

REPORT ON OVERSEAS TOUR

JC TOERIEN

Westfalia Estate, P O Box 14, Duivelskloof 0835

The main objective of the journey was to collect suitable avocado cultivars and rootstocks to increase our avocado genepool for future breeding.

On-route to California, I had the opportunity to visit the European markets. My impressions were that the disastrous 1987 season was caused by the record Israeli crop, which was spread over a much later marketing period than usual. Avocados will in future, have to compete with other crops for the housewife's attention. The need for feedback to SAAGA on fruit quality and condition became very clear. The decision to appoint a representative can only benefit the industry.

In California I was received by Professor Art Schroeder and his wife Mary, whose warm hospitality was much appreciated.

We attended the annual meeting of the California Avocado Society (CAS) under the chairmanship of Hank Brokaw. I was honoured to be elected as a Director at large of the CAS. Almost all the leaders of the California avocado industry attended the meeting. The concept was confirmed that the industry is doing well because of enthusiastic and dedicated people who work towards the improvement of the California avocado industry.

Breeding is of paramount importance, with excellent work being done by Dr Bob Bergh and Bob Whitsell. I was pleasantly surprised when three co-operators were honoured for looking after more than 10000 plants each. The gesture was a splendid contribution to the future of the avocado industry.

At the UCR we had the opportunity to greet many old friends, somewhat hampered by insufficient time. Professor Zentmeyer and Dr Ohr accompanied us to Saticoy and the Brokaw nursery. The trip provided an excellent opportunity to share in their vast experience.

Hank Brokaw's avocado nursery is still very impressive. Field trials with various *Phytophthora cinnamomi*-tolerant rootstocks emphasised the need for continuous breeding and selection. Martin Grande (G755) showed severe chlorosis on calseric soil conditions and Thomas has done well under replant conditions.

I was privileged to visit Dr Eugenio Schieber in Guatemala. His hospitality and dedication to the avocado industry, my visit to Popenoe House and the avocado plaque erected by the CAS, will always be precious memories. Lake Atitlan is beautiful and surrounded by avocado trees. I was fortunate to view the lake area from a helicopter. The vast number of natural-growing avocado trees was unbelievable they were everywhere and dominated the natural vegetation.

Guatemala certainly played a dominating role in the origin of the avocado. Dr Schieber

is doing pioneering work on the collection of the avocado. He really was a very worthy receiver of the CAS merit award.

Chile, with its unique geography, the majestic Eastern border, the snow-clad Andes and the Pacific on the West, was a very interesting experience.

Rudolfo Renz and Jose Oleata were splendid hosts. I was fortunate to visit the subtropical areas north of Santiago and as far as La Serena.

Quillota is the major avocado producing area with Hass as the major cultivar. I was very impressed by Renata Magdahl Spies's Huerto California. With the advisory assistance of Francisco Gardiazabal, the 38-year-old Hass orchards produce 33 ton/ha, which is an outstanding achievement. The relatively large sized Hass fruit on old trees, is a phenomenon that I can only ascribe to the relatively cool climate.

The University of Católica is doing excellent work on avocados. Their contract on biological control of insects is extremely successful. The leading avocado producers are co-operating in central packaging and marketing. I expect that Chile will in future become more successful on world markets.