



Natures Fruit Company

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NEWSLETTER

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The devastation that Cyclone Larry left in its wake will have a sustained effect on North Queensland for years to come. Not to detract from the immediate short-term impact of crop loss, it is the long-term consequences of tree damage, in some cases irreparable, for industries such as avocados and macadamia nuts that will be felt in the area for years to come. We cannot begin to imagine how our fellow growers in North Queensland must feel, with the widespread crop loss and the enormous clean up task ahead. On behalf of the growers, staff and Board of NFC I extend our sympathies and best wishes to all our growers from North Queensland who have been affected by the cyclone.

In the aftermath of the cyclone it was pleasing to note that growers from other areas did not try to take advantage of the temporary lull in supply and pick their fruit before correct maturity to gain a price advantage. This action has ensured that immature fruit was not put into the market to the detriment of future sales.

As mentioned in other reports in this newsletter the season on the whole has started a little earlier than usual. Weekly fruit volumes are continuing to increase, although in some areas fruit size is smaller than anticipated due to prevailing weather conditions.

It is heartening that growers have continued to work cooperatively and that communication between growers and Natures Fruit Company has remained strong, ensuring that picking schedules are adhered to, thus allowing fruit to move steadily through the markets.

As you are aware our Annual General Meeting will be held on 26th May, followed by dinner. On behalf of your Board we hope that you can join us at this important function for our company, and we look forward to catching up with you.

All the best.
Ros Smerdon

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MANAGER'S REPORT

Operations Update

The season is now up and running at NFC. Fruit volumes of Hass have been increasing quickly. The season has seen fruit mature earlier than in previous years resulting in a few of our growers now being finished for the year.

Packing has been continuous here in Nambour for some weeks. Having finished the Shepard season off from Bundaberg we moved into some other

green skins. Our Hass program originally saw fruit being selectively marketed towards Western Australia in an effort to reduce any impact on Eastern seaboard markets for our North Queensland members. This was successfully achieved and we would like to thank all those that assisted us in this matter.

Our supermarket orders have also started flowing. However, size of fruit is

our greatest problem at present. Due to a number of factors including early maturity and trees bearing larger crops, fruit size is down to that of previous years. We are hoping to get into some larger fruit as cooler climate fruit becomes available later in the month.

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Managers Report Continued

Bin Movement

A major challenge we are currently faced with is the movement of field bins to growers. In the past it seems that the cultural norm was to over-order requirements for field bins. With the current volumes being handled it is important that we accurately assess the requirements being placed on these bins. We certainly have enough bins in the system to handle what we are currently doing, however, it will take all of us to manage the situation. I ask that growers assist us in ensuring that we are managing these bins in a timely manner.

New Zealand Indexed Trees

We have recently had an exporter approach us for information on our growers regarding indexed trees suitable for export to New Zealand. If any grower has trees that were planted for this market could they please contact me immediately as an opportunity has arisen for NFC to look at exports to New Zealand.

2006 AGM

With the 2006 AGM coming up in the next few weeks I would en-

courage members to attend. I believe that you and your company and its staff have worked hard to achieve the results of the previous year. This is truly a time for you to celebrate the efforts placed into ensuring the successes that we all attain. I look forward to seeing you all there.

If members have anything specific they wish to discuss with me prior to or during harvesting I encourage you to contact me. Communication is a matter for two people and I am only too happy to discuss matters relating to your company.

Yours in avocados
Andrew McKillop

AFTERMATH OF CYCLONE LARRY Col Cummings

The North Queensland growers have experienced a significant event on the 20th of March in the form of Cyclone Larry.

What does this mean to us as growers, both as a business unit and to the industry as a whole.

The severe winds experienced on the Atherton Tablelands caused major damage to the avocado crop, in some cases up to 75% loss of fruit, trees pushed over and major limb damage in many orchards.

The long term damage caused by the stresses introduced to the trees during this event is unknown. We will have to wait and see if they recover and flower then set and retain a good crop. The stresses are associated with high rain fall, high winds and trunks being blown over.

Major cash flow problems will be experienced because in almost all cases, the input costs had already been incurred and hence as a business unit, these costs will be unable to be recovered.

In the broader context, the impact on the industry has been a shortening of the market in April.

The impact on many families is profound, the damage bill to property immense.

What can we learn from this event !!!

Some growers argue that wind break trees in and around the orchards caused more damage to the tree crops by breaking and falling over and should be removed, whilst others feel although they did cause collateral damage they did reduce the amount of fruit marking.

Avocado trees certainly stood up far better than other tree crops in particular the macadamia trees where in orchards that had both tree crops, the macadamia trees simply snapped off or fell over with losses ranging from 30% up to 65% of trees down. Some growers have already had dozers and tub mulchers clearing their fallen trees

The Governments, both State and Federal, have put forward support packages aimed at getting the industry on its feet again and ensuring the region can continue to grow. Growers have had meetings with agencies to push for

longer term support that will ensure that growers can have confidence in the industry going forward.

The economy of this region has been hit a severe blow, but in time it will come back stronger



Research News - Graeme Thomas

When there is a whisper of some news research in an area such as Phytophthora control, growers will rush to try it. Currently there are a number of people speaking at field days and some companies sending out irresponsible articles encouraging growers to apply phosphorous acid to their trees as a bark spray. Other dangerous comments have been made in relation to the latest developments in the control of anthracnose.

Please treat with a grain of salt.

To counter this misinformation, I asked Ken Pegg to put a couple of notes together for you all to know the real situation.

As many of you are aware Ken has retired, but is continuing to be a key Pathologist in the research process of our Industry. For those of you who do not know Ken, there is no doubt that in the area of pathology in avocados, Ken is without peer anywhere in the world, and we are so lucky as to have him continuing his intense interest. Ken made the following notes for our newsletter:

Bark Painting with phosphorus acid

Potassium phosphonate can be applied as a soil drench (not effective in clay soils), foliar spray, trunk injection or trunk spray. With trunk sprays it is difficult for enough fungicide to be absorbed through the bark to effectively rejuvenate roots. Experiments are underway combining potassium phosphonate with bark penetrating compounds. Until these field experiments have been completed growers should continue with injections or foliar sprays. Injections are the best way of rejuvenating trees showing symptoms of root rot.

Anthracnose Control

With anthracnose, infections of unripe fruit progress no further until after harvest, thus a combination of preharvest fungicides and post-harvest treatments are required to prevent development of the disease. Copper sprays should be applied at 14 to 28 day intervals from fruit set to harvest. Amistar can be included in the preharvest fungicide program, and is best used after wet periods. A postharvest treatment with prochloraz is also needed. Rapid marketing will reduce the disease as disease increases quickly as the length of time in storage increases.

Potassium Silicate

Although there has been a significant reduction of avocado anthracnose with potassium silicate in research trials, there is still much to be done before silicon can be recommended as a viable and practical means of disease control in avocado.

As a number of the trials have been conducted on our property, and I have been involved in the decision process to develop the concept of trunk spraying, I would like to add a couple of facts that have occurred during the work so far..

- 1 To increase the uptake of phosphorus acid various additives have been made. One has been the use of Pulse. With research still fine-tuning rates we have found some interesting data. Pulse is registered as a penetrant when using Roundup. Various rates have been trialled, with the highest rate causing a sugar exudate, came from the area sprayed. I am not sure of what long-term effect this will have, but we did injure the bark. In a publication, circulated by an irresponsible rural supplier, the rate recommended, was 250% above the highest rate trialled.
- 2 With bark painting, we expected that by painting it on the bark, the product would enter the bark and then into the phloem and

straight to the roots. We expected this to occur regardless of the season. In the spring trial, the sample taken 14 days after application, there was effectively nothing in the roots and the level in the leaves was in excess of 300 mg/kg. This also implies that an application at this time will give you a residue in the fruit that will exceed the Maximum Residue Level. We have irresponsible people around the industry, advocating such practices.

- 3 One of these irresponsible writers has stated that if you have Reed as a rootstock, you can reduce the number of applications of phosphorus acid. In the near future data will be released to show that as a rootstock, Reed has no resistance or even tolerance to Phytophthora. In fact laboratory work by Ken Pegg has shown that it has one of the poorest responses when roots have been lost. Velvick has been mentioned as being resistant which is incorrect. Velvick and Merensky 2 both show some useful tolerance, but in areas where disease pressure is very high, both will fail.

Research News Graeme Thomas

4. Suggestions have been made that the conclusions for trunk painting trial work will be published after this season. The amount of work required to prove that this method is successful or not and to get registration if useful would be 3-5 years. Remember to legally use phosphorus acid in the method suggested, it needs to be registered.
5. There are a number of dose rates being mentioned. In one of the trials on our property, the trees were accidentally double dosed. The result could be best described as a chemical cincture. The leaves drooped & became yellow. A similar result that would have occurred when a branch is cinctured. (A thin ring bark) The trees have survived but with a reduced crop this year and I would expect a reduced yield potential next year.

I have always been happy to work with our research community. There are times that there will be a cost to you in terms of lost productions. Our Industry needs this information.

We as growers should be aware that in the process of researching a new compound or a new technique to apply an existing product, there significant risks. Trials are done over a period to virtually eliminate these risks. We all need to be patient and wait for our researchers to sort out the problems that may arise. It must be noted that a change in application technique also requires to be registered. That process is long and drawn out. For us to comply with our quality assurance audits, we must only use registered products and use them as directed..

One of the reasons that some are trying trunk spraying is the cost. From one of the irresponsible articles being handed out, the recommendations are:

- 4 applications per year
- The dose rate, when compared to injection is 16 to 28 times higher. If using 100mls/injection/tree, they are recommending 400-700mls/tree/year.
- You are making 4 visits to the same tree/year, but spending less time/visit.

You do not have to be a Rhodes scholar to figure the yearly costs of

trunk spraying is more expensive than injecting, both in chemical and labor costs.

From the work we have done with monitoring the root phosphorus acid levels, we have found that 1 well-timed injection (June/early July) will comfortably give a full years protection.

The new owners of our property this year will be injecting Fosject from mid June to mid July. They will be injecting at the label rates for curative control. This will lift the phosphorus acid level in the roots to around 125 mg/kg by mid August. This will persist at curative levels until June next season. This program will effectively cover the 2 main stress periods during flowering and early fruits set and during summer/autumn when there is a higher risk of high rainfall periods exists.

In the business of growing avocados, like any other crop, good information is paramount, but incorrect information is expensive.

I hope the information above helps you in your decision making process and you are able to profit by it.

Graeme Thomas

Consultant Horticulturists

BOARD MEETING IN ALSTONVILLE

Following the success of the Board meeting held in Atherton earlier in the year the Board have agreed to hold a Board meeting in Alstonville. The meeting will be held on Friday 7th July.

After the Board meeting Directors and management are pleased to inform growers in the Northern Rivers area that a function will be held with NFC members. The Directors are hoping that we can replicate the success of the North Queensland function where discussions were held about where the company is going into the future and what this means for our grower members. More information will be sent to grower members in the region closer to the meeting date





Annual General Meeting

**Friday 26th May
Maroochy RSL Club
Ripples Function Room
Memorial Ave, Maroochydore**

**Meeting commences 4.00pm
Dinner commences 6.30pm**

Dinner cost (excluding drinks) \$30 per person. If you are attending the dinner, please RSVP on (07) 5441 3699 by Thursday 18th May to assist with catering arrangements. If you have special dietary requirements, please let us know.

Should you need directions, contact the office and we can provide you with a map.

Hope to see you there!

2005 Rebate

Due to your contribution to a successful year, a rebate has been declared of \$0.16 plus GST per unit to members based on their 2005 sales volume.

AVOCADO, TOMATO & BACON SALAD

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Total cooking time: 25 minutes

4 cloves garlic, unpeeled

1/2 cup (80ml) olive oil

250g cherry tomatoes

300g short cut bacon (see note)

350g fresh fettucine

1 tablespoon white wine vinegar

2 tablespoons roughly chopped fresh basil

2 ripe avocados, diced

Whole fresh basil leaves, to garnish

1. Preheat the oven to moderately hot 200oC (400oF). Place the garlic at one end of a roasting tin and drizzle with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Place the tomatoes at the other end and season well. Bake for 10 minutes, then remove the garlic. Return the tomatoes to the oven for a further 5-10 minutes, or until soft.
2. Cook the bacon under a hot grill (broiler) for 4-5 minutes each side, or until crisp and golden. Roughly chop. Meanwhile, cook the pasta in a large saucepan of boiling water until al dente. Drain well and transfer to a large bowl. Drizzle 1 tablespoon of the olive oil over the pasta and toss well. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper and keep warm.
3. Slit the skin of each garlic clove and squeeze the garlic out. Place in a screw-top jar with the vinegar, chopped basil and remaining oil and shake well to combine. Add the tomatoes and their juices, bacon and the avocado to the fettucine, pour on the dressing and toss well. Garnish with the basil leaves and serve with a green salad and crusty bread.

NOTE: Short cut bacon is the meaty end of the bacon rasher and is also sold as eye bacon

**FARM BIN PICK UPS : TURNERS TRANSPORT FOR
NATURES FRUIT COMPANY : 2006 SEASON**

Bins must be ready no later than 1pm on day of pick up.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY	*SATURDAY
Mt Tamborine	Blackbutt	Mt Tamborine	Blackbutt	Mt Tamborine
	Hampton			Hampton
	Gatton			Toowoomba
	Esk			Gatton
	Toowoomba			Esk

28 BINS OR MORE - DAYS CAN BE VARIED WITH 24 HOURS NOTICE

ALL OTHER AREAS

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	
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FROM FARM PICK UPS - Morning Pick Up to be ready by 9am

Gympie	Bellthorpe	Gympie	Bellthorpe	
Kandanga	Caboolture	Kandanga	Caboolture	

FROM FARM PICK UPS - Afternoon Pick Ups to be ready by 1pm

Palmwoods	Beerwah	Palmwoods	Beerwah	
Woombye	Glasshouse	Woombye	Glasshouse	
Range	Peachester	Range	Peachester	

Beerwah Depot bins to be delivered by 4pm

Maryborough Depot bins to be delivered by 3pm

REMINDER TO GROWERS: Bin pick and empty requirements must be left on our answering machine (07) 5441 7707 no LATER than 2pm the day before

MARKET REPORT— Paul Schramm—CRYSTAL BALL

The 2006 Hass season is now in full swing with North Queensland, Bundaberg and Sunshine Coast areas picking. Fruit from Bundy and Sunshine Coast very much on the small side with Nambour shed packing less than 5% of throughput in the size range of 16-20's . This, as my information source tells me, is mainly due to the warmer nightly temperature and weather and water shortage all of which are out of our control. What is in our control is the information about this. Communication with the office and myself is vital in our marketing supply schedules to maximise your returns. The prices at present for premium grade fruit is still around last years returns in the mid 20's but for small and second grade fruit, prices are well down because of the quantities of cyclone damaged fruit from North Queensland and hail damage from the Sunshine Coast.

Our target of being the first to market a million trays of fruit is looking slightly shaky with the loss of North Queensland fruit and small fruit down south, but it is still quite possible to do in the high 800 000 units (and must keep ahead of Timbercorp) and hold our mantle as the biggest supplier of Avocados in Australia. Spare a thought for your fellow members in North Queensland who still do not know the final fall-out from the cyclone as yet. I believe that we would be not achieving current prices if not for their misfortune.

Now for some crystal ball gazing. I would expect large premium grade fruit to hold price fairly well over the next month or so as both major chains are very committed to promoting avocados very second week and with the bananas the price they are, hopefully we can promote avocados as their replacement as we all know avocados have more potassium than bananas. (As advertised in late 90's).

For up to date market report phone me on 0438 621 579 from 5.00 am.