

Allahabad Agricultural Institute

September 3, 1933. Allahabad, India.

Dr. J. Eliot Coit, Vista, California,

Dear Dr. Coit:

I received your letter of June 19, on behalf of the California Avocado Association, and have delayed answering in order to gather information.

I have never seen an avocado tree in India except the two or three I brought out in 1921, and which received rough treatment on the boat. They arrived in very poor condition, and died the following summer. I do not consider that a fair trial.

The only reference I have seen is in Firminger's Manual of Gardening for India, in which it is stated that the avocado is tolerably common in Lower India (a rather vague term). On receipt of your letter, I wrote to the agricultural departments in Bombay and Madras Presidencies, and in Bengal and the Punjab. The Horticulturist to Government, Bombay, replied that the avocado was not grown there. Bengal also replied in the negative, and I have had no reply from the Punjab. The only positive information is from the Director of Agriculture, Madras. He writes as follows:

"The Avocado is grown both at Burliar and Kallay fruit stations, Nilgiris, on 'Glenburn Estate,' Kotagiri, Nilgiris, and I believe on various tea and coffee estates in South India on a small scale. Plants are occasionally distributed from the above mentioned fruit stations to various growers in South India. This fruit, however, is not likely to become popular as it is relished only by a few Europeans who have acquired a taste for it. The variety grown is oval in shape and greenish yellow in color. A dark skinned elongated variety has recently been introduced, but it will be some years before it reaches the fruiting stage. Another dark skinned variety said to be hardy was planted in the Pomological Station, Coonoor, Nilgiris, about 10 years ago, but this does not ripen its fruits."

I wrote to one of the fruit stations mentioned, and received a reply from the Curator, Government Botanic Gardens, Ootacamund, in which he says he can supply seedlings at one rupee each. He adds, "The variety is of the West Indian type, large fruited and greenish yellow when ripe. I regret I do not know the origin or the name of the variety. It is probably one of the original types of *Persea gratissima*."

I have ordered a couple of these seedlings, and will be much interested in seeing how they grow here. Our summer temperatures are much higher than in the Nilgiri hills. As we are able to grow papayas with only rare frost damage, I do not anticipate trouble from the cold.

On the whole, I gather that the avocado is at present grown only to a very limited extent, in the higher portions of South India, and is regarded somewhat as a curiosity, and not at all as a commercial crop. This does not prove, of course, that it does not have great

possibilities, if the right varieties are grown and their consumption is pushed. A fruit of such high food value could play a very useful part in Indian agricultural economy.

Very sincerely yours,

W. B. HAYES,. Horticulturist.