

INDEX FRESH® **THE INSIDER**

SPRING 2025



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FIELD MANAGER’S LETTER

DEAR GROWERS,

The 2025 California avocado season began with great momentum in mid-January, marking an earlier start than usual. Thanks to a short supply of 48s from Mexico during January, we were able to work together to bring California fruit to market just in time to meet the heightened demand during the Super Bowl period.

Early harvesting primarily consisted of size picks, but the favorable market conditions also allowed growers the opportunity to conduct maintenance and anti-theft picks at competitive price levels.

Looking ahead, California is poised for a strong crop this year, with volumes expected to be similar to the 2024 season. Last year’s final numbers reached 386 MM pounds across all varieties. For 2025, initial estimates project 355 MM pounds of Hass avocados, 11 MM pounds of Lamb Hass, 8 MM pounds of GEM, and 1 million pounds of other varieties such as Reeds and green skins.

The U.S. avocado market is currently facing notable challenges. Mexican supply has fallen short of meeting regular weekly demand, and recent tariff uncertainties have further tightened availability. These factors have created robust demand for California fruit at premium prices over the past several weeks.

With ongoing uncertainty surrounding Mexican supply, retail buyers are increasingly turning to alternative sources to meet their needs. California avocados stand out for their quality, consistency, and reliability—making them a top choice for buyers nationwide.

GEM avocados are also generating excitement among retailers. Our newly launched California Crema GEM campaign has already sparked enthusiasm from both new buyers and long-standing GEM customers eager to expand their programs. Please coordinate closely with your field representative to ensure a smooth harvest process.

We’re excited to welcome Agronomist Gerardo Aldunate to Index Fresh full-time this April! With extensive expertise in avocado cultivation, Gerardo will be a valuable resource for our growers and team. Contact Gerardo at galdunate@indexfresh.com to schedule an in-field consultation.

The Fresh Facts mobile app has been revamped with a sleek design and enhanced features. Growers can now access two years of historical price trends alongside the latest price quote and market insights. We’re committed to delivering cutting-edge tools—reach out with suggestions for future updates.

Finally, I’d like to personally invite all growers and members of the avocado community to join us at our Grower Appreciation Lunches

this May. These casual gatherings are a wonderful opportunity to connect, enjoy great food, and discuss the upcoming season. The lunches will be held on:

- May 6th in San Luis Obispo, Wayfarer Hotel
- May 7th in Ventura, Brokaw Nursery Long Canyon Ranch
- May 9th in Temecula, Temecula Creek Inn

With appreciation,
Keith Blanchard



INDEX FRESH
LAUNCHES
CALIFORNIA CREMA™
GEM AVOCADOS

It’s “time to shine” for avocados wearing the California Crema GEM label offered exclusively by Index Fresh. Icons of the Golden State, California Crema GEM Avocados are gold-flecked, deliciously creamy, and in season annually between March and July.



The new California Crema brand draws consumers into this limited release offering, with stand-out marketing that educates and creates excitement around the GEM variety that we are proud to have helped put on the map.

California Crema’s campaign promotes California grown, focuses on flavor and nutritional density, and pairs resilience with responsibility. Sold bagged and in bulk with eye-catching, innovative packaging, California Crema sets itself apart from other avocado options on the market.

The market is ripe for a delicious new variety that sparks excitement and pays attention to the rising consumer demand for more environmentally mindful packaging.

GEM avocados are often associated with farming practices that strive to minimize their environmental impact, like growing on compact trees that have a more dense and efficient fruit set, producing more within a smaller footprint. The California Crema program also harnesses sustainable initiatives through incorporating recyclable paper film, certified home-compostable PLUs and net

bags, and biodegradable cartons into the product line. We are excited that California Crema will elevate the GEM variety’s already beneficial farming practices with packaging designed to reduce the environmental footprint.



Keep an eye out for California Crema GEM avocados displayed at your local supermarket and visit CaliforniaCremaAvocados.com to learn more about this exciting brand campaign. 🌞



AVOCADO ORCHARD SPRING TRANSITION

BY GERARDO ALDUNATE, AGRONOMIST, INDEX FRESH

As we transition from winter to spring, crucial phenological processes begin in avocado orchards, particularly the Flowering and Fruit Set. These stages are critical precursors to the next harvest. To optimize tree health and productivity during this period, implement the following cultural practices:

FERTILIZATION

- Initiate fertilizer application to support flower development and fruit set
- Adjust fertilizer quantities based on flowering intensity
- Consider foliar applications of micronutrients to boost tree health

IRRIGATION MANAGEMENT

- Maintain adequate soil moisture during flowering, fruit set, and early fruit development
- Monitor soil moisture levels regularly and adjust irrigation schedules accordingly



- Implement deficit irrigation strategies if water resources are limited, but avoid water stress

POLLINATION

- Monitor flowering progression closely
- Introduce honeybee hives when approximately 10% of flowers have opened
- Consider supplemental pollination techniques in areas with insufficient natural pollinators



CROP LOAD MANAGEMENT

- Assess fruit set and consider early thinning of excess fruit
- Remove small or damaged fruit to improve overall crop quality
- Balance crop load with tree vigor to prevent alternate bearing

PEST AND DISEASE CONTROL

- Implement Avocado Thrips and Persea Mite control measures based on monitoring results
- Be vigilant for symptoms of root rot, which is most stressful to trees in spring
- Apply appropriate treatments if root rot is detected
- Monitor for other seasonal pests and diseases, such as fruit spotting bug or anthracnose



WEED MANAGEMENT

- Control weeds to reduce competition for water and nutrients
- Use mulch or cover crops to suppress weed growth and improve soil health
- Time weed control to avoid competition with avocado flowers for pollinating insects

ORCHARD FLOOR MANAGEMENT

- Maintain a clean orchard floor to facilitate harvest operations
- Consider cover crops to improve soil structure and beneficial insect populations
- Manage ground cover to balance ecosystem services with practical orchard management

By implementing these practices, growers can optimize tree health and productivity during the critical spring transition period, setting the stage for a successful avocado harvest. 🌞

WELCOME GERARDO!



We are excited to welcome Gerardo Aldunate as a full-time member of the Index Fresh Field Team. Gerardo is a highly accomplished agronomist with nearly three decades of expertise in the agricultural industry. Born in Chile, he began his career providing cultural guidance to one of the country's largest avocado exporters. Today, Gerardo brings his wealth of knowledge to Index Fresh growers, offering tailored in-field

consulting services such as orchard health assessments, irrigation recommendations, leaf and soil analysis reviews, cultural input planning, and canopy management advice. A graduate of the prestigious Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso with a degree in Agronomy, Gerardo is dedicated to helping growers achieve consistent yields and optimal orchard productivity.

Take advantage of Index Fresh's enhanced agronomy services to elevate your orchard's performance. Schedule a personalized consultation with Gerardo Aldunate. Whether you need insights on irrigation strategies or canopy management, Gerardo is here to help you maximize your orchard's potential. Contact him today at galdunate@indexfresh.com or call (805) 215-0538 to book your visit. 🌞

LOOK OUT FOR LACE BUGS!

Native to the southeastern United States, the avocado lace bug is a notable pest that causes damage to avocado trees. Its presence has been documented as far south as San Diego County and as far north as Ventura County.

Here are some essential facts about this pest:

- **APPEARANCE:** Eggs are laid in an irregular pattern, sometimes in loose rows, stuck to the lower leaf surface and are covered with irregular globules of a black, sticky, tar-like substance excreted by adults that may protect eggs from natural enemies. Eggs will appear like grains of black pepper. Adult avocado lace bugs are small, have clear, lacy wings (about 2mm long) with a single dark band on their bodies, yellow legs, and antennae. They are visible to the naked eye.
- **LIFE CYCLE:** Lace bugs are immobile most of the time. They feed on the underside of leaves, causing chlorotic blotches that can become necrotic. Severely damaged leaves may drop prematurely.



- **DAMAGE:** Heavy lace bug feeding can lead to defoliation, sunburned fruit and wood, and stressed trees, potentially reducing yield.
- **LOCATION:** Lace bugs have been spotted in groves spanning from San Diego to Carpinteria. The lace bugs live in colonies on the lower surfaces of leaves, often with adults, eggs and nymphs together.



- **OTHER HOSTS:** Besides avocado trees, the lace bug also feeds on the camphor tree (Cinnamomum camphora).
- **TIMING:** Lace bug populations tend to build in July, peak around



September, and decline to low densities from January through May. Because they are largely immobile, they tend to disappear as older leaves drop off and the new leaves emerge during the spring flush.

- **MANAGEMENT:** Management strategies may include restrictions on the movement of host plant materials, insecticide screening trials, and evaluation of natural enemy releases.
- **NATURAL ENEMIES:** Green lacewing larvae were historically identified as natural enemies of avocado lace bug. However, recently Erico Ferro, PCA, notes he

has not observed natural enemies feeding on any of the different stages of lace bug (egg, nymphs or adults) including lacewing larvae. Predators may feed on them but should not be relied on to control a population.

- **PESTICIDES:** There are several pesticides that can kill lace bugs and are tolerated by green lacewing larvae.
- **CONTROL:** UC recommends various products to help control lace bugs. To learn more about how to control the pest, email info@indexfresh.com for UC's management guidance and evidence-based recommendations from PCA Enrico Ferro. 🌱

Lace Bug Article Sources:

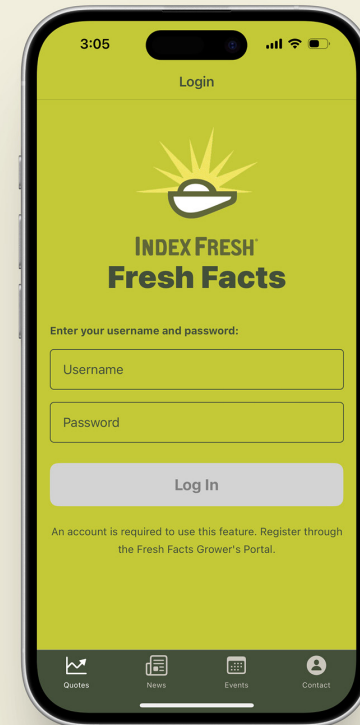
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EVENTS

APPRECIATION LUNCH

MAY 6

12:00 - 2:00 PM
THE WAYFARER HOTEL
1800 Monterey St
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

MAY 7

11:00 - 1:00 PM
LONG CANYON RANCH
Browkaw Nursery
5501 Elizabeth Road,
Ventura, CA 93004

MAY 9

11:00 - 1:00 PM
TEMECULA CREEK INN
4501 Rainbow Canyon Road
Temecula, CA 92592

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