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## Grower Profile

The Ikeda Bros.  
Arroyo Grande, CA

16

### From the Grove

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## In This Issue

- 8 **New Beetle**  
Fungus Disease Complex Threatens Avocado Production
- 12 **Annual Meeting Focuses on Future**
- 16 **Diversification Led Ikeda Bros. to Avocados**  
Grower Profile
- 19 **Leveraging Blogger Relationships to Create**  
**California Avocado Engagement**
- 22 **Celebrating Summer Holidays with**  
**California Avocados**
- 25 **Avocado Pest Management Strategy & Research**
- 29 **The IR 4 Project**  
How it Benefits California Avocado Growers
- 36 **Backstage: The Development and Filming of**  
**CAC's 4<sup>th</sup> of July Commercial**
- 40 **The California Avocado Society**  
Weaving the Fabric of our Industry

## Departments

- 4 Message from the President
- 6 Chairman's Report
- 18 Global Perspectives
- 28 Avocado Research
- 30 From Your Commission
- 32 Issues Watch
- 34 Handlers Report

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# Message from the President

## Connecting All the Pieces



*Tom Bellamore*

**T**he California Avocado Commission serves as a repository for a tremendous amount of information about the industry. Data are derived from satellite and aerial imagery, crop estimating surveys, grower lists provided by handlers, GAP rebate forms, tax assessor parcel databases, and opt-in grower communications. With all of this at our fingertips, you might expect that we would know the location, ownership and production of every commercial avocado grove in California, but we do not. Each data set has gaps that cause inefficiencies in the way CAC conducts business.

Imagine what might be possible if the information could be seamlessly interwoven. For growers, a complete, geographic information systems (GIS) database could mean more efficient pest management through real-time mapping of pest population levels. Or improved irrigation efficiency through timely micro-climate forecasting. For packers, more

precise production information could lead to better inventory control and improved market stability. For CAC, more certainty with respect to where avocado volume is originating would yield more accurate district lines and better balloting for properly balanced representation in elections and referenda. Industry-wide, enhanced trace-back capabilities that enable a rapid response in the event of a food safety incident involving avocados may be the most compelling benefit.

To make this happen, a single, common thread is needed to unite the patchwork of data that resides at CAC—the global positioning system (GPS) coordinates for each producing avocado grove. The prevalence of smart phones and web-based mapping would seem to make this an easy task, but some among us remain “digitally challenged.” Even so, there are still alternative ways of arriving at the same point. For example, an assessor parcel number (APN) or the physical address of a grove is suf-

ficient for CAC to identify the GPS coordinates and link the grove to other information already in its geo-database.

Individual growers and packers must be willing, however, to collect and send this information to CAC if we're to be successful at creating a functional tapestry. The rewards are many and the risks are few, especially with the amount of data already available in the public domain, and CAC's heightened sensitivity about protecting the confidentiality of grower information. Still, we need your help.

In the upcoming weeks, all California avocado growers of record will be receiving a simple request for information on their grove location. If you have a grove manager who handles your affairs, please direct them to cooperate in fulfilling CAC's request.

Once all the pieces have been connected, CAC can begin designing innovative new tools to help growers become more efficient producers. At the same time, we'll be better prepared to protect your investment by minimizing the impact of a food safety incident. Do your part today by sending your name and grove coordinates to [gps@avocado.org](mailto:gps@avocado.org) so that we can complete our geo-database. With more competition knocking on the door every day, your future depends on it. 🥑





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# Chairman's Report

## So Far...

**I**t is midway through our CAC Board year and time to review some of our activities to date:

### Marketing:

**Independence Day Promotion:** Get ready, one of the best promotions I have ever seen in any industry is being prepared for launch this summer by your CAC team. Watch your television, listen to your radio and read the print ads for “Red, White, Blue and Green.” Read the “Celebrating American Summer Holidays with California Avocados” article on page 22 for an in-depth look at CAC’s summertime promotional activities.

**Website:** Our marketing team reports more than 1.4 million visitors to the CAC website last year. We have 140,000 consumer email subscribers year to date. That is an amazing number of avocado eaters who signed up to receive special recipes for new and better ways to consume and serve our favorite fruit.

**Social Media:** More than 100,000 “likes” on our Facebook page – the first avocado association in the world to do so. 100,000 “likes” means a huge number of interested, passionate avocado consumers are tracking us through our social media outreach efforts.

**Food Bloggers:** I was asked by our marketing team to participate in a special field day for some of the top Southern California food bloggers. After a tour of the high-tech West Pak packing house, a dozen bloggers visited the beautiful home and grove of Bill and Carol Steed in Pauma Valley. Food bloggers are passionate about foods and recipes; browsing the web sites of the bloggers that

we spent the day with will make you wish it was meal time. Check the current Greensheet for links to several of these sites. Details about CAC’s blogger engagement over the past few years can be found on page 18.

### Water:

On April 27 of this year, CAC President Tom Bellamore sent out the following release to your CAC Commissioners: *“Yesterday, the San Diego County Water Authority voted to extend the Special Agricultural Water Rate (SAWR), in its current form, for another two years. The favorable decision is worth roughly \$8.4 million to agricultural producers in San Diego County. The decision came following months of work by the California Avocado Commission, the San Diego County Farm Bureau, and several north county water agencies to preserve the existing SAWR program. Prior to yesterday’s decision, the SAWR was scheduled to be modified at the end of 2012. At that time, agricultural water rates under the SAWR would have increased by an estimated \$78 per acre foot. The extension now ensures that the program will remain intact until January 1, 2015.”*

Good going Charley Wolk, who is the Water Committee chairman, and the CAC Staff. Without water we do not have an industry.

### GAP Program:

Our Good Agricultural Practices program is moving forward nicely. GAP Committee Chair Scott Bauwens and our Director of Issues Management Ken Melban have been busy. Since the inception of this important program, Ken has been holding meetings throughout the grow-



Ed McFadden

ing regions of the state, talking with growers, handlers, labor contractors and state officials. To date, Ken has helped more than 7,000 acres of avocados become GAP certified. As an industry we still have a long way to go, but what a GREAT start! If you are not yet GAP certified, give Ken a call for help and advice.

### Annual Meetings:

I hope that you were able to attend one of the three annual meetings earlier this year. CAC held meetings in Fallbrook, Santa Paula and San Luis Obispo. The meetings were well attended by interested, engaged growers. Tom and his staff gave thorough industry and commission updates and answered many questions from growers. I was able to attend all three meetings and was impressed by grower interest at each meeting and the presentations given by Tom and his staff. See story on page 12.

### Grove ID Project:

This has always seemed like a great idea to me – bring the industry together and make acreage, production and other industry data easier to collect and track with a system of grove identification numbers. Seems easy, but it is anything but. Tom and his staff have spent a great deal of time with this project and have

brought updates to the CAC Board. This project will take some time to complete, as well as assistance from the grower community. Read the President's column on page 4 for more information on how you can get involved.

### Tea Shot Hole Borer/Fusarium Dieback – the Looming Menace:

CAC has been supporting the work of Dr. Akif Eskalen in studying and mapping the population of this boring beetle and the disease it spreads in Los Angeles County and now a sliver of Orange County. Learn about this beetle; know the signs of infestation. If you see something suspicious or want more information, call or email CAC Research Program Director Jonathan Dixon. Check the CAC website for updates posted by Dr. Dixon.

At the time of the writing of this column, your Production Research Committee (PRC) and Dr. Dixon were studying proposals and discussing strategy in preparation for an emergency meeting of the PRC on June 5. On that same day the CAC Executive Committee held its own emergency meeting immediately following the PRC meeting for the purpose of reviewing and considering action on proposals from the PRC to better understand and more importantly to control this dangerous insect/disease threat.

The Tea Shot Hole Borer (TSHB) was found in Southern California in 2003, 2008 and 2010 on ornamental trees but was not associated with avocado trees. Apparently it did not go away and during the decade since it was first discovered in our state it has been keeping out of sight until it was most recently rediscovered this year by Dr. Eskalen in L.A. County residential neighborhoods on avocado and ornamental trees.


The beetle attacks a wide range of hosts but seems to have a special taste for the Castor Bean plant, a

noxious weed found wherever avocados are grown. Most farmers I know eradicate this weed on sight; we now have even more reason to keep it out of our groves. On May 8, Dr. Dixon and I attended a CAC-supported seminar and field tour in South Gate organized by Dr. Eskalen and the Los Angeles County Agricultural Commissioner to review the latest TSHB information and see the beetle in La Habra Heights, one of several locations where it has been found.

DNA comparisons have shown that the identical insect and the Fusarium dieback fungus it spreads were reported in Israeli avocado groves in 2009. According to CAC Handler Member Reuben Hofshi, it has infested more than 6,250 acres of Israeli avocados, which he says represents more than 10 percent of their industry.

To date, researchers worldwide have not found effective treatments for either the beetle or the disease it carries. The Fusarium dieback disease spread by the beetle does not appear to be as deadly as the Laurel Wilt disease being spread by another boring beetle through avocado groves and native forests in the southeast U.S. but still represents a serious threat to our industry.

I would like to understand why a pest discovered locally a decade ago has not aggressively infested our groves in the same way it has in Israel. Perhaps the infestation is more widespread than we know - more work is needed. If the TSHB was found in our California groves today we would be defenseless against it and the debilitating and potentially fatal disease it carries. We need to know where it is, how it lives and how to treat it while at the same time be wise stewards of our assessment dollars.

For more information about the TSHB, take some time and review the article written by Drs. Eskalen and Stouthamer on page 8. 

**So far...so good!**



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[CaliforniaAvocadoGrowers.com/your-representatives](http://CaliforniaAvocadoGrowers.com/your-representatives)



# New Beetle

## Fungus Disease Complex Threatens Avocado Production

By Akif Eskalen and Richard Stouthamer

**R**ecently a new beetle/disease complex was detected causing Fusarium dieback on avocado and other host plants in Los Angeles County. The disease is caused by a new, yet unnamed *Fusarium* sp. that forms a symbiotic relationship with a new *Euwallacea* sp. beetle morphologically indistinguishable from the tea shot hole borer, *Euwallacea fornicatus* (an exotic Asian ambrosia beetle).

We suspect that this is a new species based on the large differences in DNA sequence between the beetle invading California and the beetles from tea plantations in Sri Lanka. The beetle is smaller than a sesame seed (about 0.1 inch in length). The identical new beetle species was found in Israel in 2009 in commercial avocado orchards where it has been causing damage to avocado (Fig 1, 2).

Unlike the Redbay Ambrosia beetle, the vector of Laurel Wilt, which has been infesting avocado and other members of the avocado family (Lauraceae) in the Southeastern United States, the new beetle and/or its close relatives have been reported on more than 100 different plant species worldwide including citrus, guava, lychee, macadamia, mango, persimmon, pomegranate and silk oak.

The beetle and fungus have a symbiotic relationship. When the beetle burrows into the tree, it inoculates the host plant with the fungus, which is carried in its mouthparts in a structure called a mycangium. The fungus attacks the vascular tissue of the tree which brings water and nutrients from the roots to the rest of the tree eventually causing branch dieback. The beetle larvae live in galleries within the tree and feed on the fungus.

The California Avocado Commission provided emergency funding to launch a research project since the beetle/fungus complex could cause serious economic damage to the California avocado industry if introduced into commercial plantings. A team of University of California at Riverside



Fig-1 An avocado tree in Israel exhibiting symptoms of beetle/disease (Mendel et al. 2012)



Fig-2 A failed main branch of avocado in Israel caused by the *Fusarium* dieback (Mendel et al. 2012)



researchers is collaborating to study this problem.

Dr. Akif Eskalen and field specialist Alex Gonzalez from the Department of Plant Pathology and Microbiology are conducting a survey in Southern California to determine the extent of the beetle infestation and the likely extent of *Fusarium* sp. infection in avocado trees and other host plants. They are also investigating *Fusarium* dieback incidence within commercial avocado groves. Dr. Richard Stouthamer and Paul Rugman-Jones from the Department of Entomology are studying the biology and genetics of the beetle and are exploring insecticides that may be used to kill the beetle on the plant surface before they enter the tree. Reuben Hofshi of the Hofshi Foundation is also gathering information about the beetle/disease internationally, and has been instrumental in obtaining beetle specimens from international co-operators.

So far, the UC Riverside team has confirmed both the beetle and fungus on several hosts in Southern California residential neighborhoods: Downey, El Monte, Hacienda Heights, La Habra Heights, Long Beach, Pico Rivera (Los Angeles County), La Habra, Seal Beach (Orange County) and Linda Vista (San Diego County). Both beetle and fungus were confirmed as the same new species identified to be the cause of avocado limb dieback in Israel. The Agricultural Commissioner of Los Angeles County and California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) also confirmed that the beetle is morphologically indistinguishable from the Tea Shot Hole Borer.

### ***Fusarium* Dieback Symptoms**

Symptoms of the disease on avocado include a white powdery sugar exudate that can be either dry or surrounded by wet discoloration of the outer bark in association with a single beetle entry/exit hole (Fig.3, 4, 5, 6). While there is no visible injury to the bark at this stage of colonization, examination of the cortex and wood under the infested entry/exit hole bored by the beetle, reveals brown



Fig-3 *White ring of sugar exudate surrounds the beetle entry/exit hole* (A.Eskalen)



Fig-4 *Typical Fusarium dieback symptoms, scraping the bark down to the wood behind the beetle entry/exit hole reveals brown necrotic tissue.* (A.Eskalen).



Fig-5 *Multiple entry/exit holes of beetle on an avocado branch (cv. Hass)* (A.Eskalen)



Fig-6 *A single entry/exit hole covered by sugar exudate.* (A.Eskalen)





Fig-7 An entry/exit hole of the beetle on Avocado bark (cv. Bacon) (A.Eskalen)

discolored necrosis caused by the fungus (Fig. 7).

### The Vector Beetle

The beetle is a new *Euwallacea* species relative to the tea shot hole borer (an exotic Asian ambrosia beetle). It is very small and difficult to see (Fig 8,9). The beetle holes penetrate approximately 0.4-1.57 inch into the wood and there are often many entry/exit holes on an infested tree (Fig.5, 6). Females are black colored and about 0.07-0.1 inch long (Fig.3), males are brown colored and about 0.05 inch long (Fig.4). The exit hole on avocado is about 0.033 inch wide.

### Known Hosts in California

Avocado (*Persea americana*), Black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), Box elder (*Acer negundo*), Castor bean (*Ricinus communis*), Goldenrain tree (*Koelreuteria legans*), Lime (*Citrus spp.*), Liquid amber (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), Maple (*Acer sp.*), Mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*), Peach (*Prunus persica*), Sycamore, *Platanus racemosa*), Wisteria vine (*Wisteria sinensis*).

### What To Do

- Look for a single entry/exit holes with surrounding white powdery exudate on avocado.
- Scrape off the bark layer around the infected area to see the necrotic tissue.
- Follow the gallery to look for the discolored necrosis caused by the fungus.
- Old Castor bean plants appear to be a preferred host for the beetle. If such plants are present close to avocado groves, inspect them for evidence of the presence or damage by the beetles. The highest beetle exit/entry holes density is found at the base of the plant. If no beetle holes are present, it may be a good idea to remove the plants. If beetle holes are found we do not yet have a proven way in which the plants can be destroyed without allowing the beetles to disperse.



Fig-8 Female beetle *Euwallacea sp.*, 0.07 to 0.1 inch long and black. (G. Arakelian).



Fig-9 Male beetle *Euwallacea sp.*, 0.05 inch long and brown. (G. Arakelian).

### Who to Contact if You Find the Problem

If you suspect that you have found this beetle or seen symptoms of the *Fusarium* dieback in your grove or surrounding areas in other host plants please contact either your local farm advisor, pest control advisor, county Ag Commissioner office or Dr. Eskalen to confirm this finding. You can contact Dr. Akif Eskalen at the University of California, Riverside by either phone 951-827-3499 or email at [aeskalen@ucr.edu](mailto:aeskalen@ucr.edu). You can also call the CAC office at 949-341-1955 and ask for Jonathan Dixon. 🥑



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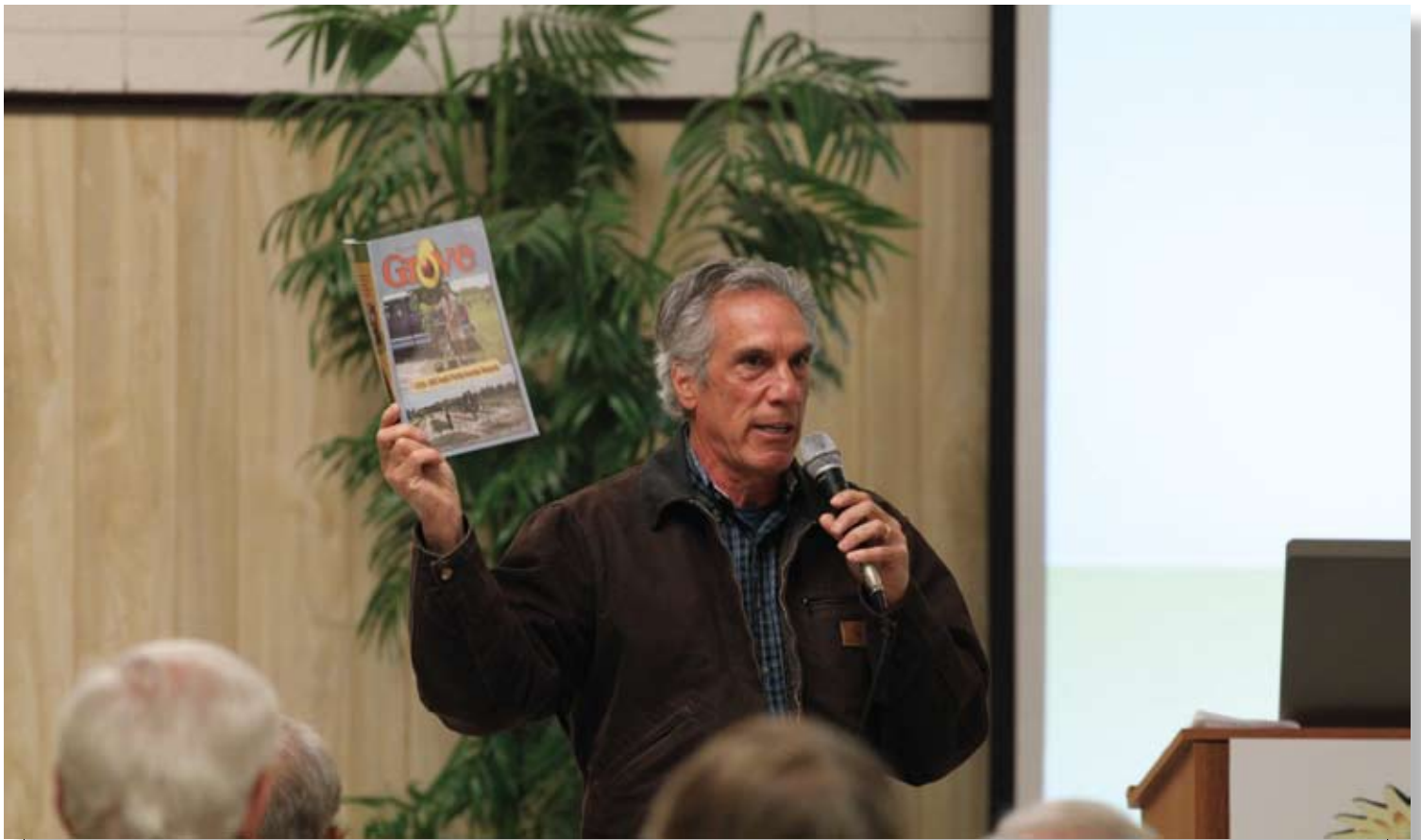
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# Annual Meeting Focuses on Future

By Tim Linden

The California Avocado Commission staff focused on the future in its series of annual meetings this spring with growers in San Diego, Ventura and San Luis Obispo counties.

“Last year we noted some of the major accomplishments of the Commission dating back to 1978, but this year we want to look to the future,” said CAC President Tom Bellamore. “What lies ahead? Where do we want to be in 10 years and what do we have to do today to reach those goals...those aspirations.”

For this exercise, Bellamore set the flagstaff at 2020. He articulated the aspirations of the California avocado industry as fourfold:

- Returning a premium price to growers;
- Assuring California of its position in the marketplace;
- Helping the grower community become highly productive and efficient;
- Maintaining and improving the excellent perception consumers have of the California avocado.

To begin the discussion, Bellamore did take a few minutes to assess the current situation, which he called “very good”. In 2011, the value of the California crop topped \$460 million. That was a record sum and marked the second year in a row that the \$400 million figure was bested. As the day progressed, he revealed that that figure is the

goal of the CAC every year.

Looking forward, the CAC president said that challenges remain, including issues surrounding water, labor, regulations and the economy. While not downplaying the importance of these obstacles, he believes the advantages far outweigh the negatives. “We are very bullish about the California avocado industry,” he said, voicing the collective view of the CAC staff.

Buffeting optimism are two very important trends: a rising population that includes a segment of immigrants who eat avocados frequently; and the unmistakable trend of steadily increasing per capita consumption over the past two decades.

If consumption trends continue at their present pace, U.S. residents will consume 8.6 pounds of avocados per



person by 2020. And the U.S. population should be at about 335 million people, including eight million new California immigrants. Doing the math, the demand for avocados will top 2.8 billion pounds, with California leading the way. Bellamore said California alone could consume about 500 million pounds of avocados by the end of this decade. "The California economy is fundamentally strong and should stay that way," he predicted.

During the meetings, Bellamore gave a general outline of the various functions of the CAC staff and then several staff members in charge of those separate areas discussed them in further detail.

In the marketing arena, Bellamore said the California avocado has a premium position in the marketplace and maintaining that position is a CAC priority. He said one of the key reasons for that position is the flavor advantage that the California avocado enjoys. "We need to continue to leverage that flavor advantage during our season," he said. "We are closest to market and there is no question that we deliver the best tasting avocados."

He said CAC will continue to concentrate on its core western markets and is launching a new campaign this year to make the Fourth of July just as big an avocado-consuming holiday as Cinco de Mayo and Super Bowl Sunday. Vice President of Marketing Jan Delyser explained CAC's strategy. "Our advertising spend is significant, but our resources are still limited. Accordingly, we must focus those resources on our core consumption markets in the West."

Every year, she said the CAC staff, the marketing committee and the commission's advertising agency partners "start from square one" in evaluating and designing a program for that year. She said the "Hand Grown in California" concept continues to resonate with consumers so it continues to be a major part of the campaign.

The Fourth of July promotion was developed as a way to maximize sales during the height of the California avocado season. Super Bowl falls a bit early and even Cinco de Mayo is prior to the heart of the season. Fourth of July, on the other hand, falls at a time when California avocados predominate in the market. Delyser believes this All-American holiday can become the biggest avocado-consuming day of the year. "We couldn't be more excited about it and the television advertising campaign we have developed for California around it," she said.

Besides boosting avocado consumption, both Bellamore and Delyser said that this year's effort sends a not too subtle message to the Peruvian avocado industry. For the first time ever, Peru is going to participate in the U.S. market and their fruit is marketed at the same time as California.

"California is our home territory," Bellamore said, "and California consumers prefer locally grown, California avocados through the summer season."

Delyser added: "It is not an option to lose marketshare to a competitor in our core markets. It's imperative that we own the Fourth of July holiday."

Delyser also spoke about the workhorse of CAC's consumer advertising campaign: radio and outdoor advertising in key western and southwestern markets such as Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Denver, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, Seattle and Portland, and the Commission's highly effective retail merchandising program. CAC also conducts cooperative promotions with advertisers on tie-in campaigns that are designed to greatly increase the bang for the buck. This year tie-in opportunities have been identified with Dulcinea watermelons, King's Hawaiian Bread and Copper River salmon.

In the area of issue advocacy, Bellamore said CAC's top priority continues to be water price, availability, and qual-



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*Jan Delyser*

ity. He said other areas of interest include securing a safe food supply, supporting immigration reform that includes a legal workforce for agriculture and achieving label registrations for crop protection tools that will improve the yield and quality of California avocados.

Ken Melban, director of issues management for CAC, fleshed those concepts out in a bit more detail. Discussing water pricing, he said CAC is meeting with water agencies in an effort to present a compelling reason why avocado growers deserve a rate break. Melban said the production of avocados is an environmentally and community-friendly activity that helps preserve the rural nature of the geographic regions where avocados are prolific. He said CAC is trying to work with environmental groups to get support for this position. He argues that if water rates continue to climb, avocado groves will be priced out of business and the entire community will suffer.

With regard to food safety, the entire produce industry is awaiting the release of new regulations that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration will use to implement the Food Safety Modernization Act. Though he called avocados a “very low risk commodity,” the rule will undoubtedly impose some new regulations on all producers, especially in the area of traceability.

Toward the future, Melban said he will be working with other specialty crop interests to ensure that funding is available in the 2012 Farm Bill for pest exclusion and research.

Another member of the CAC team that spoke briefly during the Annual Meetings was Aria Lukman, who discussed the financial condition of CAC and the industry. He said that the decline in avocado acreage over the past several years underscores the importance of keeping yields high, so that funds continue to be available for market development and research.

While the assessment rate this year was at a historically low point because of large reserves created by the past two high value crops, Lukman said that moving forward CAC’s goal is for the assessment rate to remain stable with minimal fluctuation from year to year.

Bellamore said it is imperative that “yield per acre goes up” so that California does maintain its share of the market.

Lukman said that with continuing growth in demand, there is every reason to believe that the farmgate price of California avocados should remain strong.

Discussing production research in much greater detail fell on the shoulders of Jonathan Dixon, research program director for CAC. He began by stating that California avocados are in an excellent position. “All indicators for California avocados are very positive,” he said. “Demand for California avocados exceeds supply.”

But to continue to enjoy that position in the marketplace, Dixon said growers need to invest in their crop and invest in new technology to become more efficient and lower cost producers. “We need to lift our production,” he said. “Whatever you spend to do that is money well spent.”

Dixon discussed a number of projects including new va-



*Jonathan Dixon*

riety development to address both pest and disease threats and the need for greater yields. He said developing new varieties is a long term project so the work being done today is tailored toward the industry’s needs in 2020 and beyond.

He also talked about specific research with a quicker pay-back including new pruning scenarios and using cameras to make cultural decisions based on what is actually happening in the grove in real time. Improving water efficiency is another important project.

But Dixon said it is most important that as this new science is developed, growers use it. “It is very important that we take the science to the grove. You guys actually need to use what we develop.”

For this reason, he said outreach education programs are a vital part of the research effort.

Coming full circle, Bellamore told the audiences that 2020 might seem to be far off in the future, but it is not. It is only eight years away and while much can happen in the interim, the industry and the commission has to prepare for that eventuality. The ultimate goal is to have a grower that is better informed and produces a better, more efficient crop. 🥑



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# Grower Profile



## Diversification Led Ikeda Bros. to Avocados

By Tim Linden

Juzo Ikeda came to California from Japan more than a century ago as a teenager and soon got into the agricultural business. He started in the King City area working for others but by the 1920s, he had established a vegetable farming operation in the Arroyo Grande Valley in San Luis Obispo County. Today, the family still farms that land and has expanded the scope and breath of its operation, including more vegetable land in the surrounding communities and a 40 acre avocado grove in Arroyo Grande.

Their farming story is one of survival and perseverance.

Early in his farming career, Juzo Ikeda joined 40 other local farm families to form two cooperatives to sell their vegetables. The two cooperatives eventually merged to become the Pismo Oceano Vegetable Exchange (POVE), a grower-shipper of fresh produce that continues selling produce today...and continues to sell the vegetable production of Ikeda Bros. Farms (pronounced E-ked-a).

"Once there were 40 families involved in that cooperative and now there are only five," said Brycen Ikeda, the fourth generation of the family to be involved in farming.

Brycen said vegetables are still the major crop for the family operation accounting for 80-90 percent of its production on an annual basis.

Over the years the Ikeda operation expanded its product mix and also its management team as more family members came into the business. Of course, one of the major hurdles to overcome in the development of the company was World War II and its impact on U.S. families of Japanese descent. Along with thousands of others, the Ikedas were interned in 1942 and had to leave their farm. The Ikedas' close friend, Vard Loomis--for whom Kaz Ikeda's oldest son is named--managed their farm while they stayed in the internment camp. Brycen said the family feels fortunate that Mr. Loomis did oversee the property while the family members were away, and when the war ended, they did get their



land back, unlike many other farmers of Japanese descent.

Juzo had three sons who took over the operation and incorporated it in 1955 as Ikeda Bros. Today, 93-year-old Kaz Ikeda, the sole surviving son of Juzo, is still an active member of the management team. "He drives the fields every day," said Brycen, "though we don't let him get out and walk around as much as he use to."

The management is mostly undertaken by four members of the third generation, Vard, Tom, James and Stan. Vard is in charge of the growing operations in Arroyo Grande while Tom serves the same function in the southern operations around Oceano. James is in charge of all office operations and Stan takes care of maintenance on all the equipment. Brycen is the first in his generation to join the family operations, and calls himself "low man on the totem pole."

Ikeda Bros. grows a diversified list of vegetables but it is especially known for its Chinese cabbage and broccoli.

The decision to get into the avocado business was cham-



pioned by Vard, who, as noted, runs the farming operations in the Arroyo Grande Valley. He said the company had discussed many different diversification options before settling on avocados. "We were lucky to have land with a southern slope that worked well with avocados," he said. "There were some avocados in the area and we had some advice from other growers and the nursery that told us avocados would work."

In 1998, Ikeda Bros. put in 40 acres of avocados. They have maintained that size ever since, though Brycen said they are on the waiting list to purchase additional trees currently. "We plan to put in 10 to 20 more acres," he said. "Right now there is a two-plus year waiting list for nursery stock."

In unison – as all family members took part in this phone interview – the Ikeda clan said the move to diversify into avocados was a good one. "We are very happy to have added avocados," said Vard, "but it has been a challenge. If we could go back and change a few things we would, but it has worked well for us."

Brycen said that because the vegetable market and the avocado market have no relation to each other, the diversification really serves its purpose well. It's rare that both markets are off at the same time. The last couple of years have been especially good ones for avocado prices.

One interesting note is that the Ikeda operation recently transitioned its crop from organic production back to conventional cultural practices. The grove started as conventional in 1998 and was transitioned to organic production about a half dozen years ago. However, Vard said a bad case of root rot has caused the company to go back to conventional practices in an effort to deal with that situation.

Though the company will plant a root rot resistant variety with its new acreage, Brycen said it will still start that crop as conventionally grown avocado trees. "We want to make sure we get it started right and then we may consider transitioning it to organic later."


Because of the location of the acreage – in the far northern segment of what is considered the prime avocado producing region – the Ikedas say they typically begin harvesting in August and can continue into November, depending on the particular weather each year and marketing conditions.

The family was particularly complimentary of CAC board member and fellow avocado grower Gabe Filipe for all the help he has provided the Ikedas. "I went to school with Gabe and he has

been of great help to us," said Brycen. "He is not the reason we planted our original 40 acres of avocados but he is one of the major reasons we have decided to plant more acreage."

On that new acreage, Brycen said the family will utilize a different planting configuration than on the original acres but the density will not be significantly greater. "We are at about 140 trees per acre on our original acreage and we will probably have 140-150 trees on the new grove, but we are going to change the spacing."

And the new grove with its expected long life, will take the Ikedas well into their second 100 years of farming. 🥑



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## A Snapshot of the Australian Avocado

### Industry Looking Forward to Successful Season with a New CEO and a Bumper Crop

Australians are prolific consumers of avocados. In the past decade, the per capita consumption rate in Australia has increased by more than 106 percent with Australian consumers eating around 2.7 kilograms (5.9 pounds) of avocados per person annually. Typically avocados in Australia are consumed in salads, as a sandwich filling, as an accompaniment to meals or as guacamole, and some processed products are consumed as dips.

The increasing demand from consumers for avocados has meant that the Australian avocado industry has enjoyed significant growth in recent years. In 2010/11 49,612 tons of avocados were produced, an increase of more than 20 percent from the previous year, worth an estimated Gross Value Production of \$207 million and \$520 million at the retail level (Australian dollars).\*

"Australian growers are predicting the 2012 season will be the biggest avocado crop harvested in the history of the Australian avocado industry," commented John Tyas, newly appointed CEO of Avocados Australia.

Avocados Australia is the top industry group for the Australian avocado industry. It is a not-for-profit membership based organization. There are more than 1000 members comprised of Australian avocado growers as well as associated businesses and other industry stakeholders. In early May, Tyas took on the role of chief executive officer of

Avocados Australia after the resignation of Antony Allen who held the position for almost a decade.

"Over the last 10 years Avocados Australia has provided strong stewardship and positioned the industry as a leader amongst horticultural industries in Australia," Tyas said. "It is imperative that our achievements to date are built upon, and industry stakeholders continue to realize and value benefits that Avocados Australia can deliver on behalf of the industry."


In announcing his appointment, Avocados Australia Chairman Jim Kochi said, "John has had a long association with avocados, he knows and understands the industry very well and we are confident in his ability to guide our ever growing industry."

Tyas has more than 20 years experience working in the horticultural industry. For the past 11 years he has worked for Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL), a not-for-profit, industry-owned company that works in partnership with Australia's horticulture industries to invest in research, development and marketing programs that provide benefit to industry and the wider community. As industry services manager, Tyas worked for a range of tropical fruit industries, responsible for managing the HAL relationship with such member industries and overseeing the levy investment programs.

To the role of Avocados Australia CEO he brings a strong background in strategic planning, research

and development, marketing program development and investment management. He also has hands-on experience as a fruit grower on his family farm at Narangba.

The Australian avocado industry aspires to be a growing, progressive, profitable and sustainable industry, in addition to being a leader in product, supply chain and industry development innovation. "We have a strong team at Avocado Australia, and a wealth of knowledge within the industry, all of which will influence my strategy going forward," said Tyas.

In response to this year's forecasted bumper crop, he explained that Australian avocado growers and pack houses are already working with the supermarkets, wholesalers and exporters to manage the 2012 crop. Planned programs are in place throughout the avocado supply chain to assure Australian consumers that no matter the size of the crop they will still be purchasing the premium quality Australian avocados are known for. The Australian avocado industry's highly regarded marketing campaign is also in full swing to promote this wonderful fruit. 

*\*Gross Value Production based on actual volume of Australian avocados for 2011/12 multiplied by the average wholesale price including transport and marketing costs.*

*\*Retail value taken as a weighted average from weekly retail price reporting conducted by industry - based on size 23 avocados.*





## Camp Blogaway 2011

# Leveraging Blogger Relationships to Create California Avocado Engagement

**T**he world has changed its news-publishing and news-consumption habits dramatically in recent years as a result of web-based publishing tools. Media and news communicators are no longer just the celebrity anchors and investigative journalists; though they still exist, now anyone with a passion for a topic or activity can deliver information online for free through readily available web-based blog publishing platforms.

Simply put, a blog is a frequently updated online journal intended for public viewing. Over the last decade as web-based publishing tools like Blogger, WordPress and Tumblr (popular free-to-use blogging tools) have become more user-friendly, the blogger population has skyrocketed. There are now millions of blogs active worldwide from people of all walks of life. These personal blogs can cover any num-

ber of topics from mountain climbing to cooking. Bloggers are able to convert life moments into immediate news with smartphones, tablets, compact digital cameras/camcorders and the plethora of available web-based publishing tools.

Major mainstream news organizations have caught on to the blogging phenomenon and now have dedicated staff bloggers who blog full-time on specific topics. In addition, these mainstream organizations often consider blog content and popular topics as relevant news, incorporating the trends or stories into their own reports – meaning that these bloggers help shape the mainstream news consumers read, hear and watch.

The California Avocado Commission (CAC) builds and maintains relationships with key blogger influencers through events, sponsorships, partnerships and product immersion



Eric Tanaka

to harness the power of their credibility and readership, immediacy and potential for penetrating the mainstream news cycle. Engaged bloggers and third party advocates serve as spokespeople for the California avocado brand, and extend into untapped audiences that are excited about recipes and California avocado usage ideas. At the Produce Marketing Association's (PMA) Fresh Summit 2011, CAC received high acclaim from bloggers and PMA staff during a panel discussing the benefits of leveraging blogger relationships. The presentation further positioned CAC as a leader in the produce industry when it comes to partnering with bloggers.

### **Blogger Events**

Since 2010, CAC has created and participated in blogger events. The events are an effective way to gather a group of bloggers in an organized environment to educate them about California avocados and inspire them to write about the fruit to pass on their learnings to their readers. For Cinco de Mayo in 2010, CAC worked with artisan chef partners Mary Sue Milliken and Susan Feniger to host a group of

popular Los Angeles area food bloggers at their restaurant Ciudad and promote California avocados around the key consumption period. More than 20 bloggers attended and competed in a "Guac-Off" competition. Posts about the event reached nearly 828,000 individuals online.

In 2011, CAC hosted two blogger events to build on the success of the year before. CAC partnered with some of its artisan chefs partners, Eric Tanaka in Seattle (shown speaking to the bloggers) and Vincent Guierthault in Phoenix, to host exclusive media dinners with interactive cooking demos. Between the two events, nearly 20 bloggers attended and 14 social media posts and online stories ran, highlighting the inventive California avocado-centric cuisine.

This year CAC leveraged its relationship with artisan chef partner Ivy Stark of Dos Caminos restaurant in New York City for added California avocado exposure on the East Coast. Chef Stark lead blogger guests through an interactive cooking challenge and then demonstrated each course of the meal as it was served on Saturday, May 19, 2012. Many bloggers shared their experiences on their blogs and several social media posts occurred throughout the day of the event.

### **Blogger Sponsorships**

CAC reaches a broader group of bloggers by sponsoring conferences and workshops. In 2011, CAC sponsored Camp Blogaway—a weekend of blog skill workshops set in a camp environment. At the event, CAC's Vice President of Marketing Jan Delyser hosted a session on the farm-to-fork journey of California avocados. Not only was CAC able to further develop its blogger relationships, but attendees' posts reached nearly 1.5 million consumers.

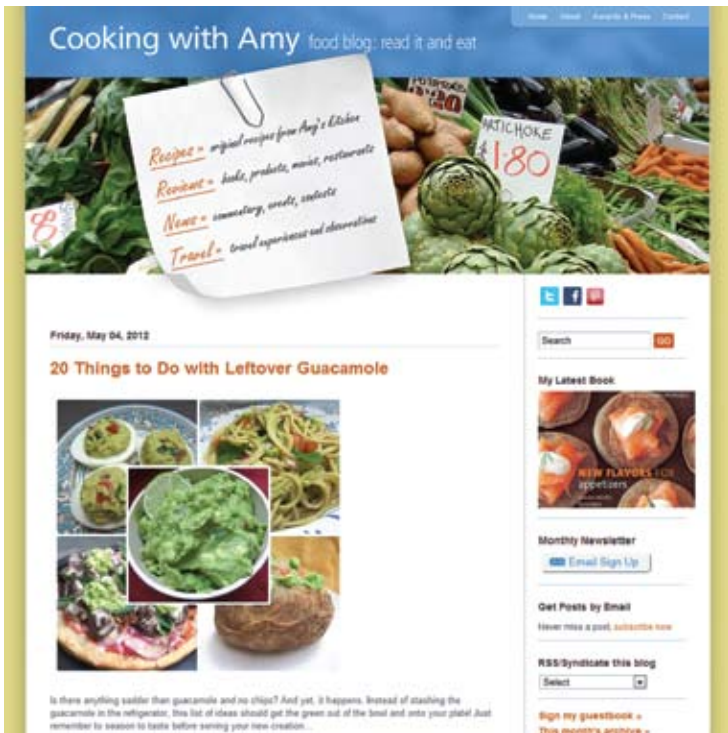
This year, CAC sponsored Amy Sherman of *Cooking with Amy* so she could attend Camp Blogaway on behalf of CAC and spread key messages and product awareness to her fellow bloggers. Amy also posted on her blog which receives around 6,000 visits per month as result of the sponsorship. In her post titled "20 Things to do with Leftover Guacamole" she also linked to and thanked the commission, and provided her guacamole usage ideas in her article.

In July, CAC will be sponsoring the Evolution of Women in Social Media (EVO) Conference where bloggers can network and build on their blogging skills. The sponsorship allows CAC to host a 4-hour interactive workshop where chef partners Mary Sue Milliken and Susan Feniger will offer a cooking demonstration and an experienced food photographer and/or video blogging expert will help participants perfect their photography skills.

### **Blogger Partnerships**

Continued interaction with bloggers through events and sponsorships contributes to lasting relationships with those bloggers who have a passion for California avocados. Blog-





## Product Immersion

CAC creates activities to completely immerse bloggers in the California avocado story. Grove and packinghouse tours are an effective way to allow bloggers to experience the farm-to-fork journey first-hand.

In 2011, CAC hosted a grove tour for key registered dietitian nutrition bloggers who attended the American Dietetic Association's Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo. More than 30 nutrition bloggers attended and were educated on the growing process, versatility of the fruit and its nutritional benefits. Also in 2011, CAC invited a group of food bloggers to a San Diego grove that resulted in coverage from 9 different bloggers that reached an estimated 300,000 consumers.

This year, CAC hosted a tour of Fairfield Farms in Pauma Valley. Seventeen bloggers attended a tour of the West Pak packinghouse and then took a wagon ride into the grove for a hands-on experience picking California avocados. Coverage from the event on April 28, 2012, is still streaming in, but social media coverage on Twitter and Facebook resulted in more than 499,000 impressions on the day of the event.

CAC's concerted effort to engage bloggers has paid off with comprehensive coverage and dozens of strong, ongoing relationships with bloggers who love California avocados. CAC continues to evolve the program and looks forward to continuing to build blogger and third party advocate relationships going forward. 🥑

ger partnerships also yield exciting mentions and posts from bloggers on social media, which CAC can share with its California avocado fans. In the case of Gaby Dalkin of *What's Gaby Cooking*, which receives around 35,000 monthly visits, CAC was able to work with her to create avocado-centric posts with all new recipes for her blog, including one for *Israeli Couscous and California Avocado Salad*. The recipes are on the CAC website and have been utilized in emails and social media initiatives.

As part of CAC's 2012 4<sup>th</sup> of July and American Summer Holidays marketing program, CAC is working with influential recipe bloggers to create a 4<sup>th</sup> of July themed recipe contest to highlight all-American California avocado recipes. The goal is to utilize blogger recipe sharing to secure coverage and promote California avocado recipes to blog readers.



Fairfield Farms Tour



CAC's new American Summer Holidays Brochure

# Celebrating Summer Holidays With California Avocados

**The 4<sup>th</sup> of July is Poised to Become a Top Avocado Consumption Day**

By Zac Benedict

*CAC Marketing Communication Specialist*

The California Avocado Commission is implementing a dynamic, multi-pronged, integrated marketing campaign to encourage consumers to add some “green” to their American Red, White and Blue celebrations from Memorial Day through Labor Day this year.

With a goal of making the 4<sup>th</sup> of July a top avocado consumption event in the United States, the CAC Board of Directors, at their March meeting, approved an expanded media budget for this season. The centerpiece of the summer holiday promotion is an eye-catching, 30-second commercial that will air extensively on network television in California during the three weeks leading up to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

“We are really thrilled to have the television advertising added to our marketing programs in California,” said Vice President of Marketing Jan Delyser. “We want to tap into the consumer preference for California-grown produce and

get them to incorporate California avocados into their summer menus while maintaining California avocado premium positioning in our top market. Television allows us to reach not only our core consumer, but those who use California



avocados less frequently. The 4<sup>th</sup> of July has ranked third in consumption behind Cinco de Mayo and the big game (Super Bowl)."

Pride in American products and interest in locally grown produce are consumer trends that create the opportunity for California avocados to be more closely connected with American summer holidays from Memorial Day through Labor Day. The 4<sup>th</sup> of July has been targeted specifically because it is in the heart of the California avocado season, it represents a key retail promotional opportunity and is as American as it gets with backyard BBQs, picnics, potlucks and other events when people celebrate our nation's birthday.

The heavy lifting of the consumer advertising campaign will still rely on radio, outdoor, and print advertising within California and in surrounding key markets. The advertising aims to remind consumers that California avocados are a perfect ingredient for summer gatherings including 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations.

Fourth of July print ads have a retro look and are designed to harken back to a time gone by while positioning avocados as a key ingredient for holiday gatherings. The goal is to inspire consumers to creatively incorporate California avocados into their 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations – this year and into the future.

The 4<sup>th</sup> of July advertisements link to CaliforniaAvocado.com where visitors will find a special 4<sup>th</sup> of July-themed website featuring new recipes from CAC's featured chefs, Mary Sue Milliken and Susan Feniger, California avocado 4<sup>th</sup> of July recipes (including a Red, White, Blue AND Green salad), entertaining tips and grower stories.

CAC's retail merchandising program will be in full swing for the summer holidays as well. New this season for retail and consumer distribution is the American Summer Holidays Brochure featuring 12 summer recipes, nutrition information and avocado tips. The 14 page brochure is available for order on the Commission's retail website and has been distributed to retailers around the country.

This season's 400 million pound crop provides ample promotional opportunity for retailers and the commission is hosting an American Summer Holidays themed Advertising Contest to encourage prominent displays, feature ads and California avocado promotions throughout the California avocado season.

CAC's information and data assets continue to inform retailers regarding the opportunities to maximize their California avocado sales during key American Holidays. This year CAC is offering retailers the ability to customize their printed POS, including POS cards, recipe pads, posters and other materials.

To support retail efforts and CAC's goals to increase consumption during American summer holidays, the commission developed a special American Summer Holidays

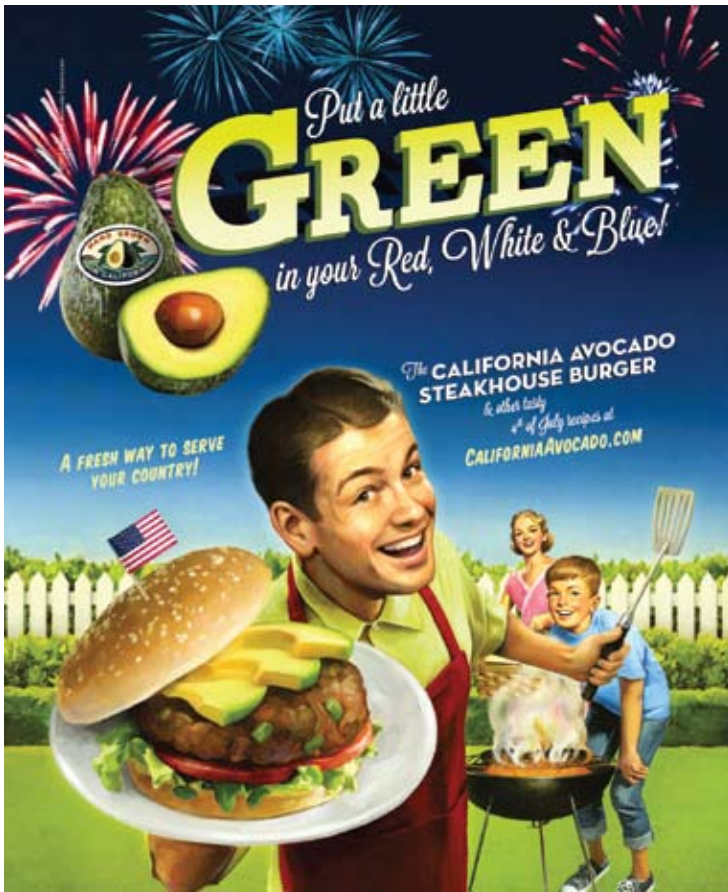


CAC's 4<sup>th</sup> of July Microsite

website for consumers featuring timely recipes and a link to download a printable American Summer Holidays brochure. The microsite will be featured on CaliforniaAvocado.com through Labor Day, and is viewable on mobile (smart) phones, tablets and desktops, by visiting CaliforniaAvocado.com and clicking the graphic on the homepage. Users who scan the QR Code (Quick Response Code) on the back of the American Summer Holidays brochure will be taken to the microsite for special "online-only" recipes.

American Summer Holidays recipes have also made their way into the monthly recipe e-newsletter to over 140,000 subscribers, and will continue to be included throughout the summer.

The website is promoted online with banner ads, search engine advertising and Facebook ads linked to a 4<sup>th</sup> of July recipe contest. Facebook fans are given the opportunity to submit their favorite 4<sup>th</sup> of July recipe creation and compete for the chance to win prizes and a 4-month supply of Cali-



CAC 4<sup>th</sup> of July Print Advertisement

fornia avocados.

To further drive consumers to the website for 4<sup>th</sup> of July recipes, CAC has developed a special 4<sup>th</sup> of July email focused solely on Independence Day to be distributed in June. Additionally, a press release to the media leveraging two new recipes from CAC's featured chefs has already been distributed to promote California avocados as a featured ingredient for 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

Cross promotions with other popular summer food brands provide added exposure for California avocados as well. This summer CAC has co-promotions with King's Hawaiian® Original Hawaiian Sweet Dinner Rolls and Dulcinea PureHeart® Mini Watermelons. King's Hawaiian Bread is distributing a featured California Aloha Slider recipe in one million packages of their Hawaiian Sweet Dinner rolls during the mid-June through July timeframe.

The Dulcinea partnership yields excellent promotional opportunities throughout the CAC season, including several recipes to be featured in 4<sup>th</sup> of July materials. CAC has also leveraged the partnerships through social me-

dia, as will King's to their 240,000 Facebook fans.

In addition to the American Summer Holidays theme, the Commission has officially declared June as "California Avocado Month." CAC's 15 partner chefs across the country are featuring California avocados in special avocado-themed menus, featured dishes in their restaurants, during media appearances and through social media in June. Also, CAC has secured proclamations from the following city/county governments recognizing June as California Avocado Month: Placer County, San Diego County, City of Los Angeles and Santa Monica.

Early response has been tremendous with enthusiastic support. CAC expects exceptional results from the American Summer Holidays and 4<sup>th</sup> of July promotions in 2012 designed to drive avocado consumption during the Memorial Day through Labor Day time period. California avocado messaging will remain front and center from Spring through Fall. Keep an eye out for the marketing programs and stay tuned for comprehensive results! 🥑



CAC's Advertising Contest Kit cover graphic



# Avocado Pest Management Strategy and Research

By Jonathan Dixon

*CAC Research Program Director*

**A**vocado pests can cause significant economic damage to California avocado trees and fruit if not well managed. In particular, insects and other arthropods can be very damaging to yields by eating leaves and scarring fruit.

Understanding such avocado pests and finding the best control methods requires a strong research effort. California avocado growers are fortunate in having a pool of talented entomology researchers who have, over the years, developed good solutions to the avocado pests present in California avocado groves. In recognition that research on avocado pests continues to be an important part of CAC's research program, half of the Production Research Committee meeting on March 5, 2012, was devoted to an open, round table discussion between the PRC and three of the five University of California, Riverside, entomology researchers.

The researchers each described the history of their research and what they saw as important issues for avocado pest management. The discussion was frank and forthright on avocado pest issues California growers currently face, how good management solutions were achieved and what pest management issues are likely to occur in the future. On page 24 is a description of the broad strategic issues identified as important by the researchers (these are not CAC policy) and an analysis of the proactive pest management strategy raised at the meeting. The topics listed are largely those being followed in pest management research projects funded by CAC.

Generally, the response of the avocado industry to new avocado pests has been to react only when the pest is present in California. However, the researchers have indicated a strong desire that the best strategy for pest management is to be proactive and anticipate the arrival of new pests into California. Such a strategy recognizes that avocado pests new to California will continually arrive. The idea is that by understanding potential pests and their natural enemies before the pest becomes established in California avocado groves, growers will have the opportunity to most effectively manage the new pest without the five to seven years of intensive research needed to develop control options.

In pursuing such a proactive strategy there have been re-



*Thrips damage on avocados*

search projects that in part or whole are designed to:

- Find all potential pests in countries that grow avocados and that may export fruit to the United States.
- Understand the biology, natural enemies and develop monitoring tools for potential pests. (There has been a major effort on scale insects from Mexico and other research on *Stenomoma* seed moth for quarantine and import standards.)

In being proactive with regard to pest issues there are important questions to address: How to identify all potential new pests and thereby predict their incursion?

While it is a reasonable strategy to anticipate pests and then develop control methods, such a proactive strategy has limitations. One limitation is that even if it is thought that all the potential pests are known within an avocado pro-

ducing country, it is not possible to determine if there are unknown, obscure potential pests. For example *Persea* mite and *Persea* thrips were not considered to be pests in their native range before introduction to California (Hoddle, CAS Yearbook 2006). *Persea* mite and *Persea* thrips are examples of pests that were not anticipated as they were both new to science and of unknown origin. It was a surprise when they became pests of California avocados. Would *Persea* mites or *Persea* thrips been identified as serious potential avocado pests if there was an intensive program of identifying all insects found on avocados in other avocado producing countries in the Americas? A further consideration is that even if they were identified as potential pests would the commission have invested in research on how to manage an insect pest not present in California?

More recent insect arrivals into the United States that have potential to be very serious avocado pests are two exotic ambrosia beetles, and the diseases they carry. The Red Bay Ambrosia beetle that vectors Laurel Wilt disease has been introduced into Florida, and a beetle tentatively identified as Tea Shot Hole Borer that vectors Fusarium die-back is in California. Both these beetles and diseases have their likely origins in the Indian sub-continent and parts of Southeast Asia, where there are few commercial avocado groves. There are large domestic avocado industries in Indonesia and the Philippines, however there are no reports of ambrosia beetles being a significant problem on avocado trees in those areas. With the focus of foreign exploration largely confined to the Americas the ambrosia beetles have appeared as a nasty surprise from where no one was looking for potential pests. These beetles are new avocado pests and it is unlikely they could have been predicted even if the foreign exploration was occurring on the Indian sub-continent or Southeast Asia. These beetles have appeared on avocado groves during the period when foreign exploration for potential pests in the Americas has been most active.

Having new pests emerge in California when actively looking for potential pests shows it is not enough to find and identify possible pests. There has to be a good monitoring system to identify new avocado pests when they first appear followed by a vigorous response plan for eradication or management.

A further limitation of looking proactively for pests is the conflict that can arise with the mandated roles state and federal governmental agencies have in regulating agricultural trade through international treaties. There are rules governing the prevention and response to pest incursions that involve a number of agencies with the ability to impose regulatory controls over the response to pests.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) has a responsibility to do risk assessments for known avocado pests entering the United States, while California Department of Food and



*Persea* mite damage

Agriculture (CDFA) has the risk assessment responsibility for pests entering the State of California. Mark Hoddle wrote in a 2006 California Avocado Society Yearbook article that the USDA had determined, for some known avocado pests, the risk of entry by approved means is very low, and the greatest risk is from pests entering through the smuggling of fruit or plant material.

To be introduced on legal imports the pest has to be missed at a number of different stages and encounter a susceptible host. The chance of this happening works out to be very low but is mitigated by the very large numbers of individual pests that could be present, increasing the chances for introduction. Even at a one in a million chance per fruit, the odds of a pest entering California can suggest hundreds of individual potential pests could be introduced, given the many millions of individual fruit that are imported into California every year.

Dr. Hoddle also noted that while a serious new avocado pest can get established with just one incursion, there are a number of barriers to the successful breeding of that new pest. More typically, the establishment of a new pest takes a number of repeated and discontinuous introductions before it becomes firmly established. This suggests it is likely to be more than just one introduction to get a new pest species to establish from smuggled fruit or plant material alone. The risk that new pests could arrive via smuggled fruit or plant material further argues that irrespective of any proactive foreign exploration for potential pests, the California avocado industry needs to have a good monitoring system and response plan to catch the earliest possible appearance of new pests.

There have been a number of CAC-sponsored research projects on proactive pest surveys in Central America and for avocados imported into California over the past decade. This research has been successful in finding pests and in providing new information for risk assessment of imported avocados. There have been two major programs, one on *Stenomoma* seed moth, a very serious fruit feeding pest, and another on exotic scale insects arriving on imported fruit.



### **Research surveying for scale insects and any parasites on imported fruit has shown:**

- hundreds of millions of live adults and crawler stages have been imported into California over the past few years;
- crawlers can disperse very effectively by hitching a ride on flying insects;
- pheromones exist for scale insects and have been synthesized allowing pheromone traps to be developed for California avocado growers so that the presence of exotic scale insects can be monitored;
- currently no exotic scale insects have established on trees in California avocado groves.

### **Research into understanding *Stenoma seed moth* where:**

- the mating pheromone has been detected and synthesized allowing pheromone traps to be developed so that presence of the moth can be monitored
- the pheromone traps are used as part of a USDA approved quarantine system in countries exporting to the U.S. significantly decreasing but not eliminating the chance of seed moth entering California
- the biology of the pest is much better known

There are a number of potential avocado pests identified by the first few surveys in Central American and South American countries that could have very serious economic impacts on California avocado growers. Perhaps it is appropriate that survey type research overseas be scaled back while the outcomes of the current research are implemented into an early detection system. A monitoring system is urgently needed to detect an incursion as early as possible by exotic pests whether known or unknown. The system needs to be inclusive and involve the agencies charged with protecting the United States and California, as well as Pest Control Advisors (PCAs).

The avocado pest introductions to California show that it is those insects or mites that no-one realized could be pests of avocados are more likely to become established than those insects or mites that are known to be pests of avocados. To fully implement the strategy of proactively finding pests, the system of monitoring and response would need a yearly allocation of funding. The presence of an exotic ambrosia beetle

in Los Angeles county shows the negative consequence to the California avocado industry when a strong system of monitoring is absent. In putting a pest monitoring system in place the industry could build off how the existing monitoring of pests is conducted by PCAs. Any system of monitoring for pests should include early detection and a rapid response for eradication before the new pest is widespread in avocado groves. I would like to suggest that the development of a robust pest monitoring system should be a high priority for the California avocado industry. 🥑

## **Strategic Topics**

### **Description of the researcher identified topics at the March 5, 2012 Production Research Committee Meeting.**

#### **Outreach**

- Handler hygiene practices - to prevent pests that may be present on imports from being placed near California avocado trees or alternative hosts
- Prevent pesticide resistance - to maintain the efficacy of pesticides for as long as possible
- Pest identification - to apply the correct treatment and to detect an exotic pest incursion as early as possible
- PCA education/forums - formally continue with ongoing education

#### **Monitoring**

- Develop tools
- Improved sampling methods - cheaper, faster and more accurate
- Population thresholds for treatment - control according to need and economic damage
- Cultural control methods - alternatives to chemical control
- Biological control - reduce pest populations below thresholds
- Chemical control - efficacy of treatments to monitor for resistance build up
- Real time pest population monitoring
- Population models - following pest and beneficial populations
- Predictive population models - anticipating and assessing the effectiveness of treatments

#### **Prevention**

- Proactive understanding of potential pests - knowledge of potential pests will influence response to incursions and control options
- Monitoring of imports - following pest levels on imported fruit
- Monitoring of potential pests - earliest possible detection of exotic pests in California

#### **Control**

- New chemistry of pesticides - to effectively manage pesticide resistance
- Application methods - most economical and efficacious use of pesticides
- Response plan to incursions - most effective control or eradication of exotic pests
- Strong project management - for effective leadership and management of pests
- Options for new pests - the best control methods that are economic and effective
- New pesticide registration - IR4 liaison and chemical company interaction
- Ambrosia beetles - new methods may be needed, eg systemic modes of action, fungal control methods.

# Avocado Research



*View of stumped tree just after application of 1.15% NAA (TreHold A-112 diluted in water and latex paint; Amvac Chemical Corporation). (From the 2007 CAS Yearbook as referenced in the NAA Article).*

## Renewal of Section 18 for Tre-Hold A-112 Successful

CAC successfully renewed the Section 18 emergency exemption for the use of Tre-Hold A-112 sprout inhibitor. Tre-Hold use has increased substantially in the past year as more avocado growers realize the benefits of controlling re-growth on pruned branches.

Tre-Hold has as its active ingredient a plant growth regulator NAA (Naphthalene Acetic Acid) that when mixed in with water based paint and painted onto cut branches will greatly inhibit new shoots from emerging in the painted area.

There is an excellent article on the use of NAA to control the vegetative vigor of avocado trees in the 2007 CAS Yearbook, written by Dr Mary Lu Arpaia, Mauricio Tapia and Reuben Hofshi. The article describes

how to use NAA and the research results on the effectiveness of NAA on sprout inhibition. The effect of NAA on re-growth depends on the part of the tree and the severity of the pruning. NAA is reported to be useful when stumping to control vigorous re-growth, pruning main limbs to keep the trees at a specific height, and shoot tipping to control the vigor of side branches. The benefits of using NAA are in reducing cultural management costs with smaller canopies helping to reduce water use, a reduction in follow-up pruning costs, reduced harvesting costs with smaller trees and less fertilizer for smaller trees. An additional benefit of NAA is its use to help manage canopy re-growth after natural disasters like freezes and fires.

## Request for Proposals

Requests for concept proposals were sent out to the research community on May 1 with a deadline for submitting concept proposals to the Commission of June 15. The concept proposals will be reviewed by the Production Research Committee and recommendations for projects to go to the detailed proposal stage will be presented to the CAC Board for approval. Detailed proposals will be reviewed by the Production Research Committee and research projects recommended for funding will be considered for final approval at the October Board meeting.

Concept proposals have been requested that address the following broad Strategic Technical Imperatives CAC will need to meet its mission:

- Effective grower education
- Increase average per acre production
- Achieve and sustain critical industry mass
- Maintain a premium quality product

In the cover letter accompanying the request for concept proposals, some of the most pressing issues for California avocado growers were identified as: overcoming the negative impact of reduced amounts and poorer quality water (especially issues related to salinity and the use of reclaimed water), improvement to disease and pest management, information systems to help California avocado growers with cultural management decisions, and developing new growing areas through innovative growing systems matched to the growing area that are high yielding and low cost.

For further information regarding CAC's research program, please visit [CaliforniaAvocadoGrowers.com/research](http://CaliforniaAvocadoGrowers.com/research). 🥑



# The IR 4 Project

## How it Benefits California Avocado Growers

By Ken Melban

*CAC Director, Issues Management*

**T**he IR-4 Project (IR-4) is such a nondescript name, sounding like a clandestine government program from a Tom Clancy novel or possibly some sort of covert CIA operation. Although IR-4 has the ring of some mysterious, cloak and dagger organization, as often is the case, fiction is more exciting than reality. Truth be told, IR-4 pursues the registration of pest control products in the United States for specialty crops and has provided tremendous benefit to farmers for many decades through the securing of crop protection material registrations.

IR-4, which stands for Interregional Research Project No. 4, was established in 1963 when a group of state agricultural experiment stations recognized a problem. Crop protection materials available for use in major crops were not pursued for registration in minor/specialty crops. On major crops like cotton and corn, manufacturers were willing to spend the large upfront costs required for these studies to receive a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registration based on the major acreage represented and projected sales revenue.

Registrations for specialty crops, however, weren't generally pursued by manufacturers because the anticipated sales were determined to be negligible compared with the costs of development. Typically, specialty crops are defined as those crops having less than 300,000 U.S. acres in production; with the total U.S. avocado acres at around 66,000 (59,000 in California), avocados are considered a specialty crop.

The IR-4 Project, headquartered in New Jersey at Rutgers University, is a cooperative effort between industry, the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the land grant university system, and EPA. Major funding is provided by a grant through USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

As a California avocado grower, chances are you have used a product that was registered through IR-4. Materials like abamectin (Agri-Mek), a major tool in controlling both avocado thrips and perseas mites, along with spinosad (Success, Entrust) for leafroller control, are a result of the IR-4 Project. Some of the other materials registered through IR-4 for avocados include NAA (Tree-Hold), glyphosate (Roundup), simazine (Princep), spinetoram (Delegate), spiroticlofen (Envidor), spirotetramat (Movento), and imida-



cloprid (Admire Pro).

If IR-4 had not funded the necessary research to support these pest management registrations, specialty crop growers would have fewer options when it comes to controlling pests. The cost of developing supportive data for an EPA registration can be significant, often in the range of several hundred thousand dollars. Without the IR-4 program, many specialty crop producers could not afford to register critical crop protection materials.

In the case of the California avocado industry, it is possible the commission could fund some of the necessary research, but this would come at a cost to other valuable commission programs like marketing, research and critical issues advocacy. Currently 6-benzyladenine (6-BA), a plant growth regulator, is a project being conducted by the IR-4 at the request of the commission. As the commission continues to explore the possibility of a registration on uniconazole (Sunny), it is likely IR-4 will be asked to conduct much of the necessary work.

USDA NIFA is currently proposing the consolidation of IR-4 funding with other possible grants in a new Crop Protection Program, and funding for IR-4 was in serious jeopardy of significant cuts. Earlier this year the commission began to actively advocate with key members of Congress on the importance of IR-4 and asked for funding to remain at the same levels. Although the new Crop Protection Program is still being crafted, as of this writing it appears IR-4 funding for 2013 will be continued at the same level. The commission will continue to work on behalf of the nearly 5,000 California avocado growers to protect the often unnoticed, yet undeniably valuable, IR-4 Project. 🥑

## 2012 CAC General Election

The California Avocado Commission Board of Directors is comprised of 29 individuals serving as producers, handlers and public members. The state's avocado growing region is broken down into five districts, with two producer members and two alternate producer members elected to serve each district for a total of 10 growers on the board. In addition, there are four handler members, four alternate handler members, along with one public member.

Each seat on the board serves

a two-year term, unless the seat is affected by redistricting, with expiring terms alternating so that there is continuity from one board to the next. Last year many seats on the Board were affected by the redistricting process, however, this year CAC resumes a typical election year with one member and one alternate seat in each of the five districts available. In addition, two handler member and two alternate handler positions are available.

Below is a summary of the

seats that will be filled in the coming 2012 election, along with the names of incumbent board members who presently hold those seats. Also included below is 2012 Election Schedule indicating dates of importance for those interested in serving on the CAC Board.

Should you have any questions regarding the CAC Election process, or serving as a Commissioner, please contact April Aymami at (949) 341-1955 or [aaymami@avocado.org](mailto:aaymami@avocado.org). 🥑

### SUMMARY OF OPEN SEATS\*

District	Member	Alternate
1	Shane Tucker	Jerome Stehly
2	Bob Schaar	Ohannes Karaoghlanian
3	Doug O'Hara	Steve Shehyn
4	Art Bliss	Larry Rose
5	Bradley Miles	Jim Swoboda
Handler	Scott Bauwens	Ron Araiza
Handler	Egidio "Gene" Carbone	Todd Elder

\*Names shown are incumbents presently holding producer/handler seats

### 2012 ELECTION SCHEDULE

July 16	Election announcement/self-nomination notice sent to all Producers and Handlers
August 27	Deadline for receipt of signed nomination petitions, candidate disclosure statements & affidavits and requests for voter access mailings at CAC
September 3	Deadline for CAC receipt of voter access mailings
September 24	CAC mails ballots to producers and handlers
October 22	Deadline for receipt of ballots by CDFA
November 7	CDFA advises CAC staff of election results
November 15	CDFA announces election results to CAC Board and seats new Board Members and Alternates




# 2012 Mid-Season Crop Update

CAC would like to thank all of the growers who participated in the recently concluded Crop Estimate Survey. Survey forms were mailed out in mid-April with a return date of May 4, 2012. We are pleased to report that we received responses from nearly 50 percent of the industry's acres, which allows the CAC

Crop Estimating Team to more accurately assess the current crop production.

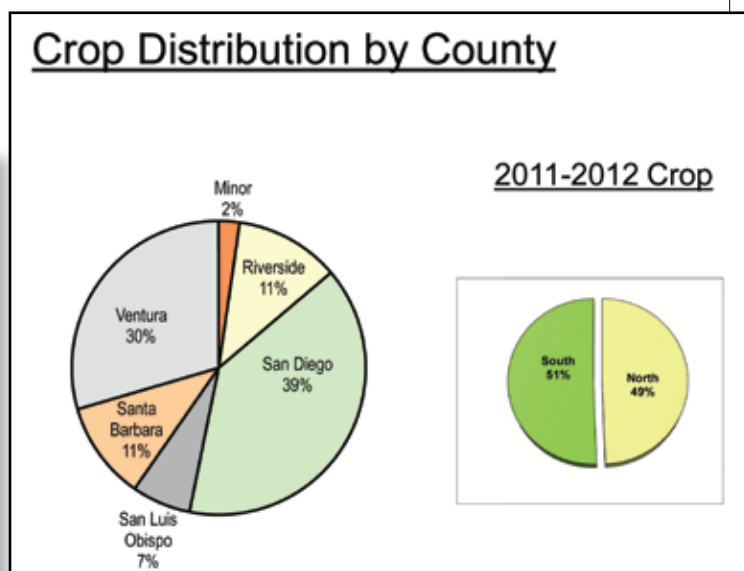
Using a series of statistical analyses to evaluate information gathered through the crop survey, satellite imagery and acreage inventory results, the CAC Crop Estimating Team has estimated the 2011-12

California avocado crop to be 392.2 million pounds, which is on par with the initial crop estimate that CAC has used for budgeting purposes of 390 million pounds. On this page, please find details of the crop estimate including variety breakdowns and production by county. 🥑



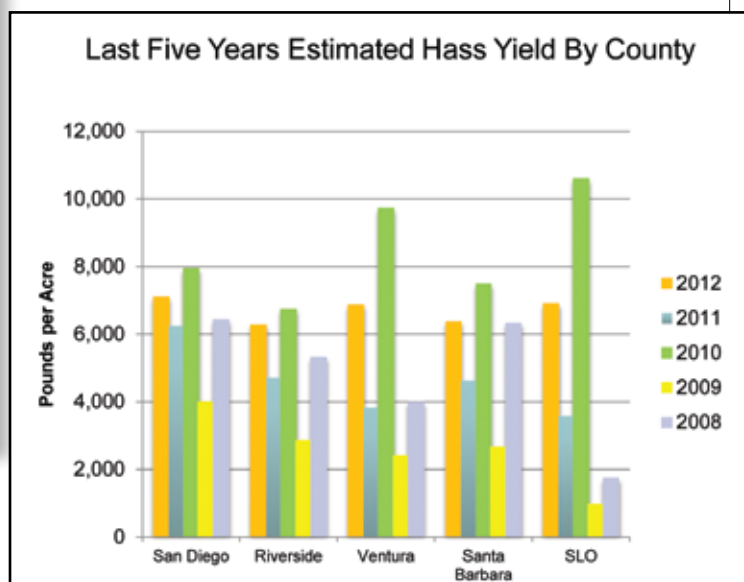
## California Avocado 2011/12 Mid-Season Crop Estimate Update

Variety	Bearing Acres	Estimated Yield		Response %
		Lbs/Acre	Lbs (MM)	
Hass	56,548	6,700	378.9	45%
Lamb-Hass	1,964	4,021	7.9	37%
Other	1,117	4,845	5.4	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59,629</b>	<b>6,577</b>	<b>392.2</b>	<b>44%</b>



County	Hass Only			All Varieties		
	Bearing Acres	Estimated Yield		Bearing Acres	Estimated Yield	
		Lbs Per Acre	Lbs (MM)		Lbs Per Acre	Lbs (MM)
San Diego	21,038	7,108	149.5	22,419	6,898	154.6
Riverside	7,055	6,278	44.3	7,249	6,215	45.1
Orange	1,198	5,017	6.0	1,224	4,933	6.0
Ventura	16,026	6,863	110.0	17,090	6,779	115.9
Santa Barbara	6,531	6,370	41.6	6,662	6,343	42.3
San Luis Obispo	4,116	6,085	25.1	4,248	6,013	25.5
San Joaquin	143	5,417	0.8	210	3,689	0.8
Other	441	3,688	1.6	527	3,830	2.0

Estimated yields are on tree forecasts and do not attempt to adjust for weather factors or project carry-out. Bearing acres include producing and topped/stumped trees four years or older. ACE Statistics: 05/30/12



by Ken Melban  
CAC Director, Issues Management

## Farm Bill Takes Center Stage



Sen. Stabenow and CAC's Ken Melban with Matt McInerney of WG Association

The commission's industry affairs staff continues to diligently advocate on behalf of avocado growers on many issues impacting the industry. Below is a summary of a few key areas.

### Farm Bill

With the current Farm Bill set to expire on September 30, 2012, the deadline is looming for Congress to pass a new Farm Bill. The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry passed the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 (Farm Bill) out of Committee with broad bipartisan support. Senator Stabenow, Committee Chairwoman, was instrumental in moving the legislation to the Senate floor. She has been a strong champion of specialty crops and supporter of programs like Conservation, Nutrition and Specialty Crops titles that will benefit California's avocado farmers.

As of this writing the House Ag Committee was completing Farm Bill hearings and could finish bill mark-up by mid-summer. House leader-

ship has been advocating for big cuts in all government spending, so it is expected the House's first Farm Bill draft will have significant reductions, but indications from senior level congressional leaders suggest the final Farm Bill will remain friendly to specialty crops.

Some Washington, D.C., insiders are suggesting election year politics will result in Congress failing to pass the Farm Bill before the deadline and it will likely be passed by a lame-duck Congress after the November election.

Commission staff will continue to remain engaged on this very important piece of legislation to ensure specialty crop funding is maintained, especially in the critical areas of pest management and research.

### Extension of the Special Ag Water Rate (SAWR)

In April the San Diego County Water Authority (CWA) Board unanimously approved an extension to the SAWR in its current form through January 1, 2015. The CWA Board's decision came after months of outreach and education by the commission along with Farm Bureau and CWA member agencies. The SAWR was scheduled to phase out one of two components in January 2013 that

would have resulted in a minimum additional charge of \$78 per acre foot for ag users. With this SAWR extension it is estimated that farmers in San Diego County will preserve a savings of \$8.4 million dollars for 2013-14.

CAC Water Committee Chair Charley Wolk testified at the CWA meeting that San Diego County avocado acreage has seen a 32 percent reduction since 2006, a direct parallel to skyrocketing water costs. Wolk testified that the California avocado industry is not just relying on an adjusted price, but is also exploring all opportunities to remain viable. He cited commission-funded research to identify salinity resistant varieties and more efficient cultural practices and equipment.

The extension of the SAWR was a great success and is part of the commission's overall water pricing strategy toward securing an affordable, reliable ag water supply.

### Central Coast Ag Rule

In March, 2012, the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) adopted an updated Irrigated Lands order (Ag Order) to mitigate nitrate contamination in ground water. Under the new Ag Order, farmers in the region were required to complete an eNOI (electronic Notice of Intent) by May 15, 2012. Upon completion of the eNOI Water Board staff will determine which Tier each farm is located based on a three Tier system. According to staff analysis, the majority of avocado growers fall within the least stringent Tier 1. Here is a list of the requirements for Tier 1:

- Enroll/submit electronic-Notice of Intent by May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012: [www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb3/water\\_issues/programs/ag\\_waivers/noi\\_submittal.shtml](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb3/water_issues/programs/ag_waivers/noi_submittal.shtml)
- Develop and update your Farm Plan by October 1, 2012: [32 | From the Grove | SUMMER 2012](http://www.agwater-</a></li></ul></div><div data-bbox=)



quality.org/projects-partnerships

- Install backflow prevention devices, if you fertigate or chemigate;
- Implement management practices to treat or control discharges and protect water quality;
- Minimize bare dirt and prevent erosion to protect water quality;
- Protect existing aquatic habitat next to your farm to protect water quality;
- Conduct surface receiving water monitoring- monitor the creeks and estuaries that may receive farm runoff;
- Conduct groundwater monitoring-monitor primary irrigation well and any drinking water well located on farm;
- Report surface receiving water monitoring (growers can comply individually or by participating in the Cooperative Monitoring Program) [www.ccwqp.org/](http://www.ccwqp.org/)
- Report groundwater monitoring.

More information on the Ag Order may be found at the Water Board website: [www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb3/water\\_issues/programs/ag\\_waivers/index.shtml](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb3/water_issues/programs/ag_waivers/index.shtml)

Two ag groups have petitioned the State Water Board requesting that the new Ag Order be overturned and for new rules to be implemented. As of this writing no decision has been made yet. CAC staff will provide updates as new information becomes available, but the Ag Order as outlined above remains in effect.

## Immigration Reform

Since the last issue little positive progress has been made on the immigration reform effort. Congress members from both sides of the aisle agree there needs to be immigration reform, but identifying a solution is where the talks break down.

Those who have a very conservative view on this issue urge for tightening border security and increasing deportations to fix the problem. This approach lacks any real

acknowledgement that the United States has a fresh produce industry dependent on undocumented workers, estimated to be 70 percent of the total ag labor force, primarily because no one else will do the work. There are suggestions that a good overhaul of the H2A Program would provide the necessary fix, but the majority of the ag community believe the H2A program is a slow bureaucracy that can't keep up with the fast moving needs of agriculture.

Individual states like Arizona and Georgia have enacted their own "ramped up" immigration reform laws which have resulted in a shortage of labor, especially for harvest. The Arizona immigration law, SB1070, which requires police to ask for papers during stops if they suspect someone to be in the country illegally, was argued before the Supreme Court in April. Based on the questions from the Supreme Court Justices during the oral arguments it appears the law might be upheld, which could likely be viewed as a setback to immigration reform that addresses the needs of agriculture.

This year Rep. Lamar Smith (TX) is terming out as Chair of the Committee on Judiciary, and Rep. Elton Gallegly (CA) is terming out of Congress. Both have been strong proponents of E-Verify without providing a remedy for agriculture, so it is conceivable they will make one last attempt to move E-Verify to the House floor this year. Commission staff continues to get assurances from House leadership that E-Verify legislation will not go to the House floor without an ag fix and we will remain vigilant in opposition to E-Verify without a long-term solution for agriculture.

Please take a few minutes and contact your local congressional member and convey your hope that they will craft an Immigration Reform solution that accommodates agriculture guest workers.


## Food Safety

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) of 2011 was signed into law with the intent of ensuring the safety and security of foods in the United States. Under the FSMA, the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) has been given increased authority and as such is developing new rules, a draft of which must be published by the end of June 2012.

Upon release of the new rules, commission staff will review and, if necessary, provide written comment to ensure the rules recognize the uniqueness of California grown avocados and don't place additional burdens on farmers that don't improve safety. Commission staff has met with FDA senior officials and will continue to communicate the progress California avocado growers have made in adopting Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). In just over six months, under the Commission's GAP program more than 7,000 acres of California avocados have been GAP certified. This represents nearly 15 percent of California's total avocado acreage. Such a significant number illustrates that California avocado growers take food safety seriously and are committed to becoming GAP certified.

The Commission is in the process of developing train-the-trainer materials that will enable handler representatives to conduct field level training and assist their growers in becoming GAP certified.

As a reminder, the commission is offering a GAP Incentive Rebate of up to \$300 for actual costs of a GAP inspection for those growers who have been certified. Funds are limited, so growers are encouraged to consider becoming GAP certified as soon as possible.

For more information on the CAC-GAP program and GAP rebate check here: [www.CaliforniaAvocadoGrowers.com/GAP](http://www.CaliforniaAvocadoGrowers.com/GAP). 

# Handlers Report



## Giumarra's Dual Facilities Represents North/South Commitment

**W**ith the opening of an avocado packing and cooling facility in Ventura County in 2011, Giumarra Agricom International LLC was signaling to its growers that it is totally committed to production in both the southern and northern districts of the state.

Bruce Dowhan, who serves as general manager of the avocado division, said that for many years the firm's Escondido facility serviced the growers in both the north and the south. But over the past decade, some acreage has shifted to Ventura County and so Giumarra believed it was appropriate to open a new facil-

ity. "We determined that we needed two facilities to serve both areas properly," he said.

He added that both facilities have field staffs on site to help with the cultural needs of their growers. The two facilities also have sales personnel on site, which gives the sales department a daily and first hand look at the fruit they are trying to sell. "The nucleus of our sales staff is remaining in Escondido but our Midwest/East Coast sales team is in Ventura County."

Dowhan said there is no strategic reason why the Midwest team is in Ventura other than that is where that staff lives. But he said there is an advantage to having members of the sales team see the product they are selling. When you can describe what you see to the buyer, it definitely

helps.

Dowhan said the state-of-the-art Ventura County facility was built with plenty of capacity and an eye toward the future. He said it is no secret that acreage is shifting toward the north and that trend will probably continue. Giumarra expects both the south and the north to be viable and significant suppliers of avocados for the firm for the foreseeable future and they are very much prepared for that. 🥑

## Small Sizes Create Marketing Challenges

**W**ith the 2012 California avocado crop peaking on smaller sizes than expected, handlers say they are faced with marketing challenges that they did not anticipate for this year.

On June 7, Scott Bauwens, director of sourcing for West Pak Avocado, Temecula, Calif., said "right now the crop is peaking on 60s and 70s. We'd like to be peaking on 48s, and I'm afraid we don't see it improving dramatically as the season progresses."

He said the size distribution, and the price discrepancy among the various sizes that has occurred, creates some confusion in the marketplace as it artificially alters demand for certain sizes. The industry is geared for peaking on 48s. In June, with 70s being sold at such a discount compared to 60s, Bauwens said some buyers were changing their orders.



“That confusion also slows down the market. We haven’t marketed as much of the crop as we should have by now.”

Reuben Hofshi of Del Rey Avocado Co., Fallbrook, Ca., echoed the same sentiments. He said that as of the first week of June in 2011, almost 50 percent of the crop had been harvested and sold. “This year we have only shipped 36.9 percent. That’s going to make it tough all season.”

Both handlers said the lack of sizing has been caused by Mother Nature and colder than normal temperatures. As a result, they said growers have been holding their fruit on the trees longer which has resulted in the decreased shipments.

As a strategy moving forward, Hofshi said size picking can help a grower produce a better size profile for the grove, but that also creates potential problems. He said when the hot weather comes, there will be some fruit drop so the more fruit on the tree, the more fruit that is at risk.

Looking forward, Bauwens said growers in areas where they are getting size and their groves are peaking on 48s should do very well this year as that fruit is at a premium and will remain so. On the other hand, growers that are peaking between 60s and 70s and still have a lot of fruit on the tree might have a very tough year.

But Bauwens did see some good marketing opportunities on the horizon that might help improve the situation a bit. Speaking in early June right before the commission launched its new Fourth of July promotion,

the West Pak executive said there is a lot of buzz about that promotion. He said retailers are talking about it and it has the potential of moving a lot of fruit through the marketplace. If sales for that period do create a “Super Bowl weekend” type experience, a lot of avocados could be sold and the latter portion of the season could see a much improved marketing situation.

Earlier in the marketing season (in late May), Giumarra General Manager Bruce Dowhan expressed optimism about this year. He said Giumarra’s field staff placed the crop size at 415 million pounds, which he believed could be marketed successfully. With that size crop, he said there will be 30-35 million pound weeks but he thought the industry is up to the challenge. “The market can handle it,” he said noting that average sales during the California season should be in the neighborhood of 20 million pounds per week. “We feel good about where the market price will be.”

Of course that was before the lack of sizing was fully appreciated.

Dowhan also liked the concept of the CAC’s Fourth of July promotion and said it could have a very beneficial effect. He called the promotion “a brilliant move, especially this season.” He reasoned that often supplies are heading down a bit in late June and early July and price is headed the other direction. That combination isn’t usually a great time to convince retailers to promote. But this year, he said there should be ample supplies

in the late June, early July period for some great promotions at very good prices. 🥑

## West Pak Moving to New Facility

**I**n early June, West Pak Avocado was busily building out their new packing and cooling facility in Temecula, aiming for an initial move-in in late July and a total move-in by the middle of the fall.

West Pak executive Scott Bauwens said the new facility will triple the company’s cooler space and add a brand new state-of-the-art packing line. “We are currently in the southwest corner of Temecula and we are going to move 3.5 miles to the northwest corner,” Bauwens said. “We are not quite sure yet what we are going to do with our current facility.”

He said the new facility should be open in time to pack some California avocados this season and it will be fully operation for next year. “We expect to open a packing line and run some fruit by late July or early August. And we are shooting to have the entire office move by late September...or let’s say mid-fall to be sure.”

He said the addition of the space does signify that West Pak is growing its California business. “We have increased our California market share in recent years and our goal is to continue to increase it in the future. We do have fruit in both the north and the south and we continue to expand in both areas.” 🥑

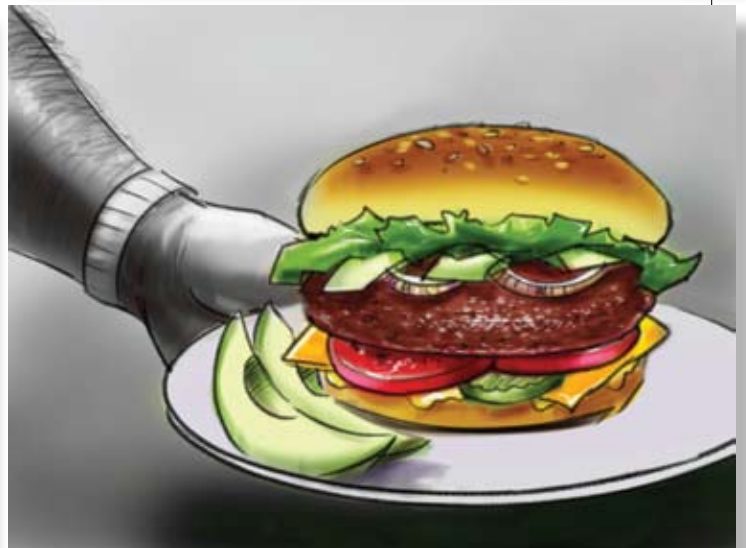
# BACKSTAGE:

## The Development and Filming of CAC's 4<sup>th</sup> of July Commercial

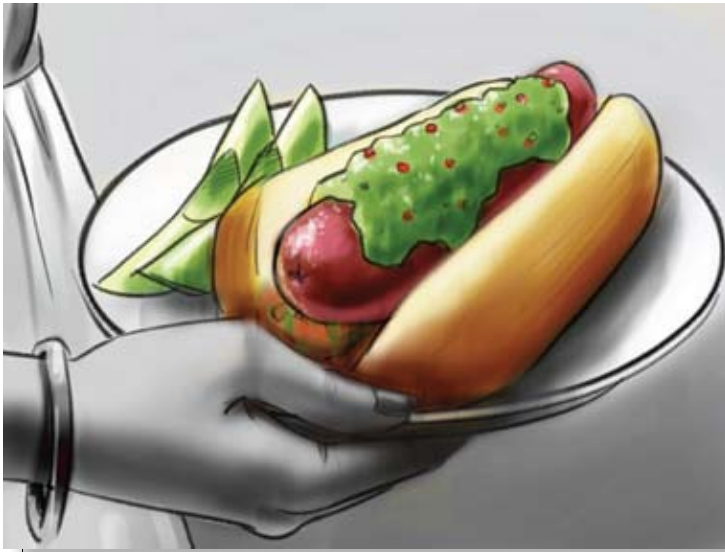
**T**he California Avocado Commission (CAC) began its 2011-12 fiscal year with the goal of making the 4th of July one of the biggest California avocado consumption days of the year.

Situated in the heart of the California avocado season, with supply and quality at its peak, this very American holiday is the perfect reason to add a little "green" in everyone's red, white and blue. The CAC marketing team set out to develop creative materials for this new summer holiday campaign that included a retro American summer BBQ print ad (as seen on the cover) and a big bandstand announcer radio ad. But this also felt like the perfect year to try something different...something new.

With ample reserves in the bank, a 400-million pound crop on the trees and Peruvian avocado shipments headed for the U.S. during CAC's season, President Tom Bellamore challenged the marketing team to come up with a plan to raise consumer demand for avocados during this 4th of July peak period so that year after year this uniquely American holiday can rival the Super Bowl weekend for avocado consumption. Their answer: integrate a 30-second television media spot into CAC's 4<sup>th</sup> of July campaign.







Presented to and approved by the CAC board in March 2012, the idea of the commercial was to bring the 4th of July retro print ad to life, enticing consumers with the all-American pastime of summer barbecuing with family and friends, and showing them how California avocados can bring a little color to their typical BBQ routine.

In the past, the Commission has refrained from spending marketing dollars on television advertising, and so the move into this arena has kept the industry buzzing about CAC's now very robust move to claim 4th of July as our own. Growers, handlers and retailers alike anxiously awaited the two-weeks leading up to what promises to be a very green 4th of July week.







While everyone in California will see the final results on television, we wanted to give California growers a unique look behind the scenes at the making of the 4th of July commercial. This pictorial shows how the print ad was transformed into creative story boards that helped shape the commercial and how that translated into casting the parts, and filming the spot.

Enjoy, and stay tuned to your television June 18 - July 8 to catch a glimpse of our favorite fruit in action! 🥑





PLEASE JOIN US  
FOR THE  
**CALIFORNIA AVOCADO SOCIETY'S**  
97TH ANNUAL MEETING  
NOVEMBER 3RD, 2012  
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

**THE CELEBRATION BEGINS** SATURDAY WITH A LUNCHEON  
AT THE WORLD RENOWNED HUNTINGTON LIBRARY IN SAN MARINO  
TO CELEBRATE OUR SOCIETY AND GUESTS.

**THE CELEBRATION CONTINUES** WITH AN EVENING SOCIAL EVENT  
INCLUDING DINNER, A BUSINESS MEETING, AWARDS CEREMONY,  
AND GUEST SPEAKER, BOB GRAY, CEO, CALIFORNIA AG LEADERSHIP  
AT THE PASADENA HILTON.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS,** AND MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS EARLY  
AT THE PASADENA HILTON FOR THE WEEKEND OF NOVEMBER 2ND AND 3RD.

**WE ENCOURAGE THE NEXT GENERATION** OF FAMILIES  
AND STUDENTS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN THE AVOCADO INDUSTRY  
TO ATTEND THIS EVENT AS WELL.

IT IS SURE TO BE A WONDERFUL  
**CALIFORNIA AVOCADO SOCIETY SATURDAY,**  
OR MAKE IT A GREAT WEEKEND IN PASADENA!

**CALIFORNIA AVOCADO SOCIETY, INC.**  
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THE CALIFORNIA AVOCADO SOCIETY 97TH ANNUAL MEETING  
IS SPONSORED IN PART BY THE CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION

# The California Avocado Society

## Weaving the Fabric of our Industry

By James McCormac



On October 25, 1915, avocado enthusiasts, growers, academics, and undoubtedly some who were just curious, gathered at the Hotel Alexandria in Los Angeles for the first meeting of the California Avocado Association. It was, according to the prominent nurseryman and avocado pioneer, F.O. Popenoe, "...the inception really, of the avocado industry in California..."

Those that gathered for this meeting were attempting to address the whole gamut of challenges that face any agricultural industry in its infancy. They were seeking answers to such questions as: What varieties to grow? How do you grow them? How do you market your production? How do you make the general public aware of and purchase your production? The list of challenges is noteworthy today because they are the same questions and challenges that we face every year.

Regardless of the difficulties, these avocado pioneers set out with enthusiasm and resolve to establish an industry. The association's first president, Edwin G. Hart of San Marino, was clear about what they were trying to do: The goal of this organization can hardly be more succinctly stated than by quoting the second by-law of the association: 'The purpose of the Association is the improvement of the culture, production and marketing of the Ahuacate.'

Please note that at the founding of our industry, the name of the fruit we cultivate had not yet been firmly established. An early task of the association was to announce to both the industry and to the produce trade that our fruit is named the "avocado."

In due course, the California Avocado Association became the California Avocado Society. Today, Avocado Society members can note with some pride that they are members of one of the oldest American horticultural associations. Much has changed in our industry over the course of nearly 100 years, but the purpose of the Society, what we now call a mission statement, is a reemphasis of the original:

*"It is the mission of the California Avocado Society to promote efficiency of production and orderly marketing toward assuring long term profitability of the business of avocado growing."*

Avocado varieties were a central concern for the fledgling avocado industry organization. A presentation at the original meeting noted and described 86 commercial avocado varieties. The following year, C.E. Utt, of Orange, Calif., had this to say about varieties: "It took us about 30 years to find out that we should only attempt to grow two varieties of oranges. It is quite likely that we shall find use for more than two varieties of avocados, but it is a safe guess that we shall eliminate and forget the greater part of the 139 varieties that are being boosted by fond owners and enthusiastic nurserymen..."

The Yearbooks of the Association/Society are filled with discussions of the merits and problems of the varieties promoted by growers and nurserymen. Experimentation was the order of the day. You can imagine what difficulties this created for the marketers of California avocados. The Society played an important role in helping to winnow the



varieties down to a manageable number of proven, commercial avocados.

The Avocado Society also provided a forum for avocado nurserymen to exchange information about the propagation and selection of avocado varieties. When I entered the avocado industry, the Nurserymen's Section was still an active part of the Society. Over the decades, their discoveries were shared with the grower community through the meetings and publications of the Avocado Society.

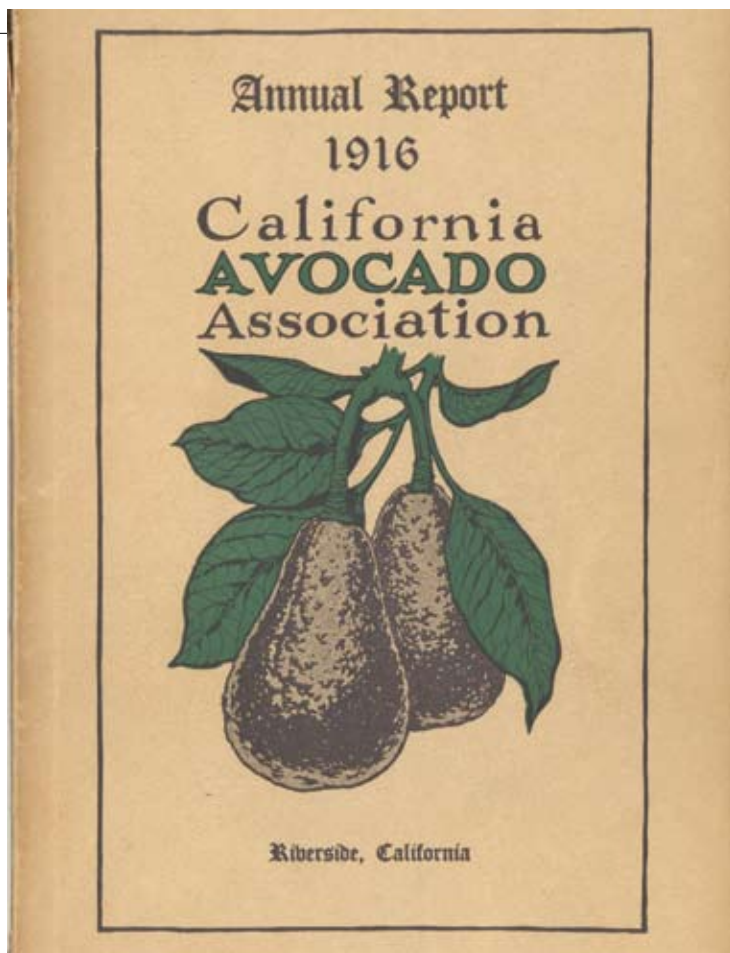
Most avocado growers know that the California avocado industry made substantial strides when the Fuerte became the predominant commercial variety grown in California. From the 1940s to the 1960s our avocado industry gravitated to the production of Hass avocados and established what we can consider the modern avocado industry. Indeed the Hass has become the basis of the global avocado industry. These developments were fostered by the California Avocado Society. Through Society meetings, growers found opportunities to gather and exchange their experiences and to hear the findings of the agricultural researchers working with avocados. The Society had a prominent influence on the selection of the avocado varieties grown in California.

Marketing avocados engaged the Society from its inception. The early members realized that the orderly marketing of avocados was imperative if the industry was to flourish. Some sort of cooperative efforts were needed, and the Society explored the produce marketing options of the time. The Society explored a contract arrangement with the American Fruit Growers, Inc. of Los Angeles to market members' fruit. A similar arrangement was tried with the California Fruit Growers Exchange.

These produce firms had established expertise in commodities other than avocados, and the Society members realized that a marketing organization specializing in avocados was needed. The opportunity came in 1923 when the state of California adopted legislation for the establishment of agricultural cooperative marketing associations. By January of 1924, the Society helped foster and organize the California Avocado Growers Exchange, an event that marked the birth of what was to become Calavo Growers.

It was clear that the Society could not be both a horticultural society and a marketing organization. The Society continued to pursue how best to grow avocados and supported the cooperative and private organizations that developed over the decades that were devoted to the task of selling avocados.

The central contribution the Society has made to the California avocado industry has been through production research. The founding members of the Society were searching for information on how to grow avocado trees. Over the years the Society has provided a forum for growers and agricultural researchers. The researchers would hear from growers about their concerns for soil conditions, plant nutrition,



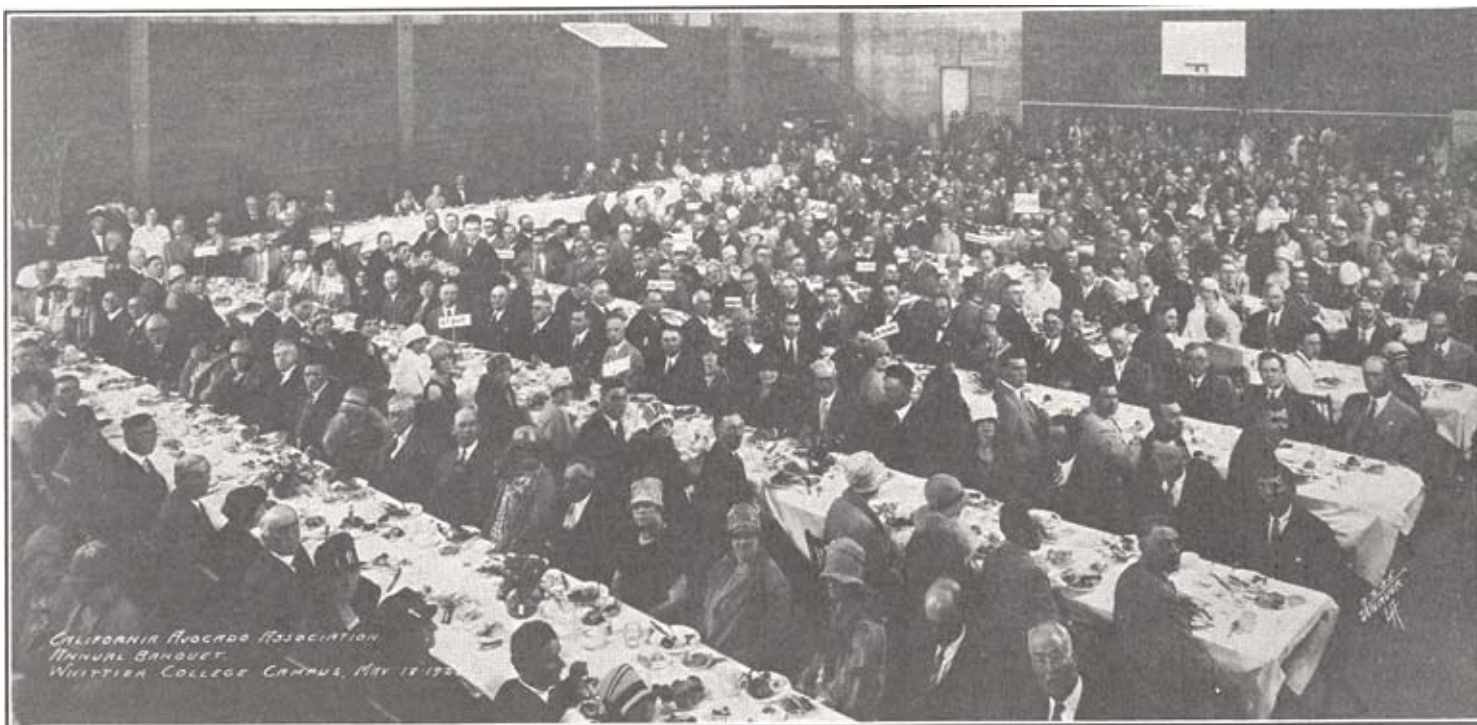
*Cover of the 2nd annual report of 1916*

cultural care and fruit handling. Through the meetings and publications of the Avocado Society, growers would have access to the latest findings on how to grow avocados.

Indeed, after the California Avocado Advisory Board and the subsequent formation of the California Avocado Commission provided the means to fund a concerted research program, the Avocado Society played a prominent role. In the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Avocado Society was charged with surveying the grower community to prioritize research goals, to evaluate research proposals, engage researchers in industry goals, and organize a research program for the consideration of the Avocado Commission Board of Directors.

I am told that the early leadership of the marketing orders held the view that the industry would be best served if they focused on marketing avocados and used the expertise of the Avocado Society to manage the research program. This relationship was highly successful for a number of years.

In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, California avocado industry leaders realized that concerted efforts were needed to lift the demand for avocados to the next level. Such an effort was beyond the means of any single private or cooperative avocado marketing organization. Voluntary programs were explored, but industry leaders decided that a state



*Annual Meeting banquet from the 1928 annual report*

marketing order would be the most equitable and workable plan. The establishment of the California Avocado Advisory Board, and subsequently the California Avocado Commission, meant that the California Avocado Society would no longer be center stage in the California avocado industry. The marketing orders, staffed by marketing professionals and million dollar budgets, quickly occupied the center of gravity of the avocado industry.

The California Avocado Society responded by reviewing its mission to support avocado growers and their prosperity, then set about developing programs to support those goals. The Society continued to host annual meetings as a forum for avocado growers to gather, exchange their experiences, and hear reports of the latest production research and marketing programs. The Society continued to publish its Yearbook. While not a peer reviewed horticultural journal, scientists studying avocados have generously submitted articles over the years that have been targeted toward the readership of avocado growers. This has kept growers abreast of current research, while being a repository of avocado knowledge.

The merging of the Avocado Growers Association and the California Avocado Society energized the Society's efforts to keep growers informed of avocado market conditions. The *Weekly Newslines* continues to this day to assist growers in understanding avocado market dynamics and to aid them in marketing their crop.

For years the Avocado Society has sponsored seminars for avocado growers on the whole gamut of avocado topics. Initially the Society partnered with the University of California Extension, and later added the California Avocado

Commission, in order to present programs of the highest quality. These seminars continue to be an important vehicle for avocado grower education.

The Avocado Society continues to publish pamphlets and bulletins of importance to avocado growers. The Avocado Handbook, written by Dr. Gary Bender, remains an important tool for both novice and experienced avocado growers. And the Society is exploring how to best use the Internet to reach its grower membership.

Of the many good works that Jack Shepherd did for the Avocado Society over the years, among the last was connecting the Society with the Huntington Botanical Garden in San Marino, Calif. The Botanical Library now houses the archive of avocado materials Jack collected during his 70 year association with the avocado industry. The Huntington Botanical Garden is now the home base of the Avocado Society. This association was strengthened with the establishment of a demonstration avocado orchard at the Huntington and named after Jack Shepherd and Hank Brokaw. This orchard preserves 33 avocado varieties of historic interest.

This November, the afternoon session of the Avocado Society's Annual Meeting will be held at the Huntington Botanical Garden and I urge you to attend.

In summary, the California Avocado Society was established to be a support system for the avocado grower, and it continues in that role to the present day. The emerging global avocado market may reorganize and rearrange how avocados are marketed and promoted, and the marketing orders that do this work, but the California Avocado Society will continue to be of service to the California avocado grower, as it always has for nearly 100 years. 🥑



# TOGETHER WE GROW

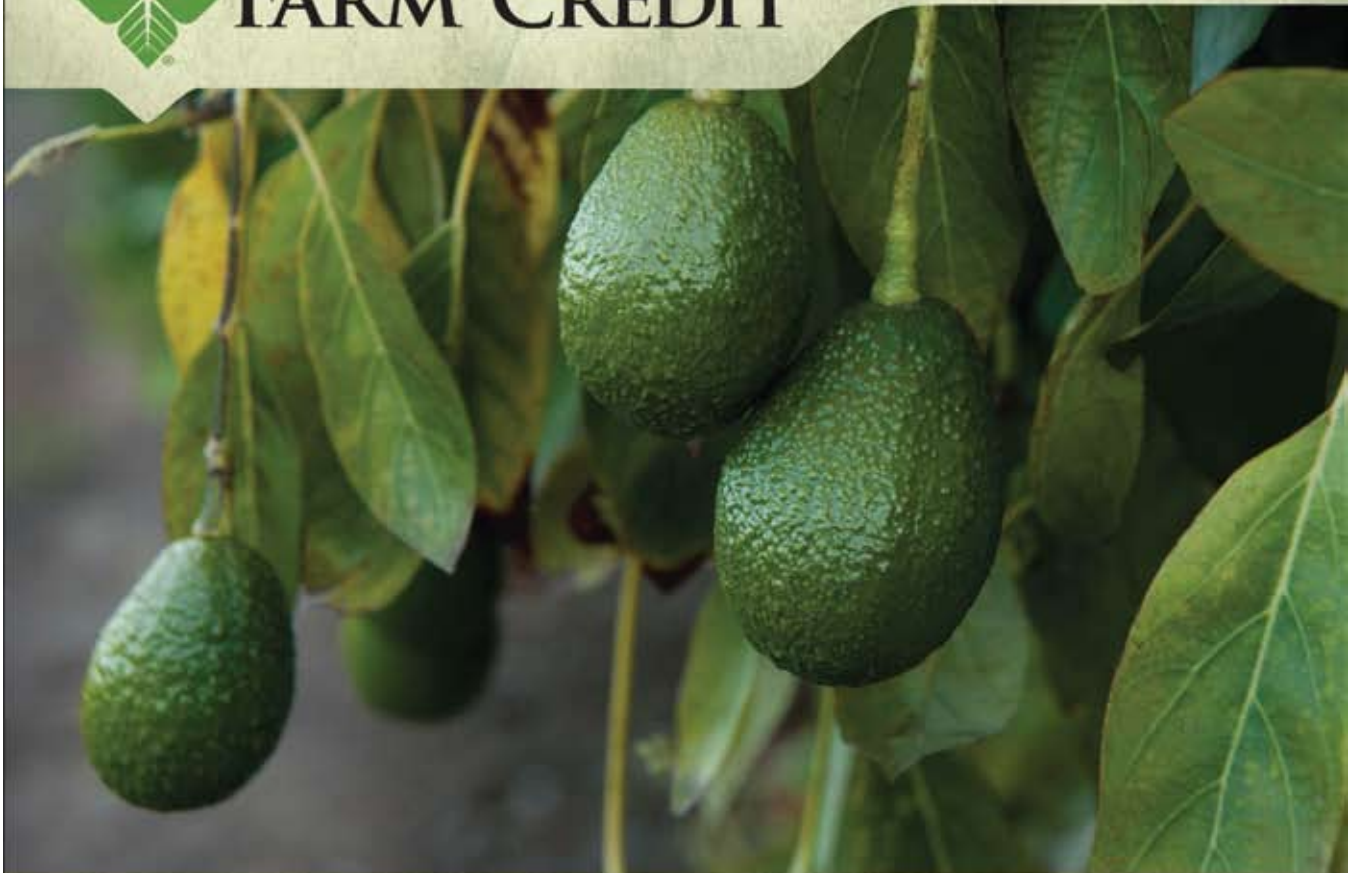
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# CULTIVATING GROWERS

Alden Broome's family are longtime avocado growers in Ventura County. Alden has managed avocado groves for his family's farming operation for six years. Presently, he farms 130 acres of avocados.

*"Index Fresh has been our avocado packer and marketer for over 15 years. During our long relationship, we have found real value in Index's commitment to helping its growers progress and relne key good agricultural practices and food safety programs. We feel that this cooperation helps us to maximize our potential as growers."*



**ALDEN BROOME**  
Avocado Grower

"Getting the best price for our fruit is very important, too. On an average price-per-pound basis, it seems to be well known that Index regularly out-performs others in returns to its growers. I like to recommend Index Fresh to other growers because we have had nothing but a good experience."

"We like that Index is a grower owned company, and that they really make an effort to support the California Avocado as a premium piece of fruit during its marketing season."

Contact our local field staff for a look at Index's historical returns:

**Ventura County:**

Gary Nichols (805) 659-4929

**Santa Barbara & San Luis Obispo Counties:**

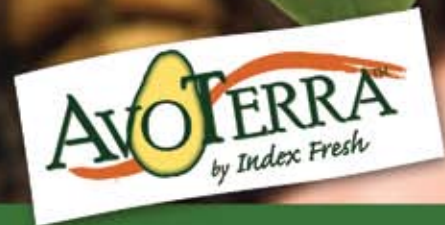
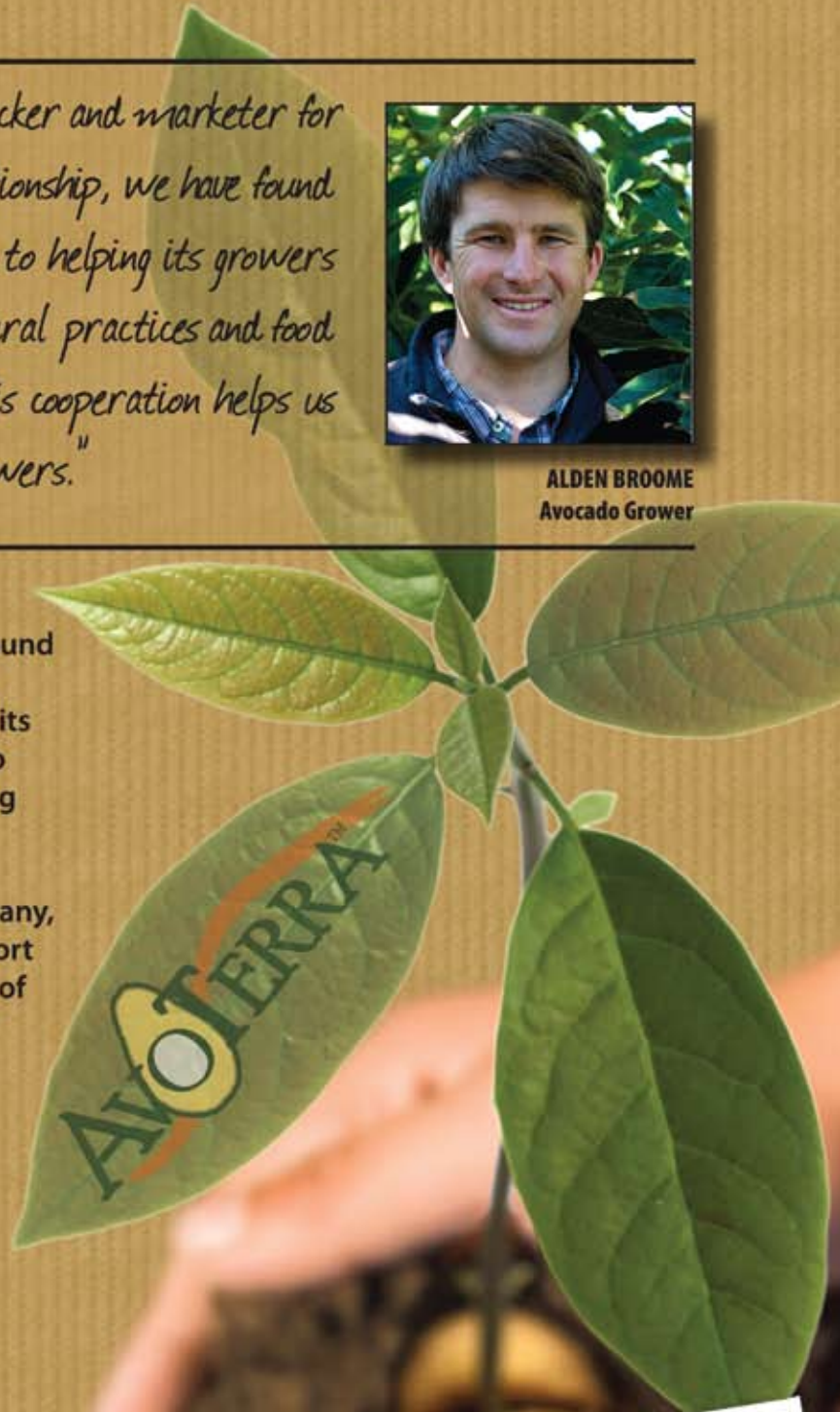
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