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Del Rey expands organic avocados out of Mexico

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In February, with the 2013 California avocado season just getting under way, Robert (Bob) Lucy, president of Del Rey Avocado Inc. in Fallbrook, CA, told The Produce News that organic avocados have become “a very big part of our business.” That is true not just with California avocados but with imported product the company handles as well.

With the 2013-14 Mexican avocado season now under way, Lucy said Oct. 14 that Del Rey Avocado is building its organic volume out of Mexico. “One of the things we are really working hard on is expanding our Mexican program,” he said.

Del Rey used to depend on organic avocados out of Chile during the winter season, he said. But now “we are not getting any organic out of Chile so we are transitioning. We have gone to Mexican organic, and that is going very well. That is a program that is growing for us.”

Five years ago or so, some Mexican growers, seeing that “the market was really developing on organic in the United States,” made a commitment to an organic program, Lucy said. Because of that, “we seem to be able to get a pretty good supply of Mexican organic.”



Bob LucyOrganics are “still not a big percentage of all the avocados being sold,” he said. “It may only be 4 or 5 percent” of the category. But the entire category has been growing dramatically, and the organic segment has been growing with it. At Del Rey, it has become “a very good portion of what we are doing.”

The growth in Del Rey’s organic avocado business is mostly with mainstream retailers, he said. “You can’t go into a retail store now, no matter what it is, without having some kind of allocation to an organic section in the store, and it seems to be growing all the time.”

In conventional as well as organic, Mexican fruit “has become a big part of what we do,” Lucy said. Currently, the Mexican avocados were “coming in big time. Quality seems to be good,” and Mexico should be “in the marketplace very, very heavily from now until June.”

The Mexican exporters industry has “some very good promotions set up,” he continued. “There are some very good ads going on with Mexican avocados that have been very well received. They are spending a lot of money building programs.”

Del Rey brings its Mexican fruit into the United States mostly through Laredo, TX, and partly through Nogales, AZ. “We will be going to the Northeast. We will be going to Florida. We have a warehouse in Texas” from which fruit is distributed. “And we will have fruit [shipped] from Michoacán directly to Fallbrook.”

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