

The Pecan Handbook

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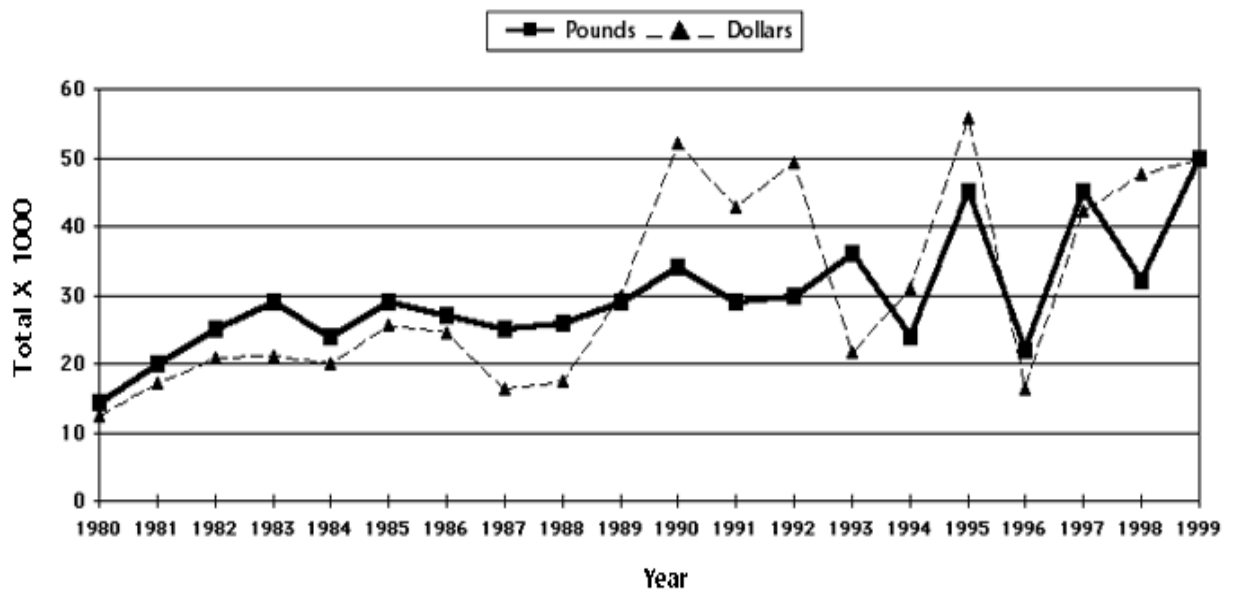
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Some of New Mexico's first pecan trees were planted in the early 1900s at the New Mexico State University horticulture farm by Fabian Garcia. More pecan trees were planted across the Mesilla Valley in following years, and the first commercial pecan orchard was established by Dean Stahmann, Sr., south of Las Cruces in the 1930s. By 1970, close to 9,000 acres of pecan orchards were established and more pecan trees were being planted. New Mexico now has about 29,622 acres of pecan trees that produced about 50 million pounds of nuts in 1999 (Fig. 1). There are no native pecan trees in New Mexico, and all producing pecans are improved varieties. 'Western Schley' is the variety grown most in the state.

Fig 1. New Mexico pecan industry: in-shell production and value, 1980-1999.



The 1997 agricultural census indicated that New Mexico had 29,622 acres of orchards with more than 20 trees. Over 3,600 acres of trees had been transplanted with mature trees. This is firm evidence that New Mexico's maximum pecan production is yet to come.

As that expansion comes, pecan growers will have to improve and expand pecan marketing techniques; however, it is equally important for them to manage their orchards in the best possible way to increase yields and reduce cost to improve profits. Currently pecan growers are producing annual yields of 2,000-2,500 lb per acre, and these yields are the accepted standard throughout the Southwest.

Extension specialists and researchers at NMSU's College of Agriculture and Home Economics have worked together to assemble the information in the Pecan Handbook. It is the kind of information that can be used to improve cultural practices in pecan orchards. Although the information is primarily intended for New Mexico pecan growers, it can also be used by growers in Arizona, West Texas, and northern Mexico.

This handbook, first published in 1983, was our first effort at this type of publication. It has been well received by pecan growers. The price covers only actual publication costs and it has been updated as needed when new recommendations come through research findings.

It now seems this handbook has met the primary goal set for it early in the planning stage—helping New Mexico pecan growers, as well as other growers in the Western region, improve their pecan orchard management practices.

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