

## SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY AVOCADO INDUSTRY

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San Bernardino County's avocado industry is limited primarily to the warm foothill areas. Most plantings are five acres or less in the Upland, Alta Loma, Mentone, and Crafton areas with the exception of a ten-acre block north of Rialto. Little expansion is expected because of limited thermal zones where most commercial varieties will grow and produce well. Wind is also a factor in some areas. Avocado root rot (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*) has killed or weakened trees in some plantings throughout the county. The disease is not as damaging in the well-drained soils which prevail in most of the foothill areas throughout the county. Some growers have replaced poorly producing citrus trees with avocados because of generally better returns.



Two-year-old avocado grove near Mentone being irrigated with low-head sprinklers on drag hoses. Planting is double set with Zutano and Mentone varieties on Mentone rootstock. When growth is crowded, grower will decide which variety must be removed.

### Varieties

Finding an avocado variety which is frost tolerant, bears well at an early age, and bears consistently from year to year with good fruit quality has been a concern of growers and the Agricultural Extension Service.

*Hass* has done very well in the limited plantings that are frost free.

*Fuerte* is inconsistent in production, and has not been planted extensively in the last few years. Many of the mature trees have been topworked to other varieties, including unnamed seedlings or bud sports which appeared promising.

*Zutano* has produced good crops of fruit consistently, but has poor fruit because of end-cracking. It is normally picked in November. Zutanos grown in the Mentone and foothill areas seem to have less end spot.

*Bacon* variety has a better fruit quality, but does not come into production at an early age as does Zutano. The fruit has a short tree life and must be harvested within a few

weeks in the months of November and December.



Grower Joe Soffel discusses crop prospects with Marketing Representative Frank Gilker-son. Fifteen-year-old trees include Bacon, Zutano, Covocado, Wright, Fuerte, Mentone, and a few unnamed selections with which the grower is experimenting. The Mentone variety is from a seedling discovered by Mr. Soffel which appears promising as a rootstock and possibly a variety in that area.

*Covocado* matures in early October. Some growers have grown it extensively because of heavy production. The future of *Covocado*, along with *Zutano*, is questionable. Poor fruit quality may make both these varieties unacceptable to future markets.

If varieties adapted to this climate were available, avocado acreage could be expected to increase from its present 124 acres because of early avocado maturity in San Bernardino County.