
How to get to market

This section describes what the exporter needs to do to get the fruit to the UK market, beginning at the picking stage, the first active phase of the marketing chain. The intention is to concentrate on the marketing of fruit, and not with production details, but the grower, as well as the exporter, should be able to profit from the information in this publication. After all, initial post-harvest handling is as important as correct picking as far as the grower is concerned. The market should guide the grower in terms of what crop to grow, in what quantities and what production techniques to use. Some major buyers are realising this and are working directly with growers to ensure their produce supply matches their variety, packaging and quality requirements exactly, rather than rely solely on intermediaries, such as export agents.



Avocados

Harvesting, Handling and Storage

Avocados need to be carefully picked, either such that the stalk is removed from the fruit, but without surface breaks, or leaving a stalk no more than 10 mm in length, cut cleanly. This is as specified by UN Economic Commission for Europe standards for avocados. Produce should be harvested at the correct stage of maturity, when hard and with a minimum oil content of 12%. It should be picked early in the day, to avoid overheating. Careful handling is essential. Fruit should be kept cool and packed as soon as possible, having been sorted and treated, frequently being waxed for protection before shipping.

Fruit must be picked to allow for ripening time during transport and distribution. Up to 14 days transport time is considered satisfactory, though unripe avocados can be held for up to four weeks if the temperature is kept between 5.5° and 8° C. For ripe avocados, the holding temperature should be lower, between 2° and 5° C. Transportation is by sea, unless being sent early in the season to gain a price premium. This is dependent on availability of air freight and access to a sea port. Kenya, for example, traditionally air freights to Europe.

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Packaging

Fruit should be packed in a single layer, fibreboard box, of around 4 kg net weight and approximate size of 300 mm x 390 mm x 88 mm. Preferred counts to a box are 12, 14, 16, 18 or 20. Fresh air ventilation is important and boxes should have ventilation holes. Fully lidded boxes are best, to give strength and rigidity. Semi-lidded or tuck-lidded boxes are liable to be damaged if picked up incorrectly. Dividers may be used to prevent rubbing during transportation, but are not a necessity. The pack should be attractively presented and clearly labelled, with country of origin, count and brand. Much fruit is also individually labelled.

Branding and Promotion

Avocado sales in the UK are dominated by Israeli produce imported by AGREXCO and South African produce. Both use brand names: Carmel for Israel under the para-statal organisation, and a variety of private brands from co-ops and growers for South Africa. The latter is currently less keen to advertise the origin of the fruit and carry out consumer promotion campaigns.

Produce coming into the UK has to compete with both these high quality, well packaged and well advertised products. However, there are possible spin-off effects from any intensive promotion campaign in terms of the impact on overall avocado sales, limiting the need for advertising by new market entrants.

Import regulations

The avocado is classified under tariff number 0804 4010010 (1st December - 31st May) and 0804 4090010 (1st June - 30th November). Tariffs are those in force for the EEC:

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	Dec-May	June-Nov
Full tariff:	4.0%	8.0%
GSP countries:	3.5%	6.0%
Israel, Algeria, Morocco:	0.8%	1.6%
Turkey:	Free	Free
ACP countries:	Free	Free
Least developed countries (LDDC):	Free	Free

In order to receive preferential tariff treatment, produce must be accompanied by the appropriate forms: EUR 1 for ACP countries or Form A for GSP or LDDC. No other import regulations apply. Certain hygiene standards must be met and all fresh fruit entering the EEC must be accompanied by the original of a phytosanitary certificate, but there is no other legislation governing entry of these fruits to the UK. (See Appendix 1)



Mangoes

Harvesting, Handling and Storage

Maturity measurements for mangoes are not standardised, differing from variety to variety and between growing areas. Skin colour changes can be used for some varieties, to indicate when they should be picked, but many mangoes are now picked and shipped green, then ripened on arrival ready for sale. This protects the fruit from damage during transport and ensures that the retailer knows at just what stage of ripeness the fruit is. However, it also makes it more difficult for the grower to decide when to pick. Other ways of identifying when the fruit should be harvested are weight, specific gravity and their chemical make-up.

Fruit can be picked entirely by hand, tipping the fruit to snap the stem, or by holding the fruit and cutting the stem, taking care not to bruise or puncture the fruit. The stem is sometimes trimmed to 1 cm: leaving the stem means that sap is less likely to damage the appearance of the fruit and regularity is always preferred by buyers. Before packing the fruit is washed and/or given fungicidal or heat treatment, occasionally being wax-coated to prolong storage life.

Mangoes have usually been air freighted in the past, owing to their susceptibility to damage from poor handling or storage. However, sea shipments have been made successfully from South America and the Caribbean and are likely to increase as trade expands, given the constraints of space and the cost of air freight. This requires earlier harvesting and careful temperature control throughout the journey. Holding temperatures need to be between 7° and 14° C and, under correct conditions, mangoes can be held up to four weeks. For ripening, the temperature range is between 20° and 32° C.

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Packaging

Fruit should be packed in a single layer fibreboard carton, net weight 4 to 5 kg, with between 8 and 20 fruit per carton. The most popular count has been 12 in the past, but the trade has noticed a consumer shift to preferring the larger sizes, and is buying more 8's and 10's. The box must have holes for adequate ventilation and should be fully lidded to give better protection.

Polystyrene nets, paper or paper straw are used to package individual fruits inside the carton.

Branding and Promotion

There are mangoes entering the market from so many suppliers that branding is less significant to the consumer than it is for avocados, where two brands dominate. The lack of a dominating supplier has also meant that there is no generic advertising. The major supermarkets do occasionally carry out promotional campaigns in their own stores for mangoes or for exotics overall.

Import Regulations

Mangoes come under tariff number 0804 500091 and tariffs are as follows:

Full tariff:	6%
GSP countries:	4%
Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel:	2.5%
Least developed countries (LDDC):	Free
ACP countries:	Free
Turkey:	Free

In order to receive preferential tariff treatment, produce must be accompanied by the appropriate forms: EUR 1 for ACP countries or Form A for GSP or LDDC. No other import regulations apply. Certain hygiene standards must be met and all fresh fruit entering the EEC must be accompanied by the original of a phytosanitary certificate, but there is no other legislation governing entry of these fruits to the UK. (See Appendix 1)

Pineapples

Harvesting, Handling and Storage



Cayenne pineapples should be harvested when half yellow in colour and, if destined for long term storage or transport time, placed under refrigeration as soon as possible. Picking is normally done by twisting the fruit from the stalk, later trimming it to 1 to 3 cm. Mechanical harvesting is used in large plantations. Ethylene-releasing compounds have been used for some time in the Ivory Coast to stimulate uniform ripening and colouring and other countries are beginning to follow suit.



Pre-cooling is required for successful sea shipments and the temperature controlled between 7° and 10°C during the journey, depending on the storage time required and the maturity of the fruit. Fruit going below these temperatures is liable to suffer chilling damage. Mature green fruit can be safely stored at temperatures between 10° and 13°C. The expected life of fruit kept in the right conditions is a maximum of four weeks. The relative humidity of the store should be high, to help keep the fruit's fresh appearance. The Ivory Coast and South Africa ship by sea, except in the early part of the season, but Ghana and Kenya generally freight by air.

Packaging

Fruit can be packed either flat or upright (though some retailers express a preference for upright packing) in 12 to 15 kg cartons, with 8 to 20 fruit per pack, depending upon the grade of fruit. Cartons must be well ventilated for sea freighting. For larger, luxury fruit it is more important that the crown be protected during shipment; the extra cost of freight space for no return on smaller fruit means that the crown is trimmed to a minimum prior to packing. (In the Ivory Coast the crown is trimmed before harvesting.)

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Branding and Promotion

The supermarkets do sometimes promote pineapples as a generic product, and usually expect a promotional contribution if this is carried out in conjunction with a particular brand. Supermarkets currently promote pineapples by country of origin, drawing attention to differences in size, colour or other characteristics.

Import Regulations

Pineapples come under tariff number 0804 3000090 and tariffs are those in force for the EEC:

Full tariff	9%
Least developed countries (LDDC):	Free
ACP countries:	Free

In order to receive preferential tariff treatment, produce must be accompanied by the appropriate forms: EUR 1 for ACP countries or Form A for LDDC. No other import regulations apply. Certain hygiene standards must be met and all fresh fruit entering the EEC must be accompanied by the original of a phytosanitary certificate, but there is no other legislation governing entry of these fruits to the UK. (See Appendix 1)

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Papayas

Harvesting, Handling and Storage

The UK retail market for papayas suffered initial difficulties as a result of fruit going on to the market having been harvested too early and not ripening fully. Harvesting has to be timed with precision. As fruit should already be fairly ripe when picked, it has to be transported with great care to avoid spoilage. Its perishability also necessitates transportation by air. Expected life after harvesting is a maximum of three weeks.

Packaging

Packaging should be in a 3 to 4 kg net weight box with counts of 8's to 12's, though some retailers are looking to sell larger fruit and so counts of 6's and 7's are being sold. Sometimes papayas are individually wrapped, for protection, but this increases handling time at the receiving end and so well packed, visible fruit are preferred.



Branding and Promotion

To date there has been little promotion of papayas, except in advertising exotics fruits in general. Brazil, which is the main supplier, does not have a country-wide brand name.

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Import Regulations

Papayas come under tariff number 0807 2000000 and tariffs in force are as follows:

Full tariff:	3%
GSP countries:	Free
Turkey:	Free
Least developed countries (LDDC):	Free
ACP countries:	Free

In order to receive preferential tariff treatment, produce must be accompanied by the appropriate forms: EUR 1 for ACP countries or Form A for GSP or LDDC. No other import regulations apply. Certain hygiene standards must be met and all fresh fruit entering the EEC must be accompanied by the original of a phytosanitary certificate, but there is no other legislation governing entry of these fruits to the UK. (See Appendix 1)



Passion fruit

Harvesting, Handling and Storage

The passion fruit plant may be used as an intercrop between tree crops and is quick to mature and therefore can provide a useful earning crop for small farms. However, the fruit is highly perishable and as a result has to be handled carefully and air freighted to the market. Temperature has to be carefully controlled after harvest, as a red discoloration of the flesh is likely to occur at temperatures below 7°C and mould sets in. However, expected life can be up to four weeks after harvest, if the fruit is handled carefully. Passion fruit exude ethylene when stored and therefore it is important to store them away from certain fruits, such as avocado, which ethylene ripens.

Packaging

Buyers are less restrictive in their requirements for passion fruit packaging, in that suppliers use various types of fibreboard containers. Kenyan exporters (the major suppliers) use 2 kg net weight single layer trays with lids and internal dividers, about 40-48 fruit to the tray. Brazilian exporters pack in double layer 4 kg cartons, with counts of 46-48. Other suppliers use cartons of up to 7 kg weight and this is a size preferred in the ethnic market. Larger supermarkets prefer the single layer trays and are currently experimenting with an even smaller size of carton, so that they have a ready supply of smaller quantities of passion fruit to ensure freshness on the shelves. So far, only UK pre-packers are working with these smaller containers.

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Branding and Promotion

There is no major brand name in the passion fruit market. Kenya has been the most important supplier, and there have been some store promotions of its fruit; they have also been included in promotions under the general exotic head.

Import Regulations

Passion fruit are classified under tariff number 0810 909020, and tariffs are those in force for the EEC:

Full tariff:	11%
GSP countries:	6%
Least developed countries (LDDC):	Free
ACP countries:	Free
Turkey:	Free

In order to receive preferential tariff treatment, produce must be accompanied by the appropriate forms: EUR 1 for ACP countries or Form A for GSP or LDDC. No other import regulations apply. Certain hygiene standards must be met and all fresh fruit entering the EEC must be accompanied by the original of a phytosanitary certificate, but there is no other legislation governing entry of these fruits to the UK. (See Appendix 1)