

AVOCADO BRAINSTORMING '99 – INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

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The articles in these proceedings are a summary outcome of an exciting gathering of the world's leading experts in avocado research and production. The two-day meeting held last fall in Riverside was opportunistic in its timing, taking advantage of the many avocado researchers who gathered the week before in Mexico for the Fourth World Avocado Congress. Through the foresight of Reuben Hofshi and Mary Lu Arpaia, the idea of hosting a forum for scientific discussion on avocado was realized by combining the supporting efforts of the avocado industry through the California Avocado Commission and the University of California, Riverside. By sponsoring the attendance of many avocado experts from around the world, we were able to host a unique and highly productive gathering, in which the scientists and the California grower community were able to share, and debate ideas, experiences and issues about avocado production and its improvement.

During the many years of developing the avocado as a prominent commodity both in California and internationally, the research community and the production industry have worked together to improve avocado production in all its facets, from genetics and breeding, to pest and disease management, cultural practices and post-harvest practices. This partnership continues to be very successful, and requires continuing rounds of proposing funding and reporting of research projects on an annual basis. However, rarely do the dynamics of these research activities and meetings provide the scope for a deeper practical and intellectual debate and discussion of the central issues that require advancement through research and sharing experiences. The Brainstorming '99 meeting provided just that forum. Having panels of experts presenting and discussing critical topics with an audience of growers and other researchers, who could ask the tough questions or counter the arguments, was most stimulating. Many discussions were continued in the numerous one on one and small group get-togethers during the meeting and on the post-meeting tour, and two days was barely enough time to complete the agenda.

These proceedings will provide a lasting record of much of the important information and interpretation that was shared at the meeting. The proceedings allow a wider audience than attendees to be reached, and they represent an important reference for all involved in avocado work. I hope that we can again grasp the opportunity in the future to have additional brainstorming-style gatherings that will benefit avocado production. I would like to say a thank you to all those who worked tirelessly on this team effort and made it a success, as indicated in the introduction by Reuben Hofshi. I wish to make a special acknowledgement to the inspiration and efforts of Reuben Hofshi, Chair, Production Research Committee, California Avocado Commission, and Mary Lu Arpaia, UC Extension Specialist. It is to these two colleagues that the majority of thanks must go for the creation and success of Brainstorming '99.