

United States' avocado production

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The United States is the third largest producer of avocados worldwide, following Mexico and Brazil. Total US production for 1985-86 (preliminary) was 171 million kg. There are two commercial avocado regions in the United States: southern California and southern Florida (Table 1). California accounts for 86 per cent of the total US avocado plantings. There is a small avocado industry in Hawaii consisting of 334 ha. A wide range of avocado cultivars are grown in Hawaii, but the major cultivar is Sharwil. Commercial avocado production has been attempted in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, but has been limited due to winter freezes.

TABLE 1 United States' avocado production			
	Hectares	Production per hectare (Short tons)	Crop value (US \$1 000)
California ^a	29 878	5,9	162,095
Florida ^b	4 797	6,1	16,416
^a Source: Californian Avocado Commission, 1985-86 Annual Report.			
^b Source: Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, 1985.			

In California, avocados are primarily restricted to the coastal and inland valley regions of southern California. Fifty-nine per cent of the state's plantings are located in northern San Diego county and south-western Riverside county (Table 2). The other major producing region in the state consists of coastal and inland Ventura county and coastal Santa Barbara county. This region accounts for 33 per cent of the state's plantings. Approximately 1 000 ha of avocados are grown in the San Joaquin Valley in central California. In this region, avocado plantings are restricted to the Sierra Mountain foothills.

The Californian industry is based on the Guatemalan and Mexican races of avocados. The major variety grown, Hass, accounts for 66 per cent of the state's current plantings (Table 3). It is likely that this variety will remain the dominant variety in the foreseeable future. Classified as a spring-summer variety, the Hass fruit is readily available year-round, except in October-November. Prior to the large expansion of avocado acreage in the mid-to-late 1970s, Fuerte was the leading commercial variety. Since 1972, however, Hass plantings have increased by 399 per cent. Sixty-six per cent of the Hass plantings

are less than 12 years old, whereas 28 per cent of the Fuerte plantings are less than 12 years old.

TABLE 2 Avocado plantings in California^a

County/Region	Hectares	% Bearing	% of State total plantings	Average farm size (hectares) ^d
San Diego	14 643	98	48,0	4,3
Ventura	6 723	99	22,0	7,2
Riverside	3383	94	11,1	5,9
Santa Barbara	3184	95	10,4	7,8
Other Southern CA ^b	1 220	98	4,0	4,9
San Joaquin Valley ^c	971	97	3,2	10,2

^a Source: 1985 County Agricultural Commissioner Reports.

^b Includes Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino and San Luis Obispo counties.

^c Includes Kern, Tulare, Madera counties.

^d Source: 1982 Agricultural Census.

TABLE 3 Avocado varieties in California (1985-86)^a

County/Region	Variety (% of total plantings/county)				
	Hass	Fuerteo	Bacon	Zutano	Other
San Diego	67	18	6	6	3
Ventura	72	2	21	1	4
Riverside	50	13	1 1	13	13
Santa Barbara	91	<1	3	<1	5
Other Southern CA ^b	65	14	14	4	3
San Joaquin Valley ^c	0	2	4	78	16
State	66	11	10	8	5

^a Source: Californian Avocado Commission

^b Includes Los Angeles, Orange and San Luis Obispo counties

^c Includes Kern, Tulare and Fresno counties

Fuerte, Zutano and Bacon are the other major varieties grown in California and are grouped as 'green-skin' varieties. Sixty-five per cent of the Zutano and Bacon plantings are less than 12 years old. The Zutano avocado is predominantly grown in the colder region of the San Joaquin Valley and portions of Riverside county. Plantings of these 'green-skin' varieties are declining, due to a disparity in grower returns between these and the premium-priced Hass. The Californian avocado industry has been administered by a state marketing order since 1962. In 1979, the Californian Avocado Commission oversaw this marketing order. Through grower assessments, this Commission manages trade promotion and advertising programmes. Of the total Californian crop,

approximately 80 per cent is marketed west of the Mississippi, with the western United States consuming the largest proportion. Although California only exports approximately 4 per cent of its production, it accounts for 95,9 per cent of the total avocado exports from the United States. Japan is the major foreign market.

Florida is the second leading producer of avocados. The Florida industry is based on West Indian varieties and is centered in Dade county in the southern portion of Florida. The Florida Avocado Administrative Committee lists 25 major and 29 minor varieties. Minor varieties accounted for 36,2 per cent of the 1985-86 production (Table 4). Fruit is harvested during the summer, fall and early winter, with heaviest shipments in October, November and December.

Variety	% of Total production (1985-86)	Week of first harvest (Month/Day)
Lula	13,4	10/7
Booth 8	N/A	9/2
Walden	8,1	8/5
Booth 7	4,2	9/2
Pollock	1,7	6/24
Seedlings	0,6	6/24
Dr Dupuis	3,4	6/3
Simmonds	8,1	6/24
Monroe	7,1	11/11
Hall	4,2	9/30
Choquette	5,0	9/30
Nadir	4,1	6/24
Ruehle	1,0	7/8
Booth 1	1,0	11/18
Fuchs	0,4	6/10
Hickson	1,2	9/16
Others	36,2	--

Source: Federal-State Market News Service.

REFERENCES

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