
- Advertisement -

Nava Co. targeting Cancun-to-Europe flights to expand mango market

January 10, 2017

MEXICO CITY — In March and April, mango growers in Chiapas, Mexico's extreme southern point, are squeezed in the North American market, due to oncoming seasonal volume from competing growers in Colima and Nayarit. Atop facing new volumes, growers endure a freight rate disadvantage — at least for fruit headed for Texas.

But, Chiapas mango grower-shipper Rafael Nava is eyeing Cancun. So many Europeans flock to the sand, sun and fun that there are 98 Cancun flights a week winging to Europe. Between the suitcases loaded with sun tan lotion and flip flops there is plenty of room for pallets of mangoes.

“Every half-hour a flight leaves Cancun for Europe,” said Nava, who is the third-generation owner of Nava Co.

In February and March this year, Nava will be maintaining his traditional sales to U.S. and Canadian buyers. Thereafter, his eyes are looking toward Europe.



Rafael Nava, the third-generation owner of Nava Co., with his teenage son in Mexico City's Polanco neighborhood, where the pair took The Produce News to lunch. The firm ships mangoes from late January until late May.

Nava, who works from offices in Mexico City and Tapachula, has been doing the legwork to make this happen. He's visited many new European customers and has invited them to visit Tapachula "so they can see what I can and can't do."

By highway, Nava's headquarters in Tapachula, Chiapas, is about 883 miles from Cancun. Tapachula is 1,166 miles from McAllen, but without the competition.

Furthermore, Chiapas' mango shipments headed for any market other than the United States do not face daunting hot water treatment processes, designed to suit USDA phytosanitary rules.

Chiapas' Atualfo mango variety has a huge untapped export potential, Nava said. It is relatively unknown in Europe.

Furthermore, he is considering some of those airplanes shuttling sunburned tourists back to North America's northeastern corner.

Therein may lie transportation efficiency. Nava is also considering use of SeaLand's Atlantico ocean freight direct link to Philadelphia, but there is the deterrent of a \$2,000 to \$3,000 inland freight charge. Nava is also interested in the new Chiquita ocean service from Puerto Chiapas to Port Hueneme, CA.

In Tapachula, Nava grows 900 acres of mangoes and almost 1,800 acres of bananas. Many of Nava's bananas are sold to Dole and Chiquita. Nava produces an additional 750 acres of certified-organic bananas in Colima.

That fruit is currently sold into the Mexican market. The firm has a wholesale outlet, Bana Nava, on Mexico City's Central de Abasto produce market

Nava's mango packinghouse has the capacity to hot-water-treat, grade and pack 300 truckloads a season.

"Seventy percent of what we sell we grow," Nava added.

Nava credits Chiquita for "doing a great job" in marketing bananas from Mexico. "I think they want to be here a long time," he said. "On the other hand, we cannot just depend on Chiquita to export for us."

Nava would like to see Chiapas banana growers have a united marketing campaign to develop a brand name as Washington apple growers promote “Washington Apples” while also using their own brand names.

[Print](#)