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Avocados from Peru could see bigger window

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LIMA — Shipments of Peruvian avocados started around two weeks earlier than last year, and that could be a trend for the future as new growing areas in the Highlands and northern part of the country come into production.



Daniel Bustamante, president of ProHass, said that expansion to new growing districts will result in a longer shipping window for Peru.

Daniel Bustamante, a grower and president of ProHass, the Lima-based promotional arm for

Peruvian Hass avocados, said that the Peruvian avocado season typically starts off a little slow, builds to a peak and then begins to decline.

“This year, the peak will start a little earlier and last a little longer,” said Bustamante.

For example, in the Olmos district in northern Peru, an early-producing district, there are currently 12,000 acres of Hass avocado orchards. In five years, Bustamante said that number could grow to 80,000 acres.

The extended production window and larger volume play well with the growth potential of Hass avocados in Peru, which is being bolstered by the health and nutrition message for the fruit.

“The beauty of the avocado industry is that although it has so much potential due to health and nutrition, it is still not widely known and still has a lot of room for growth,” said Bustamante.

He said the United States is the largest avocado market in the world, but Europe presents the biggest growth potential.

“In Europe, promotions have not yet moved the needle, and we expect the efforts by the World Avocado Organization will start to have an effect on consumption,” said Bustamante. “Norway currently has the highest per-capita consumption of avocados in Europe, but Germany is the most exciting market now due to the number of people [30 million] and the wealth in that country. Eastern European countries are also starting to demand more fruit.

“China is now a tiny market for Peru, but it is doubling every year as people become more familiar and educated about Hass avocados,” he added. “The ceiling is very high for avocados around the globe.”

Bustamante said Peruvian growers do not take for granted that strong competition exists in those export markets.

“For the U.S. market, our biggest competition is Mexico, and for the European market Peru competes against South Africa,” he said. “In Peru, we take pride in the fact that we have responsible growers and exporters with large professionally managed farms that are focused on quality. And that is very important because we are not very close to our markets, so our fruit has to travel 30 to 35 days on a ship.”

Bustamante said that even though growers do an exceptional job producing a high-quality piece of fruit, the handlers and retailers must also do their part to provide consumers with a good experience and build confidence in the category.

“It takes some effort to properly educate the ripeners and retailers that sell the fruit,” he said. “For example, Peruvian fruit does not mature entirely black due to the young age of the trees and the sandy soil. So it is necessary to educate the trade about that.”

Bustamante said this will be an exciting year for Peru because it is a more important source of avocados than ever before.

“I think distributors had too high expectations for Mexico,” he said. “Now, importers and retailers are aware of the early production and high quality coming out of Peru and they are pushing hard to get it. Europe will receive the lion’s share of our volume, but as producers we need to be intelligent about our supply and fulfill the needs of the market. We need to keep a balance of our two major markets, the United States and Europe.”

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