

---

- Advertisement -

## Mexico's produce industry getting well-earned respect

January 29, 2018

CULIACAN — In life, familiarity isn't necessarily the fast lane to respect. Becoming familiar with a topic doesn't mean you'll be thrilled by all you find.

For the most part, those born north of the Rio Grande River generally haven't had an opportunity to know Mexico and Mexicans. (Cancun and Acapulco are nice, but they don't count.)

The land has such vast agriculture. When flying the length of the Pacific Coast, the stretch from northern Sonora all the way through the long state of Sinaloa is a checkerboard of irrigated fields. The landscape around communities such as Guaymas and Culiacan contain an astounding acreage of shade houses. Lime trees and other fresh citrus products have an expanding presence here.

To the south, beyond Sinaloa, the tropical areas of Jalisco, Colima and Chiapas are rich in other types of fruit and vegetable production.

In the highlands along Mexico's spine are numerous high-tech greenhouses of high value berries and vegetables to serve the neighbors to the north. Queretaro is so dynamic with new European technology and international influence. Guanajuato is a well-organized and highly professional leader in Mexico's produce industry. Sophisticated growers enjoy cool summer temperatures to supplement U.S. fruit and vegetable production.

Mexico is overwhelmingly the largest mango exporter in the world. Mangos are commercially produced throughout much of Mexico and yet only about a third of the national mango production is exported. Of course, Mexico — starting with Michoacan — is flush in avocados.

---

---

The combined efforts between U.S. and Mexican marketing committees have built huge markets for avocados and mangos.

### **Mexican produce leaders**

No Mexican agriculture would exist if not for educated, aggressive, forward-thinking people. It is this remarkable segment of humanity that makes it so easy to love the Mexican produce industry. Everyone is polite, gracious and respectful.

Time and time and time again, third-generation produce companies are represented by bilingual middle-aged presidents with hardworking children who are taught in fine schools and taught humility and learned in their families' smooth social graces.

### **Social responsibility**

Part of the culture is a wide-reaching respect for humanity, certainly for those doing the dirty work.

There are Mexican families who have for decades treated field workers with great respect. That is special because it isn't a universal attitude in any industry. But the Mexican produce business has come to appreciate that social responsibility is more than a catch phrase printed to please North American retailers.

In much of Mexico, people live on dirt floors, and bathrooms and running water are luxuries in the backwater villages of many of Mexico's migrant workers. Children need to work to help feed the family. An education beyond reading and writing is scarcely a lifetime goal for many.

So, the standards of living at socially responsible farms may not meet those of Holiday Inn Express, but the children are in school and families are far more comfortable, well fed and safer than what these workers left behind.

### **North American trade**

Another strength of Mexican fresh produce exports is its broad contribution to society.

Hopefully, a revised NAFTA treaty will leave alone the original text involving fresh fruits and vegetables.

Many Canadian, Floridian and California fruit and vegetable companies are operating in Mexico for good reason. This is an ideal location to produce for North American consumers. It is common sense.

If there is an overlap in production seasons, growers throughout North America will be competing to be the most competitive, which is based on quality, food safety and price.

The beneficiaries of the competition are, of course, the North American consumers.

Restricting consumer access to this vast production reduces the options for healthy eating and certainly raises the cost of living.

Furthermore, with saber rattling in Washington, DC, it's a smart move for Mexico to keep its options open by thinking of global markets. More than 90 percent of Mexico's produce exports have relied on

---

the U.S. market.

It's a good idea to continue developing those offshore markets.

[Print](#)