

## Australia...



**Don Lavers—**

*Director-at-Large, California Avocado Society; and Vice Chairman, Australian Avocado Growers Association.*

Greetings. . .

I am greatly honored to have been elected a director-at-large for the California Avocado Society and hope that, during my term in office, I will be able to contribute to strong links of friendship between the Californian and the Australian industries. The Australian Avocado Growers Federation enthusiastically endorses this hope, and has asked me to convey warmest greetings to the Society and all its members.

In recent years, avocado production in Australia has been increasing at around 12% to 15% annually until 1987, but there was a leveling off in 1988. These are the approximate figures for the last few years:

1986:	19,000 tonnes, or 41.8 million pounds = up 15%
1987:	22,000 tonnes, or 48.4 million pounds = up 15%
1988 (est.):	23,000 tonnes, or 50.6 million pounds = up 4.5%

The below expectation crop in 1988 was brought about by prolonged heavy rainfall in south east Queensland and northern New South Wales during March and April, which caused extensive tree death as well as loss of crop. Tree death was mainly from drowning and would have been many times worse if *Phytophthora* root rot control, using phosphorous acid injections and other cultural methods, had not been promptly applied.

In spite of the slightly heavier supply in 1988, prices were higher than the year before. This has been attributed to two possible factors:

- (1) Promotion, which is carried out independently by each producing state, may

have been successful in stimulating consumer awareness.

(2) The sharply rising plane of production, which normally coincides with the onset of cold weather (June-July), did not occur this year. Normally, the market becomes flat in winter and avocado consumption is 70% of that during the warmer months. This year, following the heavy rains, the rise in supply during the critical period was gentler and prices remained firm for the whole of winter.

The industry is currently undertaking a marketing study and will examine this experience to determine whether promotion or marketing strategies aimed at preventing the winter price drop may be useful in future years.

### **The Federation**

Growers are served by a national body, the Australian Avocado Growers Federation, with delegate representatives from each member state numerically weighted in favor of the states that dominate production, Queensland and New South Wales. Those serving in 1988 were:

Secretary	Ross Boyle
Chairman.....	Ashton Gough
Vice Chairman.....	Don Lavers
Chairman, Varieties Committee	Alec Kidd
Queensland.....	Don Kidd, Alec Kidd, Don Lavers, Brian Capamagian, ..... Brian Weiss
New South Wales.....	Warren Meredith, Peter Molenaar, Ashton Gough, ..... Graham Anderson
Victoria (Sunraysia).....	Marion Matthews
South Australia .....	Ross Richards
West Australia .....	John Galatis

The Federation biennial Conference was held in June at Caloundra on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, and 350 growers, packers, handlers, and trade people participated. A stimulating program was provided by Australian researchers, advertisers, and marketers, augmented by two well known research workers from South Africa, Nigel Wolstenholme and John Bower. It was disappointing that no Californians attended this year, but we wish to extend a cordial invitation to all interested people to join us for our next Conference in May-June 1990. This will be an important warm-up for World Congress 2, so please watch for early notifications.

Alec Kidd, one of the Australian industry's genuine pioneers, announced his retirement from active industry affairs at the Federation meeting in November. Alec, who has numerous friends in California, helped to form the Queensland Avocado Subcommittee and, later, the Federation, and was the first Federation chairman. He received the

Federation Award of Merit in 1986, and is currently chairman of the Varieties Committee. The industry says thanks to a great friend.

Under the direction of the Varieties Committee, the Avocado Nursery Voluntary Accreditation Scheme (ANVAS) has been expanded to include the Virus Tested Tree Registration Program was the aim of encouraging nurseries to supply trees for commercial planting free of sunblotch as well as root rot. Almost 100% of trees sold for commercial planting come from ANVAS nurseries.

A number of cultivars from Dr. Bergh's breeding program and some resistant rootstocks supplied by Dr. Coffey are now in trial plots under the surveillance of Tony Whiley, Senior Research Horticulturist, QDPI, who is technical adviser to the Varieties Committee. 'Gwen' is expected to be released shortly under the new Plant Patent Rights legislation.

## **Research**

A number of research projects are currently being conducted, and I am listing a few that are of general interest:

***Growth Cycle.*** Tony Whiley and co-workers are studying:

- Growth and flushing patterns of roots so that effective management strategies based on the growth cycle can be developed; they are using ten rhizotron chambers, each with two viewing windows.
- Impact of tree storage of fruit on long term productivity of avocado trees.
- Use of Cultar (PP 333) as a tree growth regulator.

***Root Rot.*** Ken Pegg, Tony Whiley, and co-workers are looking at: —Combining zinc and boron with phosphorous acid injections.

- Reduced rates of phosphorous acid.
- Dynamics of distribution and dilution of phosphite, injected into avocado trees, to develop a better understanding of its fungicidal use.
- Evaluation of clonal rootstocks for root rot resistance.

***Soil Applied Calcium.*** Tim Trochoulias is examining the impact of calcium on tree health, tree and fruit nutrition, and disease control.

***Pest Control.*** Geoff Waite is examining the biological control of red spider mite and ivy leaf roller and the use of pheromones in the control of ivy leaf roller and fruit spotting bug.

***Cholesterol.*** Dr. I. Coulhoun and Judy Walker are evaluating the effect of avocados in

the diet on blood cholesterol levels.