

California Avocado Association 1932 Yearbook 17: 68-70

Status of the Avocado Industry in Ventura County

Vincent F. Blanchard

Farm Advisor, Ventura County

Talk, given at Avocado Institute, Tustin, February 26, 1932.

After listening to a talk on the "Status of the Avocado Industry in San Diego County" I am beginning to wonder if we have an avocado industry in Ventura County. Mr. France has mentioned "thousands of acres of avocados." We are not much more than in the "hundreds of acres" class.

Early in 1930 Calavo Growers made a survey of the avocado industry in Ventura County. It was found that there were 19,039 trees. There were 15,271 trees planted since the spring of 1926, and 5174 of these were planted in the early part of 1930. Only 3768 trees were older than four years. The earliest planting in orchard form was in 1912.

Since this survey was conducted on a tree basis, I cannot give an accurate record of acreage. On the basis of 90 trees per acre, we had in the early part of 1930 some 211 acres of avocados. Some acreage might have been missed in that survey. I do not know how many trees have been planted since then, but doubt if it exceeds 100 acres.

Although our acreage is small, we do have many growers. There were 118 growers owning the trees as listed, or an average of 1.79 acres per grower.

The following table lists the avocado trees in Ventura County by years, according to the survey made by the Calavo Growers Exchange early in 1930:

Years	Number of Trees
1930 (Partial Report)	5174
1929	7102
1928	503
1927	944
1926	1548
1925	696
1924	1028
1923	281
1922	51
1921	571
1920	379
1919	80
1918	210
1916	89
1915	34
1914	30
1913	212
1912	107
Total number trees	19,039

It is clearly evident from these figures that we are very young in the avocado industry. However, we have many thousands of acres suitable for avocados in case expansion were warranted.

We do have some advantages in our avocado development. There has been very little real estate promotion development. That may be either a handicap or an advantage. With the exception of one real estate subdivision, most of the plantings have been made by farmers who have established a small planting in conjunction with their farming enterprise. These are mostly growers of citrus or walnut trees. I cite this because I believe it will ultimately react favorably for the avocado industry. These growers have been brought up on cooperative marketing, and recognize that success in this industry is dependent upon all growers collectively marketing their fruit in one organization. Some of these growers are already directors of citrus or walnut associations, and are familiar with the problems involved in marketing.

I have been asked to discuss the soils and climate of Ventura County in relation to growing avocados. It is with some hesitancy that I speak of these, because I am afraid you will accuse me of bragging. If you were to examine the soil survey map for Ventura County, you will find that a large percentage of the cultivated land is classified as of the Yolo loam series. That is the type of soil which has contributed to Ventura County's reputation for growing such fine crops of beans. It is also known as a "walnut" soil because of its uniform cross-section depth and richness. It has also proven very satisfactory for citrus trees, and is a splendid avocado soil.

Most of the avocado plantings in Ventura County are in the coastal belt, with a smaller amount in intermediate climatic areas. Just as with the lemon, and Valencia orange, the cooling influences of this coastal area delay maturity of the fruit. The heavy shipping season of the lemon in Ventura County is several weeks later than in southern lemon areas. The same is true of the Valencia orange. Avocados, apparently, have this same tendency. We, therefore, are able to extend the harvesting with practically all varieties observed, compared to southern avocado districts. So far this has proved advantageous to us. It has enabled us to market avocados when there were very few available in other districts.



Ventura-Santa Barbara Farm Bureau Avocado Tour at the Grove of Andrew Borchard, Oxnard

Climatic influences have played tricks with varieties in Ventura County. Some varieties, having splendid responses in other sections, do not show as favorable results with us. In the coastal belt the Fuerte has not proven very satisfactory so far. It fails to set regularly. We believe that we must have regular production to succeed. We hope that a few locations within the coastal belt, on the south slopes, will prove to be more satisfactory with this variety. The Fuerte has responded fairly satisfactorily in the intermediate belt.

We have several promising varieties that mature in the late summer and fall when the rest of the state has few avocados. Because of our late maturity, we are concentrating on that period for marketing.

Several of our growers have variety plantings which should give us information within a few years as to the best ones to plant under our conditions. We do not believe the problem is answered yet. With a cooperative group of growers, such as we have, interested in this problem, we are optimistic about securing results.



Farm Advisor Vincent Blanchard, Ventura County, and C. J. Daily, explaining avocado variety experiment at Camarillo, Oct. 9, 1931.