

The increasing demand for avocados threatens forests

Автор(и): Нора Иванова, Редактор Растителна Защита /РЗ/

Дата: 12.09.2016 Брой: 9/2016



Super fruits? Before, avocados were placed on the shelves as exotic and luxury food; today they can be found even in the neighborhood store. Is their active introduction into our daily menu truly healthy, or is it just another trend in food preferences?

The avocado is one of those miracle foods that have been successfully promoted by the global trade flow in recent years. Traditional foods are giving way in regional cuisines to new super fruits and vegetables that dictate not only food fashion but also determine market demand. Suddenly, leading restaurants place the green fruit with a skin resembling that of an alligator at the center of their menus. And cooking blogs inspire one another daily with creative recipes for salads, guacamole, and other unconventional dishes and desserts with avocado.

Behind this boom in overproduction, a disturbing picture emerges – between 1,500 and 4,000 hectares of forest are illegally cleared every year in the areas around the Mexico metropolis to be used for cultivating the valuable food. The huge appetite for avocados and the rising price per kilogram make the business with the green super fruit attractive not only for farmers. The region has long been controlled by the Mexican mafia, which also dictates the rules in the local livelihood of the farmers.

In one of the most fertile states of Mexico, Michoacán, located in the southwestern part of the country, the population lives mainly from the production of lemons and avocados. There, people also suffer from the consequences of intensive agriculture. “The frequent use of unregulated pesticides and the contamination of groundwater are only part of the impending ecological disaster,” shares Jaime Navia from the Mexican environmental organization GIRA.

Avocado: a miracle fruit

Undoubtedly, *Persea americana* ranks in the top ten superfoods and has wide application not only in gastronomy. Avocado is a fruit rich in minerals and vitamins A, C, and E. It contains far more protein than other fruits. It is beneficial for the heart and prevents blockage of blood vessels. It has an antioxidant effect. It helps eliminate toxins from the body. Avocado oil helps with eczema and vitiligo. It also lowers high cholesterol. Avocado contains iron and is very suitable for people suffering from anemia. It is also recommended as food for pregnant women and children due to its high content of vitamins, minerals, and proteins. 100 grams of avocado equals almost 165 calories. Another application of avocado can be found in cosmetics, where it is used in the form of masks, most suitable for dry skin. Avocado oil is also used in various cosmetic face creams, shampoos, and shower gels.

The most popular avocado varieties in Europe are “Fuerte” and “Hass”, with the former having been present on the market in Western Europe for many years. Avocados of the “Hass” variety have only recently been gaining an increasingly larger share on the Old Continent. “Fuerte” originally derives from two avocado varieties – Mexican and Guatemalan. “Fuerte” are larger than “Hass”, reaching a weight of up to 400 g, and withstand lower storage temperatures (4–6°C).