

THE AVOCADO SITUATION IN VENTURA COUNTY

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Ventura County is one of the major avocado-producing counties in California. The industry is comparatively new and great strides have been made during the past 15 years to establish the industry in the county. In 1942 there was a total of 490 acres of avocados in the county, and in 1958 there were 2481.9 acres.

The following table gives a graphic picture of the bearing and non-bearing acres from 1942 to 1958, showing the total production of 40-pound field boxes and the value of the fruit for each of the years indicated. The avocado business is now big business in Ventura County as the total value of avocados in 1958 was almost \$1,229,000.

AVOCADO ACREAGE AND PRODUCTION BY YEARS
1942 - 1958

Year	Acreage			Production 40 lb. field boxes	Value
	Bearing	Non-Bearing	Total		
1942	231	259	490	36,725	\$76,511.00
1944	324	185	509	25,256	120,145.00
1946	430	85	515	25,502	161,318.00
1948	422.4	126.5	648.9	25,771	166,348.23
1950	497	674.0	1171.0	13,839	146,545.61
1952	548	971.0	1519.0	54,984	380,299.00
1954	738	1298.0	2036.0	42,851	325,383.00
1956	1840.6	436.3	2276.9	101,770	948,410.10
1958	1765.6	716.3	2481.9	214,271	1,228,986.00

Compiled from Crop Reports of County Agricultural Commissioner C. J. Barrett

AREAS OF PRODUCTION

Avocados may be grown in any area of Ventura County in which lemons are produced. The main producing areas are the Santa Clara Valley from the coast to Piru, including the Oxnard Plain; the Camarillo area; the Las Posas - Simi area; the Ventura River area; and the Ojai Valley. Temperatures appear to be the limiting factor for avocado production in these areas and varieties must be selected that will grow under varying climatic conditions. In some of the colder areas, frost protection must be resorted to for protection of the trees and crop. The county is roughly divided into three climatic zones. The coastal zone is that area on the Pacific Coast back to a line drawn north and south through Camarillo and Saticoy. The intermediate zone extends from the Camarillo-Saticoy line to a point approximately half way between Santa Paula and Fillmore, and

includes the Las Posas - Moorpark area. The interior zone is that area from a point halfway between Santa Paula and Fillmore to the Los Angeles County line on the east, and includes the Simi and Ojai Valleys. A survey was made in 1947 to determine what varieties would do well in the various climatic zones. This survey indicated varieties that would do well on the coast and would not do well in the interior, and those that produced well in the interior zone and would not produce on the coast. From this survey we could recommend varieties that would bear and produce good crops in the various zones.

RECOMMENDED VARIETIES FOR PLANTING

From information gathered in the county survey and from information developed in test plots located in various zones of the county recommendations are as follows:

Coastal zone: Hass, Bacon, Rincon, MacArthur, Zutano; Intermediate zone: Hass, MacArthur, Rincon, Zutano, Edranol, Fuerte (in sheltered areas), Bacon; Interior zone: Hass (in sheltered frost-free areas), Fuerte (in sheltered locations), Topa Topa, Zutano, Bacon, Selected thin-skins.

The varieties we have at the present time are good varieties, but as further tests are conducted, new varieties may be found that are as good, or better, than the standard varieties at the present time. With this in mind, a number of variety plots were established in Ventura County beginning in 1946.

VARIETY PLOTS ESTABLISHED

Beginning in 1946 test plots were established and by 1953 ten plots had been established in all climatic zones of the county. Four of the plots were established in the interior zone, three in the intermediate zone, and three in the coastal zone. A total of 53 named varieties were tested. Not all of the varieties were tested on each cooperator's property but some of the varieties were tested in one or more of the test plots in each climatic zone. These varieties have been evaluated for several years and many of them were considered not good enough for commercial varieties. The varieties tested were: Regina, Wright, Susan, Zutano, Arturo, Bacon, Emerald, Rincon, Bonita, Lois, Decem, Silliman, Ganter, Lodge, Wurtz, Carlos, Garcia, MacArthur, Bishop, Mesa, Hass, Wilhoit Fuerte, Cole Fuerte, Nowels, Edranol, Frey, Yama, Puebla, Monica, Topa Topa, Corona, Tantlinger, Irving, Nabal, Ryan, Hass No. 4, Halsted, Covocado, Strong, Alpha, Routh, Mexicola, Jalna, Hazzard, Mary Martin, Graham, Anaheim, Hellen, Maynard, Dickinson, Encanada, Campbell, Dent. A great many of these varieties will be top-worked in the spring of 1959. From our observations we believe that the following varieties should be evaluated further: Interior zone: Regina, Wright, Emerald, Bonita, Decem, Lodge, MacArthur, Mesa, Corona, Nowels, Clifton, Yama; Intermediate zone: Nowels, Emerald, Decem, Lois, Hass No. 4, Mesa, Corona, Bonita, Alpha, Routh; Coastal zone: Lois, Bonita, Emerald, Decem, Mesa, Corona.

TOPWORKING A NECESSITY

Many of the varieties that show no promise and are difficult to market are being worked over to the recommended varieties. A great many trees have been topworked to date, and it is estimated that over 4,000 trees will be topworked to better varieties in the spring of 1959. We are working closely with the industry to eliminate as many trees as possible so as to make it much easier to market the fruit. However, research must go on and we must test varieties as they come along to see whether or not they have commercial possibilities.

HYBRID AVOCADO VARIETIES BEING TESTED

From 1951 through 1953 a great many hybrid avocado trees have been planted in test plots in Ventura County. Many of these trees have fruited to date and some interesting information is being developed regarding these crosses. A total of 86 trees produced fruit in 1958 and of the 86, 32 crosses produced fruit that looks somewhat promising. Such crosses as Fuerte-Hass, Hass-Blake, Fuerte-Mexicola, Fuerte-Anaheim, and Duke-Edranol have produced fruit that appears to have some commercial value. Fifteen of the best fruits have been evaluated as to flavor, oil content, weight of the fruit, size of the seed and other characteristics which go to make a good commercial variety. Thirteen of the best crosses were established in two test plots in the county in March of 1959. One of these was at the Berylwood Investment Company property at Somis, under the direction of Bob Mills, Ranch Manager; and the other at the J. N. Thille Estate property in Santa Paula under the direction of John Kelley Thille. After all the fruit has been evaluated and thoroughly tested, it is quite possible that there may be a few varieties or crosses which will have commercial value. At the present time there are 22 plots in the county composed of over 150 different hybrid trees.

WHAT DOES IT COST TO PRODUCE AVOCADOS IN VENTURA COUNTY?

In 1958 the first avocado cost study was conducted in the county. We took a typical 10-acre orchard, owner-operated, with trees 10 years of age. This orchard was composed of 50 per cent Hass, 30 per cent MacArthur, and 20 per cent Rincon. The average yield on this orchard was 14,000 pounds to the acre. We estimated the land value at \$3,000; the tree value at \$1300 per acre. The costs, such as fertilization, irrigation, frost protection, weed control, pruning, pest control, tree care and miscellaneous amounted to \$186.80 per acre or 53c per 40-pound field box. Picking and hauling 14,000 pounds of fruit amounted to \$140 per acre, or 40c per field box. Cash overhead including taxes and general expense were \$71 an acre or 20c per field box, making a total of \$397.80 or \$1.13 per box for all cash costs. Depreciation and interest on the investment amounted to \$345.38 or a cost of 99c per 40 pound field box for all non-cash overhead. A grand total of all costs was \$743.18 per acre, or a cost of \$2.12 per 40-pound field box. The cost per pound to produce avocados in 1958 according to this study was 5.3c per pound.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

There are many acres of land in Ventura County that are suitable for avocado production. Acreage today, plus that planted in 1959, may total 3,000 acres. There is considerable interest in the avocado business in this county and we expect the acreage and production to increase for the next several years. The late Vincent F. Blanchard, who was Farm Advisor in Ventura County many years ago, stated that there were 20,000 acres of land in Ventura County that were suitable for this crop. We do not believe that 20,000 acres will be planted to avocados, but we may level off with 6000 to 8000 acres some time in the future. We have the land, the climate, and water to produce this crop, and we can produce the fruit at a reasonable cost. Production is high and varieties that we use at the present time are good producers of high quality fruit. There may be some limiting factors in the production of fruit in Ventura County since now there are seven known infections of avocado root rot. No large acreage is involved but it is here. Subdivisions may take some acreage in the future, but for the most part we think there will be a great increase in the avocado business of Ventura County.

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