



BRANCHE	SECTION(S)	ÉPREUVE ÉCRITE
ANGLAIS	B,C,D,E,F,G	<i>Durée de l'épreuve : 150 minutes</i> <i>Date de l'épreuve : 16/09/2020</i>

Are Mexican avocados the world's new conflict commodity?

The 19 mutilated bodies, nine hanging semi-naked from a bridge in the Mexican city of Uruapan, were initially thought to be the result of a clash between rival drug gangs. But the Jalisco New Generation cartel, which claimed the murders in August, is believed to be fighting for more than drugs. It wants dominance over the local avocado trade. Mexico is the world's biggest producer of avocados. Exports of the "green gold" from the state of Michoacán, which produces most of Mexico's avocados, were worth \$2.4bn last year.

Now, the risk analytics group Verisk Maplecroft has warned in a new analysis that Mexican avocados risk becoming the next "conflict commodity", akin to "blood diamonds" in Angola and Sierra Leone and conflict minerals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The analysis examines a range of factors contributing to the increasing risk profile of Mexican avocados, including the growing involvement of cartels and the associated violence, as well as the use of forced and child labour in farming.

It also examines illegal deforestation, illegal logging and forest-clearing for cultivation. The environmental situation has been exacerbated¹ due to cartel activity, "as criminal groups clear protected woodlands to make room for their avocado groves²", according to the report. "The exponential growth of the avocado's popularity is a mixed blessing for Mexico's communities and farmers," Verisk Maplecroft's Americas analyst, Christian Wagner, says in the report. "While most have benefited from record-breaking prices, many have attracted the attention of organised crime groups that are sinking their teeth into the profits."

Avocados have been lauded by dieticians for their high nutritional content and "good" fats. In Mexico, the industry is popular because it pays up to 12 times the Mexican minimum wage, according to the study. The country tops the list of world exporters, ahead of the Netherlands, a major non-producing exporting hub, and Peru.

At least 12 criminal groups are operating in the region. Some local packers and growers have responded by recruiting their own defence forces. But "this increases the risk of both more violence and the potential for human rights abuses", says the report, and criminal groups often coerce pickers into temporary forced labour. Falko Ernst, International Crisis Group senior analyst for Mexico, said avocados have been a prominent item in Mexican organised crime groups' portfolio for at least a decade, especially in Michoacán.

¹ made worse

² trees

“It’s not only avocados. Mexican organised crime has long mutated away from ‘just’ drugs trafficking,” he said. “Today, the model is this: you control a given territory, and within it you exploit whichever commodity is locally available. That includes avocados, but also limes, papayas, strawberries, illegal logging and mining, to name but a few.”

Ernst said a boycott of Mexican avocado is not the right response because “we’re talking about a huge sector that sustains thousands of hard-working, peaceful families. A boycott would mean pulling the rug out from under their feet, and most likely prompt criminal groups to prey on civilians more aggressively to make up for lost avocado income.”

He added: “What consumers can and should do is voice their expectations toward the companies they buy goods from, to not remain silent bystanders to human rights crises in many of the producing regions in the global south. Governments often ignore their citizens, but if the private sector, if investors, start budging, it’s a whole different story.” Ryan Aherin, senior commodities analyst at Verisk Maplecroft, said there isn’t a simple answer on how consumers should respond. (581 words)

(adapted from Saeed Kamali Dehghan’s article in The Guardian, 30th December 2019)

A. Comprehension (20 m)

Answer the following questions in your own words.

1. Why is the increasing demand for avocados from South America both a blessing and a curse for Mexican farming communities? (10)
2. How do Mexican criminal organisations ensure their business remains profitable? (4)
3. How are consumers expected to react to this controversial issue? Explain why.(6)

B. Personal Opinion (10 m)

Answer the question below. Do not use any ideas from the article. Word limit: 100-150 words! Indicate your word count.

To what extent do you agree that consumers have rights but no responsibilities?

C. Essay (30 m)

Write a well-structured essay of between 300 and 400 words on ONE of the topics below. Indicate your choice clearly and include a word count.

1. Discuss the risks of climate change and suggest measures that should be taken to prevent environmental catastrophes.
2. ‘If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.’
(George Orwell) Discuss.
3. With the development of technology, children are now living in a world that is completely different from that of 50 years ago. **Discuss the benefits and the problems** this may cause for families and society.