

MEXICAN EXPLORATION

Harold Wahlberg,
Orange County Farm Advisor

Speaking before Growers Institute, June 9, 1931.

I should like to call to the attention of those attending this meeting the matter of further exploration of the Mexican strain avocado in their native habitat to get varieties that might supplement the present standard variety namely the Fuerte, which was just described to you by Mr. Newman. The Fuerte fills the place very splendidly in its particular season. However, we need another variety to supplement the Fuerte in the summer season.

Unfortunately, the explorations carried on by the United States Department of Agriculture, the Bureau of Plant Introduction, suddenly were discontinued because of political warfare and revolutions in Mexico making it unsafe for that type of work. So this work was stopped several years ago. As the work was not completed, there is still a good deal of territory to be explored. No doubt some splendid varieties may come out of this. The California Avocado Association and the various avocado departments of the Farm Bureaus feel it would be desirable to continue this exploration, taking it up where they left off with the hope of finding a supplemental variety to the Fuerte. Your chairman thought it might be desirable to get an expression from this group this morning as to your pleasure in this matter and your expression may be sent on to the proper authorities in Washington, provided you feel that such exploration will be desirable. The Government has the facilities but will not undertake the project unless a substantial demand from the industry is imminent.

Motion by Wahlberg, and seconded, that the following Resolution be approved:

WHEREAS, there is a need for a standard summer avocado to supplement the Fuerte Variety, the outstanding commercial variety of the industry at the present time, and

WHEREAS, Mexico is the native habitat of this hardy strain where may be found many varieties of the Mexican group, and

WHEREAS, the early explorations in Mexico were suddenly discontinued because of the political situation, and

WHEREAS, the avocado industry has grown to substantial proportions embracing some ten thousand acres in California and a large acreage in Florida and Texas,

THEREFORE, be it the sense of this meeting of one hundred and fifty representative growers from Orange, Los Angeles, San Diego, Ventura, and San Bernardino Counties assembled at the Avocado Growers Institute, Anaheim, California, June 9, 1931, that an urgent request be made to the Bureau of Plant Introduction and Secretary of Agriculture

to renew its project on Avocado exploration in Mexico with the above expressed purpose in view, and

FURTHERMORE, that a copy of this resolution be sent to our Congressmen asking their cooperation in securing funds for said project if necessary.

Chas. Hamburg: We have innumerable varieties in California. I have seen some very fine ones. Why do we have to run away to some other country? Why don't we encourage our home industry?

Kaiser: The United States Government is experimenting in my nursery with thirty-seven different varieties.

Mr. Wahlberg: Relative to Mr. Hamburg's comment on this motion. We do not mean to minimize investigation of local varieties on seedlings. That will be carried on. Undoubtedly there are desirable varieties in many back-yards and nurseries. At the same time there is a general feeling that there is a large territory that has not been explored in Mexico, the native habitat of the Mexican avocado, which ought to be searched thoroughly so that we will know a thorough and exhaustive search has been complete.

Resolution voted and passed unanimously.

(Dr. W. W. Woody of Pharr, Texas, was called on to speak.)

Dr. Woody: I have the same theory regarding speeches as Mr. Sharpless. If it were not for the fact I wanted to bring you greetings from the Rio Grande Valley and let you know there was such a place in existence, I would not speak. Now I noticed you mentioned raising grapefruit in Florida. We raise grapefruit in Texas. Also, we are going to raise those summer varieties of avocados you speak of to fill that little gap. We do not come here as competitors. Our seasons are almost completely different. I would go slow on planting those summer varieties for we have some nice ones down there.

I was pleased to find out other people in the world don't know much about the game. The speakers frankly admit that they are groping around. So are we. We don't know much about it. We are absolutely satisfied it is going to be a good thing with us. I wanted to get an education so I first went to the Experiment Station and then came down here. Our Fuerte and Puebla varieties are our summer varieties.

Fred Popenoe: One gentleman said that we should look to our home seedlings. We have done that for many years—the work of our Committee on Varieties attests that. Nothing escapes that committee. All their work is very good work and there will doubtless be more good work in the future.

But in Mexico there are thousands and thousands of seedling trees to the one we have here. That is really our great hunting-ground after all. It has practically not been touched. A good explorer going down there and spending parts of two seasons would run down undoubtedly some very valuable material and possibly and probably would find this variety needed for summer use.

Of course, whatever he found would have to be tested for bearing, ripening, and maturing at the particular time we wanted here for the variety might not function here as it does there.

Chairman Halm: The son of Mr. Fred Popenoe, Wilson Popenoe, was the explorer for the United States Government in the tropics and he spent ten years in working amongst the avocados. A great many of our avocados have his finger marks. We hope Wilson Popenoe might be secured to do this same work.