

Horticulture industry leaders in Rwanda have projected that by 2026 avocado export will increase by 600 per cent around 16,000 tons per year thanks to the number of strategies they are putting in place.

Agriculture sector is the backbone of Rwanda's economic activity, accounting for 33% of the national GDP. Around 72% of Rwanda's working population is employed in farming and related activities.

Souk Farms, one of the largest growers and exporters of fresh horticultural produce in Rwanda, said horticultural exports have been steadily growing over the last decade and are now established in addition to tea and coffee, commodities traditionally shipped by the country.

Seun Rasheed, CEO of Souk Farms, noted that good agricultural practices are of great importance for Rwandan farmers even as the country actively works towards sustainability.

The increase in fruit and vegetable exports is mainly driven by avocado, french beans, bird eye chilies, and habanero chilies.

"For avocado, Rwanda's export could increase by over 600% to 16,000 tons per year by 2026 based on trees planted to date. The same applies to other vegetables such as chilies and french beans, which are seeing strong growth of upwards of 30% annually," said Rasheed.

"We have seen the effects of the economic and environmental situation on several countries, and we learn the right lessons to make our agriculture sustainable. We are increasingly adopting irrigation, energy, and fertilization systems that strengthen our resilience to crises."

According to Rwanda's National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB), the avocado market is evolving towards more sustainability and therefore, needs cost-effective transportation chains such as sea freight.

It is expected that approximately over 200 hectares will come into production in the coming years, almost doubling the avocado production in Rwanda.

Although Rwanda is an emerging country in the international agricultural market, as their horticulture and agriculture exports date less than 10 years, Rasheed bets on favorable climatic conditions to give the country a competitive advantage.

“We produce throughout the year and can supply the international market on a stable basis, in addition to the fact that our production costs remain lower despite recent increases,” he highlighted.

Additionally, the executive also acknowledged Rwanda’s supportive policies that have strengthened its position in promoting agribusiness and rewarded the efforts of farmers.

In the current production, Rwanda exports 200-250 metric tons of avocados per month primarily to the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Data by NAEB indicates that in the last five years, avocado exports from Rwanda increased from (US\$37,155) 105.4 Metric Tons in 2016/2017) to (US\$4,533,801) 2,765 Metric tons in 2021/2022.