

## Chile: Fruit growers Araucanía sign agreement to produce quality berries

The Association of Clean Fruit Producers of Araucanía (Frutaraucanía) signed a Clean Production Agreement (CPA), which will benefit 45% of the region's berries production, to produce quality fruit, improve their product's access to international markets, and ensuring better prices.

More than 40 micro, small, and medium sized producers of berries, cherries, murtillo, and hazelnut from the communes of Loncoche, Gorbea, Collipulli, Carahue, and Temuco will work for a period of 18 months to bridge the gaps in environmental and health matters in orchards ranging from 0.25 to 5 hectares. All this promoted by the National Council for Clean Production with the support of the regional ministries of Economy, Agriculture, Health and Energy, SAG, INDAP, SERCOTEC, and CORFO.

The APL will help improve the orchard's production standards through the rational use of fertilizers, control in handling of pesticides and fungicides, efficient use of water resources through irrigation systems and rainwater collection systems, reducing conventional energy consumption, and training of entrepreneurs and workers in environmental and occupational safety issues.

The regional minister of Economy, Eduardo Vicencio, emphasized that the partnership was key to raising the competitiveness of small growers in La Araucania, a sector that has increased its agricultural area by 95.3% in the 2006-2012 period.

"We hope that by 2018 there will be 40% more hectares in this development. Implementing the CPA will allow producers to obtain better fruit quality, meet standards and get certifications to reach new markets or improve prices. La Araucania needs to produce more berries and this agreement is an important step to improve an emerging sector in regional agriculture, which I believe is one of the sectors with the greatest potential in the next 10 or 20 years, he said.

According to the secretary of the Regional Committee of Cleaner Production, Luis Muñoz, the CPA plays a very important role in supporting the development strategy driven by the regional government, which regards the fruit industry as an opportunity to improve the competitiveness of the traditional farming sectors. "For this, the APL will focus on installing a sustainable agricultural production through management tools based on Cleaner Production, leverage resources for investment and promote associative marketing models," Munoz said.

Meanwhile, the president of the Association of Clean Fruit Producers from Araucanía (Frutaraucanía), Alex Ceballos, said that producers expect the CPA to help them become known as clean producers with traceable and safe fruits.

"With this certification, we intend to have an added value and reach the European and Asian markets. We have gaps in infrastructure that we must address to meet international requirements. We are working with institutions linked to the fruit world, which gives us a tremendous opening as a trade association to do business together and optimize marketing. What better way to do it than with an CPA certification?" said Ceballos.

### **The industry's current state**

The berries (blueberries, raspberries, strawberries), along with apples, cherries and European hazelnut, have the best market prospects and business opportunities. There are 110 berry producers working 4,000 of the 7,000 hectares devoted to fruits in the region. Berry exports amount to US \$40 million and rank second after apples (69 million dollars).

The companies that will benefit from the CPA produce eight thousand tons / year, i.e. 45% of the region's total berry production, 80% of which is allocated for exports.

In addition to having actions aimed at overcoming productive and environmental gaps, the CPA will implement monitoring, reporting and verification of the sector's sustainability indicators. In addition, fruit producers will receive the HuellaChile training program of the Ministry of Environment so that they are able to measure their carbon footprint.

Source : [www.freshplaza.com/](http://www.freshplaza.com/) 02/12/2015