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THE SOUTH AFRICAN AVOCADO INDUSTRY: PRODUCTION AND MARKET DEVELOPMENT

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The South African avocado industry is optimistic of its future, despite the worldwide increase in production. The industry's competitive strategy includes market development, production of high quality fruit, cost efficient production, communication, and international cooperation.

Market development initiatives of the South African Avocado Growers' Association (SAAGA) are multifaceted. Although the primary focus is the export of fresh avocados, attention is also given to development of the domestic fresh market, as well as development of processed products for export and domestic consumption.

SAAGA's generic promotions have been instrumental in doubling consumption of South African avocados in the UK over the last seven years. The campaign aims to increase consumption without decreasing price.

Export production is expected to increase at an average of 2% per annum for the next 5 years. The rate of growth beyond 2005 will depend on growth of exiting markets and access to new markets. The total area under commercial avocado orchards is currently 12400 ha. Nursery orders over the past four years indicate that the majority of new plantings are Hass. Some Fuerte and Pinkerton orchards are being replaced by Hass. Total area under Fuerte is decreasing. By the end of 2004, Fuerte is expected to make up 34% of the area under avocados- as opposed to 39% in 1999. For the same period, the area under Hass will increase from 36% to 41% of the total area.

International cooperation in market development in Europe is considered vital if the viability of the avocado industry in supplier countries is to be maintained.