

Hawaiï Avocado Association NEWSLETTER

Spring 2021



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SHARWIL Export Season Ends Well

Kane Plantation Avocados began shipping to the mainland on November 17 and ended the season on March 31st. Working with 20 Kona growers, 78,000 lbs of conventional and 35,000 lbs of organic Sharwil were shipped to distributors – an increase of 10% on the previous season. Lower demand from the food service sector due to the pandemic left some growers with unsold fruit, and the lack of a market for #2 grade fruit resulted in a loss of around 10,000 lbs to growers. The farm gate price was down 8% over last season. The Packinghouse operated for 55 days during the 20-week season.

David Cox, owner of Kane Plantation Avocados, reported that despite depressed demand from the food service sector and competition from low priced Hass, sales increased in March with the addition of new customers, and the season ended fairly well.

Even though this has been a challenging year, Cox is very optimistic for the 2021/2022 season and is expecting demand to increase by around 20%, depending on the availability of quality Sharwils.



Demand Lower, Retail Price High

The effects of the pandemic on the food service sector, coupled with the historically high volume of low-priced Hass from Mexico and California kept demand for Sharwil on the mainland lower this season, while imported Hass sales reached record highs.

In the first 4 weeks of 2021, Mexico exported 277 million pounds of avocado into the USA at under \$30 for a 25lb case - a 19% increase in volume over the same period in 2020.

During January and February Hass were roughly 1/3rd the price of Sharwil landed in Seattle. Hass prices began rising in March due to wet conditions in California.

Mainland retailers view Sharwils as a high-priced specialty item with shelf prices of around \$5 to \$6 per pound.

[From the Produce Blue Book](#)

USDA Evaluates Malama

The USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) in Hilo is conducting tests on the Malama variety to determine its susceptibility to Oriental Fruit Fly (OFF). Similar tests were conducted on the Sharwil which resulted in that variety being classified as a poor OFF host and ultimately approved for mainland export under a USDA regulated protocol.

If the results of the tests prove favorable, the HAA will request approval for Malama to be added to the export system approach. This is a long-term project and approval may take a number of years.





Spring Tasks in the Grove

“Spring is the time to prune and spray fungicide once the fruit is off your trees.”

- Prune
- Spray
- Fertilize

Spraying Tips

Avoid spraying during the heat of the day as spray can have a phytotoxic effect in high temperatures. Do not spray if there is a chance of rain. Apply in early morning or late afternoon and always wear protective clothing and eye protection. Always read the product label and follow safety precautions.

Hopefully by now the winter varieties have been harvested and flowering is underway or fruit has already set. Now is a good time for annual pruning and to begin spraying to control fungal diseases.

Remove any dead wood and prune tree skirts to allow for good air flow under and around the trees to help reduce humidity and fungal issues. Keep the area around your trees clear of fallen limbs and overgrowth. Add mulch to suppress fungal spores.

Prune verticals to manage the height and shape. If the tree has become too tall and fruit size has decreased, consider pruning around 1/3 of the tree. If the tree has lost vigor and is weak and has not responded to normal pruning it may be time for heavy ‘staghorn’ pruning. Cut the tree back to the main limbs to restart growth.

If you have noticed fungal problems like Scab, Pseudocercospora Spot or Anthracnose on your fruit, now is

the time to begin spraying copper-based fungicide. The first application should occur at flowering and then be repeated every 4 to 6 weeks for 4 applications. Control fungal problems before they spread.

Scab and Pseudocercospora Spot is widespread in the Kona area and more common at higher elevations with moist, cool environments. Both cause lesions on the skin which affect the marketability of the fruit, and in severe cases causes skin cracks and early drop of mature fruit.

Copper 53 works well as a fungicide when applied at a rate of 1lb per 30 gallons. Keep it well mixed and agitated during spraying. Spray to cover the entire tree including the underside of leaves. Spray in the early mornings when no chance of rain. Copper 53 is available from Farm and Garden and BEI.

After the first juvenile fruit drop, apply a low nitrogen fertilizer around the drip line.

Avocado Lace Bug Widespread on Hawaii Island

Avocado lace bug is widespread on Hawaii Island. This pest lives on the underside of leaves and sucks nutrients from the leaves, ultimately causing leaf drop and defoliation.

Trees generally recover from an infestation and are usually not seriously harmed however the yield may be affected and exposed fruit may sunburn.

[CTAHR recently published an excellent paper](#) which provides more information about the Avocado Lace Bug.



HFUU Survey & Avocado Grafting Workshop

The Hawaii Farmers Union United (HFUU) recently held a virtual grafting workshop on Oahu. An instructional video should be published soon and available on YouTube.



Preliminary results of the avocado grower's survey conducted last summer by the HFUU have been compiled. Of 70 respondents, 50% have been farming for 10+ years, and 26% between 5 and 10 years. 64% of farms grew between 1 and 3 acres of avocado and 10% 3 to 5 acres. 90% of farms were below 2000' elevation with 67% reported growing Sharwil, and of those, most reported yields in excess of 2500lbs per acre. 47% are planning to increase Sharwil plantings and equal number are planning to add Greengold and Kahalu'u. The final report will be available shortly on the HAA website.

USDA/ ARS Tests HPP on Sharwils

Dr. Peter Follet from the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Hilo recently tested Sharwil avocados at the JBT food science lab in Kentucky. The goal was to determine if High Pressure Processing (HPP) could be used as a phytosanitary control for Hawaiian avocado exported to the mainland.

100 lbs of Sharwils were shipped to JBT by Kane Plantation Avocados, however the tests proved that HPP is not suitable as a phytosanitary control for fresh whole avocado.

Tests are continuing on ripe, cut, and processed avocado.

[Read the Preliminary Report](#)



The FSMA Produce Safety Rule – Does It Affect You?

As of January 2020, farms with *more than \$25,000 in annual produce sales* must comply with the federal Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).

Farms are classified into three categories under the law: fully exempt, qualified exempt (partially exempt), and fully covered (need to be in full compliance).

The Produce Safety rule establishes science-based minimum standards for the safe growing, harvesting, packing, and holding of fruits

and vegetables grown for human consumption.

If you are not exempt and are covered by this rule, there are two basic requirements that must be met in addition to record keeping – your farm must be GAP certified and have one responsible person attend mandatory produce safety training.

Produce buyers, distributors and retailers are becoming more insistent that growers and packers comply with the FSMA Produce Safety Rule. Cornell University in

conjunction with the Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) developed the only approved training course that meets the FSMA requirements. The PSA is currently offering online courses.

The decision tree on the next page can help determine if you are exempt, partially exempt, or must comply with the rule. For advice and assistance with farm food safety, [contact CTAHR](#).

[More about PSA Training](#)

USDA GroupGAP Can Help - An Easier Option

Through the The North Shore Economic Vitality Partnership (NSEVP), the Hawaii GroupGAP program works to advance understanding and implimentation of food safety practices among food and farm enterprises. USDA GroupGAP will help with attaining Harmonized GAP certification and FSMA compliance.

NSEVP is working with farmers and agricultural leaders across the state to build a network of farms committed to growing high quality, food safety certified products for the local markets. NSEVP is a non-profit organization.

For more information about GroupGAP and how it can help you, contact Lisa Rhoden at 808-343-8196 or email info@nsevp.org

Learn
More »



North Shore EVP
*A Community Economic
Vitality Partnership*

Does your farm grow, harvest, pack or hold produce?

Sections 112.1 and 112.3(c)
We define "produce" in section 112.3(c).

NO



Your farm is NOT covered by this rule.

YES

Does your farm on average (in the previous three years) have \$25k or less in annual produce sales?

Section 112.4(a)

YES



Your farm is NOT covered by this rule.

NO

Is your produce one of the commodities that FDA has identified as rarely consumed raw?

Section 112.2(a)(1)

If you grow, harvest, pack or hold more than one produce commodity, you must ask this question separately for each one to determine whether that particular produce commodity is covered by this rule.

YES



This product is NOT covered by this rule.

NO

Is your produce for personal/on-farm consumption?

Section 112.2(a)(2)

YES



This produce is NOT covered by this rule.

NO

Is your produce intended for commercial processing that adequately reduces pathogens (for example, commercial processing with a "kill step")?

Section 112.2(b)

YES



This produce is eligible for exemption from the rule,

provided you make certain statements in documents accompanying the produce, obtain certain written assurances, and keep certain documentation, as per Sections 112.2(b)(2) through (b)(6).

NO

Does your farm on average (in the previous three years) as per Section 112.5: have < \$500k annual food sales, AND a majority of the food (by value) sold directly to "qualified end-users"?

Section 112.3(c)

"Qualified End-User" as defined in Section 112.3(c) means:

- the consumer of the food OR
- a restaurant or retail food establishment that is located—
 - (i) in the same State or the same Indian reservation as the farm that produced the food; OR
 - (ii) not more than 275 miles from such farm.

(The term "consumer" does not include a business.)

YES



Your farm is eligible for a qualified exemption from this rule,

which means that you must comply with certain modified requirements and keep certain documentation, as per Sections 112.6 and 112.7.

NO

YOU ARE COVERED BY THIS RULE.

Created November 13, 2015

Some Changes on the HAA Board

After many years of relentless work as Secretary to the HAA Board, Brooks Wakefield has taken a step back and passed those responsibilities along to Doug Bong.

Brooks remains on the Board as a Director and will continue to support the association and the avocado industry as she has done for decades.



The Hawaii Avocado Association

PO Box 925

Kealekakua Hawaii 96750

808 329-9729

info@hawaiiavocados.com

Visit us on the web

<https://www.hawaiiavocadoassociation.com>