

The Colombian Agricultural Institute (ICA) has evaluated the presence of pests in Hass avocados from certain growing regions to assess whether they meet the criteria for export to the United States.



The analysis was managed and approved by the U.S. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), testing avocados from the departments of Antioquia and Tolima.

The three pests tested were the fruit borers *Heilipus lauri* Boheman, *Heilipus trifasciatus* Fabricius (Coleoptera: Curculionidae), and *Stenoma catenifer* Walsingham (Lepidoptera: Elachistidae), all of which are quarantined in the U.S.

ICA general manager Luis Humberto Martinez Lacouture said the tests were an important step for Colombian avocado producers seeking new market opportunities.

"We expect fresh new plant products to be written into the framework of the recently signed free trade agreements with new markets," Humberto said in a statement.

"Colombia has great potential as a producer and exporter of fresh Hass avocado fruit to the U.S., and so we must overcome the phytosanitary restrictions limiting this type of trade."

As part of the analysis, 60% of the avocado farms in eastern Antioquia were monitored, which collectively covered some 1,600 hectares of land. Some tested positive for *Heilipus lauri* and *Stenoma*, but there were no traces of *Heilipus trifasciatus*.

In Tolima, the same percentage of growers was tested for pests, covering 901 hectares, and the results were the same as in Antioquia.

ICA plant health technical director Emilio Arévalo Peñaranda said appropriate action would now be taken to ensure all farms gained access to the U.S. market as soon as possible.

"What comes now is to carry out evaluations farm by farm to both begin the certification process for properties free of quarantined pests and to establish plague management recommendations for the affected farms to rid them of the problem," he said.

"We will also reveal strategies for technicians and producers for the establishment and function of a system to control and eradicate the quarantined species.

"Given that the U.S. is a very important market that Colombia needs access to, these actions should allow to to be approved as soon as possible."

The Hass variety makes up about a quarter of total avocado production in Colombia, and is grown on 6,300 hectares of land involving 1,615 producers.

Photo: [www.shutterstock.com](http://www.shutterstock.com)

[www.freshfruitportal.com](http://www.freshfruitportal.com)