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U.S. consumers to get first taste of Colombian Hass avocados

From the beautiful country of Colombia, renowned for its cut flowers and producing the world's richest coffee, comes another treasure: Hass avocados.

The Colombia Avocado Board has recently been formed to promote the fruit grown in the country known for the myth of El Dorado. This fall, U.S. consumers will for the first time be able to place Colombian-grown avocados in their grocery shopping carts.

Colombian avocado production gives U.S. importers an additional unique and diverse source of the popular green fruit. The CAB is funded by grower volume assessments and industry support. The Medellin, Colombia-based Corpohass trade group represents Colombia's Hass growers and exporters.

"As Colombian Hass avocados are new to the U.S., the Colombia Avocado Board will play an important role in bringing growers, exporters and importers together in a cohesive marketing effort, which will benefit everyone throughout the distribution channel from growers all the way through to retailers, foodservice professionals and consumers," said William Watson, managing director. A veteran leader formerly of U.S. mango and watermelon promotion boards, Watson helped organize the Orlando, FL-based board.

Colombia growers harvest avocados through two harvesting seasons: October to March is the main season with a secondary season of May through August.

As Colombian avocados become available for U.S. consumers, the CAB is positioning itself to be the source of Colombia avocado information and promotional support, said Jim Donovan, CAB chairman and senior vice president of global industry affairs for Mission Produce Inc. in Oxnard, CA.

"Hass avocado growers and exporters in Colombia are smart to create the CAB to help the U.S. trade and consumers better understand their crop and its role in the marketplace," said Donovan. "As volume of Hass avocados from Colombia will increase the diversity of crop options for retailers and foodservice operators in the U.S., the CAB will grow to be meet the needs of avocado marketers as they educate consumers of the benefits of Hass avocados."

Logistically, Colombia fits U.S. avocado demand because of the quick transit times required for seaboard transit to both the U.S. East Coast and West Coast.

Europe and the U.S. are the biggest purchasers of Colombia avocados. From 2018 to 2019, Colombian exports to the U.S. grew 306 percent in pounds and 434 percent in dollars.

In 2014, Colombia harvested from 10,800 harvested acres. In 2020, production quadrupled to 41,200 harvested acres. "The Colombia Avocado Board will provide new opportunities for the promotion of Colombian Hass avocados in the United States, the largest market in the world. This initiative will also reassure our commitment to increase sustainable production so that the exportable offer becomes even more competitive as it reaches wider and more demanding markets," said Flavia Santoro the president of Procolombia.

In January, the CAB received formal U.S. Department of Agriculture approval. Following organization, the board publicized its formation in October.

As president of The Fresh Approach, an Orlando, FL, consulting and organizational management firm, Watson was the first executive director of the National Watermelon Promotion Board from 1990 to 2003. From 2006 to 2014, Watson was the first executive director of the National Mango Board, which he helped form.

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