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Hass Avocado Board celebrates 20th anniversary

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As strategic promotion is credited for being instrumental to growing demand for fresh Hass avocados, the [Hass Avocado Board](#) enters its 20th anniversary year by expanding the role and responsibilities of Gina Widjaja, director of marketing and communications. HAB has reorganized internally and formed a deeper bench of expertise under Widjaja to power its vision to make fresh avocado's America's most popular and desired fruit by 2025.



Widjaja is approaching her 10th year with HAB after over 20 years in marketing, including a nearly eight-year role at Sunkist Growers. Her diverse experience across marketing and communications has propelled her professional growth and deep understanding of the best ways to build consumer demand. Under the new structure at HAB, Widjaja has a larger team including a senior digital strategist, content manager, graphic designer and recently added, a registered dietitian to help expand the influence and impact of her marketing strategies.

“Twenty years ago, the avocado was an exotic novelty, and the headlines were about basic guacamole as a party food,” said Widjaja. “Marketing changed the narrative. Strategic promotion of the science to health professionals expanded and deepened the conversation, moving fresh avocados from special occasions to a mainstay staple for healthy living, integrated across all the different meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks) and in a variety of creative ways (on toast, in smoothie and in soups).”

In fact, U.S. consumption of fresh avocados has grown by more than 2 billion pounds per year since the establishment of the Hass Avocado Board in 2002.

“Growing demand without discounting requires focus on continually improving the value proposition,” continued Widjaja. “Our current strategy is based on redefining the value of avocado’s health benefits, relentlessly setting new context for the nutritional benefits of fresh avocados to elevate their worth and lessen purchase barriers. With every promotion, we give health professionals and consumers one more reason to love avocados.”

Marketing programs led by Widjaja have been changing public opinion about the perceived benefits of consuming fresh avocados, empowering health professionals to increase recommendations and giving consumers encouragement to invest in their health by enjoying the fruit in various meals throughout the day. Indicators of success under Widjaja’s leadership captured by HAB’s 2021 Consumer Tracking Study based on three waves of 2,400 surveys include:

- **Growth.** Proportion of households purchasing avocados is up from 64 percent in 2019 to 72 percent in 2021.
- **Reputation upgrade.** The top two reasons for purchasing avocados are now believing they are healthy and knowing they contain “good” fats. “Taste” the primary driver twenty years ago is now a secondary driver.
- **Influence.** Registered Dietitians recommendations of avocado as a source for healthy unsaturated fats increased from 32 percent in 2013 to 77 percent in 2021.
- **Impact.** Annual tracking studies show awareness for Fresh Avocados - Love One Today continues to grow, increasingly its role as a leading source of the healthiest reasons and tastiest way to enjoy fresh avocados

“The University of California, Davis conducted an evaluation indicating expansion of our investment in marketing would further increase grower and importer profits so we will continue to invest in Gina’s strategies,” added Emiliano Escobedo, executive director of the Hass Avocado Board. “Her focus on engaging health care professionals, in particular, puts the science in the hands of the experts with the greatest opportunity to improve American’s overall health and trigger long-lasting demand on fresh avocado purchases.”

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