

Kenyan avocado exports surpassed 64,000 tonnes this year despite pandemic

Geoffrey Kipchumba is an avocado farmer in Moiben, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. When he ventured into avocado farming a few years ago, he still had doubts as to whether there would be a ready market for his fruits. With his first harvest coming in July, Kipchumba had all the reasons to worry when the Covid-19 pandemic started sweeping across the globe. When the country was first put under a lockdown he started anticipating the worst.

“Avocado is quite new to us but when the county government convinced us that it is the gold of the future. I decided to give it a try but started with 1,000 seedlings because I didn’t want to take a major risk before knowing what was in it for me,” he says.

However, things turned out different from how he anticipated. When picking began, buyers camped at his farm - something he had never witnessed as a maize farmer. Having earned more than he expected, Kipchumba is now in the process of expanding his avocado farm.

Kipchumba’s story is not different from those of many other farmers growing avocados across the county. Currently, more than 2,000 acres of land have been put under avocado farming in Uasin Gishu County.

According to the Avocado Society of Kenya Chief Executive Officer, Ernest Muthomi, despite the pandemic, avocado exports surpassed 64,000 tonnes this year, which was higher than last year’s volumes. Muthomi says the demand for avocados went up both locally and internationally.

“Our avocado exports this year exceeded 64,000 tonnes compared to last year’s 43,000. The demand for fruits and fresh vegetables has continually been on the rise

since the pandemic began. Of course when countries were put on lockdown, we experienced challenges as restaurants and cafes are usually our first point of distribution in the international market, so when they were closed there was a slight slump in demand but this didn't last long," Muthomi told standardmedia.co.ke.

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