

A relatively new South African avocado variety called 'Maluma' is spreading rapidly throughout the world and shows no signs of stopping any time soon thanks to its many desirable attributes. 

The Maluma is the first South African cultivar to reach the world stage, having achieved full export status in 2006 followed by its official 2007 unveiling in Chile.

It was first discovered in the early 1990s and handed over to Allesbeste Nursery, who carried out further development and research and discovered its huge potential to compete internationally with the ever-popular Hass avocado.

"It has certain attributes which gave reason to investigate further, one being its production potential - it is very precocious and produces well," Allesbeste Nursery owner Dr. Andre Ernst told www.freshfruitportal.com.

"If we talk on tonnage, Hass struggles to get 12-15 [metric] tons per hectare - the Maluma easily exceeds that.

"In addition it grows on more of an upright type of tree with very good angles of the lateral branches, which favors fruit set and therefore makes it good for production."

Ernst explained how the fruit was slightly larger than Hass and had a good flesh-to-seed ratio, along with not being as sensitive to diseases and frost damage.

"When it comes to pathological problems it compares very well," he said.

"There's always a question mark on what is better. The thing is that it has certain attributes that outperform Hass by far."

Other favorable characteristics include its rich and 'whole-hearted nutty taste' and its ability to be shipped over long distances while still arriving in excellent condition.

Slightly different picking and packing protocols are needed with the Maluma due to its higher initial respiration rate than Hass once it's been harvested.

"It's not that difficult. You just have to be very aware of that to bring the respiration rate down through cooling," Ernst said.

The Maluma has a registered trademark, and Ernst said it was currently being marketed by four out of the five most important exporters, including grower-owned Afri-pro and

Summerfield Exports.

It is also at various phases of commercial trials in several important avocado-growing countries throughout the world.

"Presently Maluma is in New Zealand where it's already in to the semi-commercial phase. Then in Australia it's going into the commercial phase now up in the [Atherton] Tablelands," Ernst said.

"We've moved into commercializing it in Spain, and in Israel it's just moved out of quarantine - we're increasing the numbers now and we'll start with semi-commercial trials soon.

"It's in Morocco and Egypt - there we've got a commercial block of two which we trial. In Peru there's a number of prominent growers, and in Chile Agricom imported it and I think it's still under quarantine at the San Jose nursery."

The Allesbeste Nursery is currently struggling to keep up with demand, thanks to the soaring global popularity of avocados in general.

"The demand is very high - as high as the growth in Europe, in Europe the growth is not as high as in the U.S. but it's picking up unbelievably in terms of the numbers we're doing through the continent lately at reasonable prices, so demand is there," Ernst said.

"And obviously in other parts of the world it's taking off. The future for avocados is huge."

Ernst explained one of the reasons Maluma was so important to him was that as production costs were increasing rapidly, it was preferable to have a more productive cultivar which could also 'piggyback' very well on the back of Hass into the marketplace due to their similarities.

"As far as I know Maluma is the first variety able to challenge Hass and take some of its market share," he said.

"The nice thing for Maluma in South Africa is the fruit size. South Africa actually struggles with the small fruit so it gives us that component also needed. So really it complements the Hass within the market place."

The future is undoubtedly bright for the Maluma, and Ernst's passion for the variety is clear.

"We believe in this variety, notwithstanding the fact that each avocado variety is not perfect. The thing is you need to know how to manage it," he said.

"And if you manage it correctly you can deliver it in a perfect condition on the other side."

For more information visit the Maluma Blog website [here](#).

Photo: www.maluma.co.za

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