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By Mike Knowles

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Avocados give NZ exports further boost

New report suggests value of country's horticultural export business could exceed NZ\$10bn within the next two years



Photo: NZ Avocado / Instagram

Avocados continue to emerge as the rising star of New Zealand's horticultural export industry, according to new figures published by Plant & Food Research in its latest industry annual Fresh Facts.

The country's avocado export sales grew significantly in 2017, the report revealed, to NZ\$147m from NZ\$82m in 2016, and while this could be attributed in part to the biennial nature of avocado production, the figure also represented a major increase on New Zealand's 2015 avocado export sales, which were NZ\$115m.

Looking ahead, this year's successful market entry into China augurs well for further expansion of New Zealand's avocado export business during 2018 and beyond.

More generally, New Zealand's horticulture industry clocked up another record set of annual results,

registering a slight annual increase in export sales to almost NZ\$5.12bn.

According to the report, New Zealand's horticultural produce business was valued at NZ\$8.8bn last year, up NZ\$100m on the equivalent figure for 2016.

It also accounted for 10.3 per cent of New Zealand's merchandise export income in the year to June 2017, with growth driven by increases in the export values of fresh and processed fruit (excluding wine) from NZ\$2.78bn to NZ\$2.82bn, and fresh and processed vegetables from NZ\$610m to NZ\$620m.

Star performers

Kiwifruit exports continued to lead the way, generating 33 per cent of horticultural exports at NZ\$1.66bn.

With wine exports bringing in NZ\$1.54bn, apples also played a significant role with sales of NZ\$691m outside of New Zealand.

New Zealand's horticultural produce was exported to 128 countries, with five markets — Australia, continental Europe, the US, Japan and China — taking more than two-thirds of the total.

Exports to Asia reached NZ\$1.95bn in 2017, twice as much as any other continent or region.

"The success of New Zealand horticulture is built on its well-earned reputation of delivering high quality and premium products to the overseas markets," commented David Hughes, chief executive of Plant & Food Research.

However, he suggested that the industry would need to keep investing in quality and innovating to retain its leading position and offer new products that met international market requirements.

"Adopting new technologies and best practices to minimise environmental and social impact of the production process

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will further strengthen our clean, green image in the global marketplace," he suggested.

Mike Chapman, chief executive of Horticulture New Zealand,

said the industry's continued growth was the result of its high-quality produce and the hard work of growers.

"We are confident that the industry will meet the NZ\$10bn by 2020 target

as long as we are committed to listening to local and overseas consumers and offering products they want and desire," he said.

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