



www.justavocados.co.nz | 54 Woodland Road, Katikati | 07 549 3027

**Welcome to the latest edition of the Just Avocados newsletter.**

It would be fair to say that the 2018 season to date has brought more challenges than we have seen for some time. The season started well with strong early supply out of the Far North matched with strong market demand from Asia. However, it did not take long for signs to appear of what was to come.

Initially we had a high variability in fruit maturities which made it challenging to handle in market, and more cosmetic defects than we had encountered in previous seasons. As we transitioned through the season, the mixed or variable maturity moved into high maturities, perhaps tracking at four to five weeks ahead of previous seasons.

This seemed to coincide with a softening Australian market which was tracking at values not seen for some time. Harvest plans were adjusted, and due to the amazing support received from growers, we managed to navigate through this tricky period without over-exposing ourselves to the low Australian wholesale values. We focused on direct retail and running our Asian programmes. The Australian market responded and we are now on the home stretch focusing on Australian retail with approximately 30% of the programme left to harvest.

Please note that with the high maturities we aim to complete export harvest by the second week of January. If you are still hanging fruit, please speak to John or Kyra to ensure you are locked into harvest by this time.

As always, we learn more in challenging seasons and that is most definitely the case for Just Avocados. We have refined our harvest plans and tweaked our cool chain and inventory management to achieve better in market quality outcomes. Our presence in the Australian market through JH Leavy & Co provides us with a clear advantage over other NZ exporters with regards to inventory management and efficiency getting fruit to market and end customers.

In this edition of the newsletter, we introduce Kyra Fielden - our new Grower Services Representative for Bay of Plenty, Erica provides some interesting reading on pruning and new plantings, Helen outlines some things to watch when harvesting, Dale provides timely reminders about orchard pests and GlobalGAP requirements, plus we have updates on the markets, Avoworks and what's happening in Northland.

I thoroughly enjoyed our AGM and Christmas functions over the last few weeks. Thanks to everyone who attended.

A big thank you to Grant Kokich who was appointed a Grower Trustee at our AGM. It will be the first time we have had a representative from the North and it's more timely than ever given the changing supply dynamic at an industry level and within our own supply base. Three years ago the Mid and Far North represented 17% of our total volume; this season 47% of our supply will come out of the North. We look forward to the contribution Grant will make to our trustee meetings.

On behalf of Just Avocados I would like to wish you all a merry Christmas and happy New Year. Thank you again for your ongoing support.

Regards,  
Jarrod Redwood



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## FEATURES

### JUST AVOCADOS WELCOMES NEW GROWER SERVICES REP

**Just Avocados growers can call on the expertise of a new Grower Services Representative in the Bay of Plenty.**

Kyra Fielden has joined the company, having spent more than two decades working in the horticulture industry.

"I've predominately held sales roles spanning retail through to business-to-business and dealing directly with farmers and growers," she explains.

"But I was keen to shift into a more avocado focused role so I jumped at this opportunity with Just Avocados when it came up."

Kyra is originally from Kaeo in Northland but has lived in Tauranga for many years. She has most recently worked at Grologic where she often helped Just Avocados growers improve their soil biology.

Kyra has a special interest in this area and has completed a national certificate in organic crop production at Toi-Ohomai.

"Regenerative growing is all about supporting orchard health and crop production by improving soil organic



*Kyra Fielden, Just Avocados new Grower Services Rep. for Bay of Plenty*

matter levels and activity, increasing biodiversity, enhancing ecosystems and building resilience in crops to better withstand environmental changes," she says.

As the Bay's new Grower Services Representative, Kyra is looking forward to supporting and adding value to Just Avocados growers in the region. She'll aim to identify new growers who are ready to take their orchards to the next level, and will work alongside the company's production management team to

enhance on-orchard practices and production.

Kyra plans to visit every Just Avocados grower in the Bay of Plenty in the coming months to personally introduce herself.

"I'm really looking forward to getting out and meeting growers and supporting them throughout the year with all aspects of their orchards and improving communication with harvest and packing." ●

## IN THE MARKETS

### JUST AVOCADOS MARKET UPDATE

**Just Avocados is 65% through its export programme. Our Asian programmes are coming to an end and we continue to turn our focus to the Australian market.**

We have hit our milestones in Korea and Taiwan, which is extremely pleasing both from a volume and value perspective. This has set us up nicely for next season, which by all accounts looks like it will be a big one.

We have also finished our programme into Korea with a few small volumes of air freight. This was a strategic move done to end the season with an emphasis on quality and the brand - and to set us up well for next season.

Just Avocados has been very focused on delivering the best quality fruit for retail into Australia. To date, our team has not had a single knock out for quality, which has been extremely pleasing for our team and our grower outcomes. We are exceeding our retail commitment in volume and quality to date.

Through our business model, where our in-market company JH Leavy & Co receives our fruit directly without the intermediary delays of delivery, we are confident that we are getting fruit through the supply chain four to six days faster than our competitors. What this means for Just Avocados growers is that our fruit arrives at its destination of sale in better condition. This is a direct example of how Just Avocados' business model is



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providing a point of difference for our growers.

Over the last two to three weeks, the wholesale market in Australia has been compromised by poor-quality NZ fruit, which has led to the significant weakening of the Australian market. It is pleasing to report to our growers that our exposure to the wholesale market is less than 10% at this time of the year as we endeavour to minimise any depressed pricing through others' poor quality.

As we head into the Christmas weeks, our market and harvest plans are focused on pushing significant harvest volumes with minimal grower



Darling Avocados in new Hope Island store display.

restrictions. At Just Avocados, we are working towards hitting our retail commitments and we are also

mindful of the effects for growers of fruit drop and further wind rub as the season comes to an end. ●

## SUPPLY UPDATE - WEEK 49 REPORT

Change in our industry seems to be inevitable. Three to four weeks ago we predicted that a slower than expected period of export activity during October and November would culminate in a huge lift of incoming domestic volumes once the Australian market cleared and export activity increased. Whilst this has happened to some extent, we have not seen anything like the anticipated local market volumes particularly in the Class 2 category packed in retail format.

Erratic weather, spectacularly irregular maturity, early fruit drop and high levels of skin blemish have all impacted a steady flow of domestic fruit. A consequence has been that more fruit has graded into the Class 3 category than expected.

From a marketing standpoint we will see further impacts as an already short supplied local market endeavours to meet its pre-Christmas promo/advert commitments. This will further curtail available stocks, but will create demand as we head into the back-end of the export season.

Pricing this week is foreshadowing the benefits of the promo/advert created demand. We have traded

good volumes at stable and sustainable values. With more promo/advert activity planned next week we will see some pricing variability but overall solid values.

Four to six weeks ago the belief was that there would be large volumes of Class 2 domestic fruit to sell and consequently programmed promo/advert activity was negotiated to allow for the movement and clearance of the looming volume. With the anticipated volume now somewhat diminished on expectation, it is incumbent on marketers to support these planned programmes – like a marriage this is one of those “for better or for worse” situations!

Some critics have suggested we pull out of the market and reduce supply at times like this. I have a pretty simple response to this..... New Zealand retailers have given huge support to both marketers and growers which has resulted in sustained growth both in volume and value. This growth is simply a result of retailer support and encouragement for consumers to purchase quality fruit at fair value. I note discussion from several other horticultural sectors about supermarkets tending to drive values down. I am very strongly of

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the view that the avocado industry is extremely fortunate in the way our large retail partners work closely with our industry, listen to our advice and support the category both during and outside periods of promo/advert.

Our view is that demand will continue to be positive. Non promo/advert orders remain very strong and this will be aided by the onset of the summer holiday period.

**Our prediction for per tray equivalent values at coolstore door are below.**

**Prices may not always accurately reflect your returns as stock may be held over pending sale or as the market dictates. Prices are subject to change based on daily market conditions. Packing/package costs should be deducted from these prices. ●**

W/c 10 December		W/c 17, 24 & 31 December		W/c 7 January		W/c 14 January		W/c 21 January	
20ct	\$16.00 to \$18.00	20ct	\$20.00	20ct	\$22.00	20ct	\$24.00	20ct	\$26.00
24ct	\$22.00	24ct	\$24.00	24ct	\$26.00	24ct	\$28.00	24ct	\$30.00
28ct	\$23.00	28ct	\$28.00	28ct	\$30.00	28ct	\$30.00	28ct	\$32.00

## ON THE ORCHARD

### JOHN'S JOTTINGS – ORCHARD NEWS FROM SOUTH AUCKLAND TO THE FAR NORTH

#### FAR AND MID NORTH

**We are well through our harvest in the Far North. A couple of orchards are still packing out at high percentage export rates, the best being 86%. The fruit is coming off six year-old clonal rootstock trees.**

Early signs are for a reasonable to good fruit set; the next few weeks will give us a much clearer picture. All the bees are out of the blocks and sprays are going on for mites and leafroller.

One big difference between the Far North and the Bay of Plenty is the increased pest pressure in the north. Mites are more virulent and there is a need to spray more often through this time of the year. Leafroller also comes in a lot earlier and in bigger numbers than in the Bay. Last season thrips were also a constant battle. I put this down to the more temperate climate providing a shorter life cycle for these pests than more southern regions.

I have been on a couple of new developments around Whangarei recently. One is a large block at Maungatapere, the other an 800 tree block near the coast at Waipu. Both plantings have wide spacing as the owners cannot see the sense in removing trees in the future, which has merit. These blocks are in contrast to the very large scale plantings which are around 5m x 3.5m spacing. It does raise the ongoing question of what is the best distance when planting a new block. For me it comes down to tonnes per hectare regardless of the number of trees you have in that hectare. Intensive plantings and large widely spaced trees will both produce good tonnage per hectare, but they have very different management requirements.

#### THINKING AHEAD

We had a situation when the Australian market dipped in value but we still wanted fruit for Asia. Some of the growers down to pick in that period were not Asia compliant. So, as we start off on a new season of spraying, please give thought to products that you are using and their

withholding periods - especially from June onwards. The best approach is to keep your fruit available to all markets at all times. Ask us or your farm merchants if you are unsure about any product withholding periods. They are all on the NZ Avocado industry website too ([nzavocado.co.nz/industry](http://nzavocado.co.nz/industry)).

#### PRUNING FOLLOW UP

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, orchards that are into their second year of growth and have had the "Erica" prune are filling in the lower canopy with new growth very nicely. Orchards that were pruned this winter are shooting vigorously, and it won't be long before they



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**Example of a neatly established new block**



**Excellent new growth soon to be thinned**

need thinning and tipping. This is a very important part of the pruning follow up to select the best shoots to grow future crop on.

A couple of observations that I have made is that older trees (say 30+ years) initially take longer to push new growth, and trees with good health (as you would expect) push stronger and more shoots than trees with compromised health. ●

## ORCHARD MANAGEMENT WITH ERICA

### PRUNING

The pruning window has closed and chainsaws should be cleaned and packed away until March. Not only can pruning in summer cause considerable sunburn damage but the regrowth is also very vigorous, often resulting in quickly closed up canopies. Sometimes the regrowth supersedes what was pruned back in the first place. The most important reason, however, is that it swings the hormonal balance in the trees and can cause excessive fruitlet drop.

Ensure you don't leave managing the pruning regrowth too late as it will harden off and become more labour intensive to thin out and remove. If you haven't applied a whitewash for sunburn protection yet, now is also the time to do so.



**Protect exposed limbs from sunburn damage by applying a 1:1 water and acrylic paint mix.**

For those that have a problem letting go of the chainsaw ... grab the secateurs and get to work on your young non-bearing trees. On these trees we want to grow the canopy quickly so vigorous growth is not a problem and nor do we need to worry about causing fruitlet drop. In this case we want to do tipping and thinning pruning and also prune out any intrusions, weak or damaged branches and start to develop a framework that will optimise production and light penetration into the young canopy.

### NEW PLANTINGS

A lot of new plantings, replants or interplants have gone in the ground or will soon be planted. A few precautions to take note of are planting depth, overwatering and sunburn. When planting, ensure you firm the soil down gently as you plant so that the tree does not collapse into



**Manage pruning regrowth by thinning and tipping shoots to ensure controlled regrowth and to get back into production quicker.**

the soil after rain or irrigation as this can cause collar rot and death especially on clonals. If you are not following my pre-planting and planting programme, your trees may display a wilted appearance for a period after planting due to transplant stress. This is sometimes misdiagnosed as water stress and treated with additional irrigation eventually to the point of overwatering – the symptoms of which are also a wilted leaf appearance. The cycle continues until the soil becomes waterlogged and anaerobic, resulting in tree mortality.

Newly planted trees are also prone to sunburn as the sensitive, green cambium has little leaf cover and



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**New planting with a 8m x 4m spacing and a "shelterbelt" row of Ettinger.**

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can quickly get sunburnt if precautions have not been taken. Sunburn damage in severe cases can cause ringbarking and also eventual tree mortality.

Remove any flowers or fruitlets on newly planted trees as you want all the energy and resources to go into vegetative growth. Any flowers or setting fruit will hold back canopy growth. Remember that any orchard development or new plantings are an investment and one that will yield returns for up to 40+ years. In light of orchard longevity, do not take any shortcuts and ensure you put in the time, resources and effort and it will definitely pay off.

On our Woodlands Road Orchard, to ensure the best possible establishment and growth, we have also done pre-plant drenches, drenches at planting and two post-planting drenches with two products called Trichopel & Unite. This will be especially beneficial in plantings within existing orchards, marginal areas and when replacing sick trees with new ones in the same hole or vicinity. You will find further information on these products, if you are interested in using them, at the end of this article. We have also done various spacings and planting densities which we will visit at future Field Days or Discussion Groups. Planting densities are always of interest and now our growers will be able to see first-hand various options that can be implemented.

### FRUIT SET

Fruit set is looking good this year. Now the challenge is to keep it on the trees. It is normal for a large portion of fruitlets to abort and fall, up to the end of February, even under optimum conditions. But we can ensure optimum fruit set by not pushing vegetative flush too strongly. Vegetative growth that is too strong during the period critical to fruitlet retention will result in too much competition with the fruitlets and increased fruitlet drop and reduced yields. Remember that balanced nutrition is crucial.

### FERTILISER APPLICATION

Remember to time your soil fertiliser application to weather events. If the forecast is for heavy rain and your



soils are already very wet or at field capacity, then hold off as most of the fertiliser will be leached down beyond the root zone. On the other hand, if the long-term forecast is looking hot and dry for the next month's application, then bring your application forward as you will not get much uptake of fertiliser if the soil is too dry. If you have irrigation, then you will be patting yourself on the back during those dry periods and timing your fertiliser according to your fertiliser application windows and with good root flush.

### USING BENEFICIAL MICROBES TO SUPPORT NEW PLANTINGS

Trichoderma spp. are utilised in many of the most successful bio-fungicides used in horticulture today. Their many beneficial properties are harnessed in bio-control agents used to grow strong healthy plants in all conditions.

Trichoderma has multiple modes of action and can be readily cultured and formulated into cost effective bio-control products.

Trichoderma has two major plant benefits:

- Stimulating root and shoot growth.
- Reduction of soil borne diseases such as Phytophthora Root Rot.

Trichoderma is a family of fast-growing saprophytic fungi – they establish predominantly in the rhizosphere but are also capable

of surface penetration and colonising plant roots.

Trichoderma have a symbiotic relationship to the plant, feeding off sugary root exudates from the plant, in turn releasing secondary metabolites that help to stimulate both **root** and **shoot growth**.

Trichoderma improves the plant's ability to take up nutrients and also to buffer the pH in the root zone which increases nutrient availability.

Trichoderma is effective at colonising the rhizosphere to the exclusion of other pathogenic fungi. They outcompete other fungi for nutrients and reduce the presence of the pathogens. Trichoderma can even actively consume pathogens as they multiply.

The Agrimm company grow selected strains of Trichoderma and formulate a range of granules and powders designed to support growing plants. In new orchard plantings or replants, **Trichopel** and **Unite WP** (a protectant bio-fungicide) is used both before and after planting.



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Recommendations for plantings are:

- Prior to planting, drench **Unite WP** at 1g/tree into the plant bag (ideally 1 week prior to planting).
- Apply 20g of **Trichopel** into the planting hole.
- After planting, mix Unite at 1g/L and apply 2-3L per tree drenched into the root zone.

**Unite WP** is registered for a range of root diseases including Phytophthora.



Agrimm recommends a programme of drenches annually through the growing season at periods of root flushes. The rate is 3g/tree.

For further information you can call Alistair Pullin at Agrimm on 021 590 329 or (03) 325 3311 or go to their website for further information: [www.agrimm.co.nz](http://www.agrimm.co.nz) ●

## AVOWORKS UPDATE



**The Avoworks team have been harvesting flat out, as expected for this time of year. Harvest has been running smoothly with the added synergies between Avoworks and the Just Avocados' packhouse.**

While out harvesting recently, we have noticed higher amounts of wind damaged fruit and also leafroller in the shoots of the new

growth - it will not be long before they are into the fruit still hanging on trees. Remember to monitor and spray accordingly with harvest times in mind.

Along with harvesting, Avoworks has also been involved in numerous planting/development projects. So far this season, we have planted just over 2000 trees with more still to go in. A range of planting densities have been undertaken, from 8m x 5m to 8m x 4m x 2m tramline style. A demonstration of this will be carried out at a Just Avocados' field day next year, to understand the differences between high-density and low-density plantings.



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The Avoworks team.

On the orchard management side of things, all bees are out of the orchards now and we are noticing a good fruit set across the board. Fruit sizing sprays are on the agenda for the coming month as well as monitoring the amount of new flush coming for the following season's crop. Currently a select fertiliser side dressing is being applied to trees that need that extra boost. We need to constantly be thinking about balancing production from year to year and use both nutrition and pruning to do so. ●

## AVOGREEN AND COMPLIANCE

### AVOGREEN MONITORING

**It's that time of year again when the 'sweet' leafroller are showing their presence. They appear to be living in the new pink shoots and will graduate to the fresh, young, newly pollinated fruit – so be aware.**

Six-spotted mite (SSM) seems to be in some orchards. They can de-foliate an avocado tree, therefore this is another pest which needs to be kept under control. The New Zealand Avocado Industry has not set a

threshold for this pest. Your AvoGreen results should show what numbers have been found - e.g. 'Low' is less than five pests on one leaf, so if your results show "Low - 3%" it means three leaves of the 100 checked have less than five SSM on them.

A pre-harvest AvoGreen monitor also needs to take place prior to picking. Keep in mind that this needs to be completed within 28 days of harvest. The packhouse needs to have a copy of all monitoring completed to ensure



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no sprays have been applied to your orchard unless it is justified by a monitor. There are times when a spray can be applied without a monitor – this information is in your AvoGreen manual (section 4.5).

### COMPLIANCE

Most of you would have had your compliance check by now. It is a

requirement that you are either NZGAP or GlobalGAP compliant at harvest. If you are under the Just Avocados' PMO and have not had your inspection, expect a phone call or contact me.

And a couple of points to remain China compliant - all sprays applied to your orchard need to

be entered into the spray diary within 10 working days, and ensure the packhouse is receiving your AvoGreen reports monthly.

For more information, contact me. ●

### PACKING, QUALITY, WEATHER AND PROBLEMS - WE ARE GETTING IT ALL

The quality of the fruit packed to date has presented problems and resulted in lower than average pack out reports. The main defect, as always, is wind rub followed by leafroller chewing causing significant damage, then colour. The avocados have been colouring up on the trees earlier than previous seasons and this is reflected in the rejects. The grade standards specify "colour is allowable where there is mostly colour with a green background". The graders have been presented with line ups of coloured fruit "in" and "out" on a regular basis to ensure they are grading to the colour allowance. This is a moving target as each orchard presents coloured fruit of varying amounts and depths of colour. As always, I am inspecting fruit after grading to ensure that a maximum pack out is achieved.



Soil deposits on the rollers.

As well as the weather not behaving to keep the harvest rolling along, our facility has had a huge problem with excess soil coming in with the bins of harvested fruit.



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When the bin is tipped, the soil spreads over the fruit, covering the rollers leading up to the water blaster. This in turn affects the efficiency of the water blaster by clogging the filtration system. The filters then have to be stripped out and cleaned due to the excess dirt. The normal back flushing cannot deal with this quantity of soil.

We are also getting very small fruit in the bins – around the size of an average chook egg. These get caught between the moving rollers which then jam and "pop out" causing a lengthy breakdown while the rollers are replaced. If these fruit could be left on the trees or dropped on the ground, without causing a health and safety issue, it would help the smooth running of the machinery (and sometimes the frayed tempers).

We always welcome visits by growers and their visitors to see the fruit being packed. There's nothing like seeing all your hard work washed, labelled and packed into the smart Darling Avocado trays ready to be sent to market. ●



Excess soil in bin of fruit.