

Mexico, Chile and Peru have traditionally positioned themselves as the main avocado exporters in the world. However, in recent years, Guatemala has made inroads in its production and currently faces the challenge to consolidate itself as a new player in the industry.

According to the Guatemalan Avocado Producers Association (Anaguacate), every effort is being made to start exporting Hass avocado to the U.S by 2023.

Francisco Viteri, president of Anaguacate and part of Agropecuaria Popoyan told Fresh Fruit Portal that "for the past three years, the association has been working with the Guatemalan Ministry of Agriculture and the U.S phytosanitary and agricultural authorities to achieve avocado admissibility. All the information has been shared with the U.S to explain our procedure and we hope to have news soon so that they can send us the risk analysis and, based on that, begin to move forward with the work plan for exporting to the U.S".

In addition to the above, new markets are being added. Viteri points out that once they gain access to the U.S., Hass avocado shipments could also enter Chile and Korea. According to Anaguacate, the Ministry of Agriculture has already requested the phytosanitary requirements from the authorities of both countries in order to begin the admissibility process.

## **2022 Season**

With an industry that is constantly developing, growing, innovating and seeking to improve avocado quality, Guatemala has 5,500 hectares and expects 3,000 to 4,000 more hectares to be planted in the next three to four years.

Anaguacate projects that, in terms of volume, the country will grow between 25% to 30% this 2022 season, with these figures depending on the negotiations of producers with different markets.

Out of that growth, 250 to 275 containers will be sent to the European Union and Canada, with another 75 to 100 to the Central American market.

"This year, the fruit from Guatemala came with a very high quality and good size. We have focused on adapting the fruit to what the markets are asking for, so we are projecting a high volume and productivity this season," said Francisco Viteri.

Viteri is confident that markets will respond to Guatemalan fruit for its quality and ripeness and that customers will choose his fruit over others.

In the same vein, the family company Frutesa expects to send 40 containers to Europe, which would allow a 25% growth compared to last season, adding 5 to 10 containers to Central America.

In terms of markets, the country has consolidated its exports in nations such as Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Panama. Luis Teo, Frutesa's commercial manager, said: "It was easy for Frutesa to enter the market because we already had a track record of implementing certifications in the fields with quality standards. That experience was one of the reasons that made it easier for us to do business. In fact, in 2008, we were the first to send avocados to Europe".

The logistic crisis and the increase in freight and production costs have impacted the current season. Anaguacate points out that the crisis has caused irregularities in schedules and a lack of commitment from shipping companies to guarantee space and transit times, which has affected the entire industry.

In addition to the above, more fruit from other markets have lowered prices due to the increase in production in countries such as Peru and Colombia.

To reverse this, Frutesa's new strategies are aimed at increasing productivity in the field and reinforcing quality.

"We have hired Colombian advisors to help us with productivity issues in our farms in order to increase the productivity level that we have in the country, while strengthening our quality and competitiveness in international markets," said Teo.

The challenges that the avocado industry faces in Guatemala are mainly to be able to guarantee the quality of the fruit in the markets and meet the demands of consumers.

Both Anaguacate and Frutesa are seeking to position Guatemala as an important new origin and to increase avocado exports so that the country can consolidate its position in the industry.