

PERFORMANCE AND MARKET ACCEPTIBILITY OF THE HASS-LIKE CULTIVARS GEM AND HARVEST IN SOUTH AFRICA

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The Hass-like cultivars Gem and Harvest, originating from the avocado varietal breeding program of the University of California, have been evaluated over a number of years at Westfalia Estate in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The evaluation of these cultivars was extended into three other production regions (early, mid and late season) in South Africa. 'Hass', 'Harvest' and 'Gem' trees were established in 2005 in an early season production region and a first small crop is expected in 2007. 'Hass', 'Harvest' and 'Gem' trees top worked in the mid season production region in 2004, bore a first crop in the 2005/6 season. 'Harvest' out-produced 'Gem' and 'Hass' by 60 and 74 kg/tree respectively. In general, 'Harvest' and 'Gem' fruit (283g – 405g) were bigger than 'Hass' fruit (249g – 340g). In the late season production region, 'Harvest', 'Gem' and 'Hass' trees were top worked in 2005 through 2006 and a first crop can be expected in 2008. As a result of the previous good performance of these cultivars at Westfalia Estate, their commercial potential was evaluated by conducting various taste panels. The cultivars Gem and Harvest were well accepted in a large-scale customer based trial conducted in conjunction with a leading South African food retailer.