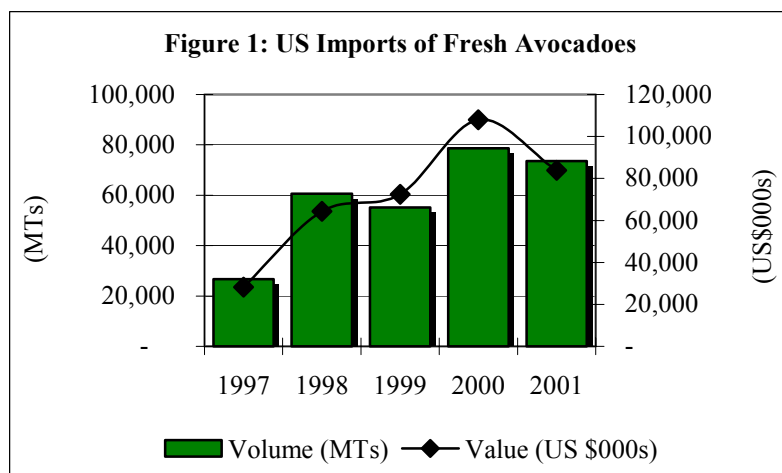


Avocado



**HILLSIDE
AGRICULTURAL
PROGRAM**
Product Bulletin # 4
2001 – 2002

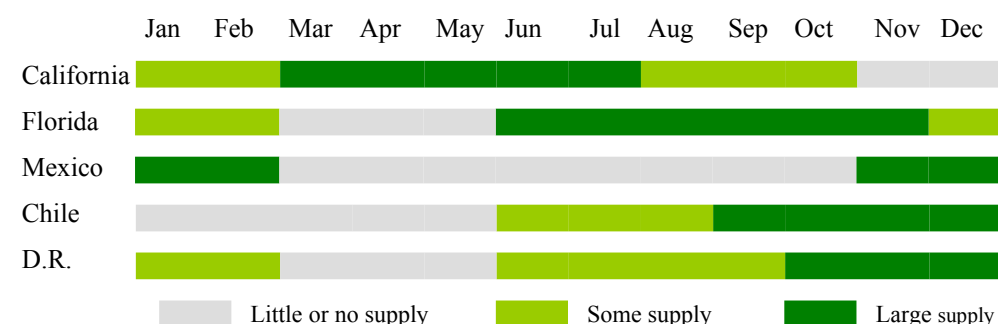


Source: USITC

Imports: US import figures for avocados do not distinguish between the more popular Hass variety found in Mexico, Chile, and California, and the West Indian, or “Greenskin” variety grown in the Caribbean and in Florida. Both volume and price of US import of fresh avocado increased gradually between 1997 and 2000 and then declined slightly by 6 percent the following year, due in part by a decline in export from Chile and Mexico. Import values also decreased by 22 percent, reaching \$84 million in 2001.

Market Share: Chile and Mexico provide the bulk of US imports of avocados, exclusively of the Hass variety, representing 67 percent and 17 percent of the market share, respectively. US imports from the Caribbean, when singled out separately, show a slight increase in volume from 1999 to 2000, followed by a substantial decrease in 2001 with 3,004 MTs. The Dominican Republic, the biggest supplier from the Caribbean, holds 95 percent of the market share among greenskin suppliers; the Bahamas being the only other significant competitor. Haiti’s last export of avocados to the US was in 1999, when it shipped 3 MTs valued at \$7,200.

Table 1: Avocado Seasonality Chart – Intensity of Supply to US Market



Source: US Census and Fintrac importer interviews

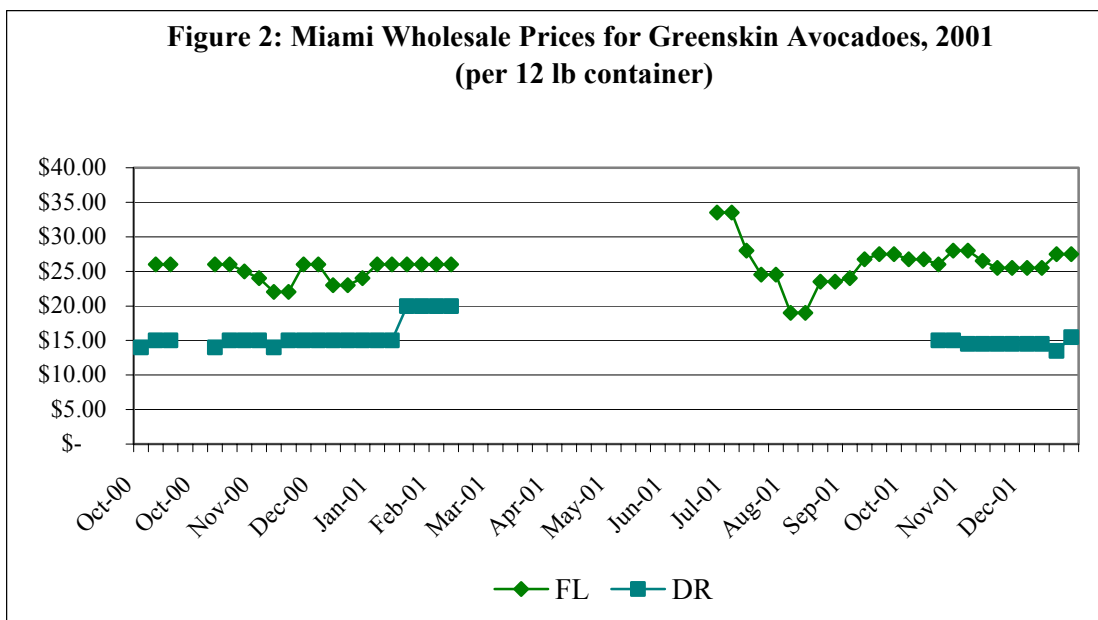
Seasonality: There are notable changes in product seasonality throughout the year. Chile’s main months of supply are September through December, while Mexican shipments are restricted to 19 northern US states

This product bulletin was produced by Fintrac, Inc. under the auspices of the USAID-funded Haiti Hillside Agricultural Program (Contract # 521-C-00-00-00035-00)
SO1 – “Sustainable Increased Income for the Poor”

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from November 1 to February 28. Domestic production from California takes over from March through September. Total US production per annum is around 150,000 MTs, roughly three times the level of all imports. While the volume of Caribbean imports has rarely fluctuated, its relative market share in the US has fallen sharply due to increased imports from Chile and Mexico.

Prices: There are notable differences in the wholesale price of Hass and Greenskin avocados. Hass normally commands higher figures. Double-layer packages (24-lb) of Hass range from \$30.00 during the height of the California season to \$50.00 at other times. The price of single layer packages of the Florida Greenskin ranged between \$23.00 and \$28.00. From July to November, Florida Greenskin avocados



commanded high premiums, almost reaching a \$30.00 mark for single layered packages, whereas the Dominican variety only commanded smaller premiums ranging \$13.00-\$20.00 for 2001

Quality Standards: The Hass variety of avocado is smaller, oilier, and more flavorful than Greenskin varieties, examples of which include Lula, Monroe, Hall, and Nesbitt. Greenskins remain far more popular among Caribbean and Cuban consumers -- the Hass variety turns a deep purple or black when it is ripe, whereas the Greenskins do not, leading consumers to assume that black avocados are rotten. As the name implies, Greenskin avocados should be uniformly green and free from mechanical damage, insect damage, and fungal infection. Fruit maturity is indicated by a change from green to light green. Fruit should be pear-shaped and of a uniform size. Skin is leathery smooth and medium-thick (1.5 to 3 mm).



Postharvest: West Indian varieties are particularly susceptible to chilling damage and should not be stored or shipped at less than 12° C, with 95% relative humidity. Ripening rate after harvest is largely dependent on fruit age; early season mature fruits may take 10-12 days to ripen, while fruit picked late in the season ripens in half that time.

Packaging: Avocados are packed in single- or double-layer, telescopic fiberboard cartons, either two-piece combinations or one-piece, self-locking units. Standard single-layer carton dimensions are 40 cm. x 30 cm. x 11 cm. Because of wide variation in fruit size, avocado cartons come in different counts: single-layer cartons weigh 12 pounds and normally contain 8, 10, 12, 14, or 16 avocados; double-layer cartons weigh 24 pounds and contain 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, or 24 fruits. All avocados in a given container should be the same size.