

POSTHARVEST RESEARCH FUNDING

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The consumption of avocados in the USA is only 700g/capita. To increase demand it is essential to maintain the supply of good quality avocados to the customers. Research can solve problems and all those that benefit from the market should share the cost. This is an opportunity and not a problem.

The economy of avocados is determined by supply and demand. The present 700 g/capita consumption in the USA is considered to be low for a major producing country. It compares very modestly with 4 Kg/capita in Israel and Chile and the 8 Kg/ capita in Mexico. Years with high yields are also associated with pressure to decrease prices. The heavy supply also influences the time that fruit is stored, associated with an increase in storage disorders.

To increase demand, promotion and advertising is obviously essential. The importance of customer satisfaction and perceptions should not be underestimated and could be turned into an opportunity to increase demand.

Quality and condition should be addressed and every effort made to insure that the customer gets value on a sustainable basis. To determine the present status quo, industry surveys should be made on a comprehensive basis. Losses should be determined and identified at production, packinghouse, handler, retail and consumer level.

Results from surveys can help to determine priorities and future action programs. Research can identify problems in production, packing, storage, transport and retail. New technology should contribute to the knowledge of the avocado from the orchard to the consumer and benefit the total industry.

The big question will surely arise as to who should pay for postharvest research. This is the one question that makes some producers nervous and others aggressive. This is also normally a cause for a debate between growers, packers, handlers and the retail industry.

The vital question is probably: Who can afford poor quality and poor prices? In my opinion the total avocado industry of the USA is responsible for funding of postharvest research. At present the USA is the 2nd most important international market in the world. It is reasonable to expect all those exporters from industries in other countries that benefit from the US market, to share in the responsibility as well. Well-directed research should not be regarded as a problem but as an opportunity where the total industry will win.