

Following the [**first ever arrival of Colombian Hass avocados in the U.S.**](#) earlier this month in Florida, the inaugural U.S. West Coast-bound shipment has arrived in Long Beach, California.

In a release, Westfalia highlighted the fruit was destined for the aisles of Walmart.

"Securing an uninterrupted supply of quality fresh avocados through the year and especially at times of high demand is of significant importance to our retail customers," Westfalia Fruit USA vice president of sourcing Julián Muñoz said in a release.

The operation, headquartered in Camarillo in California, will receive and check the fruit at their partner facility in Fillmore Piru before packing it for retail stores. Ripening services are also being added to the mix.

The company said most large retail groups had high expectations of their suppliers and associated facilities in terms of their social and environmental sustainability, and conducted regular audits and investigations into supply chain conditions.

"A sustainable food supply chain gives consumers transparency into how their produce is grown, which is another important factor in the retail sector today," Muñoz added.

"While we play a crucial role in providing supply security to our customers, we are also tasked with working continuously towards reducing the environmental impact of our agricultural practices."

These are areas in which many Colombian avocado suppliers are beginning to make their mark - and that's not just the opinion of Pedro Aguilar, GM of Westfalia in Colombia, whose container of Hass arrived at California's Long Beach port on Nov. 14.

GlobalGAP auditors have certified many of Westfalia's growers that demonstrate the requisite standards for on-farm food safety and sustainability. One such farm is La Estancia del Viento, located in close proximity to Westfalia's Colombian packhouse.

Owned and run by Juan Zuluaga and his wife Claudia Mendez, the farm is currently being monitored to determine if fruit production meets the stringent export requirements laid out by the USDA and ICA, including pest-control protocols.

Both the farm and the Westfalia packhouse were visited recently by US Ambassador to Colombia, Kevin Whitaker, who showed considerable interest in the export process and was impressed by the level of control and professionalism seen at the premises.

Rapid expansion of Colombian production capacity

The benefits of such positive developments are likely to be felt by the entire Colombian avocado industry, whose Hass exports are expected to reach US\$60 million FOB value by December this year.

Producers are demonstrating their faith in the industry's future by planting more trees; approximately 16,000 hectares are currently planted to avocado, with production areas growing at a rate of 15% annually (2,000 hectares per year).

“With the opening up of the US market, it is expected that the industry will grow up to 30,000 hectares within the next four to five years,” predicts Aguilar, who adds that foreign investment in new growing regions is also on the rise, with orchards being established even in areas previously affected by conflict.

From a socio-economic perspective, the Colombian avocado industry creates close on 26,000 permanent jobs in the rural areas, and during harvest times this figure can double, according to Westfalia.



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