

SAAGA CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 1993

The 1993 crop was dramatically affected by the third dry year in the worst drought in 250 years. Producers suffered severe losses and we exported 5,6 million cartons compared to 8,5 million in 1992.

The 1994 export crop is estimated at 8 million cartons and this volume is expected to grow to 20 million by the year 2 000. The lack of promotion and advertising of avocados on the European market is cause for concern. If we are not prepared to invest in promoting the avocado today we may find a lack of demand when we have big crops to sell. International co-operation in consumer awareness should be a very high priority.

Fortunately there was a positive side as well and many successes were achieved:

- Phosphorous acid is now registered for the control of root rot on avocados. This is the result of original research by Dr Joe Darvas in 1980 and a sustained industry effort. Ocean Agriculture has undertaken to use the trade name "Tree Doc" and sell the product for use by the avocado industry. This will contribute to help finance future industry research.
- Volumes for export were co-ordinated and secured a very even flow of volumes to a market dominated by Californian Hass. This effort stabilised the market prices.
- SAAGA and PPECB managed to develop a system of temperature control on board the ships. Almost daily contact and temperature management control resulted in hard fruit without internal disorders to be associated with the South African avocado. This is a breakthrough of tremendous significance to our industry. I would like to thank Dr Bezuidenhout from Westfalia and Dr Eksteen from PPECB for their dedication to get the system going.
- The local market committee was very active and laid the foundation for market development. The Menlyn promotion was a great success and will hopefully be referred to as a turning point in the marketing of our fruit.
- Research is a major expense item on the SAAGA budget but once again the research workers rose to the occasion. The SAAGA Symposium lived up to the tradition of excellence. Prof Kotzé could really feel proud of yet another successful year of co-ordination. The dedication of the ITSC team which was reflected in their papers was a highlight.

Research priorities based on the industry needs will become a reality in time to come. The industry participation is an exciting new development and will be of value to the Industry, Research Institutes, Universities and research workers. The aim of research will be to solve industry problems on an economic priority basis.

SAAGA is losing the services of Prof J M Kotzé who created a unique research

programme for SAAGA. The capable and dedicated co-ordination over 17 years solved most industry problems through research. Prof Kotzé was involved in almost all facets of the avocado industry during a most essential period. Prof Kotzé, we thank you for what you have done for SAAGA and hope to keep contact in the years to come.

- The report of Dr Sartorius von Bach on Marketing and promotion gave new perspectives. We believe that action by the industry will lead to a bigger demand for our fruit.
- SAAGA drew up a five year budget which will make planning easier on a long term basis. Decisions will have to be taken in the future regarding a reserve fund and advertising.

The 1994 season looks promising with an estimated crop of 8 million trays for export. Drought relief in many areas made producers optimistic although some areas are still affected.

The markets look an optimistic scenario with little fruit offered from Israel as the result of a short crop.

Spain is reported to be down on last year and California is much down on their record crop of 1993.

Kenya is expected to be on the market with a regular supply.

With communication, co-ordination and planning we could expect a good marketing year unless greed makes us ship immature fruit, excessive volumes of small fruit or speculation on the market.

The GATT (general agreement on tariffs and trade) can make a big difference to our economy should South Africa be re-classified.

Our members should be informed that 1994/95 is the last year that GEIS (General Export Incentive Scheme) is in place.

On the international front contact was made with the Australian Avocado Industry and Robert Mosse their Chairman who has used his experience and knowledge as an ex SAAGA grower to build a beautiful avocado unit. The industry is about the same size as ours and Tony Whiley is doing very good work.

Ron Bailey, Chairman of the New Zealand avocado industry at the Symposium along with a group, strengthened the relationship. Lisa Korsten was involved in an international working group in New Zealand on biological control.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Colin Partridge, Jerome Hardy, Henri Finnemore and Jenny Joubert for compiling the SAAGA Packing Guide. I am certain that this guide will assist many a packhouse through the packing season. Your hard work will not be in vain.

Many thanks to the SAAGA staff for the hard work done and for achieving much this year. Colin Partridge and Jenny Joubert for keeping such a tight rein on the finances. Lizette Croucamp for prompt Newsletters and Liesl for being always friendly and helpful over the telephone.

My thanks to the SAAGA Board of Directors for their positive contributions and support.

Thank you to the people who worked behind the scenes, the subcommittee members: the work that you do is very valuable to the industry.

I wish all the SAAGA members a prosperous 1994 season. Thank you for the support you have given to SAAGA over the years.

J C TOERIEN

CHAIRMAN