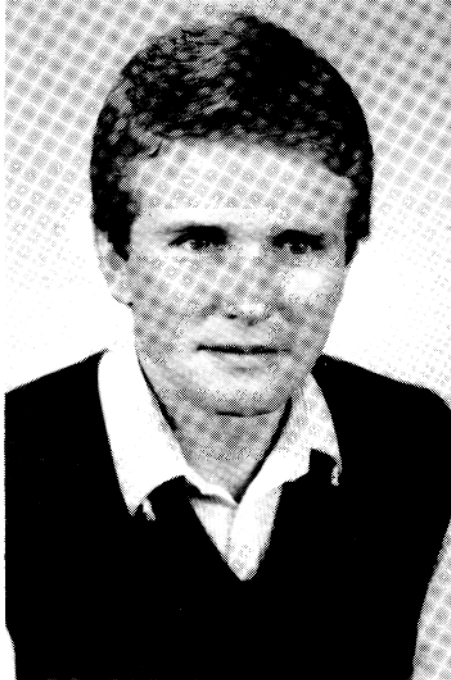


Report on a visit to Mexico

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The main objectives of the journey were to visit various horticultural research institutions and researchers with a view to exchanging ideas and collecting budwood of dwarf trees.

The total production of avocados in Mexico is estimated at more than half a million tons annually. Commercial production is found primarily in the state of Michoacan and in the state of Mexico, known as the 'avocado belt' (Sanchez Colin & Barrientos Priego, 1987). The avocado belt comprises 70 000 hectares and yields on average between six and seven tons per hectare. The orchards are situated at altitudes ranging from 1 500 to 2 000 metres. The major cultivar is Hass, covering some 90% of the planted area. Mexican seedling rootstocks are used; clonally propagated rootstocks are not available.

While the avocado is indigenous to Mexico, research on avocado has only recently been initiated. Most research projects, including the collection and evaluation of native types, started in 1970. The government runs some universities with agricultural faculties and a number of experimental farms in various parts of the Federal Republic.

Apart from research undertaken by the government, there is CICTAMEX, an institution founded by Dr Sanchez Colin. The CICTAMEX office and the affiliated experimental farm are located at Coatepec Harinas in the state of Mexico. Avocado research at CICTAMEX deals mainly with the horticultural evaluation of dwarf tree selections (Figure 1) and cultural practices of avocado. Dr Sanchez Colin kindly provided budwood of different dwarf avocado selections which have Fuerte-like fruit characteristics. Colin V-33 is the best researched dwarf selection as yet (Barrientos Priego *et al*, 1987).

Cultural care of orchards includes regular applications of mineral and organic fertilisers. Root rot seems to be present in some orchards. Thrips is the major insect pest and nearly all commercial orchards are sprayed with insecticides. Anthracnose is the most important fruit disease. Stem canker, which is thought to be caused by *Nectria galligena*, is a serious problem in some orchards and seems to be controlled by application of Bordeaux-mixture. The main harvesting season for Hass is from October through January. There is a huge difference in quality between locally marketed and exported fruit. Local consumption of avocados is very high and Mexico City with 17 million inhabitants is a major market. There are about ten pack-houses that handle export fruit which are mainly shipped to France and Japan.

My visit to Mexico was co-ordinated by Dr S Sanchez Colin. Prof L Fucikovsky and Ing E de la Cruz accompanied me on all my technical visits. I would like to express my sincere thanks to them as their hospitality and friendliness made this visit a great success.



ig 1 A dwarf avocado tree at CICTAMEX experimental farm. Standing behind the tree from left to right: Prof L Fucikovsky, Ing E de la Cruz and two members of the CICTAMEX technical staff.

REFERENCES

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