Project Title:
To develop marketing protocols for FEMA designated orchards that are harvested two to three weeks after normal release but do not qualify for FEMA release.

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Objectives and Rationale
Currently almost 50% of all South African Forelle, representing about 2 million cartons, are marketed under the FEMA programme. As FEMA fruit can demand premium prices, producers identify an excessive number of orchards to ensure that they make their quota. FEMA released orchards arriving in the market early give the highest returns. Producers therefore often push a large number of orchards so that they stand the best chance of qualifying for the FEMA release standard. This often results in some orchards being harvested for standard release at a compromised maturity, especially in terms of colour break. The problem that needs to be addressed is how to best handle these fruit to ensure best eating quality either on the local or the export market.

The aim of this project is to develop a marketing protocol for fruit that do not meet FEMA release criteria, but were from orchards designated for FEMA release.

Methods
Three Forelle orchards in the Villiersdorp region were selected. These orchards have a history of flesh firmness’s not lowering to an acceptable level for FEMA release in time. Fruit were harvested at normal Forelle release and again two later. Fruit were subjected to a pear rate and FEMA rate SmartFresh SM and stored for 8 and 12 weeks at -0.5 °C in RA. After cold storage fruit were subjected to a 7 day simulated shelf life and a taste assessment.

Key Results
All milestones and all laboratory work were successfully met and are now complete. Interpretation of the data obtained from the taste panel will be discussed with staff from the Department of Food Science at the University of Stellenbosch as the data sets are quite complex.

Conclusion and Discussion
This interim report is to inform the workgroup of the status of the project. Feedback and discussion of this project will address possible amendments for the following season.