



By Maura Maxwell

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## European avocado prices soar amid shortage



Peru's focus on the US market and the shorter South African crop have left importers scrambling for supplies

**A** severe avocado shortage on the European market is forcing importers to rely on airflown supplies from Africa and Mexico in a scramble to meet their programme requirements.

With a sharp drop in arrivals from Peru and South Africa, the dominant EU suppliers during the summer, prices are exceeding €20 per carton.

"The European and UK market is very, very short. We're seeing record prices from Peru as they've been able to sell to the US at very high prices due to the lower crop in California and Mexico," one UK-based handler told Fruitnet.

The situation contrasts sharply with last summer, when a huge spike in avocado volumes from Peru caused prices to plummet on the European market.

Elena Rogojnikova of Dutch company Hagé International said caution from

importers and the smaller South African crop had exacerbated the lack of product.

"Due to the relatively low prices in May 2019 European avocado importers were a bit careful with volumes," she explained. South Africa had less production in Hass this year, which also played a roll in the difficult situation we face right now.

The problem is believed to be particularly acute in continental Europe, with Dutch brokers bringing in avocados by air from Kenya, Mexico and Colombia in an attempt to meet their programmes.

"Peruvian suppliers sent bigger volumes to the UK due to the higher prices, which immediately resulted in a shortage and sent prices surging on the European market," Rogojnikova said.

"There are importers who are importing some avocados from Kenya by air, but this is not the case with Mexico because

the dry matter of Mexican Hass at the moment is too high to ripen it upon arrival in Europe, which makes not only container but also air shipments too risky," she continued.

Rogojnikova predicted that the shortage would persist high until mid-August when the first Chilean arrivals hit the market and the high season begins in Colombia. "However, I expect avocado prices to remain high through August and into September," she said.