



The Varroa mite (photo supplied by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry)

website has a map that shows where the movement restrictions apply. The Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests continues to meet in response to this detection.

At its last meeting, the committee agreed that this *Varroa jacobsoni* incident relates to an emergency plant pest as described under the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed. It also determined that based on the evidence available to date, this pest is technically feasible to eradicate.

The committee also considered a response plan put forward by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, which is the lead agency responding to this incident.

The national Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests has previously determined that Asian honey bees cannot be eradicated from Australia, so response activities are only focused on the Varroa mites.

Australia has well established arrangements in place for responding to exotic pests, such as Varroa. This is a nationally significant pest and all efforts will be put in place to prevent it from establishing in Australia.

Call to action

- The local community and beekeepers have a critical role in containing the Varroa mite incursion by reporting bee hives and feral bee populations in the Townsville area.
- If you are an amateur beekeeper in the area, you need to check your hives for the presence of Varroa mites. If you suspect that you have Varroa mites, please contact Biosecurity Queensland on **13 25 23**.
- The local community is also encouraged to report Asian honey bees or feral bee nests to Biosecurity Queensland on **13 25 23**.

Visit www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au for further information on the Queensland response to this incident.



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Win for farmers with proposed backpacker tax rate cut

Media release from The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, the Hon. Barnaby Joyce

The proposed 32.5 per cent tax rate that was to apply to working holiday visa holders will be slashed to 19 per cent following strong representations by The Nationals in Government.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, Barnaby Joyce, and Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister, Luke Hartsuyker, said the change recognised the importance of keeping regional economies strong.

"The win on backpacker tax is a win for our farmers who can get their fruit off the tree, off the vine and off to market," Minister Joyce said.

"The Nationals, including Assistant Minister Luke Hartsuyker and our Senators and Members of Parliament have been fearless champions on behalf of their regions, their agricultural stakeholders and common sense.

"The decision to reduce the proposed tax rate from 32.5 per cent to 19 per cent tax maintains Australia's status as one of the most competitive destinations for working holiday makers, while ensuring they pay a fair level of tax.

"Australia's Working Holiday Maker programme provides a vital source of labour, particularly across the agriculture and tourism sectors.

"The peak tourism and harvest season is ahead of us - from mangoes, lychees, bananas and avocados in the north, to asparagus, cherries and berries in the south.

"I would also like to thank Assistant Minister Luke Hartsuyker for his hard work on the review."

Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister, Luke Hartsuyker,



said the government had remained committed to resolving the issue quickly and fairly.

"More than 1700 stakeholders contributed to the review through written submissions and face to face consultations. They made it clear that an early resolution to the tax rate issue was needed.

"Today's announcement demonstrates the Government listened and is now providing certainty to stakeholders for the upcoming harvest and tourism seasons.

"Today's outcome has been made with an informed understanding not only of the labour challenges facing our agriculture and tourism sectors, but also the challenges facing the Australian economy in a global labour market.

"The review was about more than the tax rate, and the government will continue to consider a number of issues and suggestions that emerged through the review."

Information about the changes will be progressively uploaded to ato.gov.au

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Australian avocados' booming trade set to continue into 2017

Australia has produced its largest avocado crop ever in 2015-16, according to Avocados Australia's CEO John Tyas.

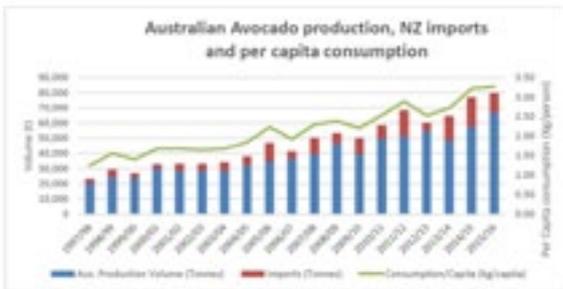
Mr Tyas said this year's crop of about 67,000 tonnes was up about 16 per cent on the previous year.

"Australia now has avocados growing in all states and territories except for the Northern Territory, which means they're being produced all year round," Mr Tyas said.

"The largest growing regions are in Queensland and Western Australia.

Avocado Consumption

Australian consumption of avocados has been steadily increasing, assist by increased supply from New Zealand. Per capita consumption is at about 3.2 kg per person.



Production by Variety

Hass is the dominant avocado variety and represents about 80-85 per cent of production and Shepard represents about 10-15 per cent of production.

The "Other" varieties include Lamb Hass, Bacon, Fuerte, Green, Pinkerton, Shepard, Wurtz and Gem.

Production by Variety (Tonnes)				
Season	Hass	Shepard	Other	Total
2007/2008	51,578	5,913	1,883	59,374
2008/2009	36,669	7,450	2,527	46,646
2009/2010	29,790	8,333	3,498	39,621
2010/2011	39,915	8,418	3,280	49,613
2011/2012	43,155	8,923	3,055	55,133
2012/2013	41,398	9,913	3,556	54,877
2013/2014	57,523	8,882	2,820	69,225
2014/2015	46,540	9,090	3,966	59,596
2015/2016	53,985	10,281	2,470	66,736

Source: All figures taken from July Quarterly Reports

"The industry has worked hard to produce and market a premium and very healthy product for our households and as a result, avocados are becoming permanent fixtures in our daily food consumption," he said.

"In 2016-17, Australia is forecasting to produce a similar volume to last year.

"Based on the latest crop forecasts, Australia's per capita consumption is likely to exceed 3.5kg per person in 2016-17.

"Our per capita consumption in 2014-15 and 2015-16 was about

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3.2kg per person in both years – making Australians some of the largest avocado consumers in the world outside Central and South America,” Mr Tyas said.

New Zealand is planning to increase its supply to Australia over this coming Spring/Summer to meet the increasing demand during this period.

“Hopefully this will ensure Australian households don’t experience the retail price spike we had early this year,” Mr Tyas said.



The figure above shows the average number of trays (5.5kg equivalent) produced in each region over the past two years. Average production over the past two years has mostly come from Queensland (49 per cent) and Western Australia (37 per cent).

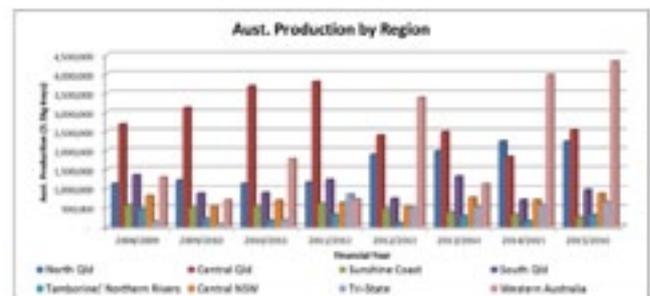
Production by Variety 2015-2016	
Variety	Production (%)
Hass	82.75
Shepard	13.52
Reed	1.55
Lamb Hass	0.83
Wurtz	0.39
Sharwil	0.29
Fuerze	0.16
Unnamed	0.06
Gwen	0.37
Pinkerton	0.06
Bacon	0.01
Gem	0.00
Edrinol	0.01

Source: All figures taken from July Quarterly Reports

Australia exported 1,546 tonnes in 2015-16, 20 per cent more volume than the previous year.

The value of these exports was more than 40 per cent higher, aided by the favourable exchange rate.

With the long term forecast indicating steep increases in production over the next few years, we expect to see increased volumes moving off shore with a strong focus on growing Asian markets.



Source: All figures taken from Avocado Australia's July Quarterly Report

Australia is able to produce avocados all year round due to the range of growing climates. The Shepard variety is only produced in Queensland from February to April and is the dominant variety in the market at this time.

Harvesting Periods for Shepard and Hass Avocados												
GROWING AREAS	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Atherton Tablelands												
Bundaberg - Childers												
Sunshine Coast												
Tamborine - Blackall Ranges												
Lodjyer Valley												
Toowoomba												
Northern NSW												
Central NSW												
Tristate												
Farth												
South West WA												
Shepard												
Hass												

Source: Avocado Australia

Eight candidates in the running for Hort Innovation Board positions

Source: Hort Innovation media release

In the lead up to its Annual General Meeting on 25 November, the nation's horticulture Research and Development Corporation – Horticulture Innovation Australia (Hort Innovation) – has announced eight candidates are in the running to fill five new Board positions.*

Hort Innovation Deputy Chairman and Chair of the 2016 Director Nomination Committee** Mark Napper said: "This is an exciting time.

"The organisation is approaching its second year as Horticulture Innovation Australia and, with industry, it is driving a significant amount of positive change in the areas of research and development, marketing and trade."

Mr Napper said the new Board will play a pivotal role in ensuring the organisation's and the Australian horticultural industry's ongoing success.

"The candidate line up is strong, and it will be interesting to see who grower members will elect to help steer the organisation into its next phase of growth."

Following a call for nominations in May, applications were formally assessed by recruitment company, Rimfire Resources.

The Hort Innovation Director Nomination Committee – made up of Mr Napper and two independent third parties – then interviewed shortlisted candidates, rating their suitability against a number of set criteria including their experience across areas such as growing, marketing, exporting and agriscience.

Mr Napper said each candidate conveyed a commitment to horticulture and a drive to increase the productivity, farm-gate profitability and global competitiveness of Australian horticulture industries.

The Committee has nominated the following eight candidates for election or appointment as a Board Director in 2016:

Renata Brooks:

With a background in leadership and governance of agricultural research and development (R&D) in the public sector, Renata has a long-standing interest in creating opportunities through innovation. Renata is currently Deputy Chair of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, having been a non-executive director of FRDC for 7 years.

She has significant experience in public policy, particularly in relation to agriculture, biosecurity and natural resource management, and has a proven executive management track record. Renata is a graduate and fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Prof. Rob Clark:

Rob is a current Director of Hort Innovation and Emeritus Professor of Agricultural Science at the University of Tasmania. Rob is also a horticultural producer, as owner and Managing Partner of Lanoma Estate, a 500ha intensive agricultural property in the Derwent Valley Tasmania.

Rob was a Foundation Director of the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture Research, and his prior appointments also include Deputy Chair of Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, a member of the National Research and Development Council, and a member of the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation Advisory Board, among others.

Paul Harker:

Paul has more than 20 years of retail experience spanning store operations, supply chain, and buying and marketing, including four years heading up the fresh produce buying team of one of Australia's largest retailers.

Through his professional background, Paul has an extensive understanding of retail, including strategy, operations, logistics, technology, and consumer marketing coupled with an extensive knowledge of the produce supply and value chain.

Paul is a former non-executive Director of PMA A-NZ, and is currently the Director and owner of Highland Farms Pty Ltd, a small horticultural operation in the central tablelands of NSW.

Jenny Margetts:

Jenny has worked in the horticultural industry for more than 25 years in a range of roles across the supply chain.

She has a background in agronomy, R&D management, industry planning and business management, and holds qualifications in applied science (horticulture technology), business and marketing.

Jenny has a wealth of experience from both an industry and commercial perspective, and for the past 12 years Jenny has managed her own consulting business.

Dr Lesley McLeod:

Lesley has 17 years general management experience in the agribusiness sector, has spent nine years as CEO of Dairy Innovation Australia and is a current Director of Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

Lesley has a depth of skill and experience in innovation, agribusiness, strategic planning and corporate governance, as well as experience in managing academic and applied research, sourcing research funding and designing and delivering training.

Lesley is a graduate member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Fran Raymond:

Fran is an experienced Director with an extensive background in financial services, member-owned organisations, and the not-for-profit sector, and as an executive in the Commonwealth Government in a number of Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer roles.

Fran has worked as the Chief Financial Officer for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and the General Manager Corporate at the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation.

She is also a Board member of UN Women Australia and the Chair of Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee for the Canberra Institute of Technology, among other roles.

Selwyn Snell:

Selwyn is the current Chair of Hort Innovation and Barawyn Pty Ltd. With more than 40 years of experience at senior executive and CEO level in agriculture, biotech and life sciences industries, Selwyn has served on numerous listed, unlisted and not-for-profit companies both internationally and domestically.

Selwyn has served as the former chairman of the Council of Rural Research and Development Corporations, non-executive

Director of Plant Health Australia Ltd, and non-executive Director of the APVMA, among other roles.

Selwyn is a fellow of the Australian Institute of Management and a graduate member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Peter Wauchope:

Peter is a current Director of Hort Innovation, and current Chair of the Hort Innovation Trade Assessments Panel.

Peter is also CEO of Center West Exports, a vertically integrated carrot growing, packing and marketing enterprise and recognised as one of Australia's leading carrot producers and exporters, with customers in over 17 countries.

Peter has enjoyed more than 30-years-experience in marketing fresh produce overseas and has travelled extensively throughout Asia, Middle East, Europe and USA visiting and servicing customers, and increasing market access for Australian fresh produce.

Originally from the Manjimup district of Western Australia, Peter's family still grow stone fruit and avocados in the district.

Two of these eight candidates will be elected as Directors by voting members at the AGM in the Sydney CBD on Friday, November 25.

Three further candidates will then be appointed as Directors by the continuing Hort Innovation Board members (those who were elected / appointed in 2015). More information about each of the candidates will be provided to Members with the Notice of AGM next month, along with proxy voting details.

Levy-paying members of Hort Innovation are encouraged to complete and return their Annual Levy Return Forms by the cut-off date of Friday, September 30 to be eligible to vote at the AGM. Any levy-payers who are not current members of Hort Innovation may submit a Member Application Form and have the opportunity to complete an Annual Levy Return Form by the end of the month to secure their voting entitlement.

*** The organisation's Constitution requires that five (5) Directors retire from the Board.**

****The committee responsible for the nomination of Director candidates for election/appointment.**

Horticulture Innovation Australia is a not-for-profit organisation charged with investing more than \$100 million in research and development (R&D) and marketing programs annually and is funded by levies, Commonwealth Government matching funds for R&D, and external co-investment funds.

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Protective Effect of Silicon against Root Rot in Avocado: A New Research Project

By Dr Elizabeth Dann and Dr Wendy Howe.

(Mineral Mulch has funded this research project.)

Silicon is the second most abundant element in the Earth's crust and, although not recognised as an essential element for plant growth and development, it has been identified as beneficial.

Evidence from years of research has shown that the absorption of silicon has numerous benefits for the plant including increased wear tolerance, disease resistance, insect resistance and increased shoot and root density resulting in higher yields.

However, the main challenge to-date for growers has been to find an economical fertiliser that contains a higher level of plant-available silicon, with demonstrated growth benefits and is relatively easy to apply.

A new product called Mineral Mulch may satisfy these requirements.

Mineral Mulch is a sustainable soil amendment product which is derived from building board.

The product contains cement, pine pulp and fine sand and, when crushed and ground to a "mulch", has been shown to release plant available silicon.

It also contains a host of essential trace elements, including calcium, copper and zinc.

Replicated commercial-scale field trials with Mineral Mulch applied to sugar cane in the local Bundaberg region over the past four years have shown not only an increase in sugar cane health and stalk height, but also a sugar cane yield increase of

up to 25 per cent. These observations were seen in conjunction with an increased level of silicon in the leaf tissue.

Given the proximity of avocado farms to the sugar industry in the Bundaberg region, Shiftwaste Pty Ltd's Rob and Dr Wendy Howe decided to also study the benefits of Mineral Mulch in avocados.

The benefit of silicon to avocado tree health is not new and has been studied previously with positive results in both Australian and South African trials (Anderson et al., 2003; Giblin 2006 and Bekker et al., 2005).

A new collaborative research project has commenced between Dr Elizabeth Dann (UQ) and Dr Wendy Howe (Shiftwaste Pty Ltd) to continue analysing the protective effect of silicon in avocados and the resulting benefits to plant health and yield.

Initial glasshouse experiments assessed the effects of Mineral Mulch on plant heights in the absence and presence of *Colonectria ilicicola*, the fungus causing black root rot of avocado.

There were indications that Mineral Mulch applied to seedlings increased plant heights 1.3-fold or 1.8-fold compared with untreated controls, when plants were un-inoculated or inoculated, respectively.

Silicon concentrations in leaves and roots also increased.

These preliminary results are extremely promising, and further glasshouse and field trials, including under high Phytophthora root rot disease pressure, are currently underway.

For further information on Mineral Mulch, please call Wendy Howe on 0447 888 029 or email info@mineralmulch.com



Sunraysia flies blow honeybee pollination trend

Source: Hort Innovation media release

A study commissioned by Horticulture Innovation Australia (Hort Innovation) and its partners has shown that blow flies in the Sunraysia region are the chief pollinators of avocados, despite bee hives regularly featuring in orchards.

Led by Plant & Food Research New Zealand scientist Dr Brad Howlett, the research project also showed beetles were commonly the secondary pollinators.

Horticulture Innovation Chief Executive John Lloyd said the research, conducted with input from growers, is ground-breaking.

“Blow flies, along with other fly species and beetles, appear to be very important for the sustainability of avocado fruit production in Sunraysia,” he said.

“These findings give local avocado growers a clear indication of where they should be investing their pollination efforts to get the best possible yields.”

Scientists observed flower-visiting insects throughout the day across 27 orchards near Mildura (11 Orchards), Robinvale (six Orchards), Renmark (five Orchards) and Waikerie (five orchards).

Flies, on average, were the most abundant insects observed

across orchards at all four locations, followed by beetles.

Waikerie orchards recorded the highest number of honey bees on average but these still represented just 17 per cent of all flower-visiting insects.

Dr Howlett said at least three blow fly species were found capable of transferring similar quantities of pollen, or more, onto flower stigmas than honey bees.

“Across all orchards almost three times as many more blow flies were observed than honey bees,” he said.

“Hover flies were also very common visitors of avocado flowers. Many hover flies actually mimic bees or wasps in their appearance and movements. This can confuse growers into thinking that they have plenty of bees visiting their orchards when in fact they are flies.”

The study demonstrated that hover flies were effective at depositing pollen onto stigmas and outnumbering honeybees by almost three to one.

This project was funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia with co-investment from Plant and Food Research NZ and the Australian Macadamia Society. Support was also given by Avocados Australia.



The brown blow fly

Grower profile

Laurie McCloskey



How long have you been in the avocado industry? What industry (if any) were you in before this?

I started at Peirson Memorial Trust, full time, in 1997 as a cane farmer. At that stage they had 14 hectares of 1 and 2-year-old Hass trees.

When my boss resigned in 1999 the Trust gave me the opportunity to manage the farm. Because my main area was the cane, I had to learn very quickly about growing trees.

I recently resigned from Peirsons in May 2016 but over the years working there, I had managed to increase the total area of avocados from 14ha to 90ha.

I'm now at my own place with two other partners at AvosRus at Farnsfield on 30ha with more than 5300 trees.

What prompted you to become an avocado farmer? What do you enjoy most about being an avocado farmer?

I enjoy the whole process of each stage from flowering to pruning.

Each year the trees bring different challenges and that's what I like about avocado farming – it keeps you on your toes.

What varieties of avocado do you grow? What variety do you prefer to grow and why?

This farm has 70 per cent Hass, 30 per cent Shepard. I like Hass as it has more consistent yields, but I like the canopy management side with the Shepards.

Having both varieties helps with an extended picking season.

What makes your avocados unique?

The "6 Ps": "Proper Preparation Prevents Piss Poor Performance" (can I say that?)

Are there any growing practices you use that are different to standard growing practices (that you would like to share)?

A lot of focus and effort over the last four years has gone into soil health.

Having healthy soil gives you a healthy root system. This gives you a healthier tree and in turn your fruit is larger which gives you more tonnes/ha.

I use a good compost and good food source to host microbes such as molasses and liquid fish. The secret is to build up the microbes in the soil to keep the quality of the soil at its best.

What is unique about growing avocados in your region/on your farm? What are the biggest issues affecting avocado growers in your region?

Having the perfect climate helps.

Over supply is one of the main issues I believe growers face in the future. Also potentially the chain could also be affected by poor communication between farmers, packhouses and supermarkets.

What's the best advice you would give to someone who has just started/entered growing avocados as a business?

Once the honeymoon period is over (after year four) the work really begins in managing your orchard.

Do you have a favourite avocado recipe? What is it?

For brekky, half an avocado, crushed ice, lychees (or mango) and the added juice blended to make a smoothie.

For dinner, mashed avocado mixed with a tablespoon of sweet chilli sauce smothered on a rib fillet steak. Bloody beautiful!!

Complete the following sentence:

I'm a member because... Avocados Australia has been working hard for our growers providing strong industry leadership over the years. Our board members and the team in at the office show great leadership and work very hard to support and promote our industry – we've got a great package.





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Bloomin Blackbutt Avocado Festival

bound for bigger things

About 5000 people headed to Blackbutt in September for the Bloomin' Blackbutt Avocado Festival this year according to festival organiser Jeff Connor.

The Bloomin' Beautiful Blackbutt Avocado Festival, this year held on 10 and 11 September, celebrated all things Blackbutt in particular its "bloomin' beautiful" Blackbutt avocados.

Bloomin' Beautiful Blackbutt Festival chairman Jeff Connor said over the two days, festival goers had the opportunity to learn how to cook and eat avocados and also competed in the avocado roll competition.

"The feedback we had from festival goers was all very positive," he said.

"People liked the change of focus to avocados so next year's event will increase that focus and will include more avocado-themed events and stalls.

"We're thinking of more avocado recipe competitions, guacamole competitions and more novelty events such as avo tossing or avo cricket – stay tuned as our avo team will be coming up with more concepts which will be announced in the lead up to next year's event."



Above:
Alvin the
Avocado at
the Festival



The Kransky Sisters headlined at the Festival

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Jason Ford from Ford on Food featured avocado recipes at the festival

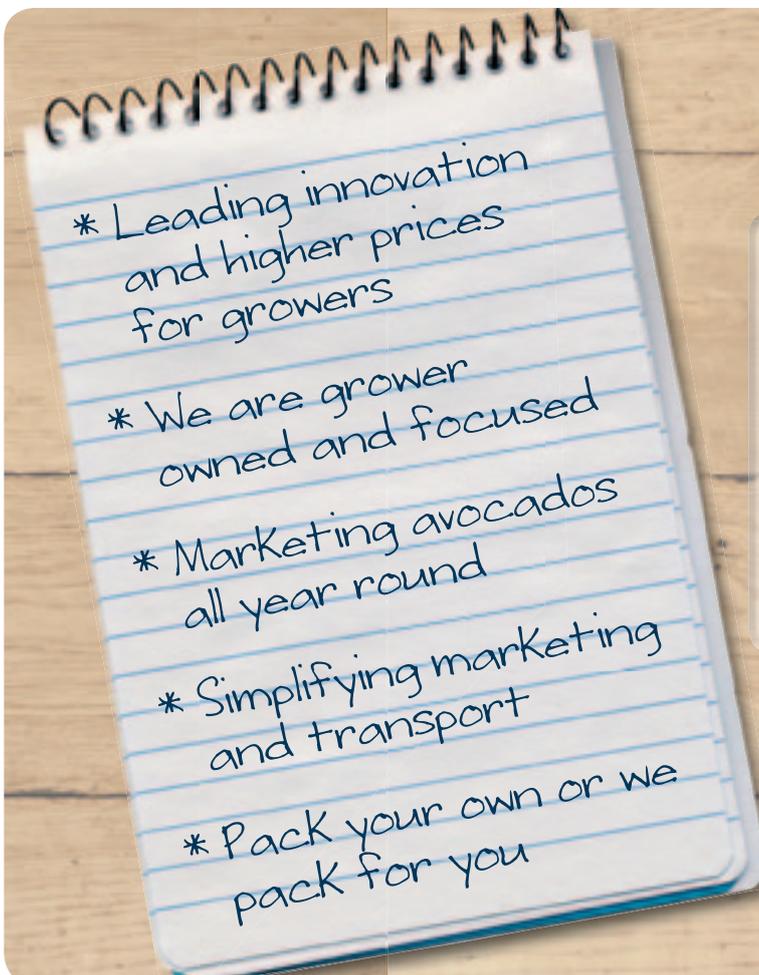
The Festival included live music, street entertainment, free kids' activities, historical guided tours, grand street parade and this year's headline event, The Kransky Sisters and Topology presented Tunes from the Tube. Specific avocado-featured activities included cooking demonstrations from Jason Ford – Ford on Food, the Avocado Roll competition, grafting avocado tree demonstrations, trees and fruit for sale at the market stalls, avocado products including hand creams and oils at the Hand Made in the South Burnett feature and local businesses had included avocado on the menu in both savouries and sweets.

Mr Connor said the event team used social media to market the event, targeting rail trail users and the grey nomads as well as family day-trippers.

He also flagged a name change for the event.

"This year we went from being known as the *Bloomin' Beautiful Blackbutt Festival* to the ***Bloomin' Beautiful Avocado Festival*** and next year onwards we're planning to become known as ***The Blackbutt Avocado Festival***, hosted by the Bloomin' Beautiful Festival Inc," he said.

Mr Connor said the group was able to host the festival because of the local growers who contributed funds, avocados, and photo opportunities.



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Hort Innovation Marketing Update

By Hort Innovation Marketing Manager, Claire Tindale-Penning

A strong focus for the past two quarters around creating relevant content on the social platforms of Facebook and Instagram is paying off.

Focusing on the inspiring meal possibilities of avocados that “avocado feeling” and “occasions with avocados”, has resulted in some great engagement with consumers. We are seeing consumers more actively sharing their recipe ideas, tips for amending our recipes and suggestions to other avocado lovers about uses.

This sort of dialogue from our consumers is so valuable, as it means that they are acting as our advocates, which is the very best type of consumer to have.

Social Media

The strategic decision to target those interested in a “healthy lifestyle” saw reach almost double on Facebook Year on Year for July 16 with 968,500 people seeing the Facebook posts.

This has meant that the cost per thousand people who saw the posts on either Facebook or Instagram has gone down, which is excellent for budget effectiveness.

Consumer attitude for purchasing avocados has been strong over the quarter, with not only the obvious “I’ll try that recipe tonight” statements, but actual photographic evidence that they did indeed cook the meal.



Insights into the demographics of our Facebook audience have shown an increase in engagement amongst men up 3 per cent month on month with the main increase being in the 35+ age group.

Our Top Performing content for August was the Lemon Avocado Meringue video content, which delivered an Engagement Rate of 23.66 per cent and had over 120,000 in total engagements (Engagement = the number of interactions people have with your content (i.e. likes, comments, shares, retweets, etc.)

Our second best performing content with regard to Engagement Rate at 5.07per cent was the ‘Avocado, Salami & Semi-Dried Tomato Focaccia’ ad which put an Italian twist on a comfort food favourite, the toastie.

In third place with an engagement rate of 3.27 per cent, the ‘Beef Mince and Avocado Pizza’ made mouths water with need to taste. By keeping with the ‘simple, delicious, droolworthy’ model, the post gave fans a delicious and filling yet extremely simple recipe with all of their favourite things... especially avocado!

Sometimes things don’t turn out how you think they might on social media and our post on the Olympic themed “Rio Green avocado smoothie” demonstrated just that. While it didn’t excite the audience wanting to try it, share the recipe, or like it, it did drive the most social traffic to the website for the month of August. That’s a great result in the end.



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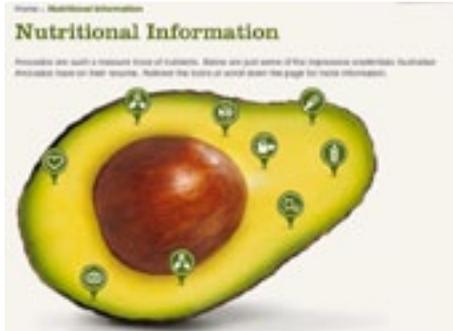
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Hort Innovation Marketing Update continued

Website

There was a large increase in social referral traffic with 45 per cent of all visits to the website

(there were 45,204 visits in July) driven there by recipe links. This result really demonstrates the value of recipe-based content for enticing consumers to find out more about avocados.



Targeting consumers that were interested in a healthy lifestyle has paid off with the Nutritional Information page being the most visited web page in August with 4,446 page views.

This same page recorded an average of two minutes spent on the page which shows the interest in the community around health and wellbeing and further supports the strategy to really target this audience.

Television

September and October are one of the most exciting times for television as all networks bring out some of the years' strongest programming. TV audiences at this time are expected to be higher than during the July Avocados campaign.

Kicking off the week commencing 18 September and running through to 30 November, we have picked the highest rating shows to run our ad alongside; the launch episode of The Bachelorette Australia (in every metro market) and The Block.

After a successful collaboration with the SBS Food Network in July, we tapped into the station again in September.

Food Network serves up a buffet of meal inspiring programming, with the intention of getting taste buds tingling and avocados onto more shopping lists.

Online commercials

The TV ad will also run across Video on Demand on both mobile and desktop platforms with a number of different targeting strategies employed. Contextual placements for instance, means placing the ad around related topics such as food, specifically targeting segments such as females and parents, placing the ad around Premium Catch Up TV and positioning alongside Lifestyle sites to capture like-minded, health and wellbeing consumers.



Digital

Between 22 September and 21 December, an Australian Avocados custom content series titled #NeedMoreAvocados will be broadcast across a collection of female focused digital properties such as Momtastic, She Knows and The Fashion Spot.

LOVE Avocados?

You'll
LOVE
 our **FREE** recipes



The digital executions across these platforms are built around the messaging of "Love avocados- then you'll love our free recipes" with a button to click through to the avocados website.

Looking ahead – End of year and Christmas season

The focus on 'simple, delicious and droolworthy' avocado meals will continue.

Our audience really responds to that and it supports the strategy to offer inspiring and innovative ways to use avocados every day.

Beautiful images of avocados dishes will continue – after all, we eat with our eyes too.

With the weather warming up, the recipe ideas will focus on those warmer day picnic ideas, bbq salads and lunches and fresh, healthy meal options.

Ongoing monitoring of the website traffic in regards to social referral will assist in dictating content and stimulate new content opportunities.

This particular segment of the audience interested in health and wellbeing will continue to be tapped and new content focusing in this area will be generated.

With the continued value that video brings, we will look to generate more video content over the coming months to take advantage of this voice to consumers.

All in all, exciting times ahead and many chances to connect with consumers and make avocados part of their everyday meals in new and different ways.



New Packhouse and Wholesale Management training modules on BPR

Two new training modules have been uploaded on Avocados Australia's Best Practice Resource – the Packhouse Training Module and the Wholesale Management Module.

The Packhouse Training Module

Once fruit in the orchard is mature and harvesting has started, the next step in the supply chain process is the grading, packing and dispatching of fruit to customers.

Managing the packhouse process well is important as it can have a significant impact on fruit quality, presentation of product for the market and consequently the returns received by the packer and grower.

This module looks at the various aspects of the packing process, especially in relation to fruit quality. It includes:

- The receive process - assessing and checking fruit
- Storing and handling fruit
- Grading, packing and waste assessment
- Fruit quality issues
- Dispatching fruit.

The module discusses in particular handling fruit, storage, grading and packing. It also includes a video on reject bin

analysis and provides templates for download.

By the end of the module growers and packers should be aware of practices that can be adopted in the packhouse to improve business performance and minimise quality loss at each step in the grading, packing and dispatch process.

The Wholesale Management Module

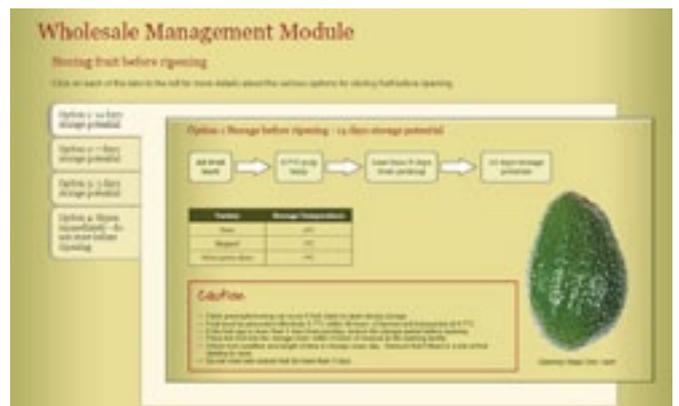
Successfully managing fruit through the wholesaling process plays an important role in the quality of the final product presented to the consumer and what they are prepared to pay.

This module looks at the various steps and aspects of supply chain management at the wholesale level and their importance in relation to fruit quality.

This includes:

- The receive process - assessing and checking fruit
- Storing and handling fruit
- Ripening fruit
- Fruit quality issues
- Displaying and dispatching fruit.

By the end of the module readers should be aware of how to minimise quality loss through the wholesaling process.



Qualicado Wholesaler workshops notch up record attendances

The final series of Qualicado wholesaler workshops were held in August in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane (Perth was held in June).

This year's wholesalers' program, which saw some of the strongest attendance levels ever, was split into two shorter sessions.

The first session, the 'Industry Update', provided a higher level snapshot of what is happening in the industry, in regard to production trends, supply issues, future export opportunities, relevant industry R&D etc.

The second session, the 'Technical Update', provided a more detailed look at technical issues related to avocado supply chain management, including the latest research findings regarding fruit management to maximise quality, future research and industry support.

Most attended both sessions.

The role of Infocado was also discussed, and all wholesalers were encouraged to participate in the program.

Participant feedback confirmed the value of this industry contact.

The wholesale/ripeners sector of the avocado supply chain is an integral part of the industry and we need to continue to engage and communicate effectively with this sector, at an industry level.

Best Practice Resource includes WHS information

October is National Safe Work Month

Some readers may not be aware that Avocados Australia's Best Practice Resource contains information about managing Work Health and Safety (WHS).

These pages have been developed to assist avocado growers and packers in managing WHS and to meet legal obligations.

They provide practical resources and information such as safety guides, induction templates, hazard checklists and management tools such as the Avocado Growing & Packing: A Practical Safety Guide, the WHS Implementation Checklist and the WHS Policy and Plan template.

These materials were developed with assistance from the Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety.

The BPR also provides instruction on how to use the resources on the website as well as links to additional WHS documents and State and National WHS offices.

Log in to Avocados Australia's Best Practice Resource to view the Manage WHS section.

If you are not already registered in the BPR, visit the industry website at www.avocado.org.au, go to the Best Practice tab and click on Apply for Access.



Central Queensland and Tristate Qualicado workshops gather crowds

Both of the final Qualicado Growers' Workshops in this year's program saw increased numbers attending the sessions in the Tri-state and Central Queensland's growing regions.

Tristate Qualicado

Avocados Australia's Tri State Qualicado workshop had record numbers of attendees willing to brave the chilly packhouse to catch up on the latest industry information.

Attendees travelled from as far away as Perth, the Sunshine Coast and Tasmania to the Marr family's property at Alfred Elms Road, Trentham Cliffs, NSW.

Avocados Australia's CEO John Tyas said it was great to see so many turn out for the day.

"This day was particularly special as we presented long-time

grower Colin Fechner with our Avocados Australia Order of Merit award for his many years of hard work for the industry," Mr Tyas said. (See page 25 to read the article about Colin's award)

"Obviously we're pleased our industry sees the value in these workshops as they not only provide an opportunity for growers and the industry to learn about the latest trends, but they're also great networking opportunities and a chance to catch up with old friends," Mr Tyas said.

"For those who travelled to this event, it also provides an opportunity to see what growers are doing in different regions and take those insights home to your own business.

"Thanks must go to the Marr family for opening their gates to us and showing us around – it's fabulous to be able to see how the climate changes growing practices so dramatically here in the south."



John Tyas with three generations of the Marr family at their Tristate orchards.



Marr Family Property



High density planting on show at DAFQ in Bundaberg

Central Queensland Qualicado

Central Queensland's Qualicado workshop finished the grower workshop series off in top style with record numbers for the full program throughout the country.

More than 80 people attended the workshop, held at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Queensland facility in Bundaberg.

Growers from as far away as Southern Queensland and Central New South Wales enjoyed the two field walks during the day to inspect the range of plantings at different densities and in particular, the high density, high productivity trellis plantings.

Speakers for the day included Avocados Australia's John Tyas, DAFQ's Dr John Wilke, University of New England's A/Prof Andrew Robson, as well as Helen Hofman, Kaila Ridgeway, Noel Ainsworth and Simon Newett all from DAFQ.

Dr Brad Howlett from Plant and Food Research and Tim Archibald from Hort Innovation also gave presentations on the day.

Avocados Australia CEO John Tyas said the day had been a great opportunity to see how the work was progressing.

"I'd like to thank DAFQ Bundaberg staff for providing this venue to us and for taking us through the field trials," Mr Tyas said.

"It's a fabulous chance for many growers to see cutting edge research first-hand and get a feel for what the future may hold."

The day also saw some media attention with the ABC and Bundaberg News Mail interviewing Mr Tyas and local growers.

"The Bundaberg reporters were very interested from a local perspective in what was being covered at the Workshop, as well as the current state of the industry," Mr Tyas said.

The presentations from these workshops and the others throughout the year are available online at Avocados Australia's Best Practice Resource.



Above - enjoying a chilly field walk at the Marr family property



DAFQ's Dr John Wilke discusses various plantation densities being studied.

No such thing as bad publicity for avocado industry, amid row over home ownership

Source: ABC QLD Country Hour

By Marty McCarthy and Kallee Buchanan

The avocado industry is enjoying the new attention the fruit is getting, following accusations young Australians are being priced out of the property market because they spend too much money on brunch.

"I have seen young people order smashed avocado with crumbled feta on five-grain toasted bread at \$22 a pop and more," KPMG partner and columnist Bernard Salt wrote in the Weekend Australian.

"I can afford to eat this for lunch because I am middle-aged and have raised my family. But how can young people afford to eat like this?"

It seems the avocado just can't cop a break at the moment.

Earlier this year the fruit was criticised for being too expensive, when prices went up to \$4 an avocado.

John Tyas from Avocados Australia said the recent attack on avocados was completely unprovoked, but the industry was loving the attention nonetheless.

"I think it's fabulous, obviously avocados have been caught in the crossfire of this debate but we don't mind because it's good publicity," he said.

Mr Tyas said Salt's comments were indicative of the fact consumers now see avocados as a weekly staple, rather than a luxury item.

"We are seeing people consume them all year round because they tick all the boxes, they're nutritious, delicious and versatile," he said.

"There are restaurants and cafes that are cashing in on the great demand for avocados.

"I think you can have your cake and eat it too, or should I say, have your home deposit and eat avocados too.

"Because if you can't afford to eat out, you can buy avocados cheaply at the greengrocer or supermarket and have it however you want."

Industry tackles supply issues

Mr Tyas said there would be plenty of avocados on the market for the rest of the year, but supply might drop off again at the start of next year.

"It sort of happens in that January, February and March period where supply is lighter but at the moment we have plenty of product flowing through from Australia and New Zealand," he said.

"When you get seasonal hiccups, like rain, you need to stop harvesting and you get a slowdown, but there is still plenty of fruit between now and Christmas to come through the system."

During the past 20 years, Australia's avocado production has increased from 18,000 tonnes a year to nearly 68,500 tonnes in 2015.

The high prices and demand encouraged farmers to plant more trees.

"There are lots of trees in the ground, but about 25 per cent of the trees in the ground are yet to come into their full production so there is big supply coming," Mr Tyas said.

"There are also new trees going in the ground every year, so I think in years to come there won't be any real concerns about a shortage of supply."

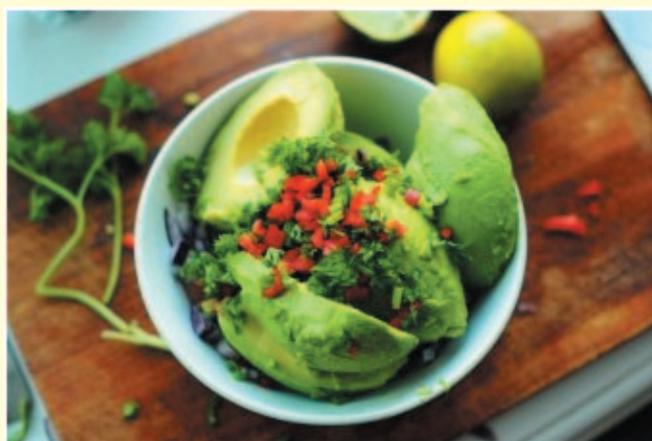


PHOTO: The avocado industry is loving the current home ownership debate. (Flickr: Ivan Dervisevic)



Snapshots - International Avocado Research Update

These snapshots are compiled from abstracts of published scientific papers collated in the CAB Direct database and from research presentations delivered at the 2015 World Avocado Conference (Peru).

Dates provided reflect the date research was published or presented.

If you would like a copy of the abstract related to these snapshots please contact Jenny Margetts, P2P Business Solutions, at jmargetts@bigpond.com or 0418215276.

Production

Identification of new avocado thrip species in Central/ South America

Australia (2016): Following recent molecular studies on avocado thrips, a new species is described from Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Colombia from the young leaves of avocado. *Scirtothrips hansonii* sp.n. is closely related to the Californian pest, *S. perseae*, and also to *S. strictus* from Costa Rica that remains known from a single female.

Use of PGRs to increase fruit retention and size and reduced new shoot vigour

Mexico (2015): Bearing 'Mendez' avocado trees were sprayed with paclobutrazol or paclobutrazol plus potassium nitrate (KNO₃) when the inflorescences were developing and flowering. The overall aim was to reduce the vigour of the new shoots arising after flowering (final length from 35 to 23 cm, or 33%), and to increase fruit size (120 to 175 g, or 46%). Fruit number was not reduced, and hence yield was increased. The specific effect of the addition of KNO₃ to paclobutrazol in spraying, was an increase in number of fruits retained until harvest (0.57 to 0.75 fruits per inflorescence, or 32%). The research indicated marked benefit to spray applying KNO₃ with growth retardant during flowering to increase tree yield.

Investigations into factors limiting pollination of avocado in New Zealand

New Zealand (2015): To investigate whether poor pollination contributes to irregular bearing and low yields in NZ orchards, the relative contribution of different pollinator species, the importance of pollinisers, and the effect of cold temperatures on flowering and pollination was assessed. Pollen deposition on stigmas from single pollinator visits differed significantly between species, such as black hover flies, honey bees and March flies. Yields declined with increasing distance from pollinisers in some years, and distance to polliniser had an overall significant negative effect on mean annual yields. Using time-lapse cameras, it was discovered that female 'Hass' flowers stay open all night following previous overnight temperatures of 6°C or below. Numerous fly, moth and beetle species visit avocado flowers at night and these were recorded carrying avocado pollen. Fruit set rates are not consistent throughout the

flowering season and fruit set can occur during colder periods when overnight temperatures are less than 11°C. By matching the optimum times for pollination with the activity patterns of effective pollinators, the aim is to enable growers to optimise their pollination.

Effect of pollinisers

Chile (2015): The need for pollinisers to obtain higher crops on Hass avocados has been proved in different countries. The trial was carried in a Hass avocado orchard with 5,5% of Edranol as pollinisers, planted at 3x3m. To evaluate the effect of different percentage of polliniser trees were netted so they were isolated from the rest of the orchard. Treatments were: T0: No nets, 5,5% polliniser under nets the following treatments: T1: 12 Hass and 0 Edranol; T2: 11 Hass and 1 Edranol and T3: 10 Hass and 2 Edranol. A randomised block design was used for the trial. Flowering, crop and fruit size were evaluated. Although flowering, crop and fruit sizes differed from year to year. The results clearly showed that the treatment without pollinisers produced the lightest crop and the treatments with pollinisers, despite having higher crops, also produced increased fruit size.

Pre-harvest / Postharvest

Avocado Rot Prediction

New Zealand (2015): Technology to predict the rot potential of avocado fruit in the marketplace before harvest offers several benefits for NZ exporters. Fruit with low rot and increased storage life potential is more suitable for distant markets (where length of time in the supply chain is significant) and in markets where there is poor infrastructure or knowledge to manage avocados effectively. Being able to select robust fruit for such supply chains alleviates potential problems. This research aimed to validate the predictive relationship between fungal populations of leaves and fruit rots. A survey of 32 avocado orchards throughout the three major growing regions of New Zealand was conducted in the 2012/13 season to validate the prediction of fruit rots at harvest. The model predicted 80% and 82% of the variation in the data for the Whangarei and Bay of Plenty districts, respectively. In the 2014/15 season leaves were sampled from 100 trees in two avocado orchards. DNA was extracted from leaves and a qPCR analysis of fungal populations was conducted. The variability in the distribution of qPCR crossing thresholds (Ct values) in each orchard was determined using spatial analysis and GPS coordinates. An optimal sampling strategy was designed to maximise the robustness of using Ct values to predict fruit rots at harvest on avocados harvested from individual orchards.

De-synchronization of 'Hass' avocado fruit skin colour with ripening

South Africa (2015): 'Hass' avocado fruit are characterized by a change in skin colour from green to purple black after harvesting as indicative of ripening. Recently, markets importing South African 'Hass' avocado fruits have been complaining about skin

colour not changing to purple/black during ripening. Therefore, the aim of this research was to investigate pre- and postharvest factors leading to 'Hass' skin colour being de-synchronized with softening during ripening.

The results showed that fruits grown on lower [cooler] slopes in the Kiepersol area (SA) showed significantly higher de-synchronized colouring. Furthermore, lower ripening temperature (16 and 21°C) significantly affected colouring of Hass avocado fruit when compared with higher ripening temperature (25°C). In addition, colour de-synchronization was mainly associated with early-season fruit harvest from lower slopes which further showed higher internal and external cold damage.

New technology to manage ripening of climacteric produce

USA (2016): Controlled ripening of climacteric fruits, such as bananas and avocados, is a critical step to provide consumers with high-quality products while reducing postharvest losses. Once ripening is initiated, fruit undergoes irreversible changes that lead to rapid quality loss and decay if not consumed within a short window of time. Therefore, technologies to slow the ripening process after its onset or to stimulate ripening immediately before consumption are in high demand. In this study, a solid porous metal-organic framework (MOF) to encapsulate gaseous ethylene for subsequent release was

developed. The feasibility of this technology for on-demand stimulated ripening of bananas and avocados was evaluated. It was placed inside sealed containers with pre-climacteric bananas and avocados stored at 16°C. Results showed that this MOF-ethylene significantly accelerated the ripening-related colour and firmness changes of treated fruit. This result suggests that this technology could be used for postharvest application to stimulate ripening just before the point of consumption.

Health

Post-ingestive effects of avocados in meals on satiety and gastric hormone blood levels

USA (2015): The addition of $\approx\frac{1}{2}$ of a Hass avocado to a lunch meal favourably increased self-reported satisfaction and reduced the desire to eat over a subsequent 3hr and 5hr period in overweight adults. The favourable biological changes in insulin levels observed over 3h after consumption of the avocado inclusive lunch test meal is worthy of future exploration in a long-term feeding study among persons with insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes to determine if avocado intake can favourably influence measures of glucose homeostasis and gastric hormone release. The increase in post-ingestive leptin levels that we observed also deserves further investigation to provide additional insight into the role of avocado intake in energy balance and weight management.



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News from Around the World

News from Around the World contains reproduced articles that have been published by various international news sources.

Laurel wilt has hurt Florida's avocado groves

Source: FreshPlaza

Florida green skin avocados yields are not where they should be, although fruit quality is good.

"Unfortunately this year's crop is down," said Steve Kiral of Uncle Matt's Organic.

"The fruit quality that we have is good - there's certainly no problem as far as (that) and demand remains good.

"We don't have a huge supply right now because of the Laurel Wilt disease that's impacting the south Florida area."

The invasive ambrosia beetle has been infecting the state's groves - both organic and conventionally grown avocados.

Being an organic farm has affected treatments for the disease, making it hard to eradicate the pest.

"There are some organic sprays but short of that until somebody comes up with a cure in a few more years it could (potentially) wipe out the avocado industry in the Redlands district down in south Florida," said Kiral.

Competing with traditional, smaller fruit such as the Hass variety has required a lot of consumer education, is something Kiral feels they've done a very good job with.

The supply he has is good to a few select customers.

"Unfortunately I don't see any growth potential until this disease (is cured)," he said.

Digital content influences avocado purchases

Source: FreshPlaza.com

Retailers and marketers can take advantage of digital and social media to drive Hass avocado sales. The Hass Avocado Board's newly released qualitative research, Digital and Social Media Influence on Shopping Behaviors, explores digital and social media platforms and how they can be used to optimize avocado marketing strategies.

The study shows that digital content, especially content shared on social media, is an integral part of shoppers' everyday lives.

Throughout their day, shoppers toggle their attention across different sources, including apps, emails and internet searches, and it's important to consumers to feel connected and in-the-know.

"This study helps guide marketers and retailers to plan their avocado marketing strategies by demonstrating how to get the



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most out of digital and social media to influence the avocado shopper," explains Emiliano Escobedo, executive director of the Hass Avocado Board.

"Digital avocado content that captivates, educates and inspires can build shopper engagement and influence use and purchase of Hass avocados."

Captivating the shopper is one of the most important aspects of digital content. Successful avocado-centric content should pique shopper interest by featuring quality photography.

When an image features avocados, it is important that the color be bright and prominent to connote freshness.

Colorful and visually appealing media channels are more likely to captivate shoppers. Pinterest and Instagram are visually appealing social media sites because of their eye catching layout, presentation and appetizing recipes.

Bright colors, good layout and clever presentation are all motivating attributes that help build shopper engagement and influence purchase.

Retailers and marketers can benefit from building awareness of the nutritional benefits and unique ways to prepare avocados to increase interest and use, which leads to purchases.

Featuring avocados in digital circulars increases avocado visibility and adding links to "find out more" about the product can increase knowledge and interest in eating and serving dishes with avocados. Shoppers also rely on retailer apps, digital circulars and websites for information about retailer promotions and in-season produce.

Shoppers are interested in new ways to use avocados, and recipe ideas featuring avocados, drive shopping trips.

Additionally, incorporating avocados into foods or dishes that consumers already like is particularly appealing. Shoppers find inspiration on social media sites, such as Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram.

They are also open to informational emails, such as a "featured ingredient" email with preparation instructions, recipes and nutritional content.

To uncover more insights on how shoppers use and are influenced by digital and social media along their food shopping journey, and how marketers and retailers can take advantage of the media to drive Hass avocado sales, visit hassavocado.com/retail to read the full report.

Mexican avocado industry responds to illegal deforestation reports

Source: FreshFruitPortal.com

The Avocado Producers and Exporting Packers Association of Mexico (APEAM) and the Michoacán government have set an action plan in motion to prevent illegal deforestation, in the wake of critical international press coverage on the sector's



Grower Member Application Form

Avocados Australia Limited

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and/or trading name:

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Key contacts:

Preferred address
(postal):

Address of property
(if different):

Contact Details

Business phone:

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Fax:

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Grower Member Application Form continued

Corporate Structure

How would you describe the nature of your operations (please tick)?

- Individual Partnership Company
 Trust Lessee Cooperative
 Other (please specify) _____

Please indicate the area of property that you crop for avocados (please tick)

- 0.5 - 5 ha 6-19 ha 20-49 ha
 50-99 ha 100-149 ha 150-199 ha
 200-499 ha 500 ha+

Payment Options

Grower Membership of Avocados Australia is **\$250 pa** (+ GST).

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News from Around the World continued

environmental impact.

Mexican National Institute for Forestry, Farming and Fisheries Research researcher Mario Tapia Vargas recently told AP that in response to high prices for the fruit, farmers had been thinning out forest canopy to plant young avocado trees.

“Even where they aren’t visibly cutting down forest, there are avocados growing underneath (the pine boughs), and sooner or later they’ll cut down the pines completely,” Tapia Vargas was quoted as saying.

This is even more relevant considering these forests are an important wintering ground for the Monarch butterfly, while Greenpeace Mexico has also been critical of deforestation’s and increased agriculture’s impact on water supplies for the region, as well as the effects of pesticide residues.

In a release, APEAM said while the sector had expanded significantly to meet growing demand, the organization had been a supporter of environmental initiatives and had led an extensive reforestation program planting more than 500,000 pine trees throughout the state in recent years.

“The reforestation program continues to expand with 280,000 trees planned for 2017 and 320,000 for 2018 with trees already being grown in the nursery,” APEAM said.

“To protect against illegal deforestation, APEAM has called on government authorities to enforce the law on this issue.”

Last week, this culminated in a deal with the government to set agricultural and environmental limits to future expansion of the avocado area, as determined by academic institutions such as Michoacán State University and the National School of Agriculture Chapingo, among other respected organizations.

“A formal environmental board will also be established to study the impact of avocado production on the region and provide recommended action to further protect the natural environment,” APEAM said.

“The environmental board will also establish certification guidelines to recognize avocados that are produced under the highest environmental standards. APEAM will continue to provide updates on the progress of this initiative.”



Avocado shortage pushes up prices

Source: FreshPlaza

A shortage of avocados from Mexico is causing prices, already above normal all summer, to soar to astronomical levels, according to Southern California suppliers. On Monday, 10 Oct., Santa Ana-based Ingardia Bros. Produce Inc. said prices are hovering at \$76 a case, the highest the company has seen in three decades.

"It's very, very critical right now," Ingardia produce buyer Cruz Sandoval said.

A poor growing season in California had led to a surge in prices, which have more than doubled from last year.

With the California avocado season coming to a close, purveyors like Ingardia were hoping for some relief from growers in Mexico. But Sandoval said there are not enough avocados being picked south of the border to meet demand.

It's unclear what is causing the shortage.

Shipments from Mexico, according to data by Hass Avocado Board., have plummeted compared with a year ago. For the week of Oct. 11, 2015, the U.S. received 44.3 million pounds of avocados from Mexico. For the week of Oct. 9, Hass projected shipments from Mexico would reach 42.9 million pounds; instead shipments recorded the week of Oct. 2 reached only 22.9 million pounds.

Sandoval said he's heard Mexican growers are "holding out for more money because the California season is running dry, and there's no other sources."

In the meantime, local suppliers and restaurant owners say the problem is real.

Phil Henry, president of Escondido-based Henry Avocado Corp., said his company is facing "extreme shortage."

"Last week, we received less than one-third of the volume we need to supply demand, and this week is not starting any better," he said Monday in an email. "In addition, we are paying significantly more for whatever shipments we do receive."

Ingardia sold cases – about 40 to 48 avocados – for \$50 to \$60 throughout the summer. As supplies shifted to Mexico last week, prices jumped to \$65 a case, up \$25 to \$35 from a year ago. Over the weekend, Ingardia ordered its usual shipment of 240 cases. On Monday, the warehouse received 80 cases. Sandoval scrambled, calling alternate suppliers hoping to get his hands on the fruit. "It's ridiculous. I'm scared I won't get what I need," he said.

On the retail side, the average unit price of avocados has gone up nearly 20 cents between December and Sept. 4, according to the latest prices reported by the Hass Avocado Board.

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