

## AVOCADOS IN ANCIENT GREECE

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With the active cooperation of the Greek Ministry of Agriculture's Department of Fruit Tree Horticulture under the direction of Constantine I. Drakakis, the American-Hellenic Development Corporation (AHDCO) is now establishing a fledgling avocado industry in Greece.

When in 1958 Dr. Wilson Popenoe visited Greece, he commented on the resemblance of the Peloponesian countryside to the Guatemalan highlands except for the absence of any avocado trees. In a few years AHDCO, a California-based company, hopes to rectify this absence. Nurseries have been established for avocados in the Province of Messinia in the Peloponesus and more are being planned for the Islands of Crete and Rhodes. The climatic conditions of Greece are very similar to those of California and in the three areas mentioned above, to that of San Diego County.

John D. Motz, the Agricultural Attache of the American Embassy in Athens, stated that he had received numerous queries from American travelers as to why the avocado was not being propagated in Greece. Mr. Motz commented further that he had been trying to get the Greek government interested in the commercial propagation of avocados for years, when much to his delight, he learned that a start in this direction had been made by AHDCO in the Province of Messinia.

The geographic location of Greece relative to the European Economic Community countries and her Associate membership in it, give Greece a particularly good advantage towards the export marketing of the avocado in the EEC countries. It is planned by AHDCO, when sufficient avocado acreage warrants, to approach other Mediterranean producers of this fruit to establish a joint marketing board. Such a board would direct a promotional campaign towards expanding the avocado market on the European continent.



Quality similar to the Fuerte. Avocados from an 8 year old seedling tree growing in the Province of Messinia. Season June—August.



Field grown nursery trees in an island valley in the province of Messinia, Greece.



Eight year old seedling avocado tree bearing delicious fruit (high oil content) in a coastal valley in the province of Messinia, Greece. Quality very similar to Fuerte. Season June—August.

Currently, agricultural practices are confined to field growing the nursery trees using Topa-Topa and Mexicola seed for root stock, and budding to Fuerte, Hass, Nabal, Bacon and Zutano. A new variety of avocado with similar commercial characteristics to those of the Fuerte, surprisingly enough, has been discovered on an eight year old seedling tree in the Province of Messinia. Its skin is green, relatively thin and peels very easily. The fruit resembles the Fuerte very much and has excellent holding and shipping characteristics. It has a high oil content, very good flavor and bears from June through

August. It is planned to use budwood from this tree experimentally on some of the existing rootstock in our nursery.

Avocado trees have been found growing near Athens and on the Islands of Crete and Rhodes as well as in the Peloponnesus. All these trees, healthy and growing vigorously, were of varying seedling variety and bearing season, indicating that the climate of Greece is very hospitable to the avocado. Because of the similarity of climates of the inland and coastal valleys of Greece to those of California, we expect to be able to grow all the varieties now grown in that state on a year around basis.

It has been our contention that Greece will one day be the California of Europe. The prospects for the avocado industry in Greece are very bright and we think that with proper guidance, Greece will achieve that goal.