

SIERRA *News*

News, notes and tips from your friends at Sierra Pacific Farms

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Out in the Field

Well, like all of you, we had a very Southern California holiday. Temperatures in the groves were ranging from an average of 75 to 85 degrees. We have had hardly any humidity and this is followed sometimes by some Santa Ana wind conditions. This is telling the trees to get ready to bloom. Our long-range weather forecasters are predicting that our winter should actually start January 20th, as these storm systems change their focus to coming

down the coast of California rather than taking an inland shot through Nevada. Personally, I can't wait. Rainfall started out this year on a great pace and we'd like to get back to that for the rest of the winter. As a reminder, February is our rainiest month here in Southern California. At Sierra Pacific we are spending the wintertime taking a look at a lot of new research

that is available. There are new methods for injecting fertilizer – one that we are looking at is lowering the ph of the water to make the nitrogen in our fertilizers more readily available to the tree. There are two benefits to doing this; one being using less nitrogen in the future because the tree utilizes it better and two, it could even play into utilizing less water by this I mean, we always have a leaching rate in our formulas for irrigation on a weekly basis – the leaching rate is there to assist the salts being removed from the root zone of tree. If we change the ph, it may allow us to decrease the water we are using by reducing the leaching rate which would be a benefit. We are putting together our re-

search plots now in order to benefit all of our growers. Of course, we will test this in our own groves first and if we see a benefit, we will move to utilize on yours. Another research project we are working on is looking at a winter fertilizing program. I have read some papers recently out of New Zealand that lead me to believe that any time an avocado tree up-takes water, it can up-take a molecule of fertilizer. It is known that trunks of an avocado tree will



store nitrogen in order to produce spring flush. With some groves having a bigger crop than normal, we are going to utilize a winter fertilizer program in order to really boost the size in the spring. On top of that this will assist in producing more spring flush which would lead to less alternization in our avocado groves. If you haven't been notified already, you will be receiving a letter

getting your approval to continue our topping programs. Our program of topping at 12 to 14 feet has been very beneficial to those of our growers who have needed to do it and have had it done. We would only recommend it if you need to. We are able to pick off our trees within 24 months after we have pruned the trees and in addition we have also revitalized that tree for another 10-15 years. The added bonus is it brings the expense of picking down by knocking our 30 foot trees down to a 12 foot level.



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Sierra Pacific News Cont...

Food Safety Program

We have already have had 18 groves approved and audited by the USDA. Elena Fox here in the South and Christopher Jackson in the North are in charge of this and we feel very confident that we will complete everyone at a very reasonable price in another three months. Remember, this is a must for the future. The Costcos, Walmarts, Kroger's and other major food chains are already demanding the paperwork to review growers' qualifications for Food Safety.

The Market

Right now avocados are not being quoted. Mexico and Chile are enjoying the majority of the space you see in the markets, however, Chile is now getting resistance from the major marketing chains such as Stater Brothers no longer wanting to use them due to quality issues. It seems now that with Mexican avocados available they prefer this source, which I find refreshing and hopefully this will tell our Chilean brothers to stop sending immature fruit into the United States market.

Merchandising: Lemons

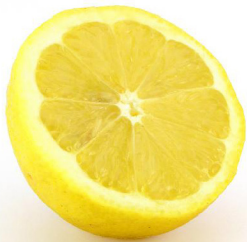
- More than 40% of consumers report buying lemons in the past year, according to *Fresh Trends 2011*.
- Midwest consumers were least likely to purchase lemons, according to *Fresh Trends*.
- Lemons contrast nicely with the dark green of avocados and the bright red of tomatoes, and the display combination encourages consumers to pick up ingredients for guacamole.



Market Lowdown

- The volume of fresh lemons sold over the year ending Oct. 9 increased nearly 5%, according to Fresh Look Marketing, but a 2.5% decrease in the average retail price tempered sales growth for the year.
- Sophisticates, who are convenience-oriented and tend to eat foods away from home more than others, report eating more fresh lemons than other consumers, according to the NPD Group's 2010 National Eating Trends.
- Married active elderly consumers report consuming more fresh lemons.

Source: Fusion Marketing.



I hope that you all enjoyed your holiday and wish you a prosperous new year. To a profitable 2012! Until Next Month...