

California Avocado Society 1928 Yearbook 12: 77-83

President's Address

E.C. Dutton

Our By-Laws provide that "the President shall submit to the Annual Meeting a report of the doings of the Board of Directors, and of the affairs and operation of the Association during the preceding year." The meeting today marks the completion of thirteen years work by the California Avocado Association, and I think the membership may fairly be congratulated on the results attained during this period. Those of us who remember the status of the avocado at the time the Association was organized can realize something of the wonderful progress that has been made, due to the generous and wholehearted cooperation of the membership. The progress made in the past may also give us an idea of what we may reasonably expect in the future with continued cooperation, and a greater and ever increasing number of avocado growers as prospects for membership.

During the past year the Board of Directors has met regularly on the second Friday of each month. With one exception, the attendance has been excellent, and in behalf of the director who has not attended as regularly as the others it may be said that it requires nearly an entire day to make the round trip from his home to the meeting place. At each of the meetings considerable business was transacted in addition to the regular routine which I do not include in this report, except to say that this sort of business has shown a marked increase over previous years. A few matters of outstanding importance will be discussed at this time.

At the annual meeting last year a motion prevailed instructing the Directors to devote their attention to the pollination of the avocado during the ensuing year. At the meeting of the Directors on July 9, 1927, after a thorough discussion it was thought best to broaden the project, and inaugurate an investigation of all the factors which might have an influence on the bearing of the avocado. A motion was carried that a committee be appointed "to make a study of all problems contributing to the setting of fruit, and report back on ways and means to help solve the problems." Dr. J. Eliot Coit, L. C. Alles and G. E. Fairhead were appointed on this Committee and started work by arranging a meeting on July 22nd at the office of the Agricultural Extension Service in Los Angeles, inviting the Farm Advisers of the counties where avocados are produced. Dr. W. H. Chandler of the University of California was also present.

Dr. Coit stated the purpose of the meeting as

1. "To discuss the possible causes for the annual fluctuations in yield, and make plans to have it determined what those causes are.
2. "To attempt to have some investigational work done in connection with the avocado, studying problems which have to do with fruit setting."

After considerable discussion some of the factors possibly affecting avocado production

were decided to be temperature, pollination, available soil nitrates, soil moisture in different types of soils, fertilization, pruning, removal of varying percentages of bloom or buds, and thinning fruit in seasons of heavy setting.

The following permanent committee was formed to inaugurate and supervise work on test plots in the different avocado producing sections with a view to securing some exact data tending to the solution of some of these problems:

Santa Barbara County: Ben Hagglund, Eugene Kellogg, A. F. Yaggy

Ventura County: V. F. Blanchard, Mr. Borchard.

Los Angeles, County: M. B. Rounds, J. C. Johnston, Dr. J. Eliot Coit. Jas. D. Hoffman.

Orange County: H. E. Wahlberg, C. V. Newman, E. C. Dutton.

San Diego County: J. G. France, R. M. Allen, Rancho Leucadia.

Several test plots were established in different localities and experiments are now being carried on in investigating the influence of some of the before mentioned factors on avocado production. This work will require some time before definite recommendations can be made, but it is a move in the right direction, and as much of it should be done as is possible. Incidentally, this is an instance of the work of far reaching value that might be done if the Division of Subtropical Horticulture of the State University could be provided with suitable land where such problems could be investigated under scientific supervision.

The Board also communicated with Dr. A. B. Stout as to the possibility of his coming to California and doing further work on avocado pollination. Dr. Stout informed us that he was interested in continuing his studies, but would be unable to come west during the ensuing blooming season. He felt that there was need for further work on pollination, and stated that he was by no means through with the subject. The Directors feel that the matter should be kept in mind and at the first favorable opportunity further studies, be made. It is also felt that it was a good idea, instead of confining the investigation solely to pollination, to investigate as many factors as possible likely to have an influence on the bearing of the avocado tree.

The President represented the Association at the annual meeting of the Agricultural Legislative Committee, held in San Francisco on June 16, 1927. This committee has been of incalculable service to the avocado industry, and some of its functions were outlined by its capable Executive Secretary, Mr. R. H. Taylor, in his address at our meeting this morning.

Collection of the special advertising fund raised by donations by realtors and avocado nurserymen was suspended, as a few contributors were bearing this entire burden, and the Board felt that it was not fair that these few should be assessed for the benefit of so many others.

The usual encouragement has been given during the year to the investigation of by-products, vitamins, etc., and progress has been made along these lines, some of the results having been reported at the meeting this forenoon.

The ever increasing demand for the publications of the Association resulted in the

exhaustion of our supply of Annual Reports for 1926, although 1100 copies had been printed. 1500 copies of the Year Book for 1927 were printed, and the Board set the price at \$5-00 per copy to non-members, instead of \$1.00 as in the past. During the year more requests have been received for copies of our Year Books from Public Libraries as well as scientific libraries than ever before. This is encouraging, and should be an incentive to make our future publications larger and better.

As another evidence of the great interest in the avocado, the well known Bulletin 365 of the University of California, although reprinted in an issue of 10,000 copies, is again exhausted, and is now in process of re-issue, having been brought up to date.

In Mexico, probably the original home of the avocado, there are signs of an awakened interest in the fruit. In 1927 a very creditable Bulletin entitled ' 'El Aguacate' ' was issued by their Department of Agriculture. This is liberally provided with translations of articles from the early Year Books of the California Avocado Association, although the author does not seem to have had access to any of the Year Books subsequent to 1921, consequently the account of the avocado situation in California is far from up to date. We are greatly indebted to our neighbor Mexico for many of our best varieties, and will be pleased to help them by furnishing them with our later publications if desired. The author of the Mexican Bulletin states that there are probably many seedlings of all the avocado races growing in Mexico, the fruit of which is superior to the propagated varieties. The probable truth of this statement must be admitted, and it is hoped that our Southern neighbors will make a systematic search for such varieties, and propagate and describe them when found.

Concerning the shipping of avocados across the continent, and their re-distribution in the many eastern markets, the favorable report last year has been amply confirmed during the past season. In addition to the customary rail shipments, a large consignment was sent by steamship via the Panama Canal to New York and arrived in perfect condition. In shipping qualities the avocado seems to compare favorably with the other perishable fruits.

As the growers' cooperative marketing agency, the California Avocado Growers Exchange was organized under the auspices of the Association, we are naturally interested in its career, and a few words on the subject would seem to be in order. During the summer of 1927 the name of this corporation was changed to "Calavo Growers of California" in order to help in the advertising and popularizing of its first grade brand of avocados, which is marketed under the name "Calavo," The policy of this marketing agency is to concentrate its advertising and sales promotion work on "Calavo" instead of avocado, in order that most of the benefits may inure to those who support the work, and this policy has been justified by the results, as Calavo commands a substantial premium in the markets.

During the 1926-1927 season the California avocado crop was by far the largest so far known, representing an increase of several hundred per cent. The situation was exactly such as had in the past resulted in the utter demoralization and wrecking of the cooperative marketing organizations of other fruit crops. Also the increase in crop production was much larger than had been the case in these other instances. By advertising, sales promotion work, developing new markets, and by distributing this

unprecedented crop throughout the United States, the Calavo Growers established a new record by returning its members a fair price while confronted by all and more than all the conditions that have always resulted in red ink returns to the growers of other fruits. Furthermore the new outlets developed, and the additional consumption stimulated by this organization in handling this tremendous crop, have resulted in all growers receiving exceptionally high prices for the present crop, a crop much smaller it is true, but still a large one compared to previous production.

Having successfully surmounted conditions which have heretofore meant demoralization the marketing organization is stronger and sounder than ever before, and may be considered a definite success.

A new method of publicity for the avocado has developed recently. Through the cooperation of the Agricultural Extension Service and Radio Station K F I, ten minute talks have been given over the air each Saturday, covering various phases of the avocado industry. The first program consisted of the following topics and speakers:—:

April 21—The California Avocado Association	E. C. Dutton
April 28—Marketing Avocados _____	C. V. Newman
May 5—Answering Frequent Questions on the Avocado	E. C. Dutton
May 12—Growing an Avocado Orchard _____	C. V. Newman
May 19—Avocado Varieties _____	J. Eliot Coit

Much interest has been manifested in these talks, and many questions have been sent in as a result. This marks the first systematic avocado broadcast by radio, a method which will probably one day be used extensively in increasing the consumption of the fruit.

One of the most important projects undertaken by the Association during the year is the investigation of potential diseases of the avocado. For some time reports had reached us of disturbing appearances in both trees and fruit, apparently confined at first to certain districts and to particular varieties. When losses of fruit in the packing house, as well as in the hands of dealers and consumers, began to be reported by the Calavo Growers, the Directors endeavored to take steps toward the definite identification of the trouble and its eradication or control if possible. A committee consisting of Dr. J. Eliot Coit, J. H. Walker, Jr. and T. G. Sutherland, reported that they could secure the services of a University graduate specializing in plant pathology who had done considerable work on market fruits and published several valuable Bulletins on the diseases found to affect them. Dr. H. S. Fawcett, Professor of Plant Pathology in the University of California was favorably impressed with this man and his work, and agreed to supervise the investigations, and to aid by furnishing equipment, etc.

It was estimated that about \$1,000.00 would be needed to insure the first years' work, and as it was necessary to raise the amount by subscription, a circular letter was addressed to the growers on February 17, 1928 outlining the proposition. The subscriptions began to come in by return mail, and about \$1,200.00 was subscribed, practically all of which has been paid in cash. Mr. C. F. Lindegren, the pathologist selected by the Board has been at work part time and will soon be able to devote full

time to the investigations, and it is our hope that by attacking the problem in its inception serious future losses may be prevented. The prompt and generous response to the call for help in this case is another of the many evidences of the progressive co-operative spirit of our members, which makes it such a pleasure to work with and for them. A detailed list of the contributors will be published in the forth coming Year-Book. Individual letters of acknowledgment were not sent, as we thought the donors would prefer that all the funds be used for the purpose indicated.

Another matter that has been brought to our attention during the past year is the feeling in Florida concerning the 8% oil or fat maturity requirement for avocados in the California Fruit and Vegetable Standardization Act. Several years ago, shortly after this act first went into effect, there was some complaint, based on the idea that California was deliberately and intentionally discriminating against avocados grown in Florida, and that the 8% test had been adopted in order to prevent competition by Florida fruit in the California markets. Knowing how utterly without foundation this charge was, and that the maturity question had been publicly debated, and all the data and arguments which resulted in its adoption were a matter of public record, being published in our various Year-Books, we did not perhaps, give our Florida friends as much attention as they deserve. I have lately learned that there is a general misunderstanding in Florida as to our position in this matter. This is to be regretted, and in an endeavor, if possible, to clear it up, I will state the position of the California growers as I have come to understand it after having had some part in the adoption of the maturity standard in question.

In the first place the standard was adopted to correct an intolerable local condition. Grossly immature avocados were being sold to people who were unfamiliar with the fruit, and this practice was seriously interfering with the introduction of this new and little known fruit.

The Association from its very beginning caused avocados to be analyzed, both by the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture and by the University of California. It was soon found that the percentage of oil or fat was the best indication of maturity. Numerous analyses were made over a period of years, in some cases of the entire crop on a tree of each variety, beginning when the fruit was not fully grown and continuing until the fruit has begun to drop from over-maturity.

When a maturity requirement was finally adopted there was available a vast number of analyses of various varieties by competent authority and the figure was set at 8% in order to be sure not to shut out any varieties of naturally low fat content.

If the question has occurred to anyone, there could have been no idea that this 8% test would affect West Indian avocados grown in Florida, as the few analyses on record by the U. S. Dept. and by State Universities averaged over 10% and the advertisements of the Florida dealers stated that their fruit contained from 15% to 30% fat.

Now coming to the feeling prevailing in Florida, our understanding is that the best expression of it is about as follows: "Californians have no right to set a standard of maturity for a race of avocados which they do not grow and with which they are consequently unfamiliar." It must be admitted that that sounds reasonable.

However, we feel that we do have a right to legislate against the sale of immature avocados. I take it that our Florida friends agree with us that the sale of immature fruit should be prohibited, and that particularly in the case of the avocado is this important, as the general public is not yet acquainted with the fruit, and in order to favorably introduce it and increase consumption, it is imperative that watery, flavorless, immature avocados be not sold. The interest of the grower require this and the consumer also has some right to consideration.

As there is no doubt that the Florida growers agree with us that the sale of immature avocados should be prohibited, and it seems to be equally true that some of them, at least, are not satisfied with the standard in the California law, the question would seem to be "What is a fair percentage of fat to indicate maturity of West Indian avocados?" So far we have been unable to find a record of any extensive analysis of Florida avocados fairly comparable to the work done in California. Until the Florida growers have developed the facts, we do not see that any change can be made in our regulations to prevent the sale of immature fruit.

I should say that the logical and reasonable thing to be done in Florida would be to have the proper authorities make sufficient analysis of their varieties to arrive at a definite conclusion as to the proper fat content indicating maturity, and then have a Standardization Act passed by the Legislature similar to that in force here, embodying the standard of maturity decided upon.

When our Florida friends are in a position to tell us that they have established a definite maturity standard for their avocados, and have by law prohibited the sale of immature fruit, I feel safe in saying that they will have to reason to complain of the California growers' lack of co-operation. We have no desire to arbitrarily fix a standard for avocados not grown here. We do, however, desire to prohibit the sale of immature fruit and assume that this is also the wish of the Florida growers, and when they have done so, we will be glad to meet them halfway.

In conclusion, I think the time has at last arrived when the Association membership might very easily be doubled by a little systematic work, as the number of prospects has greatly increased owing to the many people who have lately engaged in avocado planting, among them, it is interesting to note, many citrus growers of long experience, who a few years ago considered the avocado simply a fad, but have finally decided that it is a permanent factor in California horticulture. For the past year or more we have used a form letter to prospects, setting forth the advantages of membership in the Association, and the results have been excellent, but the percentage of those engaged in avocado culture whose names are sent in to us is small. What is needed is some method by which the office of the Association may receive the name and address of all who are engaged in the avocado business in order that a systematic solicitation of all prospective members may be made. Each of our present members could help here, and those engaged in selling avocado land, as well as avocado nurserymen could be of great assistance.

With the greatly increased acreage of avocados, and the large production of fruit expected in the near future, the industry will have many problems of importance to solve, and the greater our membership the better we will be able to deal with them. For

some years to come the greater number of growers will be those with young trees not yet in production, and by joint action through the Association these may do their part in preparing for the profitable handling of their fruit crops. It is, therefore, hoped that our present members, including realtors and nurserymen will give a little time and thought to the matter and send in the names of all prospects for membership, and continue this practice throughout the year. In the present state of the avocado industry the Association should have 1,000 members, and we can secure them with the aid of a little energetic and systematic work on the part of the present membership.

In closing, I wish to express my grateful appreciation of the enthusiastic and whole-hearted spirit of co-operation shown by the Directors and Members of the Association during my term of office, which has made the work a privilege and a pleasure.



Kathryn Irving shows how trees are burdened with more fruit than experienced growers believe they should carry and T. U. Barber of North Whittier Heights illustrates extent to which crop should be thinned