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For further information contact:

Yvonne Harz-Pitre: 0033140025302

yharz-pitre@agrofresh.com

News Release

New Trial Results on South African SmartFreshSM Quality Avocados

Delivering a Better Quality Avocado for the End Consumer

Significant benefits in storage, transport flexibility, and reduction in grey-pulp of South African avocados using the SmartFreshSM Quality System have been revealed by the results, released today, of a major SmartFresh quality management program involving comprehensive trials on South African avocados.

Working with local partners, AgroFresh, conducted scientific, semi-commercial and full-scale commercial trials starting in 2000. According to Peter Vriends, AgroFresh's Vice President for Europe, Africa and Asia-Pacific: "We decided from day one that we had to work with local partners. We knew that we had to prove that SmartFresh would provide major benefits for growers and shippers under South African conditions and help them to deliver quality avocados to their customers in Europe, to deliver and maintain the ideal ripeness stage. Our goal is to contribute significantly to a better eating experience for the end-consumer, independently from mode of transport or temperature fluctuations."

The key is the SmartFresh Quality System's unique ability to slow down internal ethylene production and make fruit less susceptible to outside sources of ethylene. The SmartFresh Quality System has the added advantage that it does not stop working when the fruit is transferred from the container to a cool store at the port of entry.

The close cooperation with local growers and shippers allowed AgroFresh to take into account the various storage and transport systems for avocados, to examine impacts of temperature fluctuations, breaks in the cold chain, delays in the supply chain on the fruits and, also, to test the positive consequences of SmartFresh on ethylene-related disorders.

For the first stage of this quality management program, AgroFresh worked closely with South Africa's internationally-respected Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Crops (ITSC), which used the SmartFresh Quality System under pack house conditions on the five most important South African export avocado varieties. The institute found that the SmartFresh Quality System slowed down the ripening period of all varieties.

In addition, further semi-commercial trials over the next year with South Africa's biggest grower-packer showed

1. Flexibility in transport:

SmartFresh delayed more effectively the ripening of avocados kept under refrigerated air (RA) than controlled atmosphere (CA). This was particularly significant for South Africa because, since its introduction, controlled atmosphere (CA) has contributed greatly towards the reduction in soft landings of South African avocado in Europe. The results suggested that SmartFresh could allow flexibility in choice of transport – South African shippers could now choose either CA or RA.

2. Reduction in Grey-pulp

Grey-pulp, an internal physiological disorder, can be a major problem in the South African avocado export industry. It is most prevalent in mature fruit stored at a low temperature at the end of the season. ITSC found that SmartFresh could significantly reduce the incidence of the disorders.

Wehan Groenewald, Sales Manager for the SmartFresh Quality System in South Africa, who supervised these trials, said: "We were naturally highly encouraged by ITSC's findings. We decided to validate them by scaling up the project with our local partner, who constructed two purpose-built storage rooms for the application of SmartFresh."

"The semi-commercial trial results confirmed the ITSC findings and were impressive enough to persuade the grower- shipper to use SmartFresh exclusively in 2003. In 2004 we started to offer the SmartFresh Quality System in South Africa and have been delighted by the take-up by other growers and shippers," continued Wehan Groenewald.

Meanwhile, the project was expanded to cover container shipments and full-scale trials which were conducted in 40ft stationary sea containers. The results demonstrated that avocados stored with the SmartFresh Quality system maintained the ripening period of the *Hass* variety avocados under RA by up to 2.5 days compared to CA. The results were confirmed at a fully commercial level in 2003 on avocados for export to Europe. AgroFresh now works with many South African avocado exporters and several container suppliers.

Today it is confirmed that, the SmartFresh Quality System offers a significant inventory management benefit to exporters and importers. More quality avocados are now available for a longer period of time for the consumer.

Looking ahead, the success of the South African trials has prompted AgroFresh to start new trials in Kenya adopting the partnership approach with one of the country's biggest growers and a leading shipper. The trials are underway, but results similar to South Africa are confidently expected.

In a major new development, AgroFresh, in cooperation with the Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Crops has also recently developed recommendations for the use of SmartFresh in the fast-growing ready-to-eat European market. It has been determined that the moisture level at harvest time plays a major role. Trials have confirmed that dry matter shall be above 30 per cent to allow a ripening time at destination compatible with the requirements of this segment.

Wehan Groenewald said today: "Thanks to the cooperation of our partners, upon arrival in European retailers' shelves, SmartFresh South African avocados score highly in taste, general appearance, ripeness, and internal quality – all top factors motivating discerning European consumers."

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Editor's Notes

1. AgroFresh Inc. acquired the SmartFresh Quality System in the late 1990s, went on to refine it, and now works with research centers and institutions around the world to further its applications to benefit consumers.
2. The SmartFresh Quality System has been successfully approved and accepted for use in every country in which AgroFresh has sought registration, which is currently more than 26, including the European Union. As the growth and demand for the SmartFresh Quality System continues to increase, AgroFresh has stated it will continue to seek registrations in other countries around the world.