



# apata avo link

MAY 2009

## Welcome to AvoLink!

People talk about global warming and then we have incidences like last week when the streets looked to be covered in snow and you thought you were in Dunedin not Mt Maunganui Beach! The vagaries of the weather always add that extra challenge to all those that are in the business of growing or farming something. Our sympathies go out to all those who have been affected by the recent hail in the Bay of Plenty.

On a more positive note we recently had the pleasure of hosting Jim Donovan, Vice President of Mission Produce USA. Jim gave presentations in Tauranga and Whangarei and spoke positively about the markets over there and our AVANZA group that provide avocados to Mission. We also heard from the four exporters that make up AVANZA and what really came through strongly was how positive things are for avocados world-wide and how our Marketers pool their experience and skills to market your fruit. It was great to see such a large group of growers get together from all sectors of the industry to gain a greater understanding of how AVANZA operates to increase the value of your crop.

We are very close to having an Avocado Service Agreement ready for you to peruse. There is a large crop out there and we need as much detail from you to plan for the season ahead.

The season just gone was a great success financially and we are thrilled with the returns for our growers. Well done to John Carroll and his team from Primor for achieving what we believe to be the highest returns in the industry this year. This is the fifth year in a row that Apata and Primor have returned the best net OGR per tray to growers in the industry. The extra dollars in grower's pockets goes a long way to keeping growers happy, but we understand that this is only part of the picture.

Apata also ended the season with 64.37% of fruit going into export from the Bay of Plenty and 61% from Whangarei. The industry results for export at the end of the season sat at 61% export.

Orchards this season look to have good flush covering fruit, protecting the crop from sunburn which was one of the major issues in the last big season. This flush also means that we may be on to a winner for having two great seasons in a row. This will boost avocado growers in the Bay who have been strongly biennial over the last five years. We encourage growers to keep their crops clean and available for all market access and this along with the fact that we are planning on installing water blasters in both packhouses for the 2009/2010 season, will set the benchmark for achieving another good result for export percentages.

Communication and relationships are also key to continuing the strong link to our growers with Apata and Primor. If you know of anyone who would like to be the next link in our chain please get in touch with Niko, Peter, Steve or myself. We encourage growers to contact us if you have any specific requirements or any questions about our Service Agreement when it comes out.

May the weather behave itself for the rest of the winter and spring, the sun shine and your fruit grow big. As Niko likes to say....Grow Well.

Therese Temple  
**National Avocado Manager**

### WHAT'S INSIDE:

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- Soil and Leaf Samples
- ASA Update
- Discussion Groups
- Grower Committee Report
- And much more!



## Full Year Results: John Carroll

Our average export returns (including Apata's 51 cent per tray rebate) to growers are:

- Sizes 14/16: \$14.62 per tray equivalent
- Sizes 18/20: \$17.03 per tray equivalent
- Sizes 23/24: \$16.91 per tray equivalent
- Size 25: \$16.21 per tray equivalent
- Sizes 28/32: \$12.03 per tray equivalent
- Size 32: \$11.05 per tray equivalent

I would like to thank our growers for your ongoing support, and also make some comment on the events of the season. It has been a most eventful season, one that has brought about some new challenges, and the way the season progressed could not have been envisaged back in August/September.

- Primor has exported 471,923 trays, out of an Industry total of 1,376,265 trays. This represents a share of just over 34% of New Zealand's exports, once again a lift over the previous season (and our previous highest) of 30%.
- I hope in doing so our comparative performance can once again show we have out-performed our competition, and done so whilst gaining market share. This must be a positive outcome for the Industry as a whole.
- The overall lighter crop created some high expectations of Grower return, and we felt the same way. Yet the hurly burly of World affairs and the credit crunch has impacted a little on market values. The final outcome is still, I believe, a decent return, most certainly in the circumstances, yet the values belie the energy expended in achieving a good outcome.
- Fruit maturities were advanced this last season, and that had an impact on the care required to run marketing programmes. A careful watch was necessary to manage temperatures, ripening and handling, as fruit behaved in a slightly different way to previous.
- In Australia, the large scale arrival of Western Australian production had a big influence, in two ways; firstly, the competition they provided in chasing Supermarket programmes, and secondly, in the pains experienced as they marshaled big volumes of fruit through the wholesale systems, notably pre-Xmas.
- Our late season fruit quality in Australia was not quite the same standard as the rest of the season and it did not cosmetically shine. Apata and Primor together went to the markets to reassure our customers that we were holding our standards up to the level required by the industry.
- Sales into Japan via Avanza were very successful, and bode well for this coming year and the future. Clearly, now our dollar has realigned, Japan will become a key market for us all.

Finally then, no year is complete without thanking also our friends and colleagues at Apata. Once again, the way they and you our growers allow us to flow product to satisfy customer requirements produces good outcomes. I am sure our comparative results will clearly show the rewards.

### New Design, New Name!



Welcome to **AvoLink** – your monthly Apata newsletter full of Apata and industry information, news, events and much more.

**AvoLink** replaces the Apata Avocado Update, and has a fresh new design which should make reading our newsletter more enjoyable.

We'd like to know what you think of our new look – contact our Communications Manager Cass Thurston on 07 552 0535 or pass on your feedback to your Apata Grower Services Representative.



## Avocado Services Agreement Update

The 2009 Avocado Services Agreement (ASA) is in the final stages of being put together, and we will start delivering these to growers in the first week of June.

To help make next season a success, a lot of planning on shipping and fruit movement etc has to be done by Primor and Apata well in advance of the first fruit being harvested. It is important that we have as many signed contracts as possible by the end of June so that by the end of July, the season's plan is very much in place.

If you have any questions regarding this year's ASA, please contact your Apata Grower Services Representative. Their contact details are on the back page.

## Grower Discussion Groups

We now have sufficient numbers to start up the Omokoroa / Te Puna Discussion group. Thank you to those growers who expressed an interest in joining this group.

The growers involved will be called individually to set up a date and time for our first meeting.



## Apata Field Day a 'Gastronomic' Success!: Niko Tahau

Late last month Apata launched a new concept in avocado field days, "the progressive concept", where food and good humour took top billing over technical transfer. The record attendance of 85 people was ample proof that our growers were ready for a change.

We started at John Bowen's property at Prestige Road. After bacon and egg butties and a cuppa we were shown around the property with the main focus for discussion being the value of soil and leaf testing. Lindsay Heard spoke at his usual high standard and the Q&A session that followed was very lively.

Apata avocado growers must have an extra "debating gene" because Todd Muller had his work cut out for him answering questions ranging from "will Apata be getting a water blaster?" to "where does Apata stand on the UHP issue?." The length of that Q&A session and the respect shown to our CEO's answers was testament to our grower's keen spirit and their will to improve their own industry.

Following lunch and prize giving, Jim Wyatt, our host orchardist at the lunch venue, gave us a rather humorous description of his horticultural background and his orchard's history. I will never forget his description of himself as a "Horticultural retard", nor will I let him!

The third and final orchard visited was that of Fred Willis of the Walker Rd Willis's. Once all were assembled in block 1, Fred launched into a passionate rendition of his view on everything from; "pruning of trees to get them more excited" to "pruning of trees for better spray coverage". Yes, you guessed it, pruning was his theme and growers were impressed with the clean interior of his trees, although some said they may be more moderate in their approach to what is now an accepted management tool in the avocado industry.

Following Jerome Hardy's talk at Fred's place, we moved to the Willis courtyard for a nice cuppa and a taste of meringue and avocado ice-cream. That was our day and I for one discovered that you learn a lot more when you are having fun!

Grow well,

**Niko**

*If you would like a copy of the Gastronomic Field Day handout posted or emailed to you, please contact Cass Thurston on 07 552 0535 or [cassandra@apata.co.nz](mailto:cassandra@apata.co.nz) to request a copy.*



## Apata Avocado Growers' Committee: Rodger Bagshaw, Chairman

This month's Apata Avocado Growers' Committee meeting discussed the just completed export season, and commenced looking at the planning for next season.

Once again Primor has done a great job in what has been a difficult season for them in several respects, and it appears from the information we have available, that Primor, which exported 34% of the crop, has achieved returns to growers that are well ahead of our main competitors. The Committee recorded a unanimous vote of appreciation to Primor on their efforts for the 2008/09 season.

The estimates for next season are showing a marked increase in crop, and at this stage Apata's estimate is for 750,000 – 800,000 export trays. John Carroll has signaled that we will again be sending crop to the USA. With more crop taking the long sea voyage to America (and Japan), once again we wish to emphasise the importance of our growers presenting a good clean crop, and the application of regular copper sprays is critical in the prevention of rots for this fruit.

The Committee perused the changes to next years packing contracts, and accepted that the few changes that have been made were necessary. Apata Grower Services will shortly commence delivering these contracts for perusal and signing in due course. To help make next season a success, a lot of planning on shipping and fruit movement etc has to be done by both Primor and Apata well in advance of the first fruit being harvested. It is important that we have as many signed contracts as possible by the end of June so that by the end of July, the season's plan is very much in place.

## Apata Avocado Growers' Committee Nomination Process

The Apata Avocado Growers' Committee has been in existence since October 2004, and comprises of six members who must supply 100 percent of their crop to Apata. Three members of the committee must be from North of Auckland, and the remaining three from South of Auckland.

At the end of each season one representative of each region must retire by rotation, and if there is more than one nomination an election is to be held.

This year Anne Inglis from the North and Rodger Bagshaw from the South are retiring, but both have confirmed they are standing for re-election.

Nominations from Northland and the Bay of Plenty region have been called for, and Ray Wolley has confirmed he will stand for the Northland seat. There were no nominations for the Bay of Plenty seat.

The Committee has appointed Cassandra Thurston as the returning officer for the election process. Details on voting will be sent to growers as soon as possible.

If you have any questions about the nomination process, or about the Apata Growers Committee in general, please contact the Committee Chairman Rodger Bagshaw on 0272 226 929.



## Technical Update: Lindsay Heard

### Leaf –Soil Tests

April and May are the months to collect leaf and soil tests.

Leaf and soil tests are one of the tools to monitor the fruit size, shoot growth and tree health for next season's flowering - fruitset. Planning ahead is important to maintain good production levels and make sure the trees don't run low on nutrient inputs and carbohydrate levels.

The medium to high croploads on most trees this season means that nutrients such as Nitrogen, Potassium, Boron will be drawn down from the leaves which in turn the trees will draw from the soil.

Nitrogen, Potassium, Magnesium and Boron are also subject to leaching from high rainfall events.

Leaf and Soil test results can be used to check:

- The fertiliser programme for the previous 12 months i.e. check nutrient inputs versus result.
- Nutrient status versus the cropload.
- Nitrogen levels to set tree up for spring flowering –shoot flush.
- Boron leaf-soil levels for spring flowering.
- Soil pH levels to check for maximum nutrient availability.

Boron is important for pollen vigour – pollen viability and Boron needs to be applied 6-12months prior to flowering for good uptake into the leaves and flowers.

## 25 Years of Apata Limited

Apata will be celebrating its 25th birthday in September this year, and we are on the hunt for old photos, documents and newspaper clippings etc that showcase Apata's journey over the past 25 years.

If you have photos/documents etc that you would like to share, please contact Cassandra Thurston on 07 552 0535.



Boron should be applied when trees are in the active root growth stage, then Boron will be transported into leaves and flowers

### Fruit Quality for Export Markets

Calcium has been recognised as an important element in many fruit crops for internal fruit quality.

As the national crop increases and fruit has longer distances to travel then fruit quality will be important for continued market access. There have been fruit quality issues into the USA and Australia in past seasons and we need to do as much as we can on the orchard to provide good quality fruit for export.

There is not much research of Calcium in Avocados but Calcium is recognized in other fruit crops for increasing cell wall structure and therefore I would advise regular maintenance Calcium levels are maintained.

Calcium is a relatively low cost nutrient to apply and if we can be proactive with good calcium applications to increase fruit quality then hopefully the exporters will have good quality fruit to supply into the markets.

### Irrigation –Fruit Quality

Studies have reported that water stress during early fruit development has reduced the internal qualities of mature fruit. Trials reported that fruit calcium levels increased in irrigated trees compared to non irrigated trees over the early fruit development period. Calcium is important for post harvest storage qualities of mature fruit and with a potentially larger national crop for 2009-2010 season, then good internal fruit quality will be important for fruit in the market place.

## Avocado Growers' Bulletin

Apata's fortnightly Avocado Growers' Bulletin is a convenient and fast way to stay up-to-date with the latest information.

The bulletin is emailed to growers fortnightly, and contains Apata and Industry event details, technical advice and up-to-date packing and industry data.

If you are not receiving the Apata Avocado Growers' bulletin and would like to, contact Apata's Communication Manager Cassandra Thurston on 07 552 0535 or email your details to [cassandra@apata.co.nz](mailto:cassandra@apata.co.nz).



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