

Are 500-Million-Pound California Seasons within Reach?

Ever since 2024 when many California avocado growers hit record-breaking yields on a per acre basis, industry observers have wondered what the upper limits are for the state's avocado production.

In 2024, some growers, especially in Ventura County, realized yields well above 20,000 pounds per acre. Those numbers were unexpected and were a big contributor to a total production that was more than 70 percent above the pre-season estimate. Instead of a crop predicted to be around 210 million pounds, the final number was nearly 365 million pounds. Was that a one-year glitch or a harbinger of things to come?

"I do believe we have the potential for 500- to 600-million-pound crops," said Patrick Lucy, president of Del Rey Avocado Company in Fallbrook, CA.

He is not predicting that those lofty numbers will be reached in 2026 but he said the potential is there. Lucy explained that the inaccurate pre-season estimate in 2024 was the result of several factors but the most important was the over-performance of young groves in the Ventura County region, many of which have been planted in high-density patterns with many more



trees per acre. Great growing conditions and good winter and spring rain allowed many of these trees to perform at an optimum level that season.

In typical fashion, 2025 has seen many of those great-yielding trees take a step back in terms of production. Though growers have employed many strategies to even out a grove's harvest from year to year, Mother Nature still plays a big role with individual trees still following the alternative year pattern.

Lucy said 2026 is poised to be an on-year once again for those Ventura County trees. In addition, California avocado acreage is increasing. Hence, he believes a crop above 500 million pounds is reachable in the foreseeable future.

Peter Shore, vice president of product management for Calavo Growers, is equally optimistic. "Five hundred million pounds is definitely a possibility," he said, and didn't rule it out for

next year. “The set on the trees looks very good for next season. Of course, there are a lot of factors that will come into play between now and next year’s harvest.”

The Calavo executive noted that the younger, newer trees are performing well for a variety of reasons, all of which point to higher average yields. “California has been planting increased acreage in Ventura, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties over the past five years,” he said. “This acreage is on good growing land with adequate water supply utilizing the latest rootstocks.”

Keith Barnard, senior vice president of global sourcing for Oxnard, CA-based Mission Produce, also discussed the potential for increased avocado supplies from California in general terms without quantifying a target number to aim for. “Growing practices continue to evolve, which can considerably impact yields,” he said. “Growers have the potential to greatly increase their yields by implementing precision farming practices. We’ve seen some growers consistently produce double the state average yield.”

Barnard also noted that California’s avocado production potential is dependent on many factors including acres of production, evolving weather patterns, and available resources.

The 2025 Season

While taking a guess as to what’s ahead is always an interesting pursuit, handlers and growers are currently in the midst of what is turning out to be an excellent California season.

Reviewing the year in late June, Shore said that California has had a good year, which started early as some growers jumped in with volume in January and February as demand was very high. He said the high demand for California fruit continued in March and

April, resulting in about 60% of the crop being picked and shipped by mid-June.

“Our peak volume weeks as an industry were in late April and May,” he said. “The harvest did include a higher volume of 84s and smaller, which was caused by the extreme heat that we experienced in September 2024. The heat caused the seed to die and the fruit did not size accordingly.”

Calavo expects to have good volume of California fruit through August, tapering off in September.

Barnard characterized the 2025 California season as being a strong one adding that “quality is excellent, volume is steady, and sizing is peaking on 48s and 60s. Overall, 2025 is expected to be a solid season for most California avocado growers. Early season pricing was particularly strong, and the market has remained relatively supportive as we’ve moved into the summer,” he said. “Timing and fruit size have played an important role in grower returns, and overall, the season has offered some solid opportunities across the state.”

In late June, he said the state had passed its peak weeks with volume to last into fall at much lower levels.

Lucy echoed the sentiments of the others that California growers have had a good season and should expect demand to be strong throughout late summer and into fall. He added that organic avocados are expected to be in short supply throughout the summer as the heavy early demand has exhausted most of California’s crop and Mexico also has diminishing supplies until its new crop begins in September.

New Sources of Supply

2025 seemed to confirm that demand for avocados is continuing to grow as it has for most years in the past couple of decades. Lucy noted that there were very high prices for all fruit

including California avocados through the first half of the calendar year and it appears the late season FOB price will also be very good.

But growers are always worried about what’s on the horizon and there does appear to be new sources of supply on the cusp of entering the U.S. market. “Guatemala has been cleared for exporting to the U.S. They’re working through final details of this operation,” Shore said. “The state of Mexico is the next growing area that is in the process of certifying orchards and packing houses for the U.S. market.”

Shore, however, does not expect the U.S. market to be overwhelmed by new supplies. “Demand continues to grow in the United States and avocado marketing organization are doing a great job of growing that demand.”

He indicated that with U.S. consumption moving into the eight to nine pounds per capita arena, there is room for more supplies. Shore also expects that a good portion of the avocados grown in the state of Mexico will be marketed domestically to satisfy the growing avocado demand in nearby Mexico City.

Barnard also is very optimistic that California growers will continue to fare well in the years to come. “Even as other origins come into the mix, California avocados will always have a place in the market as a locally grown, high-quality piece of fruit,” he said. “Our diversified sourcing strategy leverages the unique harvest timing of every origin to provide a reliable supply of avocados year-round. California plays a key role in meeting consumer demand for avocados, especially during the spring and summer months.” 🥑