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Dominican freshness and international freight connections

Being the number one tourism destination in the Caribbean has advantages for the fresh fruit and vegetable industry. While you read this article, probably one or more aircraft landed or has taken off from the Dominican Republic to Europe.

The Dominican Republic received 6.1 million of tourists in 2016. While the United States remains the largest source market for Dominican tourism with 2.1 million visitors, followed by Canada with 772,000; the remaining 3 million tourists primarily come from Spain, Italy, Germany, France, United Kingdom, and even Russia.

This means 67 non-stop flights from the Punta Cana airport alone to Europe, including 17 direct flights to Russia during the winter season. Other Latin America and Caribbean may have direct flights to the United States and Canada, but no one else has this level of non-stop connectivity to Europe.

This means that Dominican mangos, Asian vegetables, aromatic herbs, pineapples, and avocados can hop on direct flights to Europe and arrive in a much fresher condition with longer shelf life. The Dominican pineapple starts off with a natural sweeter advantage because of a stronger sunlight regime in the field and a less than 24-hour transit time to its final destination, which makes sure it stays just as sweet. Compare the taste of a Dominican pineapple with a Costa Rican pineapple in a European supermarket.

In fact, South American tourists also come to the Dominican Republic so South America fruit and vegetable competitors are starting to use Dominican airports for trans-shipping cargo to Europe. Dominican exporters are one among the very few countries that can export long beans to Europe because of its strong air freight connections that competitors don't have. Long beans, needs fast and fresh transport to preserve its freshness and quality.

Dominican producers have traditionally looked to the nearby US market. The US Department of Agriculture supported Exporta Calidad Program is helping Dominican exporters understand the different requirements of the European market including box sizes, certifications, and quality standards. European tourists returning from the Dominican Republic have taken a liking to fresh Dominican produce as part of their meals. The Exporta Calidad Program is working with Dominican exporters to develop a country source of origin branding for their produce.

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