

Avocado Growing in Panama

Summit, Canal Zone, July 31, 1936.

Dear Dr. Coit:

I am very glad to contribute a brief statement of the status of avocado culture in this region. Progress in improving the avocado in Central American and tropical South American countries is by no means rapid and it will require a long time to leaven the whole lump with the idea of selecting and standardizing a few choice varieties and propagating them by budding or grafting. One reason for this is to be found in the fact that seedling fruits of all kinds are more generally grown than asexually propagated varieties. Budding and grafting are not generally practiced in this region and commercial nurseries where budded stock is available are rare. A second reason for the continued use of seedling trees is the lack of an exacting market demand for a standardized and uniform product. Again the rather high quality of many although varied seedlings in some of these countries has not favored interest in standardization.

Nevertheless, progress is being made towards the establishing of selected varieties and clones and increased interest is manifesting itself in budded stock of avocados and of other fruit trees. The Canal Zone Experiment Gardens have acted as a center in the dissemination of such stock. Its orders from Panama and the surrounding countries are increasing. Small orchards have been established and the appreciation of quality fruits and the demand for the same is on the increase. I am inclosing a few photographs of avocado plantings in Panama. In well selected soils and locations, not only in Panama but throughout a wide region, avocado trees make a remarkable growth and the yield in quantity and quality is all that could be desired.

From the standpoint of competition in United States markets with avocados grown in California and Florida, the growers within these states probably have nothing to fear from these countries because quarantine regulations made necessary by the presence of insect pests in Central America and South America, stand in the way of such competition.

There is no probability that all of these pests will be brought under control sufficiently to justify the lifting of quarantines against avocado fruits from this region at the ports of entry of the United States. This applies to avocados from Panama and to those from some but probably not all of the countries of tropical America.

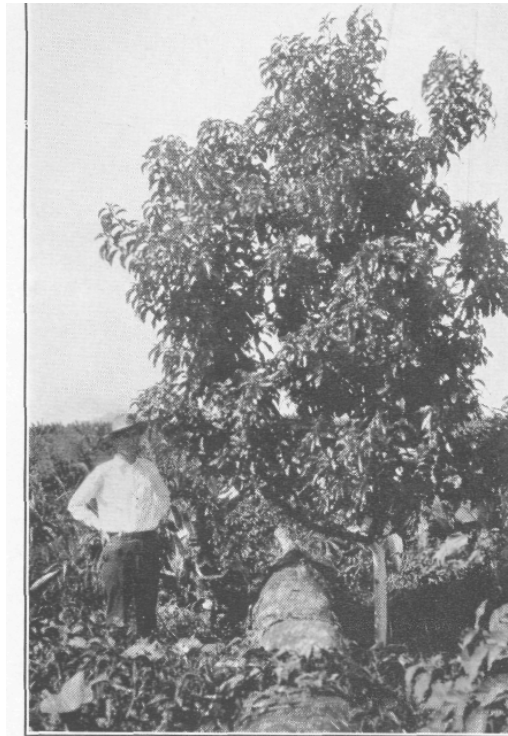
Yours very truly,

J. E. HIGGINS,

Consultant in Plant Introduction and Utilization.



An avocado orchard in the Panama Canal Zone.



A vigorous young avocado tree planted after the felling of a tropical forest. No tillage is practiced under these conditions, but the jungle growth is kept down by the use of machetes or large sword-like knives.