

# avoco news



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## Directors' Review

# Asia challenge accepted

Directors JOHN CARROLL and ALISTAIR YOUNG remain confident about the opportunities in Asia and the ability for AVANZA to grow its market share.

**I**t was Avoco's eighth year in business and our team called on all its experience to extract as much value from the markets as we could. Our industry leadership shone through and we were able to successfully navigate our way through the season to deliver outstanding Orchard Gate Returns. We believe growers will be delighted by the results. These came about through enormous efforts from our post-harvest partners, our logistics team and our fruit handlers on the other side of the Tasman. Everyone performed incredibly well under pressure and we owe a huge thank you to all those who worked so hard for Avoco and our industry.

We were certainly fortunate to have Australia as our closest market. While shipping across the Tasman was very challenging, we achieved mostly positive outcomes. With Australia's domestic fruit volumes down on previous years, demand for New Zealand avocados was high.

While it's true that next season Western Australia will produce a heavy crop, we remain positive about the support we have from major Australian retailers for our fruit. They view us as long-term business partners and value the programmes we can supply in both years of high and low volume.

Next season, we estimate we'll have about 2.8 million trays of fruit available for export, which is a similar volume to 2020-21. In the face of a heavy Australian crop, we're not planning that our Australian retail programme will be the same size as last year. Instead, we will revert to supporting Asia with greater volumes in what we anticipate should be a more 'normal' season.

## CONFIDENCE IN ASIA

It's important to remember that our relationship with the AVANZA brand began in 2001. We recognised the value in developing markets in Asia as a way to avoid swamping the Australian market with fruit when crop volumes were high. Twenty years on, it continues to be a valid market strategy. The events of last year are not regarded as 'the norm' and we continue to feel optimistic about the opportunities we see in Asia.

There's no doubt, however, that shipping will continue to present challenges. Many people already have a negative view of how global sea freight shipping will perform, and this is an issue we will be monitoring closely. On the flipside, we expect there will be more air freight opportunities and, while costly, they are likely to be an important part of our plans to service our Asian customers.

While containing the spread of COVID-19 continues to be a priority for many countries we



do business with, the roll-out of various vaccines has lifted the level of confidence that many people have in overcoming the virus' threat. Healthy, ready-to-eat produce remains in high demand and it's our belief that we'll see a return to more stable consumer shopping behaviour over the coming months.

## QUALITY FOCUS CONTINUES

Planning for next season started as early as February and, with international travel still restricted, we've continued to meet with our customers via 'Zoom'. Naturally, we'd prefer

to 'press the flesh' and eyeball each other in person but this continues to be our reality for now. Everyone supplying Asia is in the same boat but we firmly believe that our export marketing experience gives us the upper hand. Our solid relationships with customers in Asia ensure that discussions are robust, transparent and productive. Everyone understands what needs to be achieved and this bodes well for a successful season.

The caveat to our success, however, is still fruit quality. All our markets have become more competitive in the past three years as producers

from multiple nations seek to capitalise on increased demand for avocados. Chile now has a footprint in Australia's wholesale market while in Asia, Peruvian fruit, in particular, is finding its way into the markets we supply in large volumes. Drier climates for growing avocados in South America mean fruit from Peru and Chile can withstand longer shipping times. Our growing conditions shorten the shelf life of our fruit after it's harvested, so we must continue to invest in practices that support quality right through the supply chain.

**To protect our strong position in Australia and ensure we can secure premium values in Asia, we need our fruit quality to perform.**

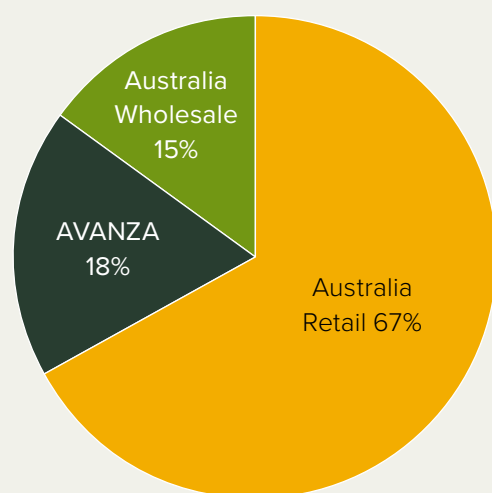
We consider Chilean fruit will have an uphill battle finding its way into the Australian retail market. Fruit from New Zealand and Australia is more appealing for retailers due to its freshness and for being locally-grown. However, to protect our strong position in Australia and ensure we can secure premium values in Asia, we need our fruit quality to perform. That doesn't start on the grading table but back in the orchard.

Our ongoing investment in fruit quality that started under the work led by Danni van der Heijden continues with the appointment of our new Technical Manager Richard Kok. He joins our team with a wealth of international experience that we know will benefit all Avoco growers.

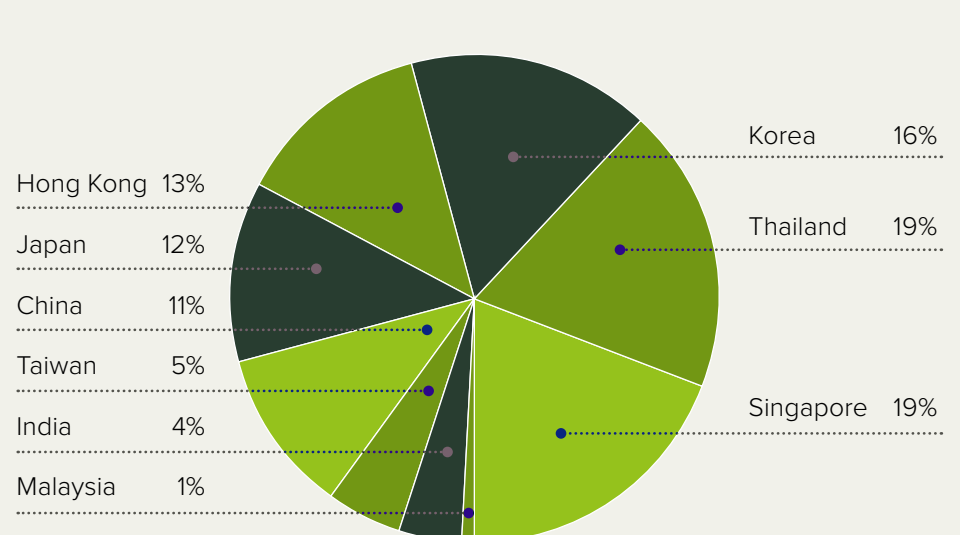
With New Zealand expected to produce greater volumes of avocados for export in the coming years, our fruit quality will become even more scrutinised on the global stage. We must continue to get it right.

All the best for a productive season. ■

## AVOCO FORECAST MARKET SPLIT 2021-22



## AVANZA FORECAST ALL MARKETS 2021-22





# Behind The Scenes

Your Avoco Grower Relationship Committee, led by chairman JOHN SCHNACKENBERG, reports on policy updates and issues important to growers and the supply group.

The Committee has met twice since my last report, in early March (delayed from mid-February due to the harvest running later and ongoing harvest, packing, shipping and logistics nightmares) and recently in mid-April. As a reminder, the purpose of this Committee is “To represent Avoco avocado growers by understanding, challenging when appropriate, and monitoring the export marketing and stewardship of grower returns to facilitate the best possible commercial outcomes for growers.” (Extract from AGRC Terms of Reference.)

As the season has progressed, we have been kept updated by the Avoco executive on our fruit quality on arrival into export markets and the status of fruit age. The former has been generally very good, but the variability



AGRC Chair, John Schnackenberg

of fruit age was a severe problem, to the point where a significant volume of fruit had to be culled from in-market inventories and discarded when exceeding fruit age expiry dates. Collateral damage for us, resulting from challenging COVID-19 disrupted shipping services.

Whilst a hit to the Pool, fortunately it has been a ‘big one’ this season, both in volume and values.

I expect by the time you read this you will have already received your ‘Finals’ pool information and payments, which on ‘the average’ are remarkably strong given this year’s challenges. More so if you have harvested after

the New Year, picking up very solid Late Season Harvest Incentives.

However, as someone said at a recent packer shed grower meeting, “Put some money under the mattress”. Why? No two seasons are the same.

This coming season, we face much more Australian-grown fruit in our key market which will likely have a softening effect on values in Australia. Accordingly, more of our fruit is planned to go to Asia under the AVANZA brand exposing us to challenging shipping and logistics issues, as well as increased competition from Peru, Chile and Mexico. Arguably, this is our new reality going forward as more fruit needs to go to Asia in coming years, albeit hopefully with more settled and consistent shipping, post-COVID-19.

At our last meeting we turned our minds to the various issues and consequences of our

supply volume to Avoco exceeding the crop estimates. The impact the late fruit had on extending harvest beyond our programmed delivery dates, the unforeseen need to sell volumes of export fruit on the domestic market, and finally the fiscal impact on the late season harvest incentive (cost per tray on all trays in the pool) for all fruit packed after 20 November, increasing incrementally each week from that date.

The Committee would appreciate receiving feedback from you on these issues.

Certainly, we will be giving full consideration to the mechanics of the late season harvest incentive at our June meeting as well as a likely confirmed ‘end-date’ for the Export Pool this coming season.

Happy pruning! ■

## AGRC COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Alistair Young	0274 929 486	alistair@southernproduce.co.nz
John Carroll	0274 959 388	JohnC@primor.co.nz
Hugh Moore	021 935 243	hugh@kauripak.co.nz
John Schnackenberg	021 731 437	jschnack@outlook.com
Ron Bailey	0274 524 538	baileyfarms@xtra.co.nz
Deon Cartwright	027 596 2963	deoncartwright@gmail.com
Ross Mutton	027 648 5577	ross.lesley@slingshot.co.nz
Terry Ridder	021 671 231	avocadosnz@gmail.com
Trevor Seal	07 552 4485	trevseal@xtra.co.nz
Malcolm Stratton	027 437 2610	malcolm.stratton@farmside.co.nz
Mark West	027 534 6349	m.k.west@xtra.co.nz

## Q&A

# Logan Whenuaroa

With an appreciation for the benefits of research and science, LOGAN WHENUAROA supports Apata growers to make better business decisions for their orchards.

**What does your role involve and what are you responsible for?**

My title is Grower Services and Technical Support. With this I do a mixture of client services and advise on anything orchard-related, ranging from new plantings and developments, nutrition, pruning etc. Also, on the side I handle our grower

comms, deliver a fortnightly newsletter, I'm involved in Apata orchard management and I coordinate the local market harvest.

**What were you doing before you worked at Apata?**

I spent the last few years as part of the Research



Logan Whenuaroa helps Apata's growers supply gold-standard fruit.

team at NZ Avocado (formally AIC). Prior to that, I worked as a landscaper and studied extramurally through Massey towards a B Agsci.

“... top-performing growers have a plan and purpose for what they’re doing on orchard and key measurables to benchmark against.”

**How did those roles prepare you for the work you do now?**

I don't think anything could have prepared me for last season! Working at the industry did give me a very broad overview of the industry and the research projects that were primarily focused on orchard. Moving to my new role at Apata, I was fortunate to have a good understanding of the whole supply chain and on-orchard issues faced by growers, so a lot of what I learnt was very transferable.

**What do the top performing growers all have in common?**

A fancy ute or SUV! Aside from doing the basics, i.e. pruning, fertilising, spraying and prioritising tree health, top-performing growers have a plan and purpose for what they're doing on orchard and key measurables to benchmark against. Orchard is a business and they make business decisions for the betterment of their orchard... and back pocket.

**When you talk to growers, what do they say is most important to them?**

It's different for everyone but I think most growers want to be communicated with because they value being informed and appreciate transparency, from both their packer and exporter. They want to see that their rep, packer, consultant, pruner, pickers, Avoco etc are working both hard and in unison to get the best result for them.

**When you're not working for Apata, how do you spend your free time?**

I'm a family man first, so on weekends you will often find me with my wife and young daughter having coffee, cake and a fluffy at a local café or playing at the park. Outside of that I really enjoy gardening, going to the gym and spending time with family and friends.

**Avocados are loved for their health benefits and versatility. How do you enjoy eating them?**

They go with almost anything, so I enjoy them complementary to the right meal. Avocado can take you from 7/10 to a 9/10! But hard to go past well-seasoned Avo on Toast.

**What do you love about horticulture and the avocado industry?**

I get a thrill out of finding or seeing that cartoonish-looking fruit that has the perfect shape, colour and is blemish-free. That's the goal or the gold standard we're trying to achieve. I also enjoy the job variety you get in horticulture. No two seasons are the same and every orchard is different, including the people and personalities (some good, some not as good). Finally, the opportunities and rewards that come to those who work hard – horticulture and avocados are great industries. ■



New Appointment

# Boosting our technical support to growers

Richard Kok joins Avoco’s Technical team this month after arriving in New Zealand from South Africa.

As Technical Manager, he will support the efforts of Danni van der Heijden, Jerome Hardy and Colin Partridge in improving fruit quality and grower best practices.

For the past nine years, Richard has worked at Westfalia Marketing Africa – part of the multinational Westfalia Fruit Group that supplies fresh and processed produce, including avocados, mangoes and lychees, to international markets through its vertically-integrated supply chain.

He has held various technical roles and, for the past 18 months, Richard was Westfalia’s Commercial Manager, based in Tzaneen.

While it was sad to farewell family, friends and colleagues in South Africa, Richard says joining Avoco is a chance to get back to his roots and passion for technical horticultural advice.

“It’s also a wonderful opportunity for my wife, Suzanne, and 20-month-old daughter, Mikaela, to expand their horizons,” he says.

The young family is now settling in to life in the Bay of Plenty.

“Suzanne and I love camping and being out in nature. There is no doubt that Mikaela is following suit. I also enjoy DIY projects, whether it be home improvements, woodwork, or steelwork. It brings a lot of satisfaction to me knowing that I was the one to do that or make that.”

## MAKING CONNECTIONS

Richard is also keen to use his time, fresh out of quarantine, to visit orchards and meet with growers. His exposure to crop production in South Africa and around the world has taught him how important it is to treat each grower as an individual.

“I’ve found it’s very rare to find one grower doing a certain practice the exact same way as another. So, what works for one, might not work for everyone,” says Richard.

“With that, it’s often best to stand back, listen and learn from each grower and from there, give guidance to possibly streamline and advise as to what other options there may be.

“It comes down to finding the best solution for that individual, under their conditions, to maximise efficiency, productivity, and quality.”

He’s also looking forward to learning more from growers about the nuances of New Zealand avocado production.

While most of South Africa’s production is under hot, summer rainfall and grown for the European market, New Zealand’s cooler, winter rain presents different climatic challenges. However, he expects Kiwi growers are ultimately looking to achieve the same consistent production goals as their peers in other parts of the world.

“All the main issues are the same: nutrition tree health, tree manipulation, disease control, quality management and picking strategies.

“Managing the nutrition correctly to be in line with the yield estimates as well as implementing good pruning techniques will allow for a less pronounced ‘on’ and ‘off’ year bearing cycle. Water management through modern irrigation systems and monitoring of soil moisture play a huge role in tree health, yield, and fruit quality.”

His early impression of New Zealand’s fruit quality is that it’s very high, but it’s only achieved



Richard, his wife Suzanne and daughter Mikaela are looking forward to embracing New Zealand's outdoor environment.

through good effort and management. Marginal production zones present unique challenges but they can be overcome, he says.

“The fact that New Zealand is supplying some of the highest quality-stringent markets is testament to its quality.”

“The fact that New Zealand is supplying some of the highest quality-stringent markets is testament to its quality.”

## TRAINING GROUND AT WESTFALIA

Working for Westfalia, the largest avocado company in the world, Richard was exposed to global production and Westfalia’s international customer base. Various roles saw him involved in everything from pre-plant recommendations to fertiliser and spray recommendations, pruning

and general orchard management, packhouse chemical and quality control, cold chain management inland and on vessels, as well as in-market fruit quality assessments and customer relations.

“I count myself as being very fortunate to have had such vast exposure within the global avocado industry.”

One of his most memorable highlights with Westfalia was being involved in the first ever exports of avocados out of Mozambique. On the technical front, he found land and established the first avocado orchards in the African nation and, a few years later, was present for the first avocados running over the pack line and placed in a container for export to Europe.

“It was quite an experience and I feel incredibly proud to have been part of it and watching the Mozambique avocado industry grow from the ground up.”

His international experience has taught him that people involved in horticulture are passionate about what they do the world over. Many growers have made long-term investments in their orchards and every season there’s new challenges and experiences to navigate.

He believes the avocado industry’s rapid growth also makes it very special.

“If you look at how the product has grown in popularity and value over the past 15 years, it is incredible. Yet the industry is still small enough to know many of the people from the various production and customer channels.”

Relationships are critically important in the industry and he is looking forward to getting to know growers and industry stakeholders in all the growing regions.

“I really do enjoy having the opportunity to have frequent interactions with the growers themselves and being able to bounce ideas off each other,” he says. “This allows us to build that relationship up over time.”

## DATA-DRIVEN FUTURE

Last year, the New Zealand avocado industry celebrated its 80th anniversary – a milestone that acknowledged the industry’s growth and its success in becoming more globally competitive as an exporter of premium high-value produce.

The increasing visibility of the avocado industry has led to strong investment in avocados in recent years, and NZ Avocado is projecting that by 2040, New Zealand could have 10,000 hectares of Hass avocados in the ground, generating net sales of \$1 billion.

To achieve that goal, Richard says the industry will become increasingly data-driven.

“The more data we have, the more we can analyse, the more trends we can identify and manage accordingly. In the not-so-distant future, we will have quite complicated systems housing large data sets to help manage our day-to-day orchard practices in a more efficient and precise way.” ■



What do you wish every avocado grower did on their orchard to support tree health and production?

My wish would be for every grower to understand the importance of water management and implement accordingly. Water is becoming a focus globally.

Water is a limited and valuable resource which we need to utilise to the best of our ability. Not only this but managing the water status of your soil and tree has a huge influence on your tree health, yield and quality.

# AVANZA markets 2020-21


**7%**
**Total Avoco export trays shipped to AVANZA markets**

## Korea

Erratic shipping forced us to pull our Korean programme after only a few weeks into our supply programme last season.

**2.4 million**

Total global avocado trays imported to Korea in 2020.

This is up from 1.5 million trays the previous season.

## South-East Asia

**Number One**


Thailand became the largest market by volume outside of Australia for both AVANZA and the New Zealand industry.

**100%**


Fruit shipped by air to Thailand and India.


**45,000**

Total New Zealand trays supplied.


**7000**

Total trays supplied by AVANZA.



In-store promotional activity was not allowed during the pandemic, so all AVANZA promotions were delivered online in Singapore.

## China

Shipping was terminated part way through the season due to unworkable delivery timelines caused by vessel delays and port congestion. As a result, AVANZA exported less than half of what was shipped to China in season two.



Third season in market.



## Hong Kong

AVANZA's second season in Hong Kong finished strongly, supplying 17,000 trays total.

**17k**

**13,000**

Total trays supplied by AVANZA.


**600,000**

Views received on blog promoting NZ avocados in first 48-hours.



In-store sampling sessions combined with social media activity to build awareness of the AVANZA brand.



Scholarships

# Scholarship recipient an advocate for sustainable farming

Avoco provides \$5000 to one worthy tertiary student each year to encourage research and study in subjects that could benefit New Zealand’s avocado industry. The recipient of the 2021 Avoco scholarship is Kazi Talaska.

Kazi is in her final semester of a three-year undergraduate degree at Massey University in Palmerston North, where she is studying a Bachelor of Horticultural Science. The 22-year-old moved to New Zealand from Indonesia in July 2018 to pursue her interests in plant production, research and technical extension work with growers. With her sights firmly fixed on graduating mid-year thanks to financial support from Avoco, Kazi hopes to work in New Zealand’s horticulture industry and apply her skills to solve some of its biggest challenges. “With all the disruption caused by COVID-19, the world is still a volatile place. Although nothing is certain, I’d love to stay in New Zealand and work in a research, extension or project management role and be on the front line of all the exciting things happening in horticulture right now.” Kazi got a glimpse of what a career in horticulture and the avocado industry could look like when she worked as a summer intern for Tauranga’s PlantTech Research Institute. Her project was designed to support NZ Avocado and research being carried out that examines

management practices in New Zealand avocado orchards. She prepared and administered a grower survey to help the industry body better understand the practices that contribute to an orchard’s success. “To improve national crop production, NZ Avocado needs to identify the best management practices and also look at what other factors contribute to productivity as well. I really enjoyed the project because it enabled me to connect with the avocado industry while learning from other experienced researchers and scientists.” “The horticulture industry, in general, is really tight-knit and supportive and that creates a really nice environment to step into after graduating.” As well as excelling academically, Kazi is also an active member of Massey University’s Horticulture Society, the Indonesian Student Association and Caretakers of the Environment International (CEI), a global organisation that educates young people on responsible food production as a sustainable development goal. With COVID-19 making international travel difficult in the short term, Kazi counts herself lucky to have experienced life overseas – both

growing up with her family in Indonesia, as well as travelling with fellow university students after being selected for the Prime Minister’s Scholarship to Asia in 2019. As part of the agribusiness immersion programme, she spent time touring South Korea, returning to New Zealand in December that year before COVID-19 became a major international health crisis. “I’ve learned so much about horticulture and life in New Zealand, but always in my peripheral vision, I have my experiences of living in Asia where a lot of New Zealand’s high-value produce is exported. “All my education and international experiences combine to help me understand the bigger global picture of why growing sustainably is so important to New Zealand’s export story. “When I’m doing research in a paddock or orchard in New Zealand, I know I’m working to improve practices that help New Zealand growers and exporters market their food globally, while also demonstrating how sustainable farming practices can feed the world.” Previous Avoco scholarship recipients include Caitlin McCulloch and Alex Tomkins. ■



Kazi Talaska is looking forward to graduating with support from Avoco.

# Information-sharing in Taranaki

More than 100 people attended an event last month to learn about the opportunities that exist for landowners and investors to establish avocado orchards in and around Taranaki.

AVANZA’s market manager for South-East Asia and India, Henry McIntosh, was one of several speakers at the event organised by regional development agency Venture Taranaki. Representatives from Trevelyan’s Pack and Cool and Lynwood Avocado Nursery also shared information on the day. Dubbed ‘Avocados: The Taranaki Opportunity’, the initiative was the second in a series of Branching Out events aimed at exploring potential for new commercial opportunities that could add sustainable value to the regional economy and make it more diverse, resilient and in-demand. The first Branching Out event was held last October and explored opportunities relating to kiwifruit. Henry says the initiative generated a lot of interest from landowners in Taranaki wanting to explore alternative land uses. “Horticulture is particularly attractive but there are still some challenges for the region, particularly around the climatic conditions and the logistics involved to service it.” His presentation covered the responsibilities of an exporter, the markets that Avoco serves and featured an outlook for New

Zealand’s avocado export industry. “The audience was quite engaged about the future outlook and importance of New Zealand avocados finding a premium position in Asia, particularly around the prospects in developing markets like China and India,” says Henry. Potential growers now have the opportunity to liaise with Venture Taranaki and to connect with existing local growers to fully understand the viability of growing avocados in the region. Venture Taranaki chief executive Justine Gilliland says her team was thrilled the event attracted more than 100 local landowners and investors. “Being able to call upon friends with expertise in the Bay of Plenty, Waikato and Northland to support us to properly explore the opportunity is a great example of Taranaki and the regions collaborating for the benefit of New Zealand. We would like to thank Avoco for their support and knowledge-sharing.” “We know that the few existing Taranaki orchards have agreed to keep in contact with the experts at Trevelyan’s and Lynwood Nurseries to optimise their existing fruit.” Justine says there is also a “significant” orchard being planted on the outskirts of New



On behalf of Avoco and AVANZA, Henry McIntosh was a guest speaker at the Venture Taranaki event.

Plymouth that will add substantial volume to Taranaki becoming a producer. “While others are still weighing up the opportunity, we wouldn’t be surprised if more avocado orchards establish in the region,” she says. “We will continue to support landowners and investors as they consider whether the avocado opportunity is for them and help make introductions to people in the industry.” ■

# Quality update

DANNI VAN DER HEIJDEN updates growers on recent trials and areas the technical team will be exploring further to improve fruit quality for export.

Fruit quality through the 2020-21 season was good on 'young' fruit, however there is still a lot of work which can be done to improve the quality and shelf life of New Zealand avocados for export. Going into the 2021-22 season, there are two main areas of focus in relation to quality. These are; the development of an alternative option to the current rotary commercial washing systems, and gaining a better understanding of fruit nutrition, how this can be altered, and its impact on fruit quality. In this update, you will find the conclusions from the trials completed this season, an overview of ongoing and future trials, and a guide to practical things you can do as a grower to improve fruit quality.

## TRIALS COMPLETED DURING THE 2020-21 SEASON

Effect of pick to pack time on fruit quality of New Zealand avocados harvested after a rain event.	<p>The results suggest that it may not be advisable to pack fruit on the day of picking for fruit picked after rainfall events.</p> <p>The results suggest that fruit picked after rainfall events could be held at 12°C and packed 3-4 days after picking without significant detriment to green or ripe fruit quality compared to fruit packed 0-2 days after picking.</p>
Effect of post-harvest applications of Liquidseal Eco on fruit quality of New Zealand avocados.	<p>Although treatment with Liquidseal Eco did result in a shelf life extension in terms of an increase in time to ripen, all ripe fruit disorders were significantly more severe in treated than control fruit. Until there is a solution for maintaining post-harvest quality of New Zealand avocados through an extended ripening time, the use of Liquidseal Eco on New Zealand Avocados is not recommended.</p>

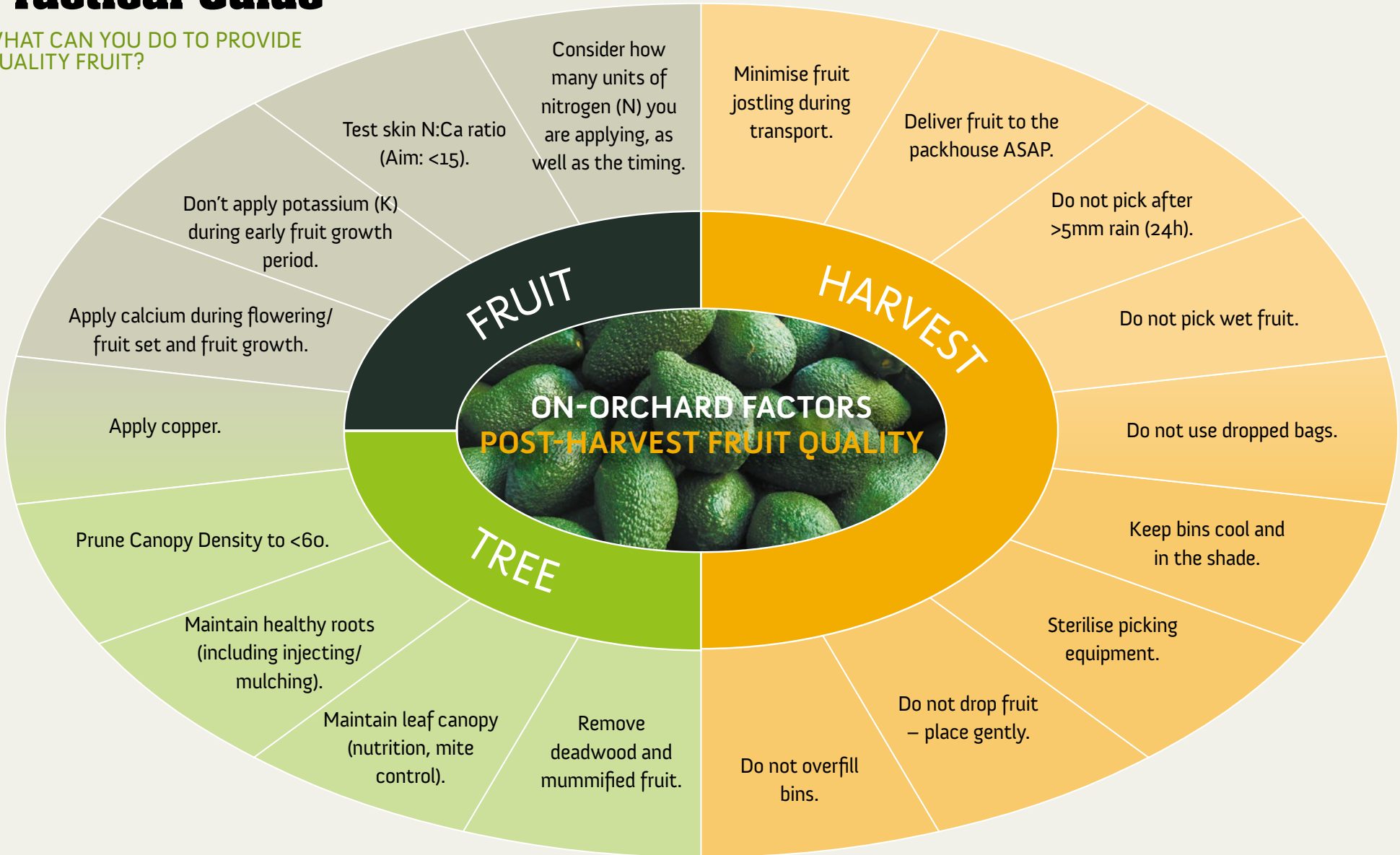


## ONGOING AND FUTURE TRIALS AND ASSESSMENTS

In-Market Assessments	554 100-fruit in-market assessment reports from Sydney or Brisbane were sent to growers this season. This programme is set to continue for the 2021-22 season.
Waterblaster	Avoco is working with NZ Avocado and CR Automation to build and assess an experimental waterblaster unit.
Fruit Skin N:Ca ratio	The aim for the 2021-22 season is to complete more extensive N:Ca testing (in conjunction with dry matter testing) in order to develop an understanding and profile of the current spread of ratios over the regions.
Fruit Size Prediction Tool	Measurements are underway which will be used to develop a tool to predict fruit size at harvest from measurements earlier in the season. As well as assisting individual growers with their planning, this could be used by packhouses and exporters to plan the harvesting and marketing of New Zealand avocados.
Nanocal applications (Calcium product).	Has been applied (to the soil and foliar) to multiple orchards. Fruit will be tested for N:Ca ratio once mature. If there is a difference, fruit quality will be assessed.
N Applications and fruit quality	Yet to be determined – a trial may be initiated to investigate different nitrogen application rates and their effect on fruit quality.
Pick to Pack Trials	Yet to be determined – a trial may be initiated to investigate the impact of holding fruit at different temperatures for different periods of time prior to packing.

## Practical Guide

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PROVIDE QUALITY FRUIT?





# Grower profile

# Embracing new ideas

A Katikati couple says there's always something new to learn when you're growing avocados and keeping pests at bay – even after 40 years.

**D**on and Daryan Grayling could be excused for putting their feet up after decades spent developing their avocado and kiwifruit orchards near Katikati.

But Don, who was born and raised on the Matahui Road property, says there's always something to do.

"Growing up, it was a dairy farm and Daryan and I milked 180 cows here for a few years after we took over from my parents.

"Horticulture is a lot more leisurely than milking cows, but we converted everything ourselves and still do what needs to be done to keep things ticking over. Across both crops, you never stop learning."

**"All growers will have their ups and downs – everyone does, no matter how smart you think you are."**

The growing popularity of kiwifruit in the 1980s saw land prices take off in the area, prompting the Graylings to sell off some of their dairy farm and use that money to invest in kiwifruit.

They planted 2ha of green kiwifruit and shelter for the vines. Later, while out fishing with a mate, Don started entertaining the idea of growing avocados too.

"Alan Boggis had an avocado nursery at Athenree and suggested that I plant out avocados to split our risk."

The couple planted 3ha of avocados to start with and, nearly 20 years later, grabbed the opportunity to plant more Hass trees after 3ha of

bare land became available next door.

Today they have about 500 mature trees across 7ha, producing about 20 tonnes/ha on average every year.

Consistently yielding well above the industry average is no mean feat, but Don says it helps when you have mature trees to work with.

"All growers will have their ups and downs – everyone does, no matter how smart you think you are. One out of every 10 years might be a down year. We were hit hard with six-spotted mite in 2007 so it does happen. But our location near the water means we don't get a lot of frosting at pollination time, so we're really lucky. Plus the more established trees can handle it better."

## PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH

Early adopters of avocados in Katikati, Don and Daryan were always keen to investigate new or different ways of doing things. That approach continues today.

The couple were among eight Bay of Plenty growers who participated in a three-year trial involving Plant & Food Research and NZ Avocado that aimed to develop a sustainable tool to manage leafroller in avocado orchards.

The trial involved the use of a tool loaded with synthetic leafroller pheromones and hung from their avocado trees in spring. These tools, called Isomates, had the effect of disrupting communication between male and female leafroller moths to minimise their mating. Remaining active for up to six months, Isomates have proven effective at limiting leafroller numbers and the damage they can cause to fruit quality and export pack-outs.

Trial results after three years were so impressive that the Graylings took the opportunity to buy the Isomates commercially for the 2020-21 season. They hung 3000 Isomates across their avocado blocks, averaging six per tree.

These had the effect of keeping leafroller



Don Grayling (left) and Phil Chisnall from DMS Te Puna in the Grayling's Katikati orchard.

numbers down. They only had to spray once for leafroller in December after a bout of rain, compared to a normal season when they would typically spray up to three or four times due to leafroller incursions.

"DMS Te Puna handles all our pest monitoring and we still have to spray for six-spotted mites and thrip, but anything that we can do to save money on sprays has to be a good thing. Plus these new approaches to pest management is where the industry is heading.

"There's a cost with the Isomates, but the end result is less leafroller damage and higher pack-out rates, which is money in our pocket. So the idea is that they pay for themselves over time."

The new technology shows how far the industry has come since the early days of avocado-growing.

Don still recalls a time when the approach to pest monitoring was a lot more relaxed.

"We just about calendar-sprayed in those days. Or, if you spotted something, that's when you sprayed. There were hardly any hard rules."

## DOING THE BASICS WELL

As former dairy farmers, however, they made a point of testing their soil and following the fertiliser recommendations. They continue that practice today, with support from industry adviser Lindsay Heard.

"We follow his recommendations and I apply the fertiliser myself, but we're past the days of carrying around a bucket and spreading it by hand," says Don.

The Graylings keep their trees to a manageable height of about eight or nine metres and use the services of AAL for pruning, which is usually done annually.

"We don't do it as often as we probably should. Last year we had a heavy crop and deliberately chose not to cut things out. But there's plenty of evidence about the benefits of pruning and letting more light in and under the canopy.

"Having older trees now, you can prune the life out of them. They're like a bad haircut, they'll just grow back. They are pretty forgiving."

Recent dry summers mean irrigation has become an essential ingredient for many orchardists, including the Graylings. They have 15 stations across both their kiwifruit and avocado blocks and turn their irrigation on where and when it's required.

"We put the bore down for kiwifruit in the early 80s and we've been glad to have it. We have used tensiometers in the past, but after so many years here now, I just use my gut feeling for when to turn it on."

They work alongside the team from DMS Te Puna and AAL to pick and pack their fruit to meet Avoco's flow plan requirements. Harvesting typically happens between September and January, depending on when they have sprayed.

## SUPPORTING AVOCO

Having supplied a variety of exporters and packhouses over the years, Don believes Avoco's depth of export experience and solid in-market partnerships benefits growers.

"Next season will be very interesting with the big Australian crop and Chilean fruit creeping in over there.

"There are also big plantings happening up north that might change a few things. But we're very happy with the Avoco model."

Phil Chisnall, DMS Te Puna's general manager for business development, says Don and Daryan's success as growers comes from their high-input approach.

"That's across pruning, injecting for phytophthora, irrigation, fertiliser – they are all big factors in how they grow. They put the dollars in to get the returns."

"They're of the view that even if the crop is down, you follow the recommendations and you don't cut back on your fertiliser or anything else. That's their recipe for success." ■



The Graylings are early adopters of new technology that is effective at keeping leafroller numbers down.



As part of a trial involving Plant & Food Research and Bay of Plenty growers, the presence of leafroller continues to be monitored.



# Are you in or



Managing your orchard to ensure all-market suitability gives us the flexibility to serve more markets beyond Australia and optimise pool returns.

# are you out?



Talk to our technical experts today about ensuring all-market compliance.

**AVOCO**  
avoco.co.nz

## New campaign launch

Katikati growers Wilson and Barbara McGillivray are featuring in a new Avoco marketing video.



**L**aunching on digital media this month, the McGillivrays are shining examples of growers who combine their love for their local environment with a disciplined orchard management style to consistently supply premium quality avocados for global markets.

A three-minute video highlights their approach to growing and their relationship with Quality and export systems manager Danni van der Heijden, whom they lean on for expert technical advice.

Marketing and communications manager Steve Trickett says the couple are experienced operators whose focus on pest management and tree health continues to reward them after many years of successful orchard development.

The video can be viewed on the Avoco website, [www.avoco.co.nz](http://www.avoco.co.nz).

Your Avoco Grower Services Team		
TECHNICAL ENQUIRIES	Richard Kok Colin Partridge Danni van der Heijden Jerome Hardy	027 355 5247 027 270 7219 022 062 0602 027 233 4380
BAY OF PLENTY		
APATA	Kate Truftt Terry Russell Kevin Ravenhill Peter Sneddon Logan Whenuaroa Melissa van den Heuvel Warwick Verry	027 809 9779 027 836 2342 0274 835 699 027 205 7496 027 373 9859 027 239 7793 027 405 7032
DMS	Phil Chisnall Hamish McKain Hugh O'Connell	027 4820 271 027 220 2005 027 245 1817
KAURIPAK	Jenny Gilliver Stuart Oates Matt Roeszler Toni Morrison	021 157 6670 027 489 8098 022 319 3513 027 265 4469
TREVELYANS	Daniel Birnie Jonathan Cutting Katherine Bell	0274 866 969 027 973 3513 027 211 9181
GOLDENMILE FRUITPACKERS		
TEAM AVOCADO	Louise Hailes	021 506 775
PRIMOR	Graeme Burnett	021 907 477
FAR NORTH PACKERS		
TEAM AVOCADO	Alistair Young	027 492 9486
PRIMOR	Ross Mutton	027 6485 577

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