

By Tim Linden

Avocado Season Shaping Up Well for California Growers

With a relatively robust crop, the expectation of top-quality fruit once again and a very good marketing situation, California avocado growers appeared to have an excellent season ahead as they marketed their first fruit in January.

"We are expecting slightly more volume and very good quality," said Regional Business Development Director Gary Caloroso of the Giumarra Companies. "It's hard to tell sizing wise what will happen but we do expect a very good year."

In mid-January, he noted that Giumarra would begin marketing fruit from the Golden State when all the fruit sizes are released a bit later in the month. "We like to get started right away and we also like to be in the deal at the very end...into October," he said.

Caloroso said marketing conditions are always subject to change but he expects an excellent season ahead with a solid FOB price throughout the year. "It's too early to tell exactly what's going to happen, but consumer demand is off the charts," he said. "It's easy to say that supplies from Mexico aren't keeping up with demand, but demand is very good even when supplies are heavy."

The Giumarra veteran, who has been involved in marketing his entire produce career, said it is clear that continued promotion of the category is driving increased sales. He added that the California Avocado



Commission, Avocados from Mexico and other groups continue to aggressively market avocados, and consumers have responded. "The U.S. avocado market is the best in the world because consumer demand is so high. Marketing works!"

He added that the industry was entering a "new day. Avocados are a premium item. The days of cheap prices are over. Global supply is not matching demand."

He noted that the last quarter of the calendar year (October through December) is typically when consumer demand for avocados in the United States is at its lowest point, but 2024 saw very strong sales even in that period.

While lack of rain during the fall and early winter could impact the situation by reducing average size

of the fruit, Caloroso said there is demand for all sizes. "We are seeing a lot of demand for bagged fruit, which is typically used for the smaller sizes. That's a big victory for the industry."

He did add a cautionary note about extenuating circumstances including the Santa Ana winds that were wreaking havoc in Southern California as this interview was being conducted. Those winds had led to devastating fires throughout the Los Angeles basin, and Caloroso reported that they also were hitting some groves from San Diego to Ventura. "We won't know if there is any damage for at least a few days," he said on January 10. "But that's always a possibility."

Peter Shore, vice president of production management for Calavo Growers Inc. was equally optimistic about the marketing of the California



crop in 2025. “Demand is very strong,” he said in early January. “We usually see the highest consumption of avocados from January to March and then through the spring into summer.”

He said demand is at its highest level at the turn of the calendar because of many promotions focused on the football playoffs held throughout January, and also because of renewed interest by consumers to adopt healthier eating habits. Dieting is commonplace in early January and avocados sales are a benefactor of that mindset.

Shore noted that the early January FOB market was experiencing a “bubble price” that saw a case of 48 size avocados selling for \$75 to \$80. He does not expect that very high market price to continue nor does he expect bargain basement prices to return. “We do expect the market to back down a bit but I expect a strong market through the first quarter [of 2025] and into the spring.”

Shore said the marketing conditions are leading to an extended season for California growers who will most likely market more fruit in January, February and March than they usually do. This lengthens the season and will allow retailers, especially West Coast operators, to offer California fruit for a longer period than usual.

While Mexico’s 2024-25 avocado

crop (July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025) was estimated to be very similar to the nearly 2.5 billion pounds shipped the previous season, there are some indications that it won’t reach that level. Shore said shipments are running behind schedule. This also bodes well for California grower-shippers as they contemplate when to pick their acreage.

Putting numbers to California’s 2025 crop was Patrick Lucy, president of Del Rey Avocado Company, Fallbrook, CA. He said Del Rey’s field team had estimated the combined volume of the Hass and GEM varieties at between 375 and 380 million pounds, which would be several percentage points greater than last year. However, he said there have been some losses because of wind and fire. He also noted that lack of rain may adversely affect the ultimate size curve, which also will reduce total volume in tonnage.

But overall, Lucy called it a good crop that should feature good returns for growers. Because of current marketing conditions, he does expect growers to get an early jump on marketing their crop with some January and February shipments. He also expects more California fruit to be marketed in March than is usually the case.

The Del Rey executive said the global marketing situation will play

a role in the marketing window for California growers. He noted that Mexico’s shipments are running behind schedule and there is some doubt that they will have as much volume as forecasted. While Mexico shipments were quite low during the Christmas and New Year’s holiday weeks, he expects shipments to be as robust as they usually are through January (60-70 million-pound weeks). But what is in question is how long Mexico will have significant volume into the spring once they finish their heavy January picking.

He believes California growers will still market the lion’s share of their fruit from April through July with solid volume continuing into August. Lucy expects that the size of California’s crop will result in fewer Peruvian avocado shipments coming into the United States this year. He noted that the larger California crop will allow for more programs to be set up, which is the lane in which Peru avocados typically play.

Though the California crop is similar to 2024, the size of last year’s crop was a surprise, eclipsing the pre-season estimate by more than 100 million pounds. That excess fruit was not pre-sold in programs because it wasn’t predicted to be there.

The three handlers also commented that this season’s California organic avocado crop should be solid representing about 10% of the total volume. “We are continuing to increase our organic supplies,” said Caloroso of Giumarra. “We are seeing more interest from consumers and growers.”

He added that organic avocados continue to command a premium over conventional fruit. “They should get a premium,” he remarked, noting that a shrinking differential is not good. “Organic avocados are more expensive to grow and they should cost more.” 🥑