

## AVOCADOS IN PERU

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Loading fruit, principally avocados and cherimoyas at Chosica, en route to Luna, Peru.

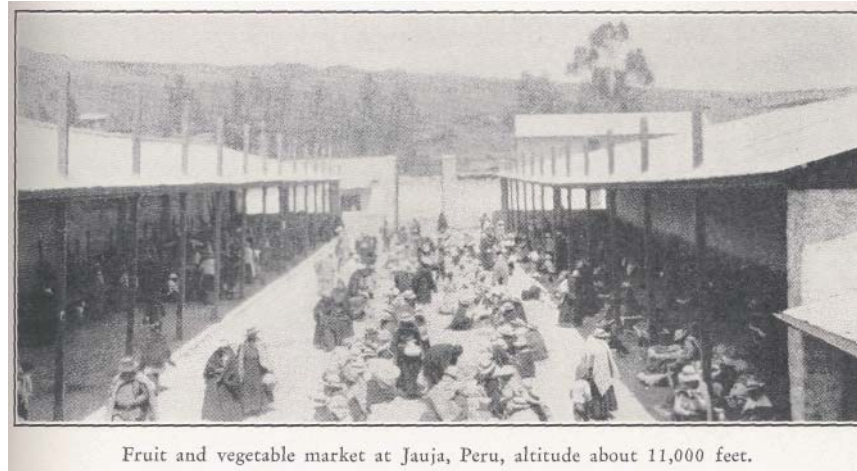
The avocado is known in Peru by the name "palta." This is evidently a name originated by the Inca Indians, and its use indicates that avocados were cultivated in land occupied by them before the arrival of the Spanish explorers. It is not likely, however, that the avocado is indigenous to any part of what is now Peru. In the Montana, that is in the section east of the Andes, avocado trees may be seen growing wild, but usually only near trails, or in other places where it seems probable that seeds could have originally been dropped by passers-by.

Today, the avocado is one of the most important of Peruvian fruits, and is, perhaps, grown successfully in as many parts of the country as any fruit. Almost without exception the plantings are seedlings and mostly of the species *Persea Americana* Mill. Avocados are neither imported nor exported to or from Peru to any great extent at the present time. The fact that the avocado is a popular fruit there is evidenced by the widespread display of it in all markets and the high prices paid for it. Retail prices in Lima are anywhere between thirty centavos and one sol per fruit (\$.12-\$.40).

Undoubtedly, introduction of the improved budded varieties will do much to improve both production and popularity of the avocado in Peru. Many of the seedling trees bear only light crops, or fruit containing fiber and poor flavor. Sufficient fruits of excellent flavor are produced to satisfy anyone that such fruits can be grown there.

A number of the best-known varieties have been planted recently at the Government Experiment Station at La Molina, near Lima, and much is hoped for in the dissemination of trees from this planting.

Avocados are produced in practically all of the west coast valleys, in various districts on the eastern slopes of the Andes, and in sheltered small districts of medium altitudes in the Andes. Of the more important districts are the Santa Eulalia district near Lima, the Moquegua district in the extreme southeastern part of the country, and in the Chanchamayo Valley in the Montana.



The industry in Santa Eulalia is declining on account of the serious inroads of Anthracnose caused by *Physalospora perseae* Doidge. This disease is found in other districts, but has not as yet caused as severe damage in these districts as in the above-named section. All parts of the trees above ground may be affected, but the most acute damage occurs when the trunk or main branches become diseased. The disease works slowly, but will in time kill the tree, and in the meantime the tree's vitality is so reduced that production of fruits is stopped. No satisfactory commercial control measures are practiced in Peru as yet.

Infestations of avocados in Peru by the West Indian Fruit Fly are not common as is the case with a number of other fruits.

Factors of improvement which are badly needed for greater development of the industry are better packing and handling methods, propagation of improved budded varieties and control of Anthracnose.

Decay in transit and in the markets is sometimes enormous on account of rough handling and Anthracnose injury. As with many other fruits, more careful handling and better packing methods would undoubtedly mean a possible lower retail price because of the saving in percentage of decay.



A Santa Eulalia avocado orchard just after pruning.