

supermarkets this year in a bid to remain competitive. The 2005 budget will be three times last year's level, with most money going towards remodelling ageing **Giant Landover** shops.

California-based avocado company **Calavo Growers** has reported a net loss of US\$1.5m on revenues of US\$47.7m in the first quarter of 2005. This year, sales have been hampered by severe winter storms, which limited volumes, and an unanticipated surge in seasonal imports from Chile, the company said.

The **Northwest Pear Bureau** has appointed Dennis Jackson as the new Northeast regional manager. The Bureau recently received a national excellence award for its industry efforts from the **Produce for Better Health Foundation**.

Compac fruit sorting company set for US

NEW ZEALAND hi-tech fruit sorting company Compac is expanding its horizons with the opening of an office in California to service its growing presence in the fruit and vegetable sorting industry.

"This is a real commitment on Compac's part to continued growth in the US market, where we have moved from working with local contractors through to a fully dedicated Compac office," said Compac general manager Bob Shaw.

Mr Shaw explains the US expansion is a logical move for the company, which has generated huge sales in the stone fruit, citrus and vegetable markets.

Compac offers electronic

sorting, grading and packing technology, including sophisticated blemish grading and near infra-red (NIR) technology, which can photograph a fruit's interior and chemical composition as it passes on a conveyor belt.

The company also claims its machines are the fastest in the world, handling between 10 and 15 pieces of fruit or vegetables a second in each lane, with a 12-lane machine sorting more than 100 pieces a second.

Indeed, its innovative sorting equipment reportedly helped Californian pack-houses save a large proportion of their frost-damaged citrus crop in 1999. Compac will also operate a sales office in Florida.

Port crises expected to deepen

EXPERTS claim the log-jam of container ships experienced at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach last summer is only a prelude to further crises along the West Coast in the coming months and years.

"With cargo from Asia and China doubling by 2020, the issues of 2004/05 will seem inconsequential by comparison with what is coming down the road," said Maersk president and chief executive Russ Bruner.

Last year's crisis has been blamed on a lack of labour and underestimated volumes. And experts say the chaos will only get worse unless there are considerable infrastructure improvements and coordination among everyone involved in the logistics chain.