

EVALUATION OF NEW 'HASS'-LIKE AVOCADO CULTIVARS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Six new 'Hass'-like cultivars from California ('Harvest', 'Gem', 'Jewel', 'Sir Prize', 'Nobel', 8-22-5) and one South African selection (Bonus) were evaluated. Topworking started in 1996, and three crops were evaluated up to 2001. Data on fruit maturity, yield, fruit size distribution and fruit quality after simulated shipment were collected. Both, 'Harvest' and 'Gem', out-produced 'Hass', had good fruit quality and were therefore tested further in 2002. All the other cultivars tested either produced low yields, large fruit, did not colour up and / or had a high incidence of physiological disorders, and their testing was discontinued after the 2001 season.

In 2002, a fourth crop of cultivars Harvest, Gem and Hass was evaluated. The cumulative yields (1999-2002) were 138, 90 and 88 t/ha for 'Harvest', 'Gem' and 'Hass', respectively. The new 'Hass'-like cultivars Harvest and Gem matured later in the year than 'Hass'. Fruit quality problems were recorded for the first time in 2002 for 'Harvest'. Many 'Harvest' fruit had vascular browning which was probably caused by very low temperatures in the experimental orchard in winter 2002. 'Gem' fruit from the same orchard, however, had good fruit quality as in previous years. Further testing of these two cultivars is warranted and is to be extended to three other South African production regions in 2003.