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## **Index Fresh continues its growth of bagged avocado products**

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With the consumption of avocados continuing to increase at a double-digit rate in year over year sales, Index Fresh Inc. is focused on working individually with each customer to help them meet the demands of their own shoppers. A result of this has been a significant increase in the selling of bagged avocados.

Bagged avocados are typically a value proposition and as avocado sales have more than doubled in less than a decade, there have been many more shoppers looking for multiple buys. Giovanni Cavaletto, vice president of operations for this firm headquartered in the Southern California city of Bloomington, said the company has doubled its bagging capacity in recent years. “And we have tripled the size of our sourcing team in Mexico to keep up with demand.”



Index Fresh avocados growing on trees in a hillside grove in Mexico. He noted that avocado sales are continuing their upward trend around the world as well as in the United States. “We’ve seen 15 percent growth in Europe in year over year sales and at

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least that much in Asia. Just because there are a lot of new trees in the ground and new groves being certified, it doesn't mean all that fruit is coming to the United States."

With regard to certified groves, he was speaking specifically of Mexico, which is largely responsible for the increased volume of avocados over the past two decades. "Mexico represents about 70 percent of the volume of avocados consumed in the United States and they also represent about 70 percent of Index Fresh's volume," he said.

Cavaletto is a member of the board of the Mexican Hass Avocado Importers Association (MHAIA) and he said acreage certified for shipment to the United States has increased to 95,000 hectares, which represents an increase of more than 10 percent.

Cavaletto acknowledged that Index Fresh was formed by a group of dedicated California growers, but it has grown so much bigger for the betterment of all. He noted that while Mexico is obviously well known for selling its avocados into the United States, Index Fresh has shipped California avocados to Mexico to help fill that country's demand during Mexico's light-volume summer season.

As he surveyed the current avocado marketing situation in early October, the Index Fresh executive expects a more average size distribution to greet buyers by late October and carrying through the holiday season. "Historically Mexico has had one of its largest ever flora loca crops this year," he said speaking of the first flowering of the four that the typical Mexican avocado tree goes through in a year. "It has produced a very large crop, in terms of both volume and size."

Cavaletto said as Mexico enters its regular crop season, the size distribution will be spread more equally across the board allowing for more bagged fruit.

With more groves certified in Michoacán, which is the historical source of Mexican Hass exports, and the potential for the state of Jalisco, and maybe others to join the party, Mexico is again poised to break its volume record for exports to the United States. Cavaletto said that for budgeting purposes, MHAIA has estimated that about 1.8 billion pounds of Mexican Hass avocados will be sold during its fiscal year, which is July 1 to June 30. California is expected to have a crop in excess of 400 million pounds this year. Add Peru and Chilean production and 2.5 billion pounds in calendar year 2016 isn't even a stretch.

Index Fresh is doing its part by working with each of its customers to customize every program it has. "We are driving our growth by meeting the needs of our customers," he said. "We will give them bags or bulk fruit. We ship from many different sources and we work them on preconditioning the fruit at our regional ripening centers. We listen to our customers and give them what they want."

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