

INTRODUCTION

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X The peach (*Prunus persica*) originated in China where it was known to grow as far back as 2000 B.C. Three wild species are still found there, namely, *P. davidiana* in the North which is used for rootstock, *P. mira* on the Tebetun Plateau and *P. ferganensis* in the sinkiang province, both in west china. The peach gradually spread from china and is found commercially around the world between 25 and 45 latitude above and below the Equator. These limits may be extended somewhat by warm ocean currents, large lakes, or altitude. While the peach can be grown in most apple sections, it extends for the most part closer to the Equator because it is more tolerant of heat and requires less chilling to break the rest period.

The first good crop of peaches can be obtained within 4 to 5 years after planting, which is sooner than for most deciduous tree fruits. Thus, the grower in many cases can benefit from the relatively higher marked prices in good periods. The upward international trend in production in recent years are probably due to (a) better selection of sites and soils, (b) the introduction of somewhat hardier and better quality peaches, (c) increased marketing of the crop at the orchard or roadside stand, and (d) the use of

refrigerator truck and rail cars to haul perishable fruits quickly to adjacent or distant markets. The world total production of peach fruits is about 5850,000 metric tons. Leaders are USA, Italy, France, Japan, Spain, Greece and Argentina (FAO, Production yearbook, 1974).

The peaches are considered one of the most popular fruits in Egypt. The total cultivated area is about 26.39 Feddans. This area is mainly located in Dakahlia, gharbia, Alexandria and kaliobia governorates (Table 1), while the annual total yield is approximately 12852 metric tons. The most popular and wide spreading cultivar in Egypt is Meet-Ghamr sp. It is a local cultivar which is grafted on seedy local peach stocks, almond or apricot stock. Many foreign cultivars were tried, but most of them didn't succeed under our climate conditions, or need high chilling requirements which are not available in Egypt. Recently, the desiduous fruit activity, ADS project, succeeded in cultivating some new imported peach varieties (from the USA) of low chilling requirements under the Egyptian climate conditions, and were grafted on some new stocks resistant to nematodes like Okinawa and Nemagard. This successful step will open the door for a wide increase in the area of peaches in Egypt on new and excellent foundations which may ensure obtaining higher yield of excellent fruits, better in quality and quantity. This may also open a door for exporting Egyptian

peaches in the near future. Therefore, we found it worthy to improve our methods of picking, handling, packaging, storage and marketing of Egyptian peaches for both local market and export. This is the main objective of this investigation.