

Kenyan avocado companies have reacted positively to the temporary export ban recently implemented by authorities, saying that it is necessary to improve the country's reputation as a supplier of the in-demand fruit.



Authorities recently announced a ban on Fuerte exports until February and on Hass exports until March in a bid to clamp down on immature fruit being shipped abroad.

A representative of Selina Wamucii, which sources and exports fruit from small-holder growers, said the company was "very happy" with the development.

"The last two years as a company we have lost millions of dollars in missed opportunities given that the sizes were too small as the fruits were not given enough time to mature before being picked. That meant that all our clients in markets that need big sized avocados could no longer get them from us," head of production Samuel Karogo said in a statement sent to *Fresh Fruit Portal*.

"A good example is Turkey, a fast emerging and promising market for big Kenyan Fuerte avocados of 260 grams and above. Last year, we could hardly get that size of avocados from our farmers as the majority had been harvested before full maturity."

He said Selina Wamucii saw the ban as "largely positive" and it "looked forward to a time where the export standards requirements will be strictly enforced such that a ban will be unnecessary."

"For example, if the minimum oil content for avocado for export is 12%, that should be strictly enforced such that companies only export avocados that meet that criteria," he said.

"On the flip side, once the ban is lifted, there will be some avocado zones that will have immature fruits and that would mean some immature fruits would still find their way into the international market."

The main season for Kenya avocados is March to September for the Fuerte variety and April to December for the Hass.

However, given the tropical climate and different avocado growing zones in Kenya, there are fruits throughout the year although in smaller quantities outside the main season period," Karogo added.

He also explained the domestic market has a preference for a local variety called Kienyeji that is currently available in season, though in very small volumes.

"As a matter of fact this variety is not affected by the ban and we are exporting this variety to a few markets even today. Our per capita consumption of Hass avocados in Kenya is negligible," he said.

A spokesperson for another company, Kakuzi, said the ban was not expected to negatively affect the business.

"At Kakuzi our interest is to promote the export of quality fruit from Kenya both to ensure that all farmers receive the best possible price and to enhance Kenya's name as an origin for quality Avocado," he said.

"We are not aware of any negative impact the regulation will have on our business as the avocado harvesting season has not started.

"The harvesting and export period for avocado will be advised by the regulatory authorities."

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