

## AVOCADO CULTURE IN THE ARGENTINE NORTHWEST

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It is difficult to assess the acreage: some just cultivate it on an experimental basis and others as a secondary crop only, mostly as border trees or in small plots. Notwithstanding, the following information seems to be the most agreed on (province = state):

Salta province	8,000 trees in production 3,500 trees not yet in bearing age
Jujuy province	16,000 trees in toto
Tucuman province	20,000 trees in all

The production is going steadily up: 1.870 metric tons in 1960-61; 1.982 in 1961-62; 2.900 in 1962-63; and 3.030 tons in 1963-64. Tucuman province produced 50% of last season's volume.

Each tree produces from 150 to 200 fruits yearly, with an average weight of 200-400 grams each.

Only a few properties have a uniform layout. In General Guemes (Salta) they usually plant the trees at 8x8 meters; but in Perico, Ledesma, Fraile Pintado, Yuto, Santo Domingo and Calilegua (all in Jujuy), they prefer 10x10 meters. However, experience advises a planting distance of 12 x 12 meters.

Cultural practices are not generally followed. The holdings with larger plantations are the only ones who do it, but these are mostly a slight disc harrowing both ways, just to control or kill the weeds between the trees: beneath them they generally do not grow. Fertilization is not practiced and irrigation is used only when it is badly needed.

The Fuerte variety is preferred because of its flavor and resistance. In Salta they grow the Mejicana variety, but both look very much alike: probably they are from the same stock. The actual orchards have a very large percentage of seed-grown trees; the State Experiment Station has recently been locating highly productive trees with high quality fruits, with the purpose of fixing a new variety and propagating it through grafting. This Station has had very good results with grafting done on small seed trees grown in pots under glass cover.

The main problems are fungus diseases, principally the one caused by "Phytophthora cinnamoni" and also "Verticillium" wilt. It is very common to see large dead trees and also a large number of non-bearing trees.

Avocado culture is not increasing, probably because the fruit is not known enough in the large cities. Prices are good, especially in the markets of Mendoza, Buenos Aires and Rosario: in Buenos Aires the consumer pays actually m\$ 40 per kilogram, but in

Mendoza the price is even higher (m\$ 50/kg). The local authorities of the last place require the fruit treatment against *Anastrepha* sp. and *Ceratitis capitata* Wied. The late maturing "varieties" always get the better price. The product is shipped in wooden boxes of 10 and 16 kilograms.