

## **A REVIEW OF THE FLORIDA AVOCADO INDUSTRY**

J. Crane<sup>1</sup>, E. Evans<sup>1</sup> and C. Balerdi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Florida, IFAS, Tropical Research and Education Center, 18905 S.W. 280 St., Homestead, Florida 33031, USA. Email: [jhcr@ufl.edu](mailto:jhcr@ufl.edu)

<sup>2</sup>, Miami-Dade County Cooperative Extension, 18710 S.W. 288 St., Homestead, Florida 33030, USA

The Florida avocado industry, which produces mainly the “green-skinned” cultivars, is worth an estimated \$18 million annually with recent seasonal average prices ranging from \$8 and over \$30 per 5 kg. The 2004 crop (prior to two 2005 hurricanes) amounted to 25,402 MT, equivalent to the pre-1992 Hurricane Andrew season but harvested from approximately half the number of hectares. Orchard area has increased during the past 3 years and now covers nearly 3000 ha. The harvest season is from June through mid-March with new cultivars poised to extend the season through March through May. Despite suffering a major set back as a result of hurricane damage in 2005, the industry is set to resume its upward trend. The resilience of the industry and general favourable performance can be attributed to a decrease in the number of major cultivars grown making harvesting, shipping, and marketing more efficient. Current pruning practices have been successful in tree size control, maintaining production and decreasing tropical storm damage. Routine postharvest pre-cooling and recent research on the use of MCP has provided the industry the potential to improve postharvest quality and storage time. Private company marketing strategies based on the reduced fat content of the Florida avocados offer the industry the potential to expand their markets and meet the demand for low calorie, healthy fruit in the U.S. market. Current research on developing root rot resistant rootstocks, cost-effective irrigation management, planning for potential insect and disease pests, and cost-effective iron applications may assist the industry maintain or expand its production.