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**Mexico breaks its avocado export record**

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By

Tim Linden

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With a total U.S. import volume just shy of 2.5 billion pounds for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2023, [Avocados From Mexico](#) eclipsed its previous high-water mark by more than 2 percent.

“This is very exciting for us as we broke our historical record,” AFM President Alvaro Luque announced to *The Produce News*. “And we believe we will break the record again this year (fiscal 2024, running from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.)”

Luque explained the state of Michoacan appears to have a crop for this current year that is similar to the previous year, and import volume from Jalisco is growing exponentially, which means another record year if all goes as expected. Luque, who has held the top staff position of AFM since January of 2014, said setting a new record again for FY 2024 would be extra special as the organization is celebrating its 10th anniversary, and the record number of shipments indicates just how well the AFM message has been received by U.S. consumers.

The organization will be acknowledging its 10th anniversary in Dallas in late September with an event to celebrate its top accomplishment of building what Luque believes is the top brand in the produce industry with a very successful marketing strategy.

He said the record-setting imports continue to increase as AFM sticks with its commitment to grow consumption through what it calls “tentpole moments,” which are avocado eating occasions that result in big spikes in sales. Promotions tied into Super Bowl weekend in early February was the biggest tentpole moment of the year resulting in excess of 250 million pounds of Mexican avocados imported in the weeks leading up to the big event. AFM also saw record-setting Cinco de Mayo promotions and shipments, with volume up more than 60 percent from 2022 and up 18 percent from 2021, which produced the previous record.

In the past, AFM has pulled back its promotional wings a bit during the summer as Mexico’s avocado volume dips to its low mark for the season and California and Peru garner a larger market share. But with Jalisco’s volume peaking in the summer, Luque said AFM has launched a more robust trade promotion campaign this year.

The organization will continue with solid promotion into the fall with Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15-Oct. 15) and a strong program with soccer and American football. “We have some unique partnership packages we are offering around American football that will be announcing soon,” he said.

AFM also had its largest number of foodservice promotions this past year with 37 foodservice operators promoting limited time offer opportunities.

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Speaking of promotions, the AFM executive said Mexico believes it has a responsibility to continue running significant promotions in each quarter of the year because of the dominant role it plays as the overwhelming volume leader. With 85 percent market share, Luque said it is clearly to Mexico's advantage to increase U.S. avocado consumption. While avocado consumption in the United States is expected to top 3 billion pounds this calendar year, Luque said it is a very reachable goal for Mexico alone to export 3 billion pounds into the U.S. market. "It's been an amazing ride for us and it was possible because we developed a broad-based program," he said.

Luque noted that Mexico had record shipments even though it's been a challenging year. In fact, he said both fiscal 2022 and fiscal 2023 were very challenging with completely opposite dynamics. In 2022, FOB prices on avocados were very high for most of the year. In 2023, the market has seen very low prices at many times. Luque said neither extreme is good for the category. He indicated that a consistent mid-range price is preferable to encourage promotions and increase consumption. "I love years that are little more balanced," he offered.

Like other players in the industry, Luque would like to see more development of other markets around the world, but he remains bullish about the prospects in the U.S. market. "The U.S. market is big enough for us and others players," he said. "As the market has grown, we still have had our 85 percent market share. But I don't worry about market share. Our goal is to make the pie bigger."

And he firmly believes there is plenty of room for growth. While AFM believes in its strategy of focusing on current avocado users in an attempt to grow their consumption, he indicated there is also opportunity to expand the base by introducing new U.S. consumers to the wonders of the avocado.

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## About Tim Linden |

Tim Linden grew up in a produce family as both his father and grandfather spent their business careers on the wholesale terminal markets in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Tim graduated from San Diego State University in 1974 with a degree in journalism. Shortly thereafter he began his career at The Packer where he stayed for eight years, leaving in 1983 to join Western Growers as editor of its monthly magazine. In 1986, Tim launched Champ Publishing as an agricultural publishing specialty company.

Today he is a contract publisher for several trade associations and writes extensively on all aspects of the produce business. He began writing for The Produce News in 1997, and currently wears the title of Editor at Large.

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