



Hawaii Avocados

An annual report on number of farms, acreage, yield, production, farm price, and value



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Output at record low level

The Hawaii Agricultural Statistics Service (HASS) estimates the State's 1996 avocado crop at 400,000 pounds, down 20 percent from last season. Adverse weather conditions and a soft market were major reasons for the decline in harvested fruit.

Production hampered again by weather

Weather conditions were generally unfavorable for avocado farmers on the island of Hawaii, the State's major area of production. Last year started favorably with a widespread round of beneficial late-winter showers. However, a severe spring windstorm, and dry weather from March through May caused yields to vary widely by age of tree, variety, and locale. While some orchards produced a bumper crop, most farmers experienced lower-than-normal yields and blamed the dry spring weather. Farmers in Kona also had to contend with the frequent presence of volcanic smoke which they claimed adversely affected fruit setting.

Economic conditions also hurt farmers

Besides adverse weather conditions, many Big Island growers had trouble selling their harvest because of fewer buyers, a lackluster economy, and stalled sales to the U.S. mainland.

Kona farmers had a difficult time marketing their harvests when one of the area's larger buyers went out of business and others stopped buying avocados. Hilo growers faced similar problems when a wholesaler there went out of business. A few growers theorized that the Big Island's tough economic times also meant that consumers were less willing to purchase the relatively expensive fruit.

Finally, sales of the State's major variety, Sharwil, continued to be mainly restricted to the local market. Although the federal government approved



Hawaii Agricultural Statistics Service
Fact finding for agriculture

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AVOCADOS: Number of farms, acreage, yield, production, price, and value.
State of Hawaii, 1992-96

Year	Farms	Acreage ¹		Yield per acre (Bearing)	Production	Farm price	Value of sales
		In crop	Bearing				
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Acres</i>		<i>1,000 Pounds</i>	<i>Cents per pound</i>	<i>\$1,000</i>	
1992.....	100	500	220	3.2	700	46.0	322
1993.....	90	460	250	2.0	500	44.0	220
1994.....	80	440	220	2.3	500	50.0	250
1995.....	80	350	210	2.4	500	54.5	273
1996.....	90	330	180	2.2	400	53.5	214

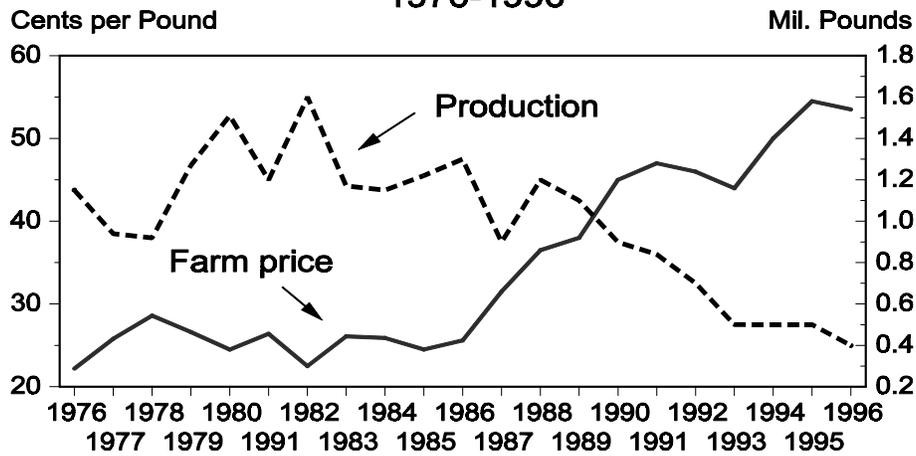
Sharwil for shipment to the U.S. mainland in February 1996, the fruit must first undergo a cold treatment to ensure the eradication of any fruit fly larvae. A shipment of Sharwil avocados was successfully treated in late 1996, but transportation problems rendered the fruit unsaleable by the time it reached its U.S. mainland destination. Additional shipments to the continental U.S. will be attempted this fall. Without the U.S. mainland market, for which the Sharwil was developed, sales of this major variety will be

limited to the local market, Alaska, and other winter markets outside the continental U.S.

Farm price declines

Hawaii farmers received an average of 53.5 cents per pound in 1996, down 2 percent from the previous year's record high farm price of 54.5 cents per pound. A limited market for local avocados and a 33-percent increase in imports from the U.S. mainland (700,000 pounds in 1996) were major reasons for the decline in farm prices.

Production and Average Farm Price of Hawaii Avocados 1976-1996



Hawaii Agricultural Statistics Service

AVOCADOS: Acreage in crop by variety, State of Hawaii, 1988-96

Year	Total area	Area by variety					
		Sharwil	Hass	Kahaluu	Linda	Others ¹	
			<i>Acres</i>				
1988.....	580	300	2	2	2	280	
1989.....	550	315	2	2	2	235	
1990.....	500	325	2	2	2	175	
1991.....	550	370	2	2	2	180	
1992.....	500	380	2	2	2	120	
1993.....	460	380	2	2	2	80	
1994.....	440	380	2	2	2	60	
1995.....	350	300	2	2	2	50	
1996.....	330	300	2	2	2	30	

¹ Minor varieties, unknown varieties, and mixed plantings that growers were unable to specify acreage for separately. Of the latter, the most frequently mentioned varieties were: Sharwil, Kahaluu, Nishikawa, Yamagata, Ohata. ² Not shown separately, but included in "Others" category.

U.S. Avocado Situation

Early Estimates Indicated Larger U.S. Avocado Crop in 1996/97

NASS releases the first official avocado crop estimate for the 1996/97 season in July 1997. Florida and California, however, have preliminary estimates of their crops. The Florida Agricultural Statistics Service estimates that the Florida 1996/97 crop will be 22,500 tons, up 18 percent from the previous season. The cold temperatures in Florida on January 19, 1997 appear to have caused no discernable damage to the current crop, although next season's early blooming varieties may be affected.

According to the California Avocado Commission, the 1996/97 California avocado crop is estimated at 3 percent higher than last season. Total California shipments through March 1, 1997 are up 12 percent from last season and prices are down 3 percent. For the Hass variety, shipments are up 10 percent and prices are down 5 percent.

Table 17--U.S. avocado production by State, 1980/81 - 1996/97

Crop year 1/	Florida	California	Hawaii	Total
-- 1,000 short tons --				
1980/81	30.8	238.0	.76	269.6
1981/82	25.8	157.0	.60	183.4
1982/83	34.7	202.0	.80	237.5
1983/84	27.0	247.0	.59	274.6
1984/85	29.5	200.0	.58	230.1
1985/86	28.5	160.0	.61	189.1
1986/87	24.7	278.0	.65	303.4
1987/88	29.0	180.0	.45	209.5
1988/89	27.0	165.0	.60	192.6
1989/90	33.5	105.0	.55	139.1
1990/91	19.6	136.0	.45	156.1
1991/92	28.3	156.0	.42	184.7
1992/93	7.2	284.0	.35	291.6
1993/94	4.4	139.0	.25	143.7
1994/95	20.0	155.0	.25	175.3
1995/96	19.0	171.0	.25	190.3
1996/97 2/	22.5	176.9	.20	199.6

1/ Crops years begin: California, November; Florida, June; and Hawaii, January of first year shown. 2/ Estimates from the California Avocado Commission, Florida Agricultural Statistics, and ERS for Hawaii.

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA and Hawaii Agricultural Statistics Service.

United States-utilized avocado production in 1995/96 totaled 190,250 tons, up 9 percent from the previous season (table 17). California was the largest producer, with 90 percent of total production. Production in California was 171,000 tons in 1995/96, up 10 percent from the previous season. Florida produced 19,000 tons, down 5 percent from the previous season. Florida is rebuilding from the damage caused by Hurricane Andrew on August 24, 1992. In 1993/94, Florida production was only 4,400 tons compared with 28,300 tons in 1991/92 season. Hawaii produced 200 tons in

1996. Virtually all U.S. avocados are sold in the fresh market. Since the 1991/92 season, only California uses avocados for the processed market, but utilization fell from a high of 19,000 tons in 1992/93 to 1,500 in 1995/96. Imports of processed avocados from Mexico, either pulp to be further processed in California or retail-ready processed avocado products, increased substantially over the same time.

For the 1995/96 season, the U.S. average grower price for fresh avocados was \$1,260 per ton, down 9 percent from the previous season, which had lower production. Florida and California produce different types of avocados because of climate conditions and consumer preferences. The Florida price averaged \$596 per ton during the 1995/96 season, down 3 percent from the previous season. Average California grower prices for all fresh avocados in 1995/96 were \$1,330, down 10 percent from the previous season. Hass avocados are estimated to account for 85 percent of total California production. Other varieties include Fuerte, Bacon, Zutano, Pinkerton, Reed, and Gwen.

Imports and Exports are Down

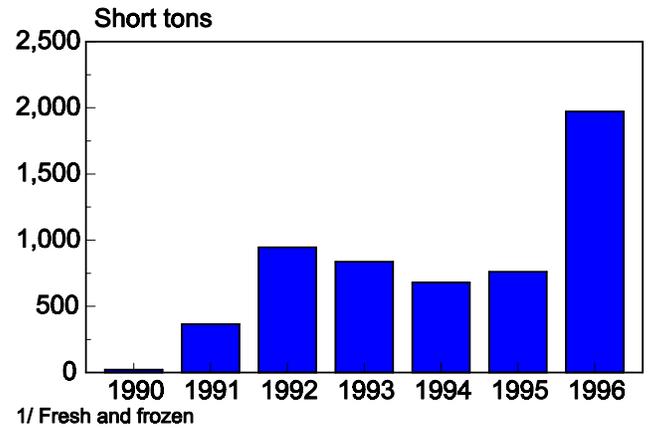
Fresh imports from November 1995 through October 1996 were 23,341 tons, down 5 percent from the previous year. Chile is the most important source, with 61 percent of U.S. avocado imports. Fresh exports were 10,410 tons, down 29 percent from the previous year. The Netherlands, Japan, and Canada were the most important markets for exports, accounting for 41, 29, and 12 percent, respectively, of the export market. Imports of processed avocados in 1995/96 declined 1 percent from the previous season.

APHIS Allows Mexican Avocados into Selected States

On January 31, 1997, APHIS approved a rule allowing importations of Hass avocados from the Mexican state of Michoacan into the District of Columbia and 19 northeastern states: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky. Since July 1993, Mexico has been allowed to ship fresh avocados to Alaska. Imports from certain growers will be allowed into these States from November through February, when cold weather in the destination States would likely kill any pests that manage to slip through pest control safeguards. This time period precedes the peak harvest of California Hass avocados. The first imports

could begin in November 1997. APHIS reports that sales during the time period and area open to Mexican avocados represents about 8 percent of total U.S. production. Under the APHIS systems approach, Mexican avocado imports must meet stringent pest-control requirements in production, packing, and transportation to minimize the risk of introducing pests to the United States that could threaten the health of U.S. avocado groves. Mexican producers will have to apply a country-of-origin sticker to each avocado indicating the phytosanitary number of the packinghouse. Avocados entering the United States will be shipped in sealed refrigerated vehicles. Other provisions of the agreement work to minimize the risk of introducing pests.

U.S. Avocado Imports from Mexico 1/



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