



By Fred Meintjes

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South Africa anticipating strong avocado crop



New plantings and larger fruit put early season forecast at 16m export cartons despite being an off season

South Africa is expected to export around 16m cartons of avocados this year, compared to the 2020 crop of 15m cartons.

Subtrop's Derek Donkin said while it is an off-season for avocados, new plantings coming into production and better fruit size are a boost for the industry.

"Most of our regions had good rains and therefore the fruit tends to be bigger, which will boost pack out," notes Donkin.

"We know that every second year is an off-season, meaning that on alternative years the trees will produce a smaller crop. We are however pleased with what we have and look forward to a good season."

The season is expected to get going in mid-February with the first fruit to be delivered to Europe and the UK in weeks 11 and 12.

"New plantings in early and late areas are boosting our industry. Amongst the early Hass we will see more Maluma and Carmen varieties in the early season, while Gem and Lamb Hass will boost the late season," said Donkin.

He added that traditional Hass varieties still dominate the season but stressed the importance for South Africa to stretch its supply window to ensure more fruit becomes available outside the peak season, when it has to contend with the Peruvian crop.

Donkin cited the uncertainty that Covid-19 has had on markets, as well as potential logistical problems in South Africa, as challenges that may again cause problems similar to last year.

"We have come a long way and learnt a lot since last year. On our farms growers are dealing with Covid effectively, while joint industry action in the ports have brought about good cooperation with

the port authorities. We are confident, however, that all will go well this year," he outlined.

Donkin said South Africa remains keen to open up markets in Asia and is hoping some progress will be made in Japan this year.

"Essentially we await the arrival of a Japanese delegation to inspect our risk management systems. This will hopefully take place as soon as it is safe to travel again. We are also keen to advance talks in China. India may also offer new opportunities, although initially it will be from a low base once we get access."

Meanwhile, South Africa is pleased with the progress made with joint international promotions to boost avocado consumption.

"By working together, the world's avocado producers have really set the

example for other industries to follow. We expect further growth in consumption and we hope the consumer markets will quickly stabilize after Covid for this good work to continue,” concluded Donkin.

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