

While carrots were the leading crop in value and volume, asparagus have sprouted up as strong contributors to trade.

The Australian vegetable industry continues on its growth path towards an ambitious goal of hitting AUD\$315 million (US\$228 million) in exports by 2020, with markets in the Middle East and Asia driving returns.

Grower body AUSVEG announced today that overseas fresh vegetable shipments rose by 3% in 2017-18 to reach AUD\$262.4 million (US\$190.8 million), while volume was up 9% at 208,000 metric tons (MT).

The group highlights strong trading conditions in key export markets, as well as increased demand for Australian-grown vegetables combined with increased activities and investment in securing the exporting capabilities of growers.

The top five markets for volume, comprising 60% of the total, were the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and Saudi Arabia.

In terms of value, the top five markets were Singapore, the UAE, Japan, Malaysia and Hong Kong, with the top three of these markets making up more than 50% of total exports.

AUSVEG's national manager for export development Michael Coote said the vegetable industry had seen solid growth in exports across a variety of fresh vegetable products in recent years, with the whole vegetable category averaging 10% year-on-year growth over the past three years.

"Carrots are the number one traded fresh vegetable commodity by both volume and value, with steady year-on-year growth over a sustained period of time indicating that demand for Australian carrots remains strong," said Coote.

"Over 85 per cent of Australia's fresh vegetable export volume is comprised of carrots, potatoes and onions.

"However, we still see positive growth in some other categories, including asparagus, which despite only comprising two per cent of fresh vegetable exports by volume, make up 11 per cent of fresh vegetable export trade by value and are the second highest value fresh vegetable commodity at AUD\$28 million (US\$20.25 million)."

AUSVEG highlighted several initiatives taken in 2018 to help improve Australian veggie growers' export capabilities, including:

- Five outbound trade missions, taking 42 grower-exporters to key export markets to increase the capability for emerging and existing grower-exporters through in-market trade activities and knowledge-sharing among growers;
- Six export workshops, which provided 44 attendees with practical and tailored knowledge about the export process; and
- Eight new market access submissions for different vegetables into Asian markets.

"The industry has increased its focus on boosting the value and volume of its vegetable exports, with work being undertaken by AUSVEG, Hort Innovation and other groups in building the exporting skills of Australian growers and providing opportunities to build relationships with foreign buyers, as well as supporting the Taste Australia trade program," said Coote.

"We are working with growers to ensure they have the skills and knowhow to improve their ability to export their produce and capitalise on increasing demand for fresh, Australian-grown produce.

"We are also working closely with the Australian Government and international trading partners to open market access for more vegetable commodities so that our growers can increase their exports into key export markets across Asia and the Middle East."

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