

Driving practice improvements in domestic avocado supply chains

By Noel Ainsworth, DAF Queensland

A new three-year project funded by Hort Innovation aims to identify and promote improvements to practices in avocado supply chains between the farm and the retail distribution centres.

Project leader Noel Ainsworth, with the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, said that this project (AV18000) would examine the range of practices in use and relate this to feedback from the supply chains.

"This feedback will include details of the cool chain temperatures, periods in storage and resultant fruit quality as the consignments depart the ripeners," Mr Ainsworth said.

"This should pick up any concerns about rots and other quality issues without the impact of bruising in retail affecting the results."

This project will build on previous experience by utilising the checklists developed by Applied Horticultural Research and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The project work will be undertaken in the five production districts of North Queensland, Central Queensland, Central NSW, Tristate and Western Australia to offer the greatest diversity in production practices and risk to postharvest issues.

In each district, project staff will work with four pack houses, both large and small, as 'Participants' in the project by examining two supply chains each. This will mean a minimum of 40 supply chains each year will be benchmarked nationally during the life of the project.

Project staff will also seek involvement from other pack houses as 'Supporters' by voluntarily contributing their practices and supply chain data for the district benchmarking.

The benchmark information about practices and feedback from the supply chains will be reviewed in post-season workshops in each of the five districts. These workshops will be critical to

enable district growers and pack houses to make sense of the information, identifying areas for improvement, and produce some interesting insights on how the industry progressively adopts what are regarded as best management practices.

Mr Ainsworth said that project staff members would develop case studies and information products to support the needs identified in district benchmarking workshops.

Project staff will link with Avocados Australia to ensure that the Best Practice Resource is updated and they will build awareness about project findings through the regional workshops planned under the *Industry development and extension* project (AV17005), led by Simon Newett (Queensland DAF).

More information

With the harvest well underway in North Queensland, growers and pack houses interested in taking part in the project are encouraged to contact Geoff Dickinson (0407 177 237) or Ebony Faichney (0491 212 948) at DAF in Mareeba. Interested avocado growers and packhouses in Central Queensland, should contact Andy Mead (0401 676 360) at DAF in Bundaberg. Project staff supporting the other target districts include Noel Ainsworth (Central NSW), Bridie Carr (Tristate) and Declan McCauley (WA).

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