

Avocado Yield Most Important Success Factor

The 1938 avocado cost analysis compiled by the Extension Service in Orange County further substantiates the four factors essential to a successful farm business; namely:

1. Better than average yields per acre.
2. Good quality.
3. Economical production costs per unit.
4. Efficient marketing and distribution.

The average yield of avocados for 1938 was only 1,276 pounds per acre as compared with 2,474 pounds per acre, the average yield for the bearing Orange County orchards reporting over a nine-year period to the Farm Advisor's office. This low yield was primarily due to the effect of the January 1937 freeze, resulting in the lowest average farm income per acre in the nine years. The two cent average improvement in price per pound in 1938 over 1937 was not enough to make up for the unusually low yield per acre.

While the average yield was 1,276 pounds, it is interesting to note that the range of variation in yields reported was from 15 pounds per acre to 6,829 pounds. The study clearly indicates that good yields per acre are essential to satisfactory returns. With the present outlook for modest prices for avocados, the yield factor becomes more and more important, according to Farm Advisor Harold E. Wahltaerg.

What can the grower do about it, is often asked. The following suggestions were given to the growers cooperating in the study when they met with the Farm Bureau Avocado Department recently.

Orchard Essentials

1st: Be sure to have acceptable varieties for the market that are also adapted to the particular location in which the orchard is located.

2nd: Replace diseased trees as soon as their production is below normal.

3rd: Top-work healthy trees that are consistently poor producers.

4th: Be judicious in irrigation practice; avoid excessive irrigation, particularly where drainage may be poor.

5th: Fertilize, and use economical simple materials of low cost per nitrogen unit.

Above all else, of course, is the foundation of good soil and suitable climatic conditions, absence of frost and wind.

The cost study showed that the more profitable orchards received satisfactory fertilizer applications and used an average of 15 acre inches of water during the season. It will

be remembered that the spring rainfall was unusually heavy in 1938.

Production Costs

The 1938 cost analysis disclosed the following average production costs reported by the Orange County growers: Labor costs \$40.34 per acre; material costs \$31.70 per acre; taxes and miscellaneous 17.29 per acre; depreciation 13.86 per acre; 5% interest on investment \$104.08 per acre.

The higher income orchards averaged 3153 pounds of fruit per acre and the low income group averaged only 331 pounds per acre. The Fuerte variety predominated in the higher income group, while the lower group reported more miscellaneous varieties. The average age of the orchards reporting was 9.3 years, but the range varied from 5 years to 16 years.

Income Factors

The average returns, based on an average yield of 1,276 pounds per acre at an average farm price of 9.23 cents per pound was \$117.78 per acre. The higher income group averaged \$306.60 per acre, and the low income group averaged \$27.85 per acre.

The report concluded that on the basis of returns obtained by that growers during the past five years, averaging eight cents per pound, it would take a yield of 1,250 pounds per acre to pay actual cash costs of production that have averaged about \$100 per acre over a long period of time; it will require a yield of 2,500 pounds per acre on 10 acres to pay cash costs and \$1,000 living expenses for the family during the year; and 2,970 pounds per acre will be required to pay cash costs plus \$1,000 living expense, plus amortized payment on a 20-year land bank mortgage of \$500 per acre.

The average production of the representative orchards in this study has been 2,474 pounds per acre over a nine-year period. It is thus seen that better than average yields per acre and larger than average farm units are necessary to maintain a family and meet usual farm indebtedness on an avocado orchard with the present trend of modest returns. These are important factors that the grower should consider in his orchard enterprise.