

Avocado production in Africa could grow as significantly and rapidly as in Colombia over recent years, according to a representative of Westfalia Fruit.

Speaking at the World Avocado Congress in Colombia, the South African-headquartered company's managing director Zac Bard explained that many countries in the continent could greatly increase their supplies of avocados given the right conditions.



Zac Bard, managing director of Westfalia Fruit

Africa also has year-round seasonality on the Hass variety and "huge potential" to increase its share of international avocado markets, he said.

Breaking down the production regions

During a session on emerging producers and exporters, Bard provided an overview of the continent's current plantings - most of which outside of South Africa are located around the Great Rift Valley - and the expected growth rate over the coming years.

South Africa, he explained, currently has a total avocado surface area of around 18,000

hectares, with an additional 2,000-2,500 hectares expected to be planted annually.

"There's going to be significant expansion and increase in production in South Africa in the following years ahead," he said.

Neighboring Zimbabwe has experienced political instability since the 2000s, Bard noted, but still has some avocado growers located on the Eastern Highlands. The country's season is similar to Peru and South Africa - April through July, he said.

Zimbabwe exports around 5,000 metric tons (MT) annually, currently has around 1,000 hectares planted and is likely to increase at a rate of around 100 hectares per year.

Mozambique, bordering both Zimbabwe and South Africa, was severely affected by war until the early-1990s, with the first avocados only having been planted around 2014, Bard



"It's a brand new origin in terms of avocados," he said. "It is expected to have a production in the coming year of around 4,000MT - 80% Hass and 20% other.

"The big draw of Mozambique is that it's the earliest production area in Africa - it starts early January and goes until April."

Bard estimated around 450 hectares have been planted, with another 1,000 expected in the coming years.

Further to the north is Tanzania, another relatively new avocado origin. The first fruit was planted around a decade ago, with its 1,000 hectares expected to grow by around 400 hectares annually.

Its current production of around 5,000MT is all destined to the European market, and it has two main growing regions, which create a long season. The north has similar seasonality to Peru and South Africa, and the south is more similar in harvest timings to Chile.

However, Bard noted that while there is lots of land in Tanzania that could potentially be used for avocado production, getting access to land takes a long time under the country's legal framework.

Kenya, meanwhile, along with South Africa, is one of the continent's older production areas. It has been growing avocados for more than 40 years, and its surface area of 7,400 hectares is expected to expand by around 1,600 hectares per year.

Its season runs from March to October and expected yield this year of around 80,000MT. Much of its exports go to markets outside of Europe, such as the Middle East.

However, Bard noted that one of Kenya's problems is that it doesn't have a strong grower organization.

"So getting information about exactly how many hectares there are exactly, what the exports are and where they're going is very sketchy, and I think that is something that Kenya really needs to work on to improve its reputation as a credible origin," he said.

The country currently has one commercial grower with the rest of the industry made up of small-holders, Bard said, but he expected that would change drastically in the future.

Other origins on the radar include Ethiopia, Angola, Malawi, and Zambia - but production in those countries remains very small at the moment. However, he expected there would be more movement in those countries by the next World Avocado Congress in 2023.

Huge potential for the future

"In summary, Africa has huge potential," he said.

"If you look at the literature, you'll see that a relatively low amount of world avocado production comes from Africa, but I'm an optimist and I believe that Africa has a really quick potential."

Anyone of the emerging countries mentioned could quite easily develop into a large supplier in a short space of time, he said.

"We've got year-round seasonality on Hass, and with the right conditions, Africa's production will rise as Colombia's has in recent times," he said.