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World keen on Qld avos

DEMAND for Australian avocados has grown strongly worldwide, with Queensland exports to overseas retailers increasing by 34% over the past five years.

Thailand is leading the race to get their hands on popular Queensland avocados, with exports increasing by 170% in three years.

In the year-long lead-up to Cairns hosting the VII World Avocado Congress, Queensland's Primary Industries Minister is doing his part to generate interest in the industry on the world stage.

Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland Tim Mulherin said the government was working closely with Queensland industry to achieve these results.

"In 2009, avocado exports to Thailand alone were worth \$878,497, with 279 tonnes exported," Mr Mulherin said.

In September, Mr Mulherin met with a delegation from Thailand who spent a week visiting avocado farms, doing quality assurance product-handling, and visiting retail stores and distribution centres.

"Queensland supplies 71% of Australia's avocado product, and the Queensland Government has invested strongly to ensure national export growth," Mr Mulherin said.

"New markets have opened up thanks to intensive promotion and market research, and exports have also increased to Hong Kong,



Malaysia and Singapore.

"The Bligh Government initiated its Global Markets Initiative avocado project with Sunfresh in 2007 to boost avocado exports.

"The results of the Global Market Initiative speak for themselves, with a 34% export increase in the past five years.

"Exporters, growers, industry, and national and state government agencies have been working together to develop sustainable, competitive supply chains for our avocados.

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Mr Mulherin said through targeted market research and training of importers and retailers, they were now ensuring quality avocados are delivered to consumers worldwide.

"Last year Sunfresh and the Bligh Government successfully delivered the first commercial sea containers of Queensland avocados to the UK and Thailand, with fruit arriving in perfect condition.

"This achievement was the result of post-harvest trials and market development work conducted by the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI), which innovated the viability of shipping product to these markets," he said.

"Since then, Sunfresh has significantly contributed to the major

growth in Australian avocado exports to Thailand over the past three seasons."

DEEDI delivered customised training to the Thai delegation on best practice handling and ripening to ensure consumer satisfaction with Australian avocados.

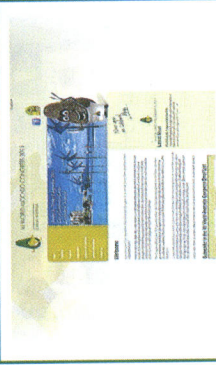
This year, the training has gone out to 528 importers, wholesalers, retailers and food service businesses in Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Thailand, educating the marketplace on the quality of Australian avocados and how to maintain that quality.

"The training program is part of DEEDI's work with Horticulture Australia Limited, Avocados Australia Limited, and the Australian Export Company – a group of avocado growers, packers and marketers from throughout Australia," Mr Mulherin said.

"As part of this collaboration, for the first time local businesses have an avocado export manual to help them and their in-market partners manage fruit quality through the supply chain.

"This 'how-to guide' will be an important tool for promoting greater understanding of our Aussie avocados and ensuring product quality.

"The project will now focus on further developing the Middle East market, which is showing increasing interest in the quality avocados that Australia guarantees."



The new World Avocado Congress 2011 website.

Website launched

IN less than a year's time, the eyes of the world's avocado experts will turn to North Queensland as it hosts the VII World Avocado Congress 2011.

In September, Avocados Australia took another important step towards ensuring the success of the event by launching the World Avocado Congress website.

The congress 2011 will be held at the Cairns Convention Centre in Cairns from September 4-9, 2011. An event held every four years, the congress is a rare opportunity for the worldwide avocado industry to come together to share and learn.

The website is a resource for potential delegates, exhibitors and sponsors of the congress to register their interest and receive up-to-date information about congress activities, view the preliminary schedule, and access general information.

Visit: www.worldavocadocongress2011.com