

Ecuador's fruit industry is working hard to put its fruit industry in the best possible position and make itself a standout competitor in global markets.

Ivan Ontaneda, Ecuador's minister of production, international business and investments explained to FreshFruitPortal.com the challenges faced by the industry. He gave us an overview of key categories - pineapples, mangoes and Hass avocados - and the specific steps the country is taking to improve fruit exports.

Currently, the most important fruits for Ecuador are mangoes - with US\$28m FOB in 2019 - and pineapples -with US\$38m FOB in 2019. Following these two valuable fruits are dragon fruits, the country's most valuable export with US\$41m FOB last year.

However, there are limits associated with non-traditional fruits like dragon fruit, explained Ontaneda.

"Companies face logistical barriers and higher costs, something that is important when thinking about competing with other countries," he said. In addition, the "rigorous inspections" for narcotics also "affects the quality of the fruit", he added.

There are various strategies that the industry uses to face these challenges. Ontaneda outlined for us what the ministry calls its "introduction strategy". This involves market research, investigation into market prospects, exploratory missions, training sessions and inter-institutional work.

Another strategy, Ecuador's "strengthening strategy", comprises participation in promotional activities, commercial activities with specialized organizations and efforts to differentiate its product from others in the market.

Ecuador's fruit industry searches for diversification and pest control

When it comes to Ecuadorian pineapple, the industry's goal to never stop working on the fruit's quality and productivity. To reach this goal, it is working to diversify its market access and control pests.

Ontaneda explained that the ministry wants to "develop demand within internal institutions and reinforce the role the institution plays in the production process". To do this, it is creating a government consulting team "with participation from both public actors and the private sector", he detailed.

"These strategies seek to increase production and position Ecuador in new local and

international markets," he added.

Regarding the challenges faced by pineapples in particular, Ontaneda mentioned that the fruit is impacted by a local pest, which affects production. Pineapples are also impacted by the devaluation of money that happens when the fruit is traded with other countries like Argentina - that being especially difficult with increasing competition from Costa Rica.

Mangoes

The country is confronted with more serious pest management problems for [the mango category](#). According to Ontaneda, there are ongoing efforts to control pests for the category.

Speaking to the challenges faced by the category, he pointed to poorly executed anti-narcotic measures taken for all of Ecuador's fruit. Fruit is subject to narcotic inspection that impacts the quality and life of fruit, adding to the pressure created by losses from pests.

Hass avocado

Finally, Ontaneda told us about the outlook and practices in Ecuador's Hass avocado industry. The country sees the category as a tremendous opportunity to generate millions of dollars for producers and is committed to increasing the presence of the Hass avocado industry in its total exports.

In 2018, Ecuador exported 126 metric tons (MT) of avocados, totaling US\$170m. Between January and November of 2019, there was a big jump in avocado exports out of the country - growing by 1921%.

"Currently, Ecuador is expanding its planted land in order to increase our offer of Hass avocados, our main variety," he said.

Its efforts to grow and strengthen its avocado production involves work to get necessary international certifications for trade, detailed Ontaneda.

Various dialogues have been held within the industry to find ways to make production practices more efficient and to improve the quality of the fruit, both for avocados and across all fruit categories.

This, said the ministry, is only representative of some of the many initiatives that the government has at work to improve its international position as a fruit producer and

exporter.