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By Mike Knowles

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## Fresca launches avocado spin-off

New business unit The Avocado Company aims to build on recent market growth as UK sales surge past £178m



One of Europe's largest fresh produce suppliers says it wants to meet expected further growth in demand for avocados in the UK by establishing a new company dedicated solely to sourcing and marketing the fruit.

The Avocado Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of UK-based Fresca Group, will offer year-round supply from grower partners in Europe, Africa, and South and Central America, managing those imports from a dedicated office and packhouse facility in Paddock Wood, Kent.

The business incorporates partnerships such as Cartama UK, a joint venture between Fresca and Colombian avocado giant Cartama that invests in production to supply the UK as well as other European markets.

The new company's general manager Paul Frowde said Fresca had identified a need for greater commercial focus on the fruit to maintain consistent, high-quality supply.

"This is something we've wanted to do for a while," he explained at a special launch event held at an avocado-themed pop-up restaurant in London called Avobar. "We believe there is still a huge amount of potential growth to come in the market as far as the amount of avocados consumers eat."

### Triple-digit growth

With the value of the UK avocado market apparently surging past sales of £178m in 2017 on the back of triple-digit growth during the past five years, the outlook is certainly positive, in part because shoppers continue to buy avocados more and more often.

According to the latest Kantar data, avocado sales have overtaken oranges, melons and cherries in the past year, and forecasts suggest a modest rise in market penetration could boost the category's value to almost £250m per year within the next decade.

"The appetite for avocados among UK consumers is such that the majority of retailers, if not all of them, are in growth,"

commented Ed Griffiths, strategic insight director at Kantar WorldPanel. "That's no mean feat considering the harsh retail environment."

In a sign that more growth is on the cards, Kantar's data indicates 3.6m households in the UK bought avocados for the first time last year. What's more, at present only a third of the UK population buys avocados in an average year. "By comparison, 50 per cent of the population buy oranges," Griffiths pointed out.

"In the last year alone, the value of the avocado category in the UK has overtaken that of oranges, melons and cherries – despite record sales for the latter in both of the last two years. 50 per cent penetration for avocados in the next ten years doesn't feel that unrealistic, and if it gets there that will be an additional £69m for the market."

Welcoming customers and suppliers to the launch event, Fresca Group chairman Chris Mack responded: "I think Ed has perfectly illustrated why avocados have become so important for us as a

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company. We've actually been trading them for more than 40 years, so we're not new to the business, but I think the growth that we see and the potential growth going forward has

meant that we've recognised there is a huge opportunity if we give this product the identity, the focus and the team that it really deserves. That's why The Avocado Company is now in existence and it will do what it says on the label."

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