

Status of the Avocado in Los Angeles County

M. B. Rounds

Farm Advisor

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I believe most of you in Orange County have your orchards in Los Angeles County but have spent your money in Orange County, and probably know a little more about the industry than I do. However, there are a few statements that I would like to make, and also give an idea of some of our thoughts in regard to this industry.

We do not have the large acreage and never will have that Mr. France has in San Diego. The acreage in Los Angeles is old, as you know, and it is distributed through quite a large part of the county. We have "orchards" all over the city of Los Angeles now, but, of course, the acreage which is the commercial acreage is now on either side of the hills which are almost on the Orange County line. We have commercial orchards on the other side of the hills and, of course, some of the large and mature orchards on this side are owned by some of you people here.

The acreage in Los Angeles County, including all of the young acreage as well as the more mature groves, runs pretty close to 1900 at this time. Most of the younger plantings, as you probably know, have been in the La Habra Heights section and also on the north slope of those hills. We have quite a lot of interest in the metropolitan area as we have quite a large interest among people who have scattered plantings even as high as a hundred trees. Many of them, of course, have just planted a few trees in their yard—trees for family use—and we find that many of these varieties which have been planted are Guatemalan type. Of course, they generally have a few Fuerte trees also. A large proportion of the home plantings have just a few Fuertes. We find a larger percentage, probably 75 or 80%, are Fuerte in the commercial groves. There is quite an interest in Nabal, and as some of you know, on the J. M. Elliott Estate at North Whittier Heights Mr. Hanson there has many Nabals and is changing over a large proportion of trees on that ranch to the Nabal variety. Many of the older orchards, the trees of older orchards are being top-worked from the original varieties which now we hear little about. Some varieties have certainly not proved out and they are being top-worked to Fuerte to a large extent and some of the Guatemalan varieties. Mr. Sheddon at Monrovia, whom you know has been there for some time, is gradually top-working most of his orchard over to some of the more profitable varieties.

So far as soils are concerned, and climate as well, we have avocados in Los Angeles County grown under quite a number of different types of climate. We have them, of course, growing down close to the ocean, and we have them growing under conditions which we find in hot interior sections close to the county lines on the east, and also in

San Fernando Valley, where we have hot, dry winds. No doubt certain varieties will be successful in that valley as well as in the east part of the county.

IRRIGATION

We are giving some thought to irrigation, but it is something that we don't know very much about anyway; even though growing citrus, we know little about irrigation, actually. That is something that we are really studying and at the present time most of the avocado orchards are irrigated to a large extent as are citrus orchards. The same thing applies to fertilization, although as Mr. France mentioned, perhaps avocado trees are a little bit hungrier than citrus trees. We feel that probably they will require more nitrogen. Fertilizer provides for a larger concentration of nitrate in soil—that is a thing which will have to be worked out. However, one large area of over 800 acres in the La Habra Heights section, according to records of irrigation, are largely young trees. Probably many of the trees are under four years of age, using 9.4 acre inches of water per year. That, in my estimation, is half the amount of water they will require when they get older. You have orchards in that section, mature orchards, and know just about what the requirement is—which I understand is somewhere around 18 or 20 inches a year in most cases.

DISEASES AND PESTS

We have an insect and disease problem, also. There are infestations of latania scale, which is so prevalent throughout Southern California. Whether that can be controlled commercially by fumigation, I don't know at this time. Experiments are being carried on. We have Dictyospermum scale. Whether that will be a future commercial problem is a question. Diseases occur in Los Angeles County the same as in other counties. Prof. Horne has been studying sun-blotch and we have that trouble with us as well as many of the fruit rots. We often have reports regarding fruits rotting on the trees. We do not have time to really follow up all of the cases because many of them are not from commercial orchards—mostly from back-yards.

I believe I am stating the thoughts of the Extension Service when I say that this industry, so far as marketing is concerned, is only going to be a success in the future through cooperative effort. It is a satisfactory situation that you have only one good cooperative marketing organization.

We have at the present time in the citrus business a very successful effort toward cooperation, but even in the citrus industry if we had cooperation between Florida and some of the other states that are producing citrus, all working together on the proper distribution of their fruit, we would have even greater success in the citrus industry than at present.

I believe a great deal of the success in the future of the avocado industry is going to be based on one cooperative marketing organization.