

## MARKETING OF LIMES AND AVOCADOS IN FLORIDA

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During the ten years from 1935 to 1945 there were approximately 2,000 acres of avocados and 3,000 acres of limes in Florida. Most of these groves were in full production during this period. There were approximately 150,000 bushels of avocados produced annually and 200,000 bushels of limes produced annually. During the period from 1945 to 1955 the total of avocado acreage rose to approximately 9,000 acres and the amount of limes to 6,000 acres. During this past year there were about 600,000 bushels of avocados produced and 500,000 bushels of limes. Many of these groves are not yet in full bearing. It is estimated that within the next two or three years the avocado crop will be between 800,000 and 900,000 bushels and the lime crop will be from 600,000 to 700,000 bushels.

During the past ten years the land on which Dade County avocado and lime groves are planted has risen in price from \$100.00 an acre to \$1,500.00 an acre, and it appears that land prices will go even higher. To add to this, the costs of labor as well as fertilizer, have risen many fold during the past 10 years. With competition for labor from nearby military installations, as well as a tremendously expanding urban population, it can be expected that labor costs will rise materially in the next few years ahead.

Fortunately, the newer plantings of avocados have been made with varieties which bear more regularly and have heavier yields per acre. Too, with the use of better nursery stock, as well as the planting of more trees per acre, the lime growers have been able to increase their yield per acre from 100 to 150 bushels up to 300 or 400 bushels per acre. It is expected that as price for land increases and the costs of production increase, more intensive cultivation and more efficient use of machinery will enable the growers to increase their production of avocados and limes per acre at a somewhat lower unit cost than might have been possible in previous years. Still, with the prospect of lower prices due to increased production of both limes and avocados each year and the continual increase in production costs, it can be seen that the avocado and lime growers in Florida are faced with a dilemma which must be solved if they are going to stay in business.

Two years ago the avocado growers adopted a marketing agreement program which set up standards of quality for avocados so that only the best fruit would be marketed. In addition, they attempted to regulate the movement of some 50 varieties of avocados so that these would each be marketed at the time they were properly mature. Finally, they standardized the packages in which avocados were packed and marketed.

A few months later the Florida Avocado and Lime Commission was formed by the growers of Florida for the purpose of advertising limes and avocados in order to increase the demand for these fruits. Efforts have been made to distribute avocados

and limes as widely as possible throughout the United States by all of the marketing agencies.

Since the growers and shippers of limes and avocados have been working closely together they have learned a great deal about their mutual problems and are taking steps to correct these. Just during the past year a number of growers have cut down a good many of the less desirable varieties of avocados and grafted these over to some of the varieties which the markets prefer. This was the result of education gained by the growers and shippers working together to find out what varieties were best from a growing, packing, shipping and sales standpoint. The industry has concentrated on four or five varieties which are marketed all the way from July through February of each year.

Although there are now better than 50 varieties being marketed commercially, 4 or 5 varieties make up approximately 60% of the total fruit being marketed. The industry hopes to be able to further reduce the number of varieties being marketed so that in the future only these 4 or 5 major varieties will comprise nearly 100% of the Florida avocados being marketed. In this way the Florida avocado industry hopes to be able to standardize on certain varieties being marketed at certain times of the year and these will come to be recognized as the outstanding avocados from Florida.

For many years Florida limes were used primarily in mixed drinks and as a hot weather beverage. When the weather turned cool, demand was very light. When supplies were short, prices were very high. The problem was to attempt to increase the use of limes in many ways other than beverages, such as on melons, on seafood, for pies and the many other uses in which acid fruits can be utilized. This has required continued effort on the part of the marketing agencies. The Avocado and Lime Commission attempted to increase the use of limes by sales promotion campaigns in the Florida markets, as well as in some selected markets in the North. All who have been connected with the promotion of avocados and limes will agree that it is a difficult job to introduce new fruits to consumers in northern markets and it takes continual sales efforts, as well as promotional work, to expand the demand for these fruits.

Mention should be made here that a year ago the lime growers decided to adopt a marketing program and under the difficult marketing circumstances of this past year, they have been quite successful in keeping the better quality limes going to market and diverting surplus and off-grade fruit to byproducts.

The Florida Avocado and Lime Commission presently taxes all growers at the rate of 10 cents per bushel for their promotional work. The avocado and lime growers of Florida feel that continued efforts at creating demand will enable them to sell their future crops at profitable prices.