

Mexico Leads in Both Production & Consumption

With a per capita consumption of more than 15 pounds per person and production coming from about 370,000 acres, Mexico is both the world's leading producer and consumer of avocados.

Eduardo Serena, the marketing director of APEAM, which is Mexico's avocado growers association, said the first commercial nurseries for the Hass avocado were established in the 1960s. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, commercial groves were planted and soon Hass avocado production surpassed and replaced the national market for both native (criollo) and Fuerte avocados, as well as other avocado varieties.

He said the motivation to produce the Hass avocado was based on the excellent quality of its flesh, as well as, its sustained production capabilities, flexible crop schedule, durable nature and its ability to tolerate transport and storage. Moreover, the growth habits of the compact Hass avocado tree allowed farmers to increase tree density and increase production.

Over the years, Mexico's production continued to increase with the majority of the production coming from the state of Michoacán. Today more than 85 percent of Mexico's avocados come from this centrally located state from about 74 percent of the country's avocado acreage. In 2012, Michoacán avocado growers grew 112,671 hectares (278,415 acres) of avocados. Some other states including Jalisco, Mexico, Morelos, Nayarit, Guerrero and Puebla also

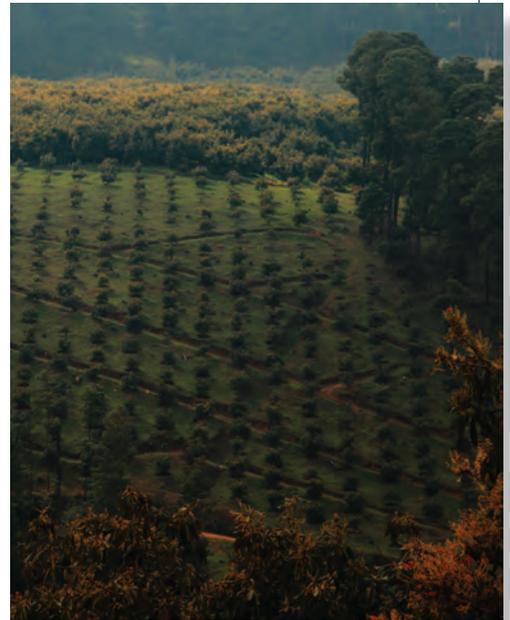
have commercial avocado groves.

Mexico exported about 361,000 tons in the 2011-2012 season and is expected to export 442,978 tons in the 2012-2013 season. These were harvested from 71,800 exportation-certified hectares. Serena said that after the United States, Japan is the second largest market for the Mexican avocado, with a volume of more than 34,000 tons in the current season. He said Mexico also exports to Canada, Europe, and Central America. Exportation of Mexican avocados first began in the 1990s.

Like California, one of the major production issues in the state of Michoacán is water. "There has been detection of reduced groundwater levels which is essential in order to stabilize the fragile ecosystem upon which the avocado industry and people of Michoacán depend on," said Serena. "Given this need APEAM has initiated a regional reforestation project that will plant, every year, 220 hectares with 220,000 trees that can naturally grow in these regions. Planting elevation will be 5,000 feet above sea level in areas that are conducive to capturing the most water that will seep back into underground rivers and lakes in the region."

He said the biggest challenge Mexican growers face is dealing with unforeseen climate issues that could affect the crop.

Because of the microclimates in the major producing region, Mexico is able to produce year round as each tree can have two blooms in one year giving the region four blooms in a



year. "Historically, the peak season begins in October and continues through May. Mexico's unique four-blooms, rich soil and microclimates allow for availability of quality fruit throughout the year in a variety of grades and sizes," Serena said.

While the APEAM executive said Mexico's domestic consumption is the largest in the world, he said it has dropped significantly in the past several years because of increased exports. "Mexicans eat around 35 percent of the world avocado production," Serena said. "The per capita consumption reached 9 kilos (19.8 pounds) in the early 2000s. However, it has been reduced to some 7 kilos (15.4 pounds) in recent years, due to the increasing volumes going to export markets." 🥑