

The South African Avocado Industry Looking Towards Year 2000

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The South African avocado industry is healthy and growing (*Graph 1*) in spite of decreasing prices and the most severe drought in 250 years. Looking back over a number of years, it is with gratitude that two of our major industry problems were solved commercially very successfully.

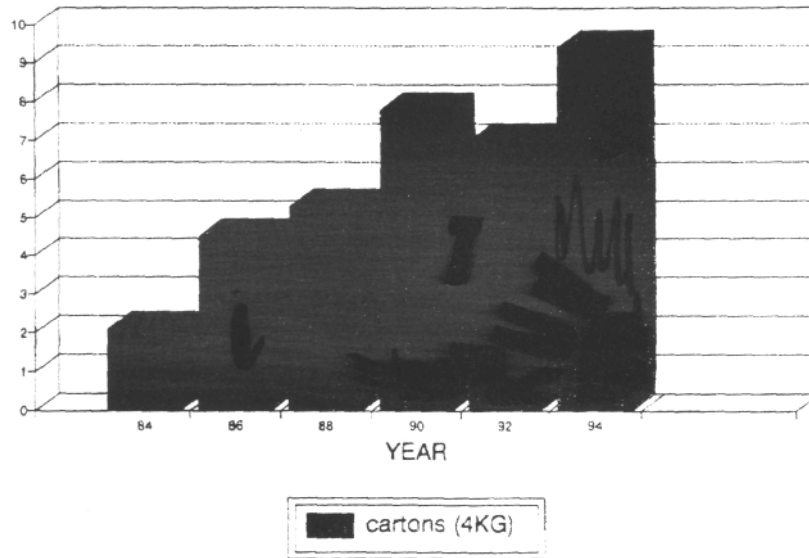
Firstly, the devastating effect of *Phytophthora* was controlled by the wonderful discovery of injections of Aliette and phosphorous acid by Dr. Joe Darvas. SAAGA won the legal battle after 10 years with regard to the use of phosphorous acid, which is now registered for avocados. The availability of tolerant rootstocks, like Duke 7, and improved cultural practices, like better soil and moisture management, also made a contributions.

Secondly, we solved our fruit quality and condition problems on the European markets as an industry. This was the result of implementation of research information to determine the time/temperature relationships of our fruit. Through the cooperation of many role players, more ideal conditions were created for the long journey of 10,000 Km to the markets. We can now market our fruit with confidence and the knowledge that our customers can enjoy the avocado as a wonder of nature.

Our industry remains committed to export, with the EEC as our main market. The lifting of sanctions opened new horizons for us, and new markets will be developed. South Africa exported 38,000 tons of avocados in 1994, and this volume is expected to double to 80,000 tons by the year 2,000. Although individual agents and exporters do brand advertising, the lack of a coordinated strategic plan for advertising and promotions of avocados is a cause of great concern. As can be seen in *Graph 2*, the consumption of avocados per capita will have to be increased. Traditional competitors on the markets will have to cooperate to the mutual benefit of all. This is relevant to all producers, packers, exporters, importers, and international industries who want to profit from this high potential market in the future. The lack of taking this opportunity could lead to serious problems for producers around the world. Market research that we hope will lead to an imaginative avocado awareness campaign has been initiated by SAAGA.

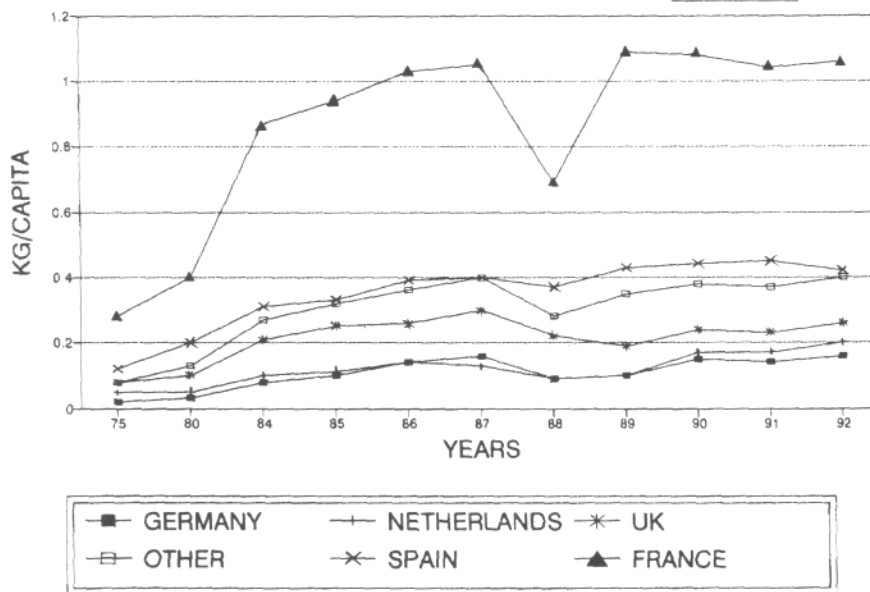
S.A.AVOCADO EXPORT STATISTICS
1984 - 1994

GRAPH 1



AVOCADO CONSUMPTION IN THE EXPORT
1975 - 1992

GRAPH 2



Research remains a major expense item on the SAAGA budget. The research workers again rose to the occasion and made the 1994 research symposium very worthwhile. For the future, we plan to concentrate on issues that will be of commercial value to the

industry.

The searches for larger Hass, dwarfing combinations, and resistant rootstocks form the basis of a breeding and selection program.

The value of identifying super trees through the single tree management program is showing great promise.

The need to produce natural safe food is a very important research aspect. Biologic disease control is a field where research over many years is showing much promise and will be developed further. A breakthrough in this important field could be expected in the control of postharvest fruit diseases.

The South African Avocado Growers Association (SAAGA) continues to play an important role in our industry and represents 99.5% of the producers although we are a voluntary, non-statutory organization. The main objectives are to collect and distribute information, to create forums for discussion and coordination, to promote research and the consumption of avocados, and to represent the industry on official forums.

The role of SAAGA is vital, and through research the industry was successful in controlling *Phytophthora* and improving fruit quality on the EEC markets. The challenge for the future will be to produce avocados more naturally and create a profitable demand for the increased volume by the year 2,000. Creative thinking and international cooperation will become essential to create markets for the future avocado crops of the southern and northern hemispheres.