



Dr. Akif Eskalen, Dr. Zvi Mendel, Dr. Stanley Freeman, Leo McGuire, Dr. Richard Stouthamer

Israeli Researchers Visit California

By Ken Melban

Vice President of Industry Affairs

In May, the California Avocado Commission hosted* Dr. Zvi Mendel, Department of Entomology, and Dr. Stanley Freeman, Department of Plant Pathology, from the Agricultural Research Organization, The Volcani Center in Bet Dagan, Israel. Both researchers have been working with Israeli avocado growers since the identification, five years ago, of the ambrosia beetle and the fungi it vectors.

The Israeli ambrosia beetle is believed to be the same

as the polyphagous shot hole borer (PSHB) in Los Angeles County. The purpose of bringing these researchers to California was to have them see PSHB/Fusarium dieback (FD) infested groves and to meet with University of California at Riverside (UCR) researchers and Commission board members. In addition, Drs. Mendel and Freeman presented at

**One-half of travel costs were paid by Index Fresh.*



Dr. Zvi Mendel, Dr. Jorge Macias, Dr. Stanley Freeman, Reuben Hofshi, Tom Bellamore

the Index Fresh Grower Seminars.

For the last few months, UCR researchers have been in contact with the Israeli researchers to compare notes on the behaviors of the pest complex and discuss possible control strategies. UCR researchers Drs. Akif Eskalen and Richard Stouthamer had just returned from their trip to Taiwan and Vietnam in search of possible biocontrol agents ahead of the Israeli's visit (see article entitled "Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer: The Search for Biocontrol Agents").

The timing allowed for a great exchange of information and ideas based on their recent scouting trip along with their current research activities. Drs. Mendel and Freeman also were able to discuss with UCR researchers and industry members the ambrosia beetle's impact on Israeli avocado groves. More information on the ambrosia beetle situation in Israel may be read in the "International Perspectives" article in this issue.

Upon visiting infested groves in California, Drs. Mendel and Freeman suggested that it appeared the point of attack was directed on stem and branch sections near bark areas already affected by other fungi. In their opinion, the successful attacks

may be related to the advanced age of the trees on those sites that support these pathogens. The UCR researchers will definitely give more attention to this possible association. In addition, since most avocado areas in California are still free of the beetle, they agreed that intensive monitoring for presence of the beetle should continue, and if beetle detection occurs increased phyto-sanitation measures should be taken immediately.

In December, the Commission also hosted Dr. Tom Atkinson, a renowned beetle expert from Texas. Since that visit he has continued to collaborate with Dr. Eskalen and they just recently submitted a new research project that will conduct extensive surveying of infested California groves to learn more about the beetle's behavior and possible interaction with environmental conditions.

The Commission will continue to pursue this type of collaboration in search of control strategies. The UCR research team is fully supportive of this synergistic effort as evidenced by the new survey project. All possible strategies will be considered as we attempt to slow the spread of this pest complex, supporting Commission President Tom Bellamore's mantra of "no stone will be left unturned." 🥑



Dr. Zvi Mendel, Dr. Stanley Freeman, Ken Melban