The green gold of Latin America continues to expand

By Luis Bringas

With the approval of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), issued May 27, Jalisco avocado producers -located in western Mexico- may certify within the next five years, more than 1,200 vegetable gardens equipped with modern technologies which have a combined area of ??16,000 hectares planted avocado Hass.

The state of Jalisco can be considered as a serious global competitor in this industry that moves exports over 3,000 million dollars a year in a rapidly-growing market *dominated by Latin American countries*, which has a very wide margin to increase consumption per capita of so called green gold. Avocado exporters of Jalisco have learned to export to distant countries, using sea routes from the ports of Lazaro Cardenas, Michoacan and Coatzacoalcos in Veracruz. With approval from the USDA, Jalisco avocados could reach the American consumer in 48 hours by land.

The announcement to start the certification process was endorsed by the Health Inspection Service Animal and Plant United States (APHIS for its acronym in English). The US authorities indicated that as of June 27, they may certify the orchards of other different states to Michoacan, which have good records management practices and sanitary control.

For most avocado growers of Jalisco, the procedure is a mere formality, since they have all the official requirements for export and their gardens are equipped with modern technologies that generate fruits of high quality and have enabled them to reach markets 15 countries, among which are Canada, France, Germany and Japan.

In his recent participation in the Expo 2016 Jalisco, Ignacio Gomez Arregui, director of the Association of exporting producers of avocado Jalisco (APEAJAL), mentioned that the imminent release of the USDA, will double exports of the members of the association. *This represents an approximate volume of 93,000 tons, of which 50% could in 2016 to US consumers.* Avocado exports of Jalisco represent less than 10% of the total contributed mostly by producers of Michoacan, which through the APEAM (Association of Michoacan avocado producers) totaling 12,000 producers and 37 packaging companies.

To achieve its objectives, the APEAJAL has worked for the last three years to meet the health requirements. Maricela Ceballos Fuentes, responsible for assessments and health checks by the Local Board of Plant Health of Jalisco, also indicated that there are 10 zones free from quarantine pests and other five under certification process.

For most avocado growers in this region of western Mexico, USDA approval represents a reward for the effort they have made for several years, but above all also indicates that there is an opportunity to meet the growing market demand, and that an increasing number of consumers looking to try the avocado.

Anyone would think that to say that the belt tightens for avocado involves increased competition.

Although in reality, this means that producers must be prepared to increase its offer and achieve greater market penetration. Especially when it comes to making investments in the medium term it takes 5 to 7 years to bear fruit. In this case the award is deserved and consumers gain.