

California Avocado Association 1932 Yearbook 17: 89-92

First Annual Avocado Institute, Los Angeles County, Whittier College, Whittier

May 12, 1932

The Avocado Institute opened at 9:30 A.M., Thursday, May 12, in the Whittier College Auditorium, Whittier, with about one hundred seventy-five people present. Roy K. Cole, State Director, Los Angeles County Farm Bureau, presiding.

The First Annual Avocado Institute, held under the auspices of the Farm Bureau, the Progress Club of Whittier, and the Agricultural Extension Service, was held in conjunction with the Avocado Show, which is a project of the Progress Club. The local committee cooperated with the representatives of the Agricultural Extension Service in planning the program.

As an outcome of this Avocado Institute, an Avocado Department of the Los Angeles County Farm Bureau was organized, with Judge F. D. Halm elected as Chairman; A. W. Christie, Vice Chairman, and Carter Barrett, Secretary. Directors for the department were elected from the eight avocado districts of the county. The Annual Avocado Institute will be an activity as a part of the program of work of this avocado department. It is hoped that this institute will be an annual affair and that the program will be made up each year of those subjects which will be of most interest to the avocado industry.

What the Farm Bureau Can Do for the Avocado Grower

Roy K. Cole

In discussing the question of the relation of the Farm Bureau to the avocado grower, we naturally think of the services a large general farm organization can perform for a particular commodity producer. As agriculture has progressed during the last quarter of a century, the farmer has ceased to believe in individualism, and has come to believe more and more in cooperation. One of the functions of the Farm Bureau is to cooperate not only with individuals but with other agencies and cooperative marketing associations working for the benefit of this individual grower. As this thought of cooperation grows and spreads, the individual realizes more and more the benefits of a great national farmers' organization.

The services of the Farm Bureau naturally start in the local community and in the county. I hope that in the very near future the avocado growers of Los Angeles County will form an avocado department of the County Farm Bureau. At the present time the Los Angeles County Farm Bureau is divided into a number of different commodity departments, and an avocado department would make a valuable addition to Farm Bureau work.

As most of you are probably aware, the Agricultural Extension Service is one of the

greatest assets a farmer has, and it is only through a properly functioning Farm Bureau organization that the Extension Service can be of most value to avocado growers.

At the last annual meeting of the California Farm Bureau Federation, a resolution was passed requesting the services of a full-time entomologist to work on avocado pests. Owing to a lack of finances, we have not received a permanent full-time man, but at the present time there is an entomologist working most of his time on control of avocado insects. The Farm Bureau is continually keeping this matter before the proper authorities, and as soon as money is available, we will no doubt receive the desired services.

It is rather difficult for an individual or for a small group to go before the College of Agriculture or the State Legislature and get very much recognition, but when the force of an organization with a membership of 23,000 is placed behind a request, it is much easier to get action. One of the departments of the State Farm Bureau, which has been of great benefit to producers in general in California, is the Law and Utilities Department. Many times in the past, this department has made itself felt in lowering freight, power, telephone rates, and in other utility matters. In addition, this department handles many informal cases for individual Farm Bureau members.

A question in which we are all interested at the present time is that of taxation. Over five years ago the leaders of the State Farm Bureau realized the time would come when it would be necessary for farmers in this state to show that they were bearing an unjust share of the cost of government. Consequently, the Tax Research Department was established. Since that time, this department has gathered together a vast fund of information, which, among other things, shows that 76% of the taxes are paid by real estate; at the same time, only 25% of the state income is derived from real estate. The Farm Bureau has established a program designed to relieve farm property of part of the cost of government by shifting some of the cost of education to the state. In order for the state to get the necessary money to finance this extra cost, the Farm Bureau and several other state-wide organizations are suggesting a state income tax and a selective sales tax. This equalization of the tax burden will appear on the November ballot in the form of a constitutional amendment. I trust you will all give this matter very serious consideration.

In addition to the two departments mentioned above, the State Farm Bureau publishes a monthly magazine and operates an organization department.

Probably one of the greatest benefits of an organization like the Farm Bureau is the work it carries on during each session of the legislature. Years ago the Farm Bureau, realizing it was impossible for an individual to represent himself before our legislative bodies, adopted the policy of keeping a representative in Sacramento during each session of the legislature. This legislative representative has been of great value in promoting legislation of benefit to the farmer and of blocking legislation that would work a hardship on the agricultural producer.

I wonder if individual Farm Bureau members realize that the American Farm Bureau Federation is their direct contact with our National Congress and with the President of the United States. The American Farm Bureau Federation, representing as it does over one million and a quarter farm families scattered over the United States, has truly been

designated "The Voice of American Agriculture." This great national organization is divided into departments more or less along the same general lines as our own state organization, but the activity that has required the most thought and energy this year has been that of national legislation. For the first time in the history of organized agriculture, the three national farm organizations got together on a unified agricultural legislative program. This program includes legislation on national taxation, Philippine independence, speculation, money stabilization, agricultural credits, and amendments to the Agricultural Marketing Act. In a national way, as well as locally, farmers are vitally interested in taxation. The American Farm Bureau has always opposed a general sales tax, feeling that the money for our national government should be received from higher income taxes, corporation, inheritance, and gift taxes.

One of the reasons many of our producers have lost their farms through foreclosure is due to the changing value of the dollar. The American Farm Bureau this year sponsored the Goldsborough Bill, which would stabilize the dollar so when an individual borrowed \$1000.00 today he could pay it back three years hence with the same amount of money. As it is at the present time, a borrower to repay a 1929 loan must produce one and a half times the amount in terms of commodities. Along with the stabilization of the dollar naturally goes a leveling of the all-commodity price index. When these two problems are solved, we will have gone a long way towards putting the farmer on a sound foundation.

For many years the American Farm Bureau has sponsored the control of crop surpluses. This year, in cooperation with the National Grange and the Farmers' Union, the Farm Bureau sponsored amendments to the Agricultural Marketing Act, making it possible for the Federal Farm Board to control crop surpluses by use of the Equalization Fee, the Debenture Plan, or by any other feasible method.

From present indications, avocado growers will be very seriously concerned with a crop surplus. The American Farm Bureau is asking for a more elastic credit system for agriculture. You will understand I did not say "more" credits, but a system that will allow a farmer credit during times of stress as well as during times of high purchasing power.

I think we can see from the foregoing that the Farm Bureau organization, County, State, and National, can be of very material benefit to avocado growers as well as to all other agricultural producers. I hope this organization will receive your support and cooperation.

AVOCADO QUESTION BOX

Particular attention is called to address by Dr. E. A. Stokdyk, page 118, which brought forth the following questions, when similar address was given on May 12.

Question: How many pounds are there in a flat, and how are they packed?

Answer: There is an average of thirteen and a half pounds in a flat.

Question: Is there a tendency to get away from larger sizes?

Answer: Los Angeles pays most for smaller sizes; New York for larger sizes. This is due to the fact that we in Los Angeles are more familiar with the fruit, and prefer to

serve them in the half shell.

Question: What decision has been rendered, if any, with regard to the fifteen cent tariff?

Answer: Our chief competition is from Cuba. For the last year, from six to eight million pounds of Cuban fruit came in. Florida is not so much of a factor. However, it does come into competition to some extent.

There has been no decision rendered with regard to the fifteen cent tariff. This tariff is directed particularly against Cuban fruit. However, this is difficult on account of the Reciprocity Treaty with Cuba. The matter is in the Courts now, sponsored particularly by the Florida Avocado Association, and helped by the California Avocado Association. We have received considerable encouragement about the tariff.

Judge Halm: The consumer will not care at all about a flat of fruit, but the dealer, the man who buys fruit in the flat, will. As I understand it, there is no legal requirement for a flat. It contains so many fruit of a certain size, more or less according to the size of the fruit. What is to prevent somebody from having flats for sale which would be considerably smaller and contain fewer fruit. There is no standard. I would like to see the time come when we can legalize the standard flat of avocados. I just bring that topic up for your thought and consideration.

M. B. Rounds: I am wondering whether one standard avocado box would work out satisfactorily, that is, from the standpoint of shipping.

Mr. Stevens, of Calavo Growers: Our flat has worked out very satisfactorily. We have two sizes, a smaller and a larger one, to take care of two sizes of fruits. The largest fruit goes into one that has a somewhat higher end, and smaller fruit all goes into the flat which is about 3% inches high on the ends. We have the two standard boxes, and the only difference is in the height of the end.

Mr. Lewis, of Calavo Growers: I do know that some of our competitors have shipped boxes containing 11% and 12 % pounds against our 13% pounds. We would be very glad to have the Agricultural Department make a standard package the same as they have on other fruits, because it would be of great satisfaction to any of us to know that someone was not shipping less.

Question: Is sub-irrigation in favor for avocados, particularly in smaller lots of land?

Answer (J. G. France): We have had several installed in San Diego County, and none of them operate.

Mr. Lewis: We put in quite an elaborate system. At the time the sub-irrigation system was put in, it was not possible to supply irrigation water to the roots of those trees. That was in pretty heavy soil. It might be of some advantage in sandy soil.

M. B. Rounds: The moisture is supplied too low down with the equipment, and moisture does not percolate upward and thus reach the feeder roots on the surface.

J. G. France: There is no reason to believe that overhead is any more harmful than any other system, except that it is a little easier to turn on the valve. As the tree gets larger, however, it seems to me that we have to go to the low type or low head system. Larger

trees create a lot of shade and so water does not penetrate so readily.

Question: What reliability can be placed on jobbers' prices quoted in the newspaper under produce?

Dr. Stokdyk, University of California: The prices to jobbers usually give wide range. We had to throw out the Market News Service reports in our study because of the difference in quoting. But I am always skeptical about newspaper quotations. Some printer may get a little lazy some day and not change the slug. So I do not think the papers are as reliable as the Market News Service reports. They actually do change every day. But the quotations in the News Service vary greatly. You may get a quotation around 8:00 o'clock in the morning, and by 10:00 o'clock the market may change because some man may wish to clean up; so you have fluctuations.

Question: What steps have been taken to reduce salaries and overhead to meet the present economic conditions?

Mr. Lewis: As Dr. Stokdyk has so clearly explained, you cannot market four million pounds of fruit in 1932 and get the same price as you did when you sold five hundred thousand pounds in 1931. If next year there is produced seven million pounds and ten million the following year, you must build a national organization that will dispose of the fruit at a fair price.

Now take the salary situation, the efficient salesman is well worth his wage. In marketing practically an unknown fruit in the large cities of our country you cannot use children—you must have experienced men who understand the psychology of distributing an expensive, perishable fruit. The orderly movement of the fruit is difficult—it takes organization. When a man takes over a higher position with greater responsibilities and more men Under him, he is worth more money and receives a raise in salary.