

REFLECTIONS ON BRAINSTORMING '99

Reuben Hofshi

Chair, Production Research Committee
California Avocado Commission

The mission of the Production Research Committee of the California Avocado Commission is to enhance grower's profitability through research, International liaison and the dissemination of information. When the opportunity arose to invite participants in the World Avocado Congress IV in Mexico to participate in a post-Congress meeting in California, the expectation was that only a small number of those invited would attend. To our pleasant surprise most responded positively. The result was an opportunity for California growers to interact with some of the world's leading researchers on avocado. The benefit to the visitors was to see first hand the state of the California avocado industry, be exposed to the problems we are faced with, and to voice their opinion as to what could be done. Probably the most long lasting impression I have was the reciprocal and instant acceptance of those Ventura county growers who hosted one or more visitors in their homes. The next morning all the visitors told of their experiences and their appreciation of the hospitality of their hosts. The greatest reward for all the efforts was to see these people, guest and host alike, so enriched by their mutual experience. There were events and experiences that will not be so easily forgotten; it was Paul Romero and Mike Nunez and their friends who put together a wonderful barbecue at the Limoniera ranch. John Orr "kidnapping" Cliff Lahav and Piet Stassen for a quick demonstration of how to prune his trees. Leo Murillo putting a very generous lunch at the El Tajiguas Hacienda in Goleta, and the visit to Nate White's high density planting in Moorpark and the ensuing discussion of the pros and cons of square vs. rectangular high density layout.

Was the meeting worth the effort and the cost? In my opinion, it was without a doubt. The idea behind the meeting was to present the California grower a wide spectrum of information. We hoped that throughout the two days of the brainstorming meeting that growers would freely interact with our international visitors. For those of us who wanted to interact privately, the visitors were always at hand willing to discuss issues and share their knowledge and experience. The visitors recognized that we are, like the growers in their respective countries, looking for similar information so we can do a better job farming avocados. They saw that the California avocado industry is receptive and willing to learn, and they shared, candidly, tremendous amounts of information with us. Those who attended the canopy management session were privileged to experience the enthusiasm and the eagerness to share of Cliff Lahav and Piet Stassen. The open and lively discussion by Gad Ish Am and Tom Davenport on different aspects of pollination was also another high point of the meeting. The pest meeting with the insightful remarks of Jorge Pena, Manes Wysoki and Jim Davis, and the very valuable evening meeting about one of the most pressing issues of our industry and others; postharvest handling.

The organization of this meeting was a joint effort of many. From CAC's side, Tom Bellamore, Senior Vice President, provided support, encouragement and guidance in getting the meeting together. This meeting was co-sponsored by the University of California. Phil Roberts, Associate Dean of the College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences and Mary Lu Arpaia, Extension Specialist worked closely with CAC in planning the meeting. There were also many that worked behind the scenes including Susana Aparicio, Pamela Dick, Jan Wood, Paul Robinson, and David Stottlemeyer from UCR, Betty Bohrk and Christine Fox from CAC who all participated, beyond the call of duty, in making the meeting a reality.