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## Henry Avocado supplies growing customer base in record numbers

Despite domestic shortages from the drought conditions in California and Chile, the steady rise in avocado production from Mexico has allowed Henry Avocado to supply its growing customer base in record numbers, according to a company press release.

Based on the projections Phil Henry has received from his certified growers in Michoacán, imports will increase from the approximately 1.2 billion-pound levels of last year, to 1.4 billion pounds during 2015. As recently as 2007, avocados from Mexico weighed in at 970 million pounds.

The dramatic growth is particularly good news for a year-round distributor like Henry whose CustomRipe program has parlayed this robust supply to expand its customer orders by 10 percent.

The increase is impressive considering the recently completed California harvest declined 40 percent from 500 million pounds in 2013, to 300 million in 2014, which caused a higher price point for the retailer.

Henry has seen its distribution center in San Antonio, TX, thrive thanks to its proximity to the sources in Mexico. Last



Henry's Jon Ullrich inspects avocados from one of the 12 ripening rooms at Henry's distribution center in San Antonio, TX. Henry has 65 ripening rooms at its distribution centers in California, Arizona and Texas.

year Henry shipped 30 percent more cartons from this Texas facility than at any point in its five-year history.

Based in Escondido, CA, Henry's location in north San Diego County is ideal for its California groves, and farm management operation, but lacked the proximity required for ensuring the freshness and quality of its avocados from Mexico and increasing market share in the Southwest and beyond.

To demonstrate its commit-

ment to acquiring and marketing only the finest avocado imports from Mexico, Henry engaged Jon Ullrich, a sixth-generation Texan whose family has sold produce in Texas for over 60 years, to open and operate a distribution facility in San Antonio, TX, in 2009.

Like the four Henry distribution centers in California and Arizona, the San Antonio facility is PrimusLabs-certified, has a refrigerated loading dock and modern cold storage rooms. Its 12 forced-air ripening rooms

give Henry a total of 65 in three states, enabling it to deliver customer orders exactly as specified throughout its marketing regions.

The Texas operation, located within 10 minutes of the 10 and 35 freeways, allows for efficient loading and departures throughout the state and to Midwest markets by a fleet of modern tractor refrigerated trailers.

The Texas locale has facilitated Ullrich's role in securing relationships with Henry's certified growers and packers in Michoacán, Mexico, each year. Additional quality control measures are also required by Henry to meet the quality and freshness standards of its Bravocado and Green Goddess labels.

"Our focus," Ullrich said in the release, "is on providing value to ensure fruit with the best appearance and longest shelf life, whether the order is for hard, custom-ripened or bagged avocados."

Founded in 1925, Henry specializes in custom-ripened fresh avocados that are sourced from its own orchards and those from growing partners in California, Peru and Chile, as well as Mexico.

Now in the midst of an

eight-year drought, however, Chile will see its exports decline again after a significant drop in volume to U.S. markets last year.

Next year's California crop will have a modest growth from 300 million pounds to 350, making Henry's year-round imports from Mexico again critical to product availability and therefore price stability. "Our relationship with Mexico dates back to the 1950s," Henry said. "It's comforting to know when California's season ends, our growers in Mexico have a mature crop ready, and that quality is not an issue."

Also reassuring is that the growers from Mexico are playing a key role on the demand side as well as supply. Henry said that the Avocados from Mexico trade association will increase its marketing budget for the United States from \$35 million on promotions from July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015, to more than \$40 million.

Consumer media coverage of the nutritional benefits of avocados is also contributing. From retail to foodservice at all levels, the fruit's popularity and role in meal planning is visible and compelling.