

EVEN A BETTER MOUSETRAP NEEDS ADVERTISING

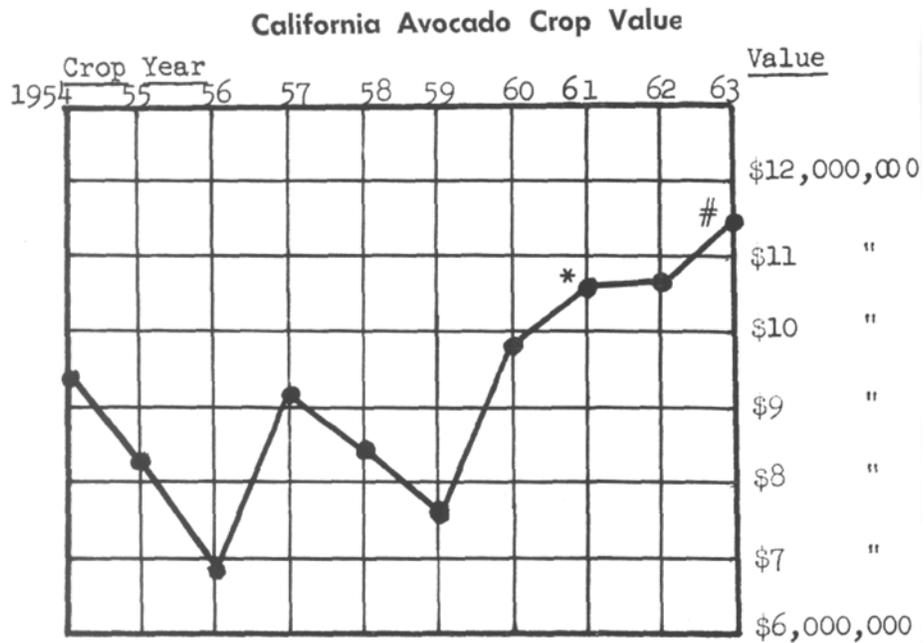
Years ago someone created the aphorism that recommended "build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door." I don't think anyone would argue very much with that. But it might take a long [time for the world to beat that pathway to your door. To insure the success of that old aphorism, the modern business world utilizes the forces of advertising. They don't wait for anyone to beat a pathway to their door. They use advertising in generous doses to tell the world exactly where their door is and all about the "better mousetrap."

This potent sales weapon is being implemented by the California avocado industry through a state marketing order. The order, which was launched in December of 1961, is directed by a 14 man board nominated by growers and handlers and serving without pay. Ten members are nominated by avocado growers and four members by handlers. It is significant to note that this is no run of the mill board of directors. From the very make-up of the industry, the avocado board is able to draw from a group of producers composed of ex-advertising executives, sales managers, business, executives, etc. Probably in no other producing industry could you find such a wealth of knowledge willing to serve on a board to direct a promotional program. But our people do it with zeal and enthusiasm. As a result, the program has produced some spectacular results even in its formative years. But let's back that up with some figures. Prior to the advent of the industry advertising program, the average annual value of the California avocado crop had been \$8,000,000. During the first year of advertising on an industry basis, the value topped \$10,000,000. This was even above the all time industry high of \$9.9 million set in the 1959-60 crop year.

At the end of the second season following the start of the marketing order, the crop value had climbed to \$10,700,000. Most important, there were healthy indications that carefully planned advertising and promotion might be able to level out the extreme highs and lows in crop value which in the past had been entirely dependent upon size. For example, the 140 million pound crop of 1959-60 was worth only \$7,659,000 while the 102 million pound crop of a year earlier had been worth \$8,652,000. One of the major objectives of the avocado advertising plan is to prevent this crop value roller coaster and accordingly improve per acre returns. Now, let's see what has happened as we are nearing the end of the 1963-64 crop year. The crop value has risen again, and we are estimating that it will reach close to \$11,400,000 by the end of the season. Since the start of the program, per acre returns have been improving steadily, a direction we plan to continue. There will be individual crop years which will prove exceptions. Obviously, a drastic drop in production where the crop was only 30 or 40% of normal could make it unfeasible to achieve crop values in the 11 to 12 million dollar area. But our long range program is designed to build consumer acceptance nationwide. We hope to build enough flexibility in consumer acceptance to stabilize values over the long and short crop years. To achieve this, continuity of effort is a pre-requisite. It won't work if we count on opening up the purse strings when the crops are large and tightening up when

the crops are small. Advertising needs don't work that way. This has been demonstrated many times, but perhaps the most dramatic is the Wrigley Gum case history. Throughout World War II, the Wrigley Company continued to advertise even though they had no product at all to sell. Why didn't they cease advertising and wait until they once again could produce their product? I think that the outstanding success of this company has proven the wisdom of their judgment and the profound force of advertising in maintaining a market even when their product is unavailable. But enough of theory, let's look at some of the specifics of the past season:

This was the year of our first major national tie-in promotion, the year when the Kraft Foods Company spent over \$80,000 in national color television in a single month to promote California avocados and Kraft salad dressing. The advisory board looks for advertising partners who maintain dealer-service men or field representatives who work at the retail level. Since the board does not maintain their own field staff, the use of such groups as the Kraft 2,000 man field sales group can be highly beneficial. I believe it is significant to note that the reason the advisory board has not elected to hire a staff to promote California avocados in the field is that this would create a high fixed overhead and prevent the program from maintaining a flexible position. Also, operating the avocado program with a minimum number of employees allows the board to invest a maximum amount of dollars in consumer advertising. This consumer advertising is vital toward educating the public to the wonders of the California avocado and how to use it.



*Marketing order became effective
December 1, 1964.

Estimated value 1963-64 crop at \$11,400,000.



Kraft executives and board manager discuss details of Kraft-Avocado promotion in Chicago. From left: Ralph Pinkerton, Advisory Board Manager; R. P. Hogan, Advertising Manager Kraft Foods; and Bill Nelson, Sales Manager Kraft Foods.





The promotion with Kraft was launched in March and extended through May. A special California Avocado display stand, appropriately called an "Avocado Activator," was designed to display 48 avocados and 24 bottles of Kraft dressing. Through the Kraft distributive system, 25,000 of the Avocado Activators were set up in retail groceries across the country. Each Activator carried 200 recipe folders telling the housewife how to prepare avocados. Additionally, Kraft carried avocado recipes on their salad dressing bottles throughout the promotion.

Nearly 20,000,000 recipes were distributed in this manner during the promotion. In March, the advisory board featured California Avocado salads and Kraft dressings in their magazine advertising in McCall's and Good Housekeeping. It is estimated that Kraft invested close to \$400,000 of their advertising and sales funds during the 90 day period or 70% as much as the entire California avocado advertising budget for the year. Well, with all this effort what happened?

The value of the California Avocado crop for just these three months jumped more than \$400,000 above the same period for the three previous seasons. And the complete value of the Kraft support will spread over future seasons. Who can tell how many new customers they won for avocados? Obviously, they have started many new users who will be with us for seasons to come.

There were four other promotions in the 1963-64 season which all helped toward reaching the record high crop value. In December, the Cling Peach Advisory Board

helped us promote half-shells of avocados filled with canned fruit cocktail. We called this dish, "Coronado Salad," and again we were able to use the Cling Peach staff to distribute promotional materials at the point of sale. In January and February, we worked with the Washington State Apple Commission, utilizing their 23 man staff to promote the "Applacado Salad," another innovation using avocados and Delicious apples.

Late in the Spring, we jumped into action, upon recommendation of the Marketing Committee, with an emergency program to spark sales during a slow down period on Fuertes and insure an orderly change over to the summer varieties. The program helped prevent a drastic price drop in Fuertes which enabled the industry to start the summer varieties at a profitable level.

All promotions were supported by what we call the Platform Advertising Program which has been carried in women's service magazines during the past two years. This is the long range and continuing effort upon which we build our promotions. It is the major arm used toward stabilizing grower returns at a prosperous level. This season, eight full color ads were carried in McCalls and four in Good Housekeeping in markets West of the Mississippi. In Eastern markets, six ads were carried in McCalls. Western ads began in December and ran through July and the Eastern ads were not started until March to make sure that Florida fruit was out of the market.

It has been a season with a marked upsurge in crop value. And yet, we still have much tool sharpening to do . . .clearer definition of all advertising objectives, and above all, program continuity to insure the best grower returns. We are advertising the "better mousetrap." We know there is no fruit that can match a California avocado. With this conviction, we look forward to building one of the truly outstanding promotional programs in the country.