POPULATION DYNAMICS OF *Oligonychus perseae* (Tuttle, Baker & Abbatiello) AND ITS AUXILIARY FAUNA IN CV. HASS AVOCADO CULTURES IN SOUTHERN SPAIN

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The persea mite, *Oligonychus perseae*, was detected for the first time in avocado's most productive areas of southern Spain (Málaga and Granada) in mid-2004. The damage this mite caused to avocado trees, in a traditionally pest-free area, distressed the growers. In response to their concern, the population dynamics of the persea mite was studied, and the natural enemies associated to the pest were identified. This work aimed at determining new techniques for crop-management that permit the phytochemical-free production of avocado to continue.

In this work we present the preliminary results of a survey carried out in an avocado orchard of the province of Málaga during 2006. The population dynamics of the persea mite and the phytoseiid mites were studied. The survey started on March, when spring avocado shoots appear, and samplings were done every two weeks. The population of *O. persea* started to increase exponentially at the beginning of July, reaching a maximum at the end of August. The phytoseiid mites, however, showed two population peaks, the first being in the spring before the appearance of the pest, and the second when the populations of the pest were declining. We discuss the role of phytoseiid mites in controlling the persea mite, and the influence of alternative prey in the dynamics of the phytoseiid population.