

World Avocado Organization Launches; Eyes European Promotions

After literally eight years of discussions, several groups, companies and individuals from the world's top avocado-producing countries have created a global avocado marketing entity called the World Avocado Organization (WAO).

Based in the United States, the organization's primary and initial purpose is to promote the consumption of avocados in the European Union, through a voluntary self-funded marketing program. As time moves on, the WAO expects that it would be the perfect platform to also promote increased consumption in Asia and other parts of the world outside of the United States, (which, of course, already has a national promotion program under the umbrella of the Hass Avocado Board).

Jim Donovan, senior vice president of international operations for Mission Produce Inc., Oxnard, CA, is the treasurer of the four-member officer committee of the new organization. The chairman of that executive committee is James Bosworth of Peru's ProHass. Donovan expressed optimism that WAO will be able to increase the worldwide consumption of avocados. The increased consumption in the United States is well documented, with most people crediting the significant promotional activities that have occurred in this country over the past half century. There are no similar programs in Europe, or other parts of the world, for that matter.

Donovan said that since the 2007 VI World Avocado Congress in Chile, there have been ongoing discussions about establishing a global promotion program patterned somewhat after the Hass Avocado Board, which is a U.S. government-sanctioned effort that is funded by mandatory assessments. He said after years of trying, there just didn't seem any way to move forward globally on a similarly-funded program, so the voluntary WAO was established.

Establishing a voluntary marketing program will present its challenges but producer organizations in South Africa and Peru are committed to funding WAO's early efforts. In time, he said organizations from all of the producing countries as well as companies and individual growers will be encouraged to join and help fund the program. The founding member countries include Brazil, Mexico, Peru, South Africa, and the United States

"The World Avocado Organization represents the creation of a major international body that has been years in the making and is, to date, the only multinational global marketing organization of its kind," said Bosworth, in a press release.

Donovan said he and Mission Produce are involved in this organization because "we believe increasing consumption of avocados is a worthy goal that will benefit us all."

The Mission Produce executive said he understands why some pro-

ducers may stand on the sidelines as it is somewhat of a tough sell to convince people to fund a promotion program for a market in which they are not participating. But Donovan said avocados are being sold on a global basis in a global market. Increased consumption in Europe will increase demand for the fruit and will benefit growers thousands of miles away selling to a different market.

He noted that both South Africa and Peru are very interested in Europe's growth as they are suppliers in that marketplace. He pointed out that every piece of fruit sold in Europe is one less avocado that will land in the U.S. market.

The WAO plans to launch its first collectively-funded marketing programs later this year in several European markets including Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and select Scandinavian countries. In 2015, the EU consumed about 800 million pounds of avocados and in 2016 consumption is expected to increase by 10 percent. That still puts consumption levels well below those in the United States. With a population topping 500 million people, EU's total consumption is only about 40 percent of U.S. avocado consumption, with a population of only 325 million people. With a concerted promotion program, WAO believes it can narrow that gap...and improve the marketing situation for all producers. 🥑