



Avocado Groves in Matahui, New Zealand

New Zealand Avocado Industry to be Showcased at 2023 World Avocado Congress

By Tim Linden

New Zealand is excited to be hosting the 2023 World Avocado Congress in April and equally happy to be showcasing the various facets of their avocado industry from the grove through the supply chain.

The 10th World Avocado Congress (WAC) will be held in the Aotea Centre, in the heart of Auckland City, from Sunday, April 2 through Wednesday, April 5, 2023. In addition, there will be four field day options on Saturday, April 1, as well as two others on the opening day of the event. Jen Scoular, CEO of NZ Avocado and president of the World Avocado Congress

Committee, is encouraging attendees to arrive early and leave late to enjoy all New Zealand has to offer.

In late November, Scoular updated *From the Grove* on the planning process for the WAC and revealed that there were already more than 850 registrants, which was the committee's initial target. She expects many more registrations over the coming months, but not too many that it will be declared a sellout. She noted that the main auditorium in the modern Aotea Centre has seating for more than 2,000 people over three levels. However, Scoular said the closing gala does have limited room, so she urged current registrants and potential

registrants to sign up early to claim their seat at the always-enjoyable closing event.

The newly refurbished Aotea Centre boasts that it includes the latest cutting-edge technology throughout and impresses with fresh natural lighting, easy accessibility, and modern décor.

“The World Avocado Congress enables us to collectively view and critique our industry; learn about the opportunities and challenges and the current and future supply and demand of avocados,” Scoular said. “Those wanting to improve their avocado business need to be part of the global conversation taking place at the congress.”

She told *From the Grove* that the avocado industry is in a much different situation than it was when the last congress was held four years ago in Colombia. “We are very aware that the global environment and the avocado sector are in very different times than at the 2019 Congress, and what we are recognizing is the enormity of the opportunity to collectively step up together as a sector and find some answers to the challenges.”

She noted that environmental conditions absolutely require attention “but we also face increased global supply without the same increase in demand, except perhaps in the United States.”

Scoular opined that the ability of the U.S. market to keep

the demand curve ahead of or at par with supply is the result of a robust promotional scheme that just doesn’t exist in other consuming countries. “The U.S. has a fantastic structure for promotion,” she said, pointing to the federally-mandated Hass Avocado Board, which collects funds for its programs as well as promotional campaigns conducted in the U.S. market by organizations representing the various producing countries. The rest of the world does not have that structure in place but does need to step up and grow the market, using the U.S. experience as a blueprint, according to Scoular.

“We see huge increases in supply coming from Colombia and Peru,” she said, adding that more effort needs to be made to sharpen the demand side. Scoular noted that China is one country with very good potential that needs to be developed.

New Zealand exports 55-75% of its volume but also has seen its own per capita consumption of avocados increase significantly in recent years from 2.6 kg to 3.8 kg (about 8 pounds) per person. She said that was the result of a lot of market development, but more work needs to be done. Although she also noted that with a population of only 5 million people, the island country is not going to make a huge dent in the supply curve. New Zealand’s main export markets are Australia and several Asian countries.

Scoular added that there also are challenges concerning labor shortages, technology not quite keeping up, and glob-



Aerial photo by Cara Davis



Aerial view of Waiheke Island with sand, trees and houses on the shore and boats in the surrounding ocean

al freight disruptions. The WAC Committee president said planning is currently underway for the educational sessions and those topics will certainly be brought to the forefront, along with a host of others. She also revealed that the period in which to submit extracts has passed with 150 papers submitted and currently being reviewed for inclusion. She added that the full program for the World Avocado Congress should be published in late January. Topics will include the future of food, sustainability, climate change, food trends, food security, water and carbon lifecycles for avocado production, practical on-orchard application of research to achieve high yields, agritech innovation, global supply chains, grower returns and the ongoing challenges of food supply, to name a few.

Field days will include New Zealand's top growers - achieving yields of over 50 tons a hectare - new intensive plantings from greenfield dairy farms, and packhouse visits. Topics will include sustainable income through multiple crops, avocado propagation and diversity of horticulture, New Zealand agtech, supply chain issues and collaboration with scientific partners.

"Field days are always a highlight for congress attendees," Scoular said. "They are the perfect opportunity to

showcase New Zealand's leadership in avocado growing, sustainable environmental practice, ethical worker treatment and beautiful, lush orchards. We encourage our avocado visitors to book field day tickets on the World Avocado Congress website to select one of the fantastic trips we have on offer."

As part of the World Avocado Congress field days, NZ Avocado is partnering with social enterprise Eat My Lunch to supply lunches. "For every lunch eaten on the field days, a child is provided with a school lunch," she said. "Eat My Lunch cares for our future through supporting children in over 87 schools throughout New Zealand. Supporting Eat My Lunch aligns with the theme of the congress, Respectful: respect for people, respect for environment and respect for our future."

Scoular said with the global avocado market worth approximately \$8 billion (USD) in 2020 and expected to grow to \$17 billion (USD) by 2025, the World Avocado Congress has become the most prestigious global event to celebrate the avocado sector.

For more information and to register for the World Avocado Congress visit the website: wacnz2023.com 🍷