Avocado **2020 consumption review**

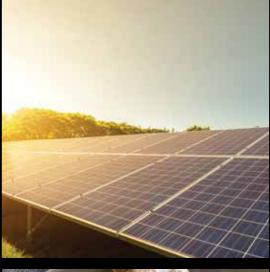
A fine dynamic, but relying on as narrow a base as ever

by **Eric Imbert**, Cirad eric.imbert@cirad.fr

2020 was the Chinese Year of the Rat. For avocado professionals, it was more like the year of the zebra, so stark was the contrast in trends between a very good world production level and trade in disarray from the Covid-19 pandemic. The consumption review that we can draw up for this extraordinary period is rich in lessons.



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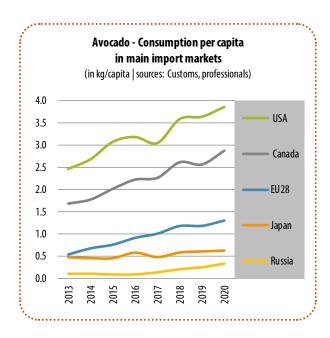




THINK WESTFALIA FRUIT



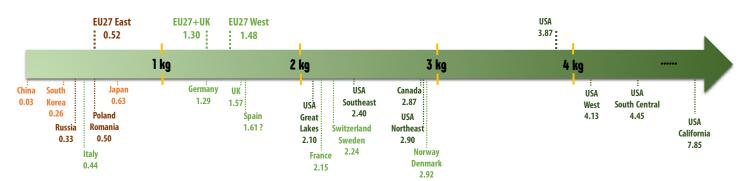
THE LEADING #AVOEXPERTS



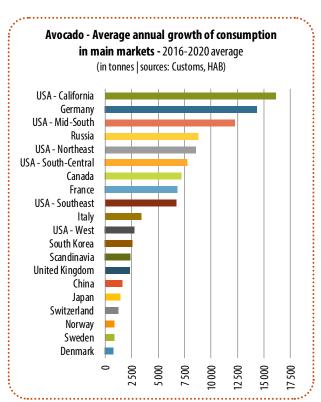
An eye-popping world consumption level

2020 probably brought a cumulative avocado consumption level across the major world import markets of 2.4 million tonnes! This figure excludes local consumption in the producer countries, which is difficult to estimate. Hass retained its near-magnetic appeal, with demand making further headway despite the curfews, lockdowns and above all a slowdown (or even a complete shutdown) of the OOH sector, which forced consumers to alter their purchasing habits (switch to the retail segment). We can only be delighted at this. Nonetheless, this review also confirms that while the US market and the EU27+UK market are drivers of development of similar power and high reliability (60 000 to 70 000 t gains in consumption on these two markets), the growth relays are still coming up short, especially the Asian markets, which have yet to take off.

Avocado – Consumption in main import markets in 2020 – in kg per capita









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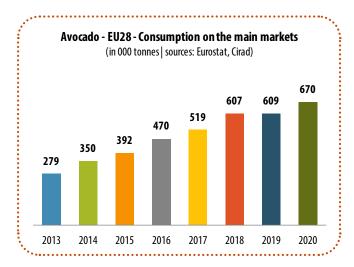


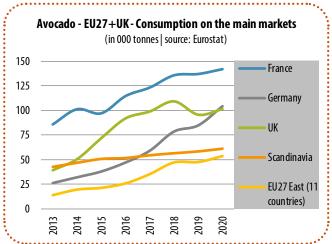


EU27+UK

A fine overall dynamic... but the devil is in the detail

The Covid-19 pandemic seems to have passed over the European avocado market. The consumption growth rate did not dip, and in fact registered a level above the four-year average, with a rise of 10 % (i.e. approximately + 60 000 t, as opposed to 54 000 t). We can hail the adaptation and innovation efforts made by all the professionals in the supply chain to pull off this feat. The market now weighs in at just over 670 000 t, with an average consumption level per capita of 1.3 kg. Nonetheless, a fine analysis reveals great variation in trends between countries. Growth has reached exceptional levels of around 20 % on new or recent markets such as Italy or Germany. There remains a strong growth potential in these still under-consuming countries. Conversely, while the high-consuming Nordic countries continue to register a small percentage growth, their volumes are tending to level out. This trend raises questions over the medium-term prospects of the major markets such as France, which are currently big drivers, but are approaching high consumption levels.





2020

TOTAL consumption

669 820 t

Comparison:

2019

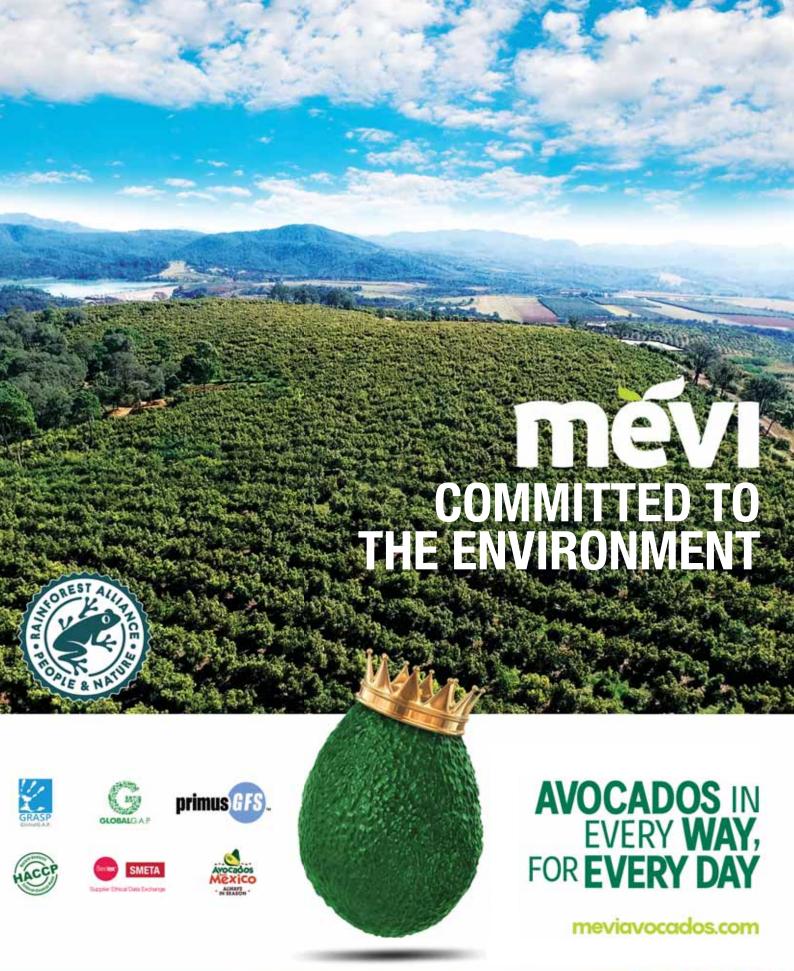
2016

+ 42 %

+11%



	Consumption		Comp	Population	
	in 000 t	kg/capita	2020/2019	2020/2016	in million
Total	669.8	1.30	11 %	42 %	515.3
France	141.9	2.15	4 %	24 %	65.9
Germany	104.4	1.29	23 %	122 %	8.08
UK	101.0	1.57	6 %	10 %	64.3
Scandinavia	61.5	2.38	5 %	18 %	25.8
Sweden	21.5	2.24	9 %	18 %	9.6
Denmark	16.4	2.92	- 4 %	24 %	5.6
Norway	14.8	2.91	6 %	20 %	5.1
Finland	8.5	1.55	11 %	8 %	5.5
Spain	75.0	1.61	11 %	100 %	46.5
EU27 East	53.6	0.54	13 %	108 %	99.7
Netherlands	40.4	2.41	2 %	10 %	16.8
Italy	26.8	0.44	19 %	103 %	60.8
Switzerland	18.8	2.24	17 %	36 %	8.4
Belgium	11.0	0.98	30 %	3 %	11.2
Austria	10.8	1.27	17 %	66 %	8.5
Portugal	10.0	0.96	28 %	317 %	10
Greece	8.8	0.80	20 %	52 %	11.0
Ireland	4.9	1.06	- 19 %	- 12 %	4.6
Luxembourg	1.1	1.82	38 %	94 %	0.6





FRANCE Population 65.9 million **GDP 2019** \$51 000 **Consumption 2020** 142 000 t 2.15 kg/capita **Dynamics** 6 860 t/year (2016-20 aver.) 6 %/year (2016-20 aver.)

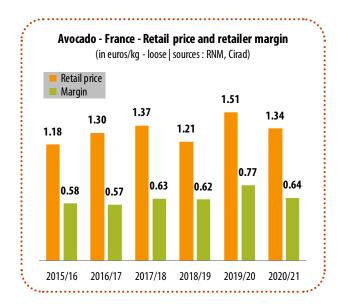
France

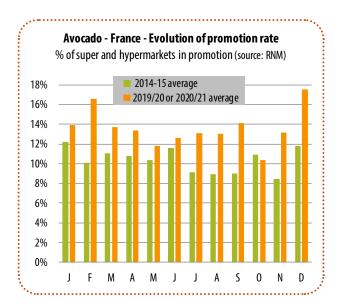
A historic leader still in good shape

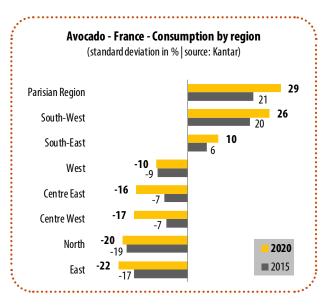
The 2020 figures confirm that France, a historic and leading market, remains a safe bet in terms of consumption dynamic. Volumes sold in 2020 approached 142 000 t, thanks to growth which was below the European average in percentage terms, but among the strongest on the continent in absolute value. The country is now one of the small group of six leading lights with a consumption per capita of over 2 kg (along with the Nordic countries, the Netherlands and Switzerland).

France, which has one of the richest portfolios of supplier countries, and remains less demanding than other markets in terms of product certification, is continuing its transformation both in terms of trading practices and consumer profile. The data from the panels show that the product is shifting upmarket. Modest households are consuming less and less (level 30 % below average, i.e. a 10-point loss in 5 years), while the richest and better-off middle class are increasingly big consumers. This trend is now firmly rooted, due to the evolution of retail prices. While there are more and more promotions, especially during the summer and period from November to February, prices are continuing to soar, even for entry-level references (80 to 85 eurocents per entry-level net bag in 2019-20, as opposed to 60 to 65 eurocents 5 years earlier).

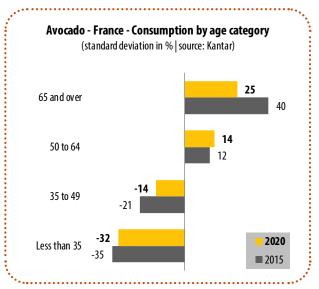
Regional disparities remain marked, and are even tending to widen. The product is retaining a distinct upward trend in the Southern regions of the country, with consumption 10 to 26 points above average. This can perhaps be linked to a favourable climate for high consumption of cold starters and salads. Similarly, the Paris region is increasingly dominant, probably thanks to its population's high income. While the North and East remain at the rear of the pack, their market share remains stable, while the Centre-West and Centre-East are consuming less and less (9 to 10-point loss in 5 years). The product's customer base remains on the older side (with 50 pluses largely over-consuming), though it is reaching into the more youthful segments (over-65s less attached, though they remain its biggest fans, with a parallel rise among the 35-49 age group, and to a lesser degree the under-35s).



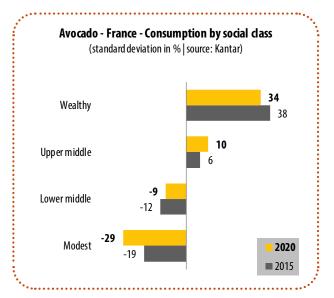














GERMANY

Population

80.8 million

GDP 2019

\$57 600

Consumption 2020

104 300 t

1.29 kg/capita

Dynamics

14 300 t/year (2016-20 aver.)

22 %/year (2016-20 aver.)



Germany

Precocious and now one of the giants

The 2020 figures seem like a minor victory, consolidating the soaring growth seen in recent years: Germany is now Europe's number two market by volume. Consuming just over 104 000 t, it has now overtaken the United Kingdom by a short head. Germany was again - by far - the market registering the biggest consumption rise in 2020, with an increase of practically 20 000 t. It has been quite a journey over the past 5-6 years, since triggered Hass started to gradually overtake green varieties on the shelves! With this change, the avocado is now present yearround in all chains, and segmentation is highly advanced. The conventional supermarkets generally offer two loose references (premium large fruit, and medium/small fruit at more appealing prices), which make up the bulk of the supply, and an organic reference (and sometimes twinpack ready-to-eat). The discounters' range is focused on a loose reference (often medium sized, e.g. 18), entry-level net bags (generally sizes 26-30), and often an organic reference too.

Changing expectations from German consumers, in particular seeking a healthier diet, as well as income growth, are facilitating the integration of the avocado into the regular shopping basket, with its exotic aspect a plus. The avocado is also now fully integrated into the specific commercial practices for the country's most consumed products, including the very popular weekly catalogue promotions. The consumer profile is multifaceted. There remains a strong link with income (more than one third of volumes are taken in by the highest-income households), and the over-65s are the highest-consuming segment of the population (26 % of volumes). Nonetheless, the millenials have a significant footprint: the under-34s are the second-highest consuming age group (23 % of volumes). Interest in the avocado from this population, often comprising singles or young couples without children, is much more marked than for other fruits and vegetables. There are fairly big regional disparities, which are also linked to both population and income. Bavaria and North Rhineland, both rich and populous, are predominant. The former East German regions are at the rear of the pack, with the exception of the Berlin zone.









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UNITED KINGDOM

Population

64.3 million

GDB 2019

\$49 900

Consumption 2020

101 000 t

1.29 kg/capita

Dynamics

2 300 t/year (2016-20 aver.)

2 %/year (2016-20 aver.)



Perfectly Ripe Fruit

United Kingdom

Still flat, but the potential is there

2020 was the fourth year in a row of unchanged consumption in the United Kingdom. Taking in just over 100 000 t, this country nonetheless remains one of Europe's main consumers, although it has slipped to 3rd position behind Germany. This is probably not down to the consumption growth potential. On the one hand, the Brexit saga, and in particular sterling's fall against the euro which occurred at the end of 2016, made this market less attractive. On the other hand, in 2020 the slowdown or even shutdown of the OOH sector probably played a more marked role than on the Continent, as in the UK this market segment is bigger (20 % of the market, as opposed to 5 to 10 % in Germany and 10 to 15 % in France, according to an estimate based on professional sources). Furthermore, Germany's dynamic is probably weighing down on the UK, since these two markets are competing for available volumes of fruit with a very high certification level. The foundations of this market point to a rapid resumption in growth: at 1.6 kg/year, its consumption per capita is now behind that of the leaders, it has a highly advanced segmentation, focused on a highly attractive and competitively priced flagship reference (tray of 2 size 22/24 ready-to-eat), with the Brexit deal now in place protecting against customs duty that could have made the product more expensive for the major origins.













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	SWEDEN	DENMARK	NORWAY	FINLAND
Population	9.6 million	5.6 million	5.1 million	5.5 million
GDP 2019	\$56 700	\$62 100	\$70 000	\$53 100
Consumption 2020	21 500 t	16 400 t	14 800 t	81 500 t
	2.24 kg/capita	2.92 kg/capita	2.91 kg/capita	1.55 kg/capita
Dynamics	800 t/year (2016-20 aver.)	800 t/year (2016-20 aver.)	600 t/year (2016-20 aver.)	900 t/year (2016-20 aver.)
	4 %/year (2016-20 aver.)	5 %/year (2016-20 aver.)	5 %/year (2016-20 aver.)	2 %/year (2016-20 aver.)

Scandinavia

The crack that must not be ignored

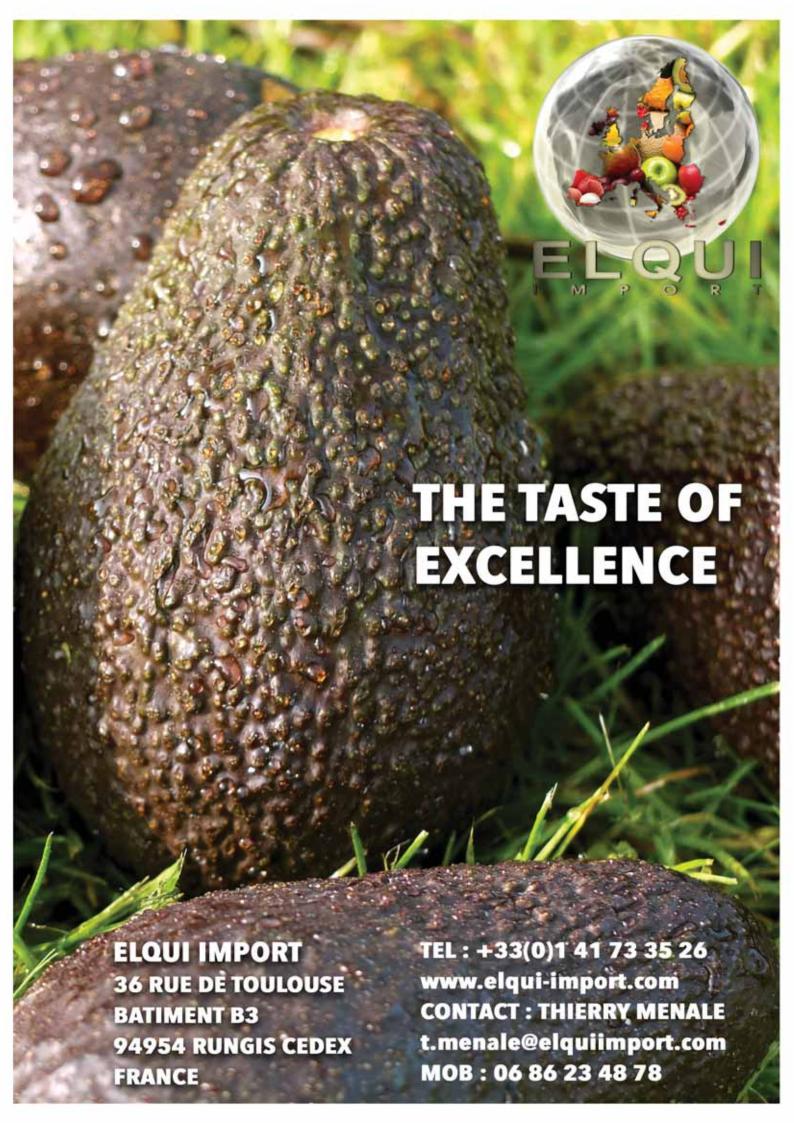
2020 was another year of light growth in the Nordic countries. The combined volumes sold by Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland rose by only just over 3 000 t, to reach 61 000 t. The average annual growth of these markets over the last five years has been between 3 and 5 %, half that of the EU27 (11 %). However, volumes available were abundant, in particular for small fruit which is popular on these markets, and the attractive prices. This near-stagnation illustrates the inversely proportional relationship between consumption level and growth dynamic, with all these markets (except for Finland) boasting the highest consumption levels in Europe (between 2.2 kg for Sweden and more than 2.9 kg for Denmark and Norway). This is an alarm signal that must not be ignored.



	ITALY		
Population	60.8 million		
GDP 2019	\$45 700		
Consumption 2020	26 800 t		
	0.44 kg/capita		
Dynamics	3 400 t/year (2016-20 aver.)		
	19 %/year (2016-20 aver.)		

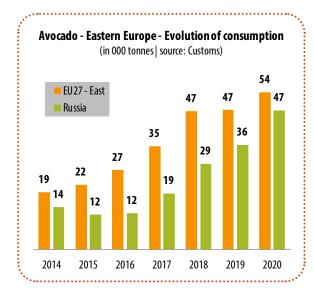
ItalyTake-off confirmed

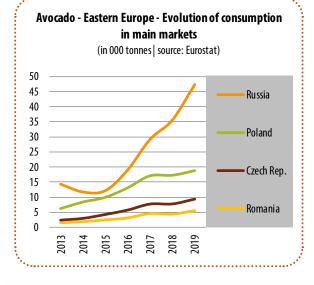
Along with Germany, Italy seems to be the other major high-potential market (60 million consumers) emerging from the shadows. True, the volumes remain modest: nearly 27 000 t in 2020, i.e. 440 g/capita. However, the dynamic is very strong, with average annual growth of approximately 20 % over the past five years. The avocado is now listed year-round by the country's major supermarkets. The conventional chains, whose range is focused on Hass, generally offer loose avocados (medium to large, e.g. 14/16) and a ready-to-eat reference (a 200 g or 300 g blister-packed avocado). The avocado is also present in the discounter segment, but their range is still based mainly on the green varieties (especially Pinkerton), with preference for large avocados at an early stage of maturity. Regional disparities in consumption are huge, with the northern regions taking in two thirds of the supply. We should note the start of small-scale local production in Sicily (at least a hundred or so hectares of Hass and Bacon in 2018, mainly in the north-east of the island), as well as in Puglia (at least sixty or so hectares in the Tarente region).



	EU East (11 countries*)	POLAND	ROMANIA	CZECH REP.
Population	102 million	38 million	19 million	11 million
GDP 2019		\$35 200	\$33 300	\$44 300
Consumption 2020	53 600 t	18 800 t	9 400 t	5 400 t
	0.53 kg/capita	0.5 kg/capita	0.49 kg/capita	0.51 kg/capita
Dynamics	6 600 t/year (2016-20 aver.)	2 200 t/year (2016-20 aver.)	1 300 t/year (2016-20 aver.)	731 t/year (2016-20 aver.)
	19 %/year (2016-20 aver.)	17 %/year (2016-20 aver.)	22 %/year (2016-20 aver.)	21 %/year (2016-20 aver.)

^{*} Poland, Romania, Czech Rep., Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia, Baltic States





Eastern Europe

A strong dynamic

The EU27's eastern markets continued to exhibit a strong and practically irreproachable dynamic (+ 13). The nearly one-hundred million inhabitants of the eleven countries making up this zone consumed approximately 54 000 t of avocados in 2020. The market has doubled in four years, thanks in particular to a strong dynamic from Poland, Romania and the Czech Republic. Consumption is now around 0.5 kg/ capita in these countries, as in more modestly-sized markets such as Slovakia and Slovenia. Hungary and Croatia remain off the pace. Growth also seems very strong in the Baltic States, though there is a possible statistical bias (entry point). Green varieties continue to make up the bulk of the range, with their prices better suited than Hass to the more limited purchasing power in this zone (GDP per capita 15 to 30 % below the European average for the most part).

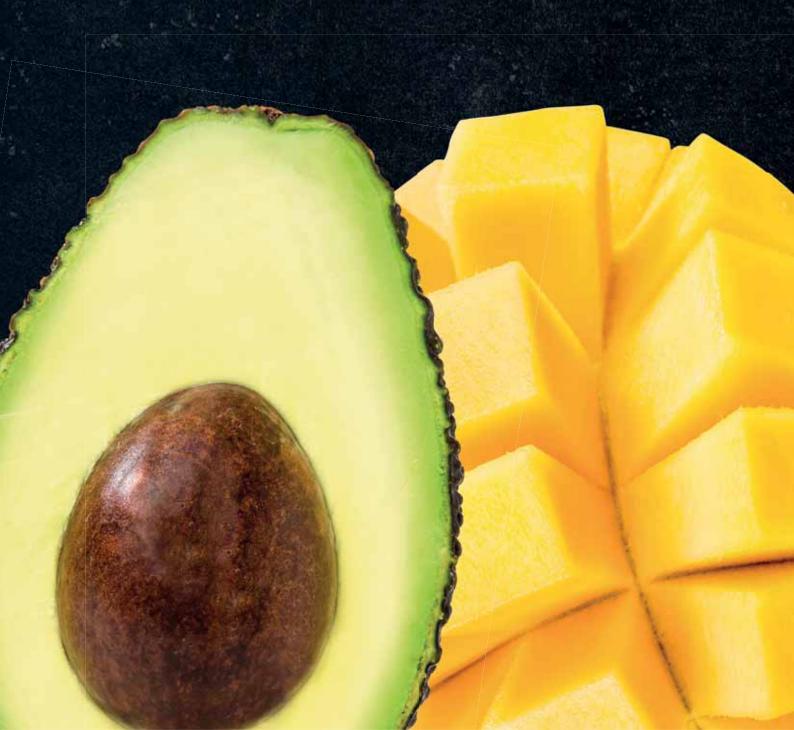
Beyond the borders of the EU27, Russia too is booming. Just as for the eastern EU, the size of the market was around 50 000 t in 2020, but the growth dynamic was even stronger (nearly quadrupling in 4 years). The consumption boom is particularly marked in spring and during the summer, especially thanks to the increasingly massive influx of Peruvian fruit. Green varieties remain very much predominant (nearly 90 % of the supply in 2020), though Hass is on a rising trend. The potential of this market of more than 140 million inhabitants remains huge, with consumption per capita less than 350 g/year.

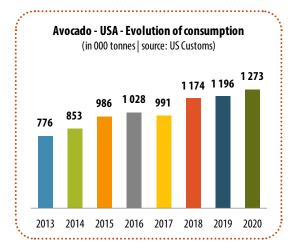


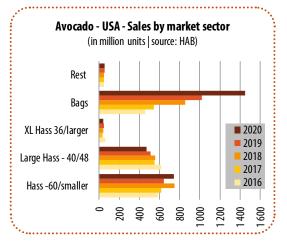


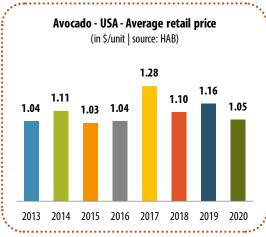


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United States

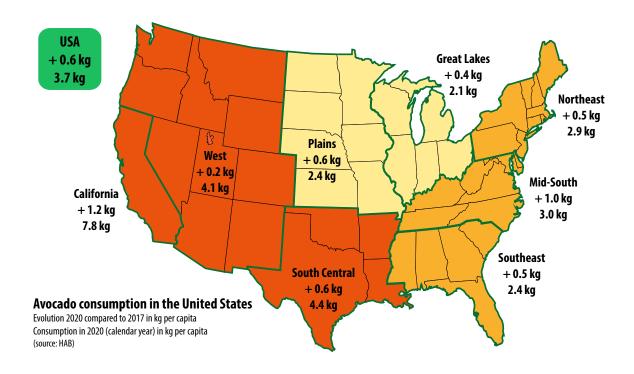
A well above-average performance!

The consumption growth registered in 2020 across the Atlantic compares fairly well to the four-year average (+ 6.5 % as opposed to 5.3 %). In view of the health crisis context, this was some feat. The OOH segment, which in the USA contributes very heavily to avocado sales (approximately 30 % according to professionals) was idling, or even completely shut down in certain States from March, i.e. for ten months. It was an exceptional retail sales dynamic which enabled the market not only to keep its head above water, but actually achieve a considerable rise (approximately 1.3 million tonnes consumed, i.e. nearly 3.9 kg/capita). The increase reached an exceptional figure of more than 20 % nationally, exceeding 25 % in certain regions (North-East, Mid-South). The secret behind this dynamic? There is the product promotion organised by the HAB of course, which in 2020 enjoyed an unrivalled clout with a budget in excess of \$65 million, thanks to the parafiscal charge levied on each box sold. There is also the highly appealing retail price level, down by more than 10 cents from 2019 to \$1.05/fruit on average. It is the net bag segment (generally 4 or 5 small fruits, not pre-ripened, sold at between \$5 and \$6) which of course was the armed wing of this highly aggressive commercial policy, made possible by a very good harvest level in both Mexico and California. Volumes of fruit sold in this form increased quicker than in previous years (+ 43 % on 2019), especially since the packaging represented a health asset. The net bag market has tripled in five years, leading the way since 2018.



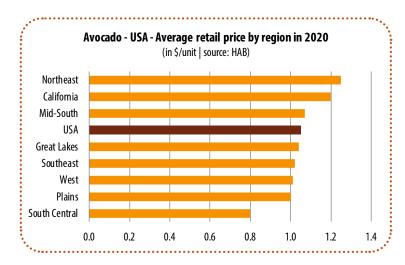


Photos © Eric Imber



Sometimes counter-intuitive regional disparities

The regional analysis reveals some surprises. As we would very much expect, the highest-consuming regions recorded below-average performances (+ 5 % in South Central and - 3 % in the West, with in both cases consumption of more than 4 kg/capita). However, we can note a considerable exception: California. Volumes per capita, though already twice the national average, leapt up by 11 % to reach 7.8 kg/capita. This wonderful anomaly can probably be explained by the high proportion of the Hispanic population (30 % as opposed to 18 % nationally), and by the presence in 2020 of a bumper local production, sold at attractive prices in the Covid context mentioned above. Also very much expectedly, we can find the best rises in the lowest-consuming regions (Mid-South and the Plains, which are also the zones with the biggest rises since 2017). But there were some exceptions too. The highly populous and wealthy North-East maintained its ceiling for the third year in succession at 2.9-3.0 kg/capita. Is there a relationship with the retail price, systematically the highest in the country, and 15 to 20 % above the national average? A similar stagnation trend, at 2.4-2.6 kg/capita, was found in the South-East, though retail prices there are much more aggressive.



Non-Hispanic consumption on the increase

Can growth on the US market, more essential than ever in terms of world market balance given the planting dynamic, hold up? The studies commissioned by the HAB, a genuine gold mine of inspiration for professionals, thanks to the precision of the analysis enabling them to put together highly operational actions based on good targets, provide grounds for optimism. They show that the base of super-consumers (more than \$26/year), representing approximately 28 % of households but 70 % of sales, is tending to expand. Above all, it seems that non-Hispanics are increasingly entering this category (27 % in 2019, i.e. + 4 % in 3 years). This can be an enormous source of progress, since this population represents 83 % of households, and is much less attached to the product (penetration rate of 61 %, as opposed to 85 % for Hispanics). Furthermore, this same study also showed that supermarkets benefit from expanding this base, since avocado super-consumers are super-consumers in general!

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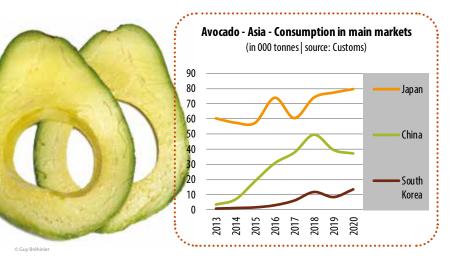
	JAPAN	SOUTH KOREA	CHINA	
Population	106.1 million	51.8 million	1 398 million	
GDP 2019	\$43 600	\$44 000	\$16 800	
Consumption 2020	79 560 t	13 300 t	37 100 t	
	0.63 kg/capita	0.26 kg/capita	0.03 kg/capita	
Dynamics	1 400 t/year (2016-20 aver.)	2 600 t/year (2016-20 aver.)	1 600 t/year (2016-20 aver.)	
	2 %/year (2016-20 aver.)	46 %/year (2016-20 aver.)	5 %/year (2016-20 aver.)	

Asia

Still no Eldorado

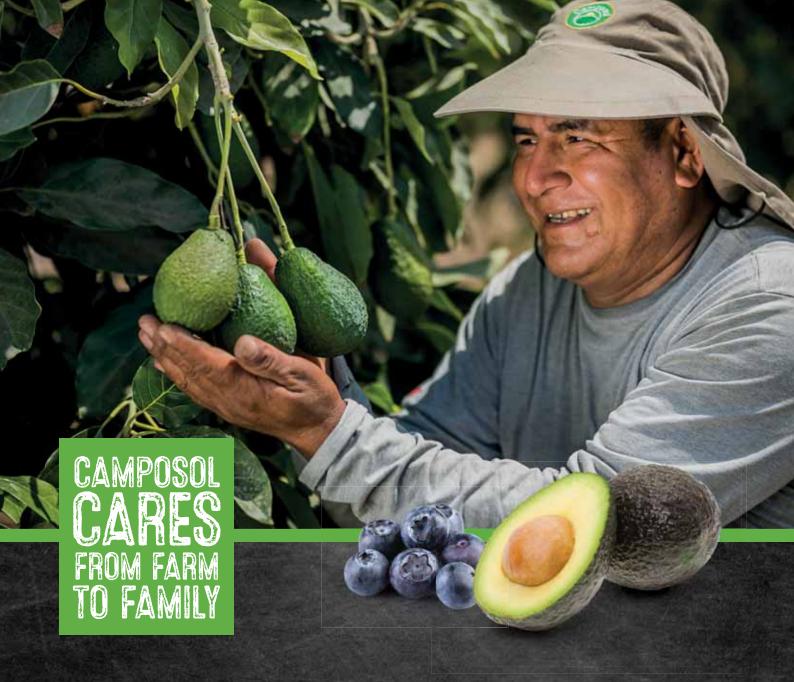
The consumption dynamic maintained its trend from previous years... i.e. practically no exceptional dynamic. It is true that 2020 is probably not ideal for gauging the health of these markets, where the pandemic had a violent impact and economic activity was hit hard by the tough lockdown measures. In Japan, with a consumption of practically 80 000 t, optimists will see an absolute record, while others a very slight rise by the market of barely more than 5 000 t in three years. The very considerable expansion of the range of supplier countries, with Japan's borders opening up to high export potential countries such as Peru and more recently Colombia, has not for the moment got the market going. The consumption per capita remains close to 600 g/year, among the lowest levels in high-GDP countries.

The Year of the Rat did the avocado no favours in China either. There was a second year of stagnation between 35 000 and 40 000 t, which shunts back a little further into the (recent) past this market's period of strong growth (nearly 50 000 t consumed in 2018, after a surge in volumes during the 2010s). However, the growth potential is there (middle class of 140 million households, with a revenue of between \$15 000 and \$75 000 in 2020), and the sector's big players are not holding back. However, it will probably take time to better raise awareness of this product which is not part of the culture, and develop suitable storage and ripening infrastructures. Growth did prevail in South Korea, the region's number three market (just over 13 000 t). However, the dynamic is still weak, despite consumption per capita of around 260 g.



Stimulate more growth in Europe

2020 confirmed an already well-rooted scenario. Tapping into the major potential of the Asian markets, and in particular the Chinese market, will still take time, and require much more investment, both in educating consumers and in setting up infrastructures (storage chambers and ripening chambers in particular). Pending this new impetus, and while world production progresses at a heightened tempo, the growth - and also balance - of the world market will continue to rely primarily, for the medium term, on the current two mainstays of the international avocado trade, namely the USA and the European Union. Investment needs to be made in the dynamic of these two markets. The work has been done - and indeed very well done - in the USA, where the HAB has managed to mobilise large-scale resources to develop both field marketing and launch research actions to forge new powerful means of communication (in particular working on specifying the product's extraordinary health assets). It is very much insufficient in Europe, where the WAO's budget remains too small. Should the actions not be shifted to a more operational focus, to promote greater uptake? Although some growth relays are in place (Germany) or emerging (Italy), there is a big risk of seeing the dynamic run out of steam on markets which are currently big drivers such as France, in the same way as the Nordic countries. The over-supply crises, becoming ever more frequent (summer 2018, summer 2020, start of winter 2020), are signals that must not be ignored. The EC market's unprecedented downturn in value in 2020 is another alarming example. Professionals have the choice, while the trade remains lucrative, to play a "win-win" strategy, by breathing new life into promotion efforts in Europe



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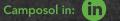














European avocado market – Winter 2020-21 provisional review

A good fight, but...

There are some good points to take from the 2020-21 winter campaign, and some less good. First of all, let's start with the good: the resilience of the market, which in the ongoing tough context of the pandemic, was able to cope with a small rise in volumes (+ 6 % approximately, according to still provisional figures), registering only a limited drop in rates (with our indicator down by 4%). However, the less optimistic (or more lucid) will also note major trends which the market will need to address in future, and which led to a slip at the beginning of winter, which providence kept under control.

While the overall supply changed in only moderate proportions, the analysis by supplier country shows major movements, some of which are structural in nature. This was not the case for the collapse in Chilean volumes, which were more than 40 % below the two-season average. This drastic fall, much steeper than predicted at the beginning of the season, was essentially due to unfavourable climate conditions, with the downward trend in surface areas only aggravating the shortfall. Conversely, the very steep rise in Mexican and Colombian shipments is clearly a major trend. Although the figures are yet to be confirmed, the combined imports from Michoacán and Jalisco should exceed 100 000 t, reaching nearly 80 % above average (more than doubling in two years!). This spectacular leap has a twofold cause: the Jalisco cultivation area entering its prime (35 000 ha in 2020, with 30 % less than 5 years old), and for the Michoacán operators, the greater price appeal available in Europe compared to the USA. The boom in Colombian shipments (also more than doubling in two years) is, just as in Jalisco, structural and due to the near-exponential expansion of surface areas (probably 30 000 ha in 2020, with 10 000 ha comprising trees less than 3 years old). We should not be fooled by the near-stagnation in Mediterranean volumes in 2020-21. This was due to unfavourable weather or an alternate bearing effect -

massive surface areas of young orchards are in place and ready to express their potential in the very short term, in Spain, Israel and Morocco.

This campaign confirms two major supply trends. On the one hand, the winter campaign trading calendar is narrowing, with the extension of the Peruvian season eating into the September market and increasingly encroaching on the October market. These three to four lost weeks in the first part of the season concentrate the volumes to be sold over six months rather than seven, which equates to a supply increase of more than 15 %. On the other hand, the very strong surge in volumes over the period October to December is becoming a constant, with the combined production peaks of the two booming suppliers, Jalisco and Colombia. This time there was a dramatic twist - the fall in Chilean volumes, as unexpected as it was premature - which enabled rates to rapidly recover, after dropping to less than €8/box at the import stage for sizes 22-24. But what about in the coming seasons?



	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21*	2020-21 compared to	
in tonnes				2019-20	2018-2020 average
Total N. Hemisphere	314 625	356 413	376 500	+6%	+ 12 %
Mexico	47 561	71 645	105 000	+ 47 %	+ 76 %
Colombia (SeptApril)	29 986	39 089	67 000	+ 71 %	+ 94 %
Spain	57 000	57 100	55 000	- 4 %	- 4 %
Chile	87 571	95 210	54 000	- 43 %	- 41 %
Israel	60 101	43 465	45 000	+4%	- 13 %
Morocco	11 237	32 649	30 000	-8%	+ 37 %
Dominican Republic	8 657	11 482	14 000	+ 22 %	+ 39 %
Others	4 375	5 773	6 500	+ 13 %	+ 28 %

^{*} provisional figures

Source: Eurostat – February: projection based on professional sources

