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AVOCADO GROWING AND PENCIL PUSHING

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In the "good old days" a farmer often relied upon hard work as the factor which was most important in determining his chances for success. Hard work is still important, but in addition to the physical work of using a shovel, he must learn to use a pencil. This is fast becoming the determining factor for today's success. Labor-saving devices reduce the perspiration, but more thought must be given to determining what should be done and how and when it should be done.

One of the things that good managers rely upon in making decisions are records. So the manager of an avocado grove needs accurate records of production and returns to determine the value of an avocado tree or variety.

Mr. Henry Hoeger in Corona started planting avocados nine years ago. At that time, little was known about the production of avocados in Riverside County. He recognized that, for his situation it would be desirable to try several varieties as production information for a variety in other areas cannot be considered accurate without some local trials. As an insurance factor he selected several varieties which seemed most likely to succeed.

Mr. Hoeger recognized that with a planting of several varieties some would be poorer than others and need to be eliminated. It was apparent to him that the first step in determining the value of a new variety was to get a record each year of its production and returns on his farm. With this information he could select the varieties best suited for him.

He summarized the information from his tree records in the two tables which follow.

In commenting on the production record, Mr. Hoeger pointed out that to date the Zutano has produced the most pounds of fruit per tree—passing the Nowels this last year. The Nowels was severely sunburned during the hot weather of the summer of 1955. This affected the fruit set the following spring and accounts for the poor production the last year.

The return per pound was higher for the Nowels than the Zutano so that the accumulative dollar return per tree was slightly higher even though it was lower in production.

The Hass variety was planted a year later than most of the others. It is, however, in third place in both production and returns when compared on an age basis.

As a result of these records and his observation, he decided that the Regina was one variety which should come out. It was quite alternating in production, producing nothing

on the off year. In addition to a fairly low average yield, the fruit quality was inferior. This was particularly unfortunate, because the Regina matured when the Fuerte harvest was in full swing. All these factors suggested to him that returns for this variety would probably be low. It was, therefore, the first variety which he eliminated. Anticipating that the alternate bearing tendency would continue, he top-worked the trees the year following the production of a large crop. Since the Nowels variety had been the top performer in his limited testing on his farm, he selected scions of that variety to make a new tree by grafting on to the old Regina stump.

RECORD OF PRODUCTION H. HOEGER RANCH, CORONA

Production is on the basis of pounds per tree each year.

Variety	Number of Trees	Year Planted	Years from Planting 4	5	6	7	8	9
Nowels	25	1948	11.2	68.8	40.0	129.6	139.0	23.25
Zutano	4	1948	10.0	50.0	40.0	104.0	155.0	103.4
Fuerte	45	1948	3.5	11.5	17.8	69.3	16.8	17.5
Regina	20	1948	0.0	18.0	0.0	168.0	—	—
Ryan*	19	1948	0.0	19.0	0.0	63.1	15.0	4.0
Hass*	13	1949	1.6	9.2	36.9	8.0	100.0	—
Irving*	23	1948	0.0	1.3	7.0	29.5	12.0	13.0
Elsie*	4	1950	10.0	50.0	28.0	20.0		

*There was some loss due to pilferage of these varieties. This loss was estimated and added to these production figures.

ACCUMULATIVE DOLLAR RETURN PER TREE

Variety	Number of Trees	Year Planted	Years from Planting 4	5	6	7	8	9
Nowels	25	1948	2.00	14.89	21.29	46.66	59.93	67.35
Zutano	4	1948	1.57	7.30	12.90	25.00	40.81	61.61
Fuerte	45	1948	0.87	3.41	6.70	15.04	16.72	22.55
Regina	20	1948	0.0	2.05	2.05	14.71	—	—
Ryan*	19	1948	0.0	3.82	3.82	7.09	9.97	9.97
Hass*	13	1949	0.0	0.0	3.61	6.05	27.20	
Irving*	23	1948	0.0	0.0	0.73	3.81	5.00	8.04
Elsie*	4	1950	0.0	2.07	5.84	9.84		

*The reduction in returns for pilfered fruit was believed to be a hazard for some varieties. Because of this, the actual returns are reported and no estimate added for fruit produced, but for which no money was received.

In the future, as his records show marked differences in production and returns, he plans to change over from the less profitable to the more profitable varieties.

All avocado growers can profitably follow a program of keeping records of the performance of each variety. Without accurate information they do not know the best variety for their location. If a tree thinning program is indicated, because of crowding, then the individual production record of each tree can be helpful in selecting the poorest trees for removal and the best trees for the permanent planting.

The successful avocado grower of tomorrow must make the right decisions today. To do this he needs good records to guide him.

Editor's Note: Tree Record Forms For Sale; Office of the Society, 4833 Everett Avenue, Los Angeles, California.