

## Avocado export ban hits local growers again

The horticulture regulator has once again banned avocado exports amid an outcry from producers who claim they have mature crop for sale.

Head of Horticulture Directorate Bernard Ondanji says the ban was effected on November 15 and that exceptions will only be given to firms that have own orchards and who apply for special permits.

The directorate is required to do a physical verification to ensure they have mature fruit. “We stopped export of avocado mid this month to allow the current crop that is in the farm to mature and protect our overseas market,” said Mr Ondanji.

A source in one of the largest plantations said the ban has prevented them from exporting mature crop. But Mr Ondanji said the claims are not true given there is a window for those with mature crop to export under special terms.

“We met with all stakeholders and agreed that we would place a ban starting November 15 and we gave a special window for those who have orchards with mature crop; so far none has requested,” he said.

The move is aimed at curbing harvesting of immature crop following rampant cases of traders picking young crops to capitalise on high prices of the commodity in the international market.

There has been a shortage of avocado in the country for the last couple of months, which has pushed up the cost of the fruit. A four-kilo packet has so far gone up to Sh600 from Sh200 in March as the market scrambles for limited supply.

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