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By Maura Maxwell

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## Steep rise in Chilean avocado exports



Strong demand across established and new markets led to a surge in shipments in the first nine months of 2017

**C**hilean avocado exports rose sharply in the first nine months of 2017 as shippers exploited a gap in the US market caused by the reduced availability of Mexican avocados, and demand in Europe and Asia continued to rise.

Figures from the latest US Department of Agriculture Gain report show total exports grew 42.9 per cent in volume to and 61.7 per cent in value between January and September 2017, reaching 90,985 tonnes and US\$197.5m respectively.

Europe was Chile's number one market, absorbing roughly half of its export volume, and the report said consumer demand in this market for Chilean Hass avocados remains strong. Spain registered a 40.5 per cent increase in import volumes, while sales also grew strongly in France, Germany and Switzerland.

The US absorbed around 30 per cent of

The USDA predicts that Chilean avocado exports will reach 155,000 tonnes in 2018 as

Chile's export volume. Shipments to this market increased by 158.5 per cent in volume and 219.1 per cent in value over the first nine months of 2016, reaching 23,070 tonnes and US\$458.8m respectively.

"Mexico had a 20 per cent decrease in production in 2017 which reduce exports to the US, opening a window of opportunity for Chilean avocados," the report said.

Chile also displaced Mexico to become the top supplier of avocados to China thanks to a 76.5 per cent volume increase and 88.1 per cent value increase between January and September.

China has become the main focus of the Chilean Hass Avocado Committee's marketing efforts, with a particular emphasis on consumer education via social media and online trading platforms.

Offline, the CHAC has teamed up with

chefs in a number of major Chinese cities to promote the use of avocados in their dishes.

"The campaign highlights health and provenance, the idea being to convince chefs to opt for Chilean avocados over those from other sources," the committee's general manager, Juan Enrique Lazo, told Fruitnet.

Lazo noted that the Chinese market was evolving as consumer awareness increases, although there is still plenty of work done to teach people how to eat the fruit and incorporate it into their diets.

"We have reached the level in China where people have lost that initial frenzy about avocados and we now have to ensure we maintain consumer interest," he said. "Thanks to improved supply, avocados are becoming more affordable for Chinese consumers and this will fuel new demand."

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acreage continues to rise and domestic consumption remains steady.

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