

Update: It has since come to light that a second export company, linked to a major U.S. importer, was also involved in the ceremony today and will be shipping fruit tomorrow. Click [here](#) for more. A Westfalia spokesperson has also confirmed the volume for the group's inaugural shipment is 11 metric tons (MT), with the container now closed and the ship ready to sail from [Port of Cartagena](#) on Saturday.

The United States is expected to receive its first ever imports of Colombian Hass avocados within the coming 10 days, with exports of the fruit set to take off from the Port of Cartagena tomorrow and on Saturday.

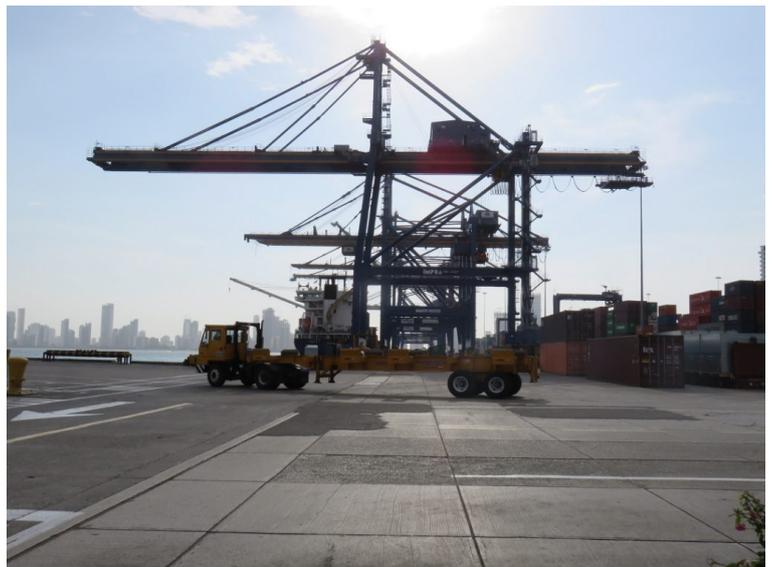
The milestone comes a little more than two months after the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) [opened market access for Colombia](#) as a source of origin.

Mission Produce partner Cartama is [expecting to ship its first container tomorrow](#), arriving in Florida on Nov.6, while Westsole Fruit Colombia's container is due to export this Saturday with arrival in Long Beach, California due on Nov. 12.

WFC is co-owned by leading multinational avocado supplier Westfalia Fruit and its Chilean partner Exportadora Subsole.

A representative of CorpoHass - a grower organization that has been instrumental in securing the access deal along with Procolombia, Analdex, Asohofrucol and a range of government ministries and departments - previously told *Fresh Fruit Portal* it would take time for many growers to meet the [import requirements](#).

It is for this reason that Westsole's first exports aren't too large. According to Westfalia Fruit Americas director of sourcing Julian Muñoz, this is just the first fruit from growers who meet all the required certifications and comply with the management plan agreed upon



Port of Cartagena.

with the U.S.

"We packed it on the weekend...it's in a 40ft container but its half full," he said.

In a release, Westfalia said staff at its state-of-the-art packhouse in Guarne, Antioquia were "understandably excited".

Running a packhouse to service its own orchards and those of over 100 associated local growers, WFC began exporting avocados to Europe in 2012. During the 2016-17 export season, the operation shipped more than one million 4kg (8.8lbs) cartons.

The company said that as the first international organization to recognize Colombia's potential as a new avocado origin, the Westfalia Fruit Group brought specialised technical expertise into the fledgling industry in the form of production, logistics, cooling and packing.

This was followed by the introduction of the group's plant material which it believes will be of enormous long-term benefit to the industry.

"What's more," noted Westsole GM Pedro Aguilar, "we managed to overcome the teething issues involved in getting GlobalGAP in place, working out effective management programmes tailored to our unique Colombian conditions," he said, adding the operation packs only 100% export-quality, Category 1 fruit.

"We follow the best possible agricultural and manufacturing practices, focussing on fruit quality and on doing things right, from our nurseries to our farms, from packing and shipping to our marketing practices.

The group said the opening of the U.S. market for Colombian Hass avocados gave growers access to the largest consumption market, and that ought to drive further development in the industry.

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