

Banana US market

US market back on the move

by Denis Lœillet

The US market leapt up by 5 % in 2017 to reach 4 235 000 tonnes, i.e. a consumption increase of 197 000 t. We need to go back to 2012 to find a similar rise. Consumption per capita set a historic record of 13 kg, i.e. 500 g more than in 2016.

One of the highlights of this year was the extremely big surge (+ 18 %) by Costa Rica to near the one-million tonnes mark, a figure it had not reached for a decade! The weakness in the USA of Ecuador as an origin (- 31 %), whose exporters clearly traded in favour of the EU and Russia, paved the way for Costa Rica, especially since Colombia made the same choice, falling by 11 % on the North American market in 2017. Guatemala continued to race ahead unchecked, with a two-digit growth

figure (+ 17 %) again this year. Mexico also made its mark, registering a leap of 50 % to 381 000 t, moving well ahead of Colombia, and thereby becoming the no.5 supplier to the North American market. The USA re-exported between 530 000 and 580 000 t of bananas to Canada.

The United States is alone in distinguishing certified organic bananas from conventional bananas. Hence we can estimate the gross imports of the USA and Canada at 430 000 t, i.e. a market share of 9 %. This is 60 000 t more than in 2016, and more notably more than double the 2014 figure (211 000 t), the first in the data series. Ecuador provided half of this volume, and was followed by Colombia, Mexico and Peru with equal shares. Neither

Guatemala nor Costa Rica export significant volumes of certified organic bananas. Going by the US Customs values, the premium on the organic banana is falling year on year. It was 2 USD/box in 2017, as opposed to 2.26 in 2016 and 3.1 in 2015.

The data for the 1st two months of 2018 confirmed the good volume trend of the US and Canadian markets, though with a lower growth rate of around 2 % as opposed to 5 % for the whole year (2017). Positions changed drastically at the beginning of this year, with Guatemala plummeting due to climate vagaries, as well as Costa Rica (- 4 %) and Honduras (- 23 %). Ecuador (+ 39 %) immediately made up for this very short-lived scarcity ■

