

SITUATION OF AVOCADO CULTIVATION IN NORTHEASTERN ARGENTINA

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C. Aguirre¹, B. A. Fernández Vera¹, J. A. Czepulis Casares¹

¹ Estación Experimental de Cultivos Tropicales Yuto. Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria. CP 4518 El Bananal (Jujuy). Argentina. fvera@correo.inta.gov.ar

The avocado producing area in Argentina is concentrated in the North-East region (NOA- Provinces of Salta, Jujuy and Tucumán) in the narrow band of the Selva Subtropical de las Yungas, at 350-900 meters above sea level, being characterized by an average annual temperature of 21.4 °C and 800-1300 mm of rain, concentrated from November to April. Springs, during which flowering occur, present high temperatures and warm winds, summers are humid and hot, with maximum temperatures up to 45°C, and winters are mild and dry with temperatures between 8,3° C and 24° C. Minimum temperatures fluctuate in the range 1-3°C below cero, although the frequency of frosts as well as their length and intensity is variable, even in close places, occurring 1-2 in the month of July.

On March 2003, a survey of the production area was carried out, interviewing 50 growers that account for a planted area of 868.2 has, representing something more than half of the planted area. According to this survey, orchards between 0-5, 6-10, or more than 10 year-old, represent 69.8%, 22.6% and 7.6% of commercial orchards respectively.

Avocado production is the main activity only in 34% of the surveyed farms, being a complementary activity to other fruit crops, cereal grains and sugarcane in the rest of the farms. The 87.8% of the avocado surface is irrigated; from the irrigated surface, 46.5% corresponds to pressurized irrigation. Over a total of 40 farms with fertilization programs, 23 use foliar analysis as a guide.

The predominant cultivar is Hass, with 87.2% of the planted surface, followed by cultivar Torres. Predominant rootstocks are of Mexican origin, which are present in the 79.4 % of the planted area.

As sanitary problems, root-rot caused by *P. cinnamomi* affects 16.9% of the planted area. Canopy problems are scab and thrips.

Average production is 4.2 mt/ha, with plantings of 0-5, 6-10, or more than 10 years, producing 1.55 mt/ha, 4.87 mt/ha and 6.2 mt/ha respectively.

This situation indicates that the avocado producing area is increasing considerably, the technology applied is very heterogeneous, avocado activity is not the only activity that sustains the farm, and that generally, there is a lack of knowledge about the agroecological requirements of this crop. All these factors are the cause of the low yields found.