

Avocado company Mission Produce has announced plans to open a state-of-the-art ripening, packing and forward distribution center (FDC) in Dartford, England, in 2023.

Strategically located with direct access to major international ports and transportation networks, the facility is expected to strengthen Mission's expanding international footprint and optimize product distribution to the company's European customer base.

"Mission Produce remains at the forefront of emerging markets and continues to lead as one of the largest, most advanced avocado networks globally," said Steve Barnard, CEO and Founder of Mission.

"Mission's UK FDC is a world-class facility designed to streamline operations while delivering a cost-effective model. This milestone represents a significant opportunity for our business and enhances our ability to drive global avocado consumption as we accelerate our reach in the European market."

Mission's 102,000-square-foot UK FDC is located near the UK's largest ports and airports and at the intersection of England's extensive transportation networks, with direct access to the M25.

The building is sustainability-focused and certified by an internationally accepted sustainability standard with a BREEAM "excellent" rating for its efficient use of resources, including its incorporation of solar panels and rainwater harvesting.

"The facility's strategic location provides Mission with unique access to the growing UK market for avocados while simplifying import logistics and expediting transit times," said Ben Barnard, Vice President of Business Operations.

"Meanwhile, the facility's sustainable systems and use of renewable energy are expected to promote energy, cost and maintenance savings."

Featuring cutting-edge technology, the facility is designed to maximize logistical efficiencies and enhance product quality. It will be Mission's first facility to feature the "Mission Control" exclusive ripening room technology, which involves a specialized atmosphere control process to create the optimal environment for ripening.

By utilizing "Mission Control" technology, the company will have the ability to ripen fruit to customer specification in a manner that is distinctive and advantageous compared to other suppliers in the industry.

In addition, the facility incorporates grading visibility technology, which can reduce handling times and minimize fruit damage, and testing machinery, which can determine stages of ripeness with advanced precision.

“We are currently the only supplier in the industry with our specialized ‘Mission Control’ technology, which supports enhanced quality, longer shelf-life and waste reduction,” said Paul Frowde, Managing Director at Mission Produce UK.

“Our innovative processes coupled with our leading team of ripening experts enhances our ability to provide excellent service and custom offerings for our UK customer base.”

Mission’s owned or partnered production from South Africa, Peru, Colombia and Guatemala is expected to be distributed through the facility across Europe.

“We are leveraging our vertical integration and presence in key markets to position us for sustained growth,” added Steve Barnard.

“With nearly 6,000 hectares of owned or partnered farms across South America, our vertical integration well-positions us to provide the European market with a year-round supply of high-quality avocados. We aim to propel the avocado category forward in Europe, as we have in the U.S. market.”