



By Maura Maxwell

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Pacific Fruits breaks new ground in Middle East



The company is pioneering shipments of Colombian Hass avocados to new markets

Colombia has carried out its first shipment of Hass avocados to the Middle East, just days after sending its first consignment to the US. The consignment departed on 5 November and is due to arrive in Dubai on 5 December ahead of WOP Dubai, the Middle East's biggest fresh produce fair.

"The Middle East is a new market for Colombian avocados and one we have worked very hard to develop," says Rodolfo Ahumada, commercial director of Pacific Fruits, the company behind the shipment. "Dubai is an interesting market in terms of prices and has a preference for medium to large-sized fruit."

For such a young company, Pacific Fruits has big ambitions. Having carried out its first avocado shipments to Europe just last year, Ahumada is confident that its export volume will hit 300 containers in 2017. The company is now looking to diversify into new

markets and product lines, such as Tahiti limes and pineapples.

"Last year was a steep learning curve as we had to quickly get up to speed on production and quality issues and establish reliable and trustworthy relationships with national suppliers and overseas customers," Ahumada tells Fruitnet. "The fact that we managed to ship 96 containers represents a huge achievement and has laid the foundations for future successful seasons."

As well as pioneering Colombian avocado exports to Dubai, Pacific Fruits was one of the first companies to ship to Hong Kong and will shortly carry out its inaugural shipment to Singapore.

"Our goal is to reach those markets to which we already have access while working with the government to open new markets," Ahumada says.

He anticipates that Europe will continue to be the leading destination for Colombian avocados for the next three or four years, followed by the US.

"When it comes to Asia, it all depends on the level of risk that exporters want to assume given the uncertainties over the transit time and cultural differences. But if we can do it then anyone willing to put in the effort and do a good job can succeed."

Pacific Fruits currently has 200ha of avocado production in Antioquia plus 100ha in Valle del Cauca, and it is looking to develop a further 200ha in the south of the country.

"We are the only company in Colombia with a presence in more than 12 avocado-growing departments, not just as a buyer but as a strategic partner to small and medium-sized producers," says Ahumada.

All in all the company works with more

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than 250 producers who between them cultivate around 1,200ha.

Ahumada believes a can-do flexible approach will stand Colombian exporters in good stead as they seek to establish themselves on the global market.

“The success of a country in a globalised world is to be able to reach all possible markets because you never know when situations are going to change unexpectedly. Sometimes, the most unlikely place can end up being a thriving market,” he observes.