



Natures Fruit Company

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NEWSLETTER

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Board recently held their July meeting in Alstonville and were fortunate to have the opportunity to meet with growers at the Summerland House facility on Friday night. It was a fantastic opportunity to again meet with growers from other regions and have a look at other packing facilities. We are most appreciative of the hospitality extended by John and Brett from Summerland House, and thank growers for attending the meeting.

Already we are halfway through the year with little or no sign of rain. The lack of rainfall in the South East Queensland area has had a definite effect on fruit size, with sizes from all growers noticeably smaller than in previous years.

Fortunately we have not suffered the severe frost damage that has recently occurred in some orchards in the Mildura and Western Australia regions.

Movement of fruit through the markets and chain stores has picked up over recent weeks, after the traditional slump in the late June/early July period. It is essential that growers continue to estimate their bin deliveries and advise either Andrew or Paul if you intend to pick large volumes of fruit at any particular time. This assists in planning the marketing strategies to ensure best returns.

We will be holding field days during September in various regions as detailed later in the newsletter. This will be an excellent opportunity to take advantage of the information that will be available from some key research and horticultural figures within industry. We look forward to catching up with you then.

All the best.
Ros Smerdon

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MANAGER'S REPORT

The season is slowly drawing to the end across many of our growing areas. Certainly the bulk of our fruit has been through the shed at Nambour. With most areas from the Sunshine Coast and Bundaberg finished we are looking towards the Hinterland region for our fruit supply.

Size has been our biggest problem during the season. The larger fruit set

coupled with little help from the heavens has resulted in a relative decrease in fruit numbers by approximately 25%. Let's hope that recent forecasts remain good and rain is just around the corner giving us good impetus for the next years crop.

I have some matters that require some attention by us all. They are

outlined below.

Transport Costs

As you are all aware the cost of transport, both domestic and commercial, has been rising rapidly. These costs too have affected your returns on outwards fruit costs from packing shed to market. In terms of inwards fruit NFC has been under-recovering on this

Managers Report Continued

freight. This is due to the set costs we deliver at the beginning of the season.

We are continually working towards minimising this impact on our growers. To do this we are investigating new options for transport and the types of configurations we utilise. Once we have some firm answers we will convey this to our members. With no immediate relief from these costs we ask those that are picking to please fill your bins to assist us during this period.

Packing Shed

During early July we undertook some maintenance with the grader to improve our efficiencies in the shed. It is with pleasure that I am able to advise that we have been very successful

with this.

The recognition of the packing shed being a vital part of our operations and service to our growers we are very aware of the need to remain competitive into the future. This is also an area that we are working towards ensuring we are investing the time and effort to either reduce or hold costs. New technology is currently available that we are investigating to both improve our output levels and provide a seamless flow of information to our major customers. We are analysing the worth of the integration of this technology into our system. Again as we progress this we will advise our members.

Board Meeting in Alstonville

In early July we conducted a Board meeting in Alstonville. This is a continuation of the policy to bring the meetings to our grower regions. Following the meeting we held a successful evening at HWNS. I must also thank Brett and John for their gracious hosting of the evening. I am sure those that attended were very pleased with the ability to meet with and discuss matters with our Directors. We hope to continue this into the future.

Field Days

It is with great pleasure that I announce the hosting of two field days. The field days are being conducted by NFC in North Queensland on the 19th of September and in Alstonville on the 21st of September.

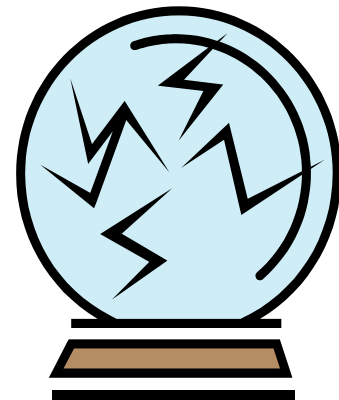
MARKET REPORT— Paul Schramm—CRYSTAL BALL

The avocado market is quite strong with price being the main reason. Most large retailers are moving fruit at a reasonable retail price which is creating strong sales.

The Bundaberg and Sunshine Coast areas are now coming to the end of their season and should help in easing supply, and hopefully demand will continue giving way to an increase in price.

Fruit size continues to be the major problem in most areas and we can only hope for a wet spring, otherwise this will continue for next year as well. Your Company next year will need better communication between farm and shed with better quantity and fruit size estimates so we do not mislead our major customers.

For a more up to date report please contact me on 0438 621



Research News - Graeme Thomas

Glyphosate found in the roots of Avocados

Recent tests have consistently found the herbicide Glyphosate® (Roundup®) in roots of avocado trees. It has been known for some time that the technique developed by SGS Agritech used to measure the quantity of phosphorous acid in the roots of avocados, also measures the quantity of the widely used herbicide Glyphosate® in the roots. Until recently, these measurements were not taken until a grower enquired, following the decline of his trees following the application of Glyphosate® to control weeds. SGS Agritech will be looking to further validate the results so far.

The Glyphosate® levels in roots of trees grown on clay loam soils varied from 60 mg/kg to 310 mg/kg and were applied as far back as the 16th January 2006 with samples taken for analysis on the 21st June 2006. On sandy soils the levels varied from 270 mg/kg to 420 mg/kg. In both these cases the blocks were sprayed in April 2006 with samples analysed in late June 2006.

To put these results in perspective if preparing a spray tank of herbicide, the most common dilution rate used when mixing 36% Glyphosate® is 1 litre of herbicide to 100 L of water. At this concentration, the mix contains 3600 mg/L of Glyphosate®. This is capable of

killing most weeds.

How the herbicide has entered trees can only be theorised. It is important to note that the highest level of 420 mg/kg was on a very sandy soil that is either free of or has an extremely low content of clay particles. It is also important to note on this block, the weed levels were low and the volume of herbicide applied was small.

What are the effects of these recorded levels of Glyphosate®?

Some of the trees from where these samples were taken were very healthy, however others were in various stages of decline. The unanswered questions are: 1) is the decline due purely to the effects of Phytophthora root rot; 2) is there a significant independent effect that Glyphosate® is having on the health of trees; or 3) is the affect synergistic between Glyphosate® and Phytophthora root rot reducing the trees ability to regenerate roots when they are lost to disease?

Experience with other herbicides on avocados has shown that trees partially debilitated by spray drift from herbicides in one season, declined significantly the following year. This decline was most dramatic in the trees caught by herbicide overspray than in the neighbouring trees. The conclusion reached at the time

was that herbicide had predisposed trees to more severe Phytophthora root rot decline

In the latest Australian Journal of Soil Science, Volume 44 pp 379 – 406, 2006, the impacts of Glyphosate® on soil organisms such as bacteria and fungi are discussed. The soil organisms are able to break down a single application of Glyphosate®, however repeated doses result in long-term changes in the populations of microorganisms and their balance in the soil.

I recall residue problems in citrus plantings on sandy soils on the NSW Central Coast during the 1990's, apparently due to the lack of clay particles which bind or deactivate the Glyphosate®. Repeated doses of Glyphosate® were then free in the soil and available to plants.

In the Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture 1992, 32, 395-9 the affects of Glyphosate® residues in sandy soil with tomato transplants was discussed. This showed a decrease in both dry weight and yield when applied to the soil up to 15 days before planting. The affects were increased when applied in dry conditions and when soil phosphorus was high.

Information has been con-

Research News - Graeme Thomas

As Glyphosate® is a very important compound in the control of weeds in avocado orchards, we need to know how best to manage the product without any detrimental effects on the crop. With some field research, it should be relatively easy to determine a safe root concentration, which should not be exceeded.

As these results have come from a small sample. I will continue to monitor the levels through the season. It was interesting to note that no root sample that was analysed had a Glyphosate® concentration below 60 mg/kg.

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NEW GROWERS NEWS—Nola Stumm

Autumn and early winter proved to be quite dry for most of the avocado growing area, however June and July brought relief with good rains over most of the coastal areas. So far this season we have had good conditions, no damaging winds and I have heard of no frost damage in the region so far, however winter is not yet over. In early August the board held its meeting in Alstonville which gave us a chance to meet with the local growers over drinks and nibbles put on by the House with no steps.

Moving the board meetings around the grower regions is proving quite successful, allowing the board a greater understanding of the particular problems experienced within the different areas. It also gives you the growers a chance to get to know just who is running your company, and it may encourage other growers to become involved and stand for a board position. We will try to continue this idea.

NORTH QUEENSLAND ROUNDUP– Col Cummings

20 weeks on from Larry, do we know how this event is going to impact on production for 2007 !!!!

The announcement by the government to extend the wages subsidy to 26 weeks for growers is welcome, we need all the assistance we can get.

Speaking of assistance, attached to this newsletter is the confirmation of a Field Day to be held in North Queensland at the Homestead at Tolga on the 19th of September 2006.

NFC is pleased to be able to offer our grower members, and in fact all avocado growers

in North Queensland, the chance to listen to some of the best scientists and other guest speakers available to our industry.

This is your opportunity to exchange ideas with your peers and network with the industry, to enhance our business performance.

The full details can be seen on Page 6 of this newsletter. I will further be in contact with A.T.A.G.A., Shepard Australia and our grower members to advertise this event. We are aiming for a full afternoon affair with speakers, question/answer ,orchard walk, lunch and

afternoon smoko, equipment displays and Bar-B-Que type meal .

Lock in the detail to your Diary.

I look forward to seeing you all there.

Col Cummings
NFC Director
North Queensland

Smoked Salmon on Avocado (serves 4)

Ingredients List

60 gms smoked salmon per person
2 small bunches rocket leaves
1 spanish onion finely sliced and soaked in water for 30 mins
2 avocado
1 tblsp mint leaves
200 gms natural yoghurt
lemon juice
virgin olive oil
salt and pepper
½ tsp ginger powder
½ tsp cayenne pepper

Method

Place the avocado, mint leaves, yoghurt, salt and pepper into a blender and puree. Transfer to a bowl and add the ginger and cayenne pepper, mix well and then add some lemon juice and oil to suit your taste. Place the washed rocket leaves on the four plates then spoon the avocado mix evenly over the rocket. Place the sliced salmon on top of the Avocado puree and finish with the Spanish onion. Serve with an extra twist of cracked pepper and a slight drizzle of virgin olive oil.

NEXT NEWSLETTER ADDITIONAL SPECIAL

NFC MANAGER'S FAVOURITE CHEESECAKE RECIPE



NFC FIELD DAYS



**North Queensland
'The Homestead'**

**Tuesday
19th September**

**Alstonville
'House with No
Steps'**

**Thursday
21st September**

Speakers Include

Dr Tony Whiley—Fruit size determination / Rootstock improvements
Ken Pegg—Pepper Spot / Disease management
Graeme Thomas—Robust fruit / Root health
Keith Fallows—Copper fungicides / Glyphosate
NFC—Marketing and Management
AAL—Industry Promotion and R & D Program 2006/7

Program

Start at 10.15am
Lunch provided
(Spray Calibration session)
Afternoon Tea
BBQ Dinner at 5.30 pm

Alstonville Field Day

NFC is organizing buses to come from the Sunshine Coast to Alstonville and from Port Macquarie to Alstonville.
Cost will be \$35 per person for the bus. Bookings are essential. We expect two pickup points for each bus on the way.

Please contact NFC office for details

**COST FOR FIELD DAY
\$50 per PERSON**

**RSVP for both events no later than Friday 15th of September
For more details contact NFC on (07) 5441 3699**