



2016

## Country Profile: Kenya

Producer country profile produced by *CIRAD, The Centre De Cooperation International En Recherche Agronomique Pour Le Développement*.



## Producer country file

### Kenyan avocado

by Eric Imbert

Kenya is the only source exporting substantial volumes (25 000 to 30 000 t per year) based in large part on production by small subsistence farmers. The industry has been able to respond to changing European demand by increasing its certification level and refocusing its supply on Hass, while diversifying its outlets, especially to the Arabian Peninsula. Avocado cultivation has developed to take advantage of the country's strong agricultural potential, though dealing with the heterogeneity of some of the produce and the relatively protracted logistics remain challenges.



## Avocado — Kenya

### Location

Kenya consists primarily of savannah and deserts, with just 15 % of its surface area suitable for agriculture. Practically all the agricultural land is packed into the plateaux of the south-west quarter of the country (Midlands and Highlands). The avocado is mainly cultivated in the zone between Nairobi and the north of Mount Kenya: Kiambu, Embu, Meru, Nyeri, Kirinyaga and Muranga, where the country's only industrial plantation is situated, near Makuyu. The rainfall is sufficiently abundant (1 200 mm/year on average) and well distributed to limit irrigation

requirements. The well-drained volcanic soils help prevent *Phytophthora* problems. The clement temperatures of between 16 and 24°C, thanks to an altitude varying between 1 700 and 2 100 m, mean that production is possible for the majority of the year. Cercosporiosis is a serious sanitary constraint. There are also plantations present west of Nairobi, in the central and southern part of the Rift valley (Bungoma, Nyamira, Kisii). They are tending to expand, although the soil is heavier in certain zones, and the *Phytophthora* problems more severe.





## Avocado — Kenya

### Production

The avocado was introduced in ancient times. However, its cultivation developed only after independence, with the State seeking to diversify an economy highly dependent on tea and coffee. Measures were implemented to develop horticulture (creation of the Horticultural Crop Development Authority), based in particular on small subsistence farms (a model which had proven itself during the colonial period with the Swynnerton plan). An extremely large production base of very small farmers (5 to 10 trees) was formed, especially via a free plant distribution and minimum technical support programme run by the National Horticultural Research Station, from the late 1970s to the early 1980s. Meanwhile, private companies became involved in collection, packing and export. Three-quarters of the country's production still apparently originates from these very small facilities, with the remainder in the hands of the country's only agro-industrial group present in the sector (Kakuzi, which owns approximately 400 ha of its own plantations). During the 2000s, the relationship between the worlds of production and export developed and strengthened, driven by international programmes such as the Kenya Business Development Service Programme, funded by USAID. The traders/collectors, which do not provide any technical monitoring and take advantage of the weakness of small producers, are still active. However, some of the exporters have established direct and long-term relationships with producer groups, for which they provide technical monitoring (advice, supplying inputs, etc.) and a guarantee of better economic returns. Production should continue to develop over the coming years, especially in Hass.



### Production calendar and varieties

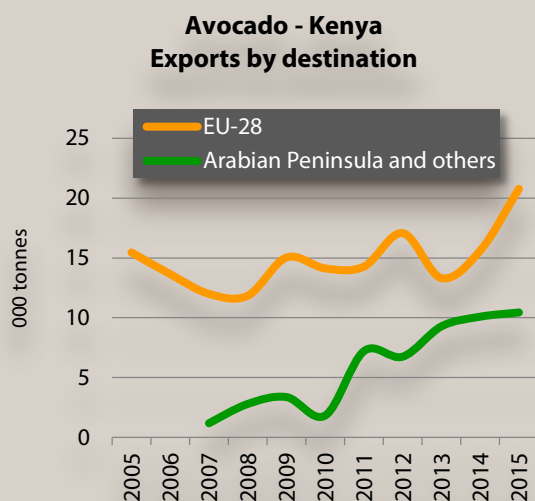
Hass is on a strong rising trend, especially among small producers. This variety is planted primarily between 1 800 and 2 200 m, and its season is mainly concentrated between June and September, with smaller quantities available from April. Fuerte, which remains an important variety, is produced through much of the year. The tropical climate enables up to three flowering periods. In addition, the staggering of the plantations over a wide range of altitudes also helps extend the season. Production culminates between late February and late August. Availability is low between November and January. Other non-export green varieties are also present (Reed, Booth 8, Pinkerton, etc.).

Avocado — Kenya — Production calendar												
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Hass												

**Avocado — Kenya**

Avocado — Kenya — Exports											
tonnes	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
EU-28	15 458	13 641	11 999	11 841	15 038	14 123	14 273	17 078	13 313	15 604	20 781
Arabian Penin. and others	-	-	1 185	2 798	3 372	1 830	7 214	6 750	9 282	10 089	10 445
<b>Total</b>	<b>15 458</b>	<b>13 641</b>	<b>13 184</b>	<b>14 639</b>	<b>18 410</b>	<b>15 953</b>	<b>21 487</b>	<b>23 828</b>	<b>22 595</b>	<b>25 694</b>	<b>31 226</b>

Sources: Eurostat, opendata Kenya



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Sources: Eurostat, opendata Kenya

**Exports**

Exports remained marginal until the early 1990s, as Kenya's competitiveness compared to other market suppliers was handicapped by its costly dependence on air freight. They developed gradually thereafter, thanks to the installation of a sea link transporting refrigerated containers between Mombasa and Marseille (ICTC-Anvers). Growth picked up from the early 2000s with the development of a new market segment built around the Kenyan Fuerte: an entry-level avocado, generally small in size and packed in 3-4 piece net bags. The gradual development of European demand, in terms of both varieties (fall in interest in green varieties in favour of Hass) and quality requirements (certification required in order to work with the supermarket sector, as well as obligatory traceability), overturned the dynamic and caused profound changes. In the upstream segment, the outlets have diversified (Middle Eastern markets in particular, which currently absorb large volumes of Fuerte), whereas downstream the pool of exporters serving Europe has shifted to facilities most highly integrated with production (Kakuzi is alone in having a large self-production capacity, boosting its market share). There are ten or so facilities active in the export sector, as a significant number of new operators which have their own packing station have in recent years joined the six historic industry players (Kakuzi, EAGA, Sunripe, KHE, Vegpro, Indufarm). Downstream, the industry has undergone reorganisation, to focus its efforts on specialist avocado importers. French importers remain the European leaders for this source, with the produce unloaded mainly in Marseille and sold widely throughout France.

## Avocado — Kenya

### Outlets

The export sector absorbs approximately one third of production. The majority of volumes are self-consumed or sold at very low prices on the local market. The hotel and catering industries, very strong in this tourist destination, are more lucrative market segments. Processing is another active sector, using sorting rejects to generate substantial value. There are at least four medium-sized oil plants in operation: Ruiru Natural Oil in Ruiru, Old Land Trade Company in Kisii, Avo Oil in Nakuru, Olivado Oil in Muranga (approx. 1 000 t of oil per year). This is a developing sector.



### Logistics

The fruit is collected from smallholdings, often by intermediaries, and transported by road to the packing stations in Nairobi (journey time approx. two hours). The boxes are loaded directly into reefer containers, which are taken by lorry to the port of Mombasa, 430 km away. The logistics to Europe are more protracted and costly than for its rival South Africa. The port of Mombasa is operating more efficiently than previously, but congestion remains high, causing loading delays. There is a direct sea link with Europe, though the frequency is not weekly (5 ships every 2 months). The transport times for the other services are longer, because of transshipment, but they provide a better frequency. The risk of piracy in the Gulf of Aden extends the sea route (away from the coast of Somalia), generating additional costs.

Avocado — Kenya — Main links with Europe

Departure port	Arrival port	Voyage time*	Shipping company**	Observations
Mombasa	Barcelona, Marseilles, Genoa	18-25 days	Messina	5 departures/2 months
	Felixstowe, Zeebrugge, Rotterdam	28-36 days	Maersk	Weekly departure 1 transshipment in Salalah

\* average duration according to VGB 2013 study/ \*\* other companies provide services, but the voyage times are longer