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Super Bowl leading surge in avocado consumption

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The Hass Avocado Board has estimated that avocado consumption around the Super Bowl weekend (Feb. 1-2) will top 100 million pounds this year, representing a 30 percent increase over 2013.

“We have seen consistent growth for many years,” said Emiliano Escobedo, HAB executive director. “Since 2000, consumption [during the Super Bowl time period] has increased 1,200 percent.”

He added that the amount of guacamole served nationwide on Super Bowl Sunday could fill New Jersey’s Met Life Stadium, the site of the 2014 contest, from end zone to end zone at a depth of more than 40 feet.

The major supplier of avocados for this most anticipated sports holiday is Mexico, with Chile also being in season at the current time. To a much lesser extent, Escobedo said some early California shippers might have some avocados for selected customers, and the Dominican Republic is also expected to send a relatively small amount of avocados to the United States during the late-January period.

Maggie Bezart, vice president of trade and promotions for Avocados From Mexico, said Jan. 8 that Mexico has been sending more than 30 million pounds of avocados to the United States on a weekly basis and that number will increase to more than 40 million pounds per week as the Super Bowl approaches.

“We actually kicked off our promotions on December 30th to take advantage of the college bowl games,” she said. “After that, we moved right into Super Bowl promotions and then we will follow with the (Winter) Olympics.”

Capitalizing on the party theme associated with the Super Bowl, AFM has a national tie-in promotion with Mission tortillas and tortilla chips whereby consumers can get free chips or tortillas with the purchase of three Mexican avocados.

Bezart said that currently 30 U.S. retailers are involved in an Avocados From Mexico display contest, and the promotion group is also utilizing radio and television advertising to promote the fruit.

While the promotional efforts peak around the Super Bowl, Bezart said AFM's goal is to promote avocados 52 weeks of the year to mirror the year-round availability of Mexican avocados in the U.S. marketplace.

Escobedo said the quality of avocados currently available is very good, with a high percentage of dry matter. In early January, the terminal market price has been in the low \$30s range per carton for most sizes of imported avocados.

Avocado sales have increased dramatically in the past decade with total U.S. consumption now topping the 1.7 billion-pound mark on an annual basis and soon expected to reach 2 billion pounds per year.

After two big crop volume years of nearly 500 million pounds each, California is expected to be down quite a bit in 2014 to about 325 million pounds.

Consequently, the California crop will be marketed in a tighter window, with most producers waiting until late in the spring to begin picking.

And HAB has estimated that total volume in 2014 will be fairly close to 2013 because of the decrease in volume in the California crop.

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