

Mexico is looking for new markets for its blueberries

BQ Fruits, the Mexican company, is currently in the middle of its blueberry, blackberry, and raspberry season. The blueberry harvest started about a month and a half ago and the blackberry harvest started this week. Overall, the company is focusing on berries this season and it is also exploring new markets.

The company's main market is Europe but, since their competitors have much lower prices, BQ Fruits has started to look for other markets, such as Japan, Guatemala, or Russia, to export its berries. "Japan and the rest of Asia are our new markets. At the end of last season we sent some product to Russia, and we hope to do it again this year. However we are still focusing on new markets, such as Japan and Hong Kong," says Nadia Martinez, from BQ Fruits. "We are also sending some blueberries to Guatemala, which produces blackberries and strawberries, but doesn't produce blueberries and has to import them from Chile, Peru, Argentina, and Mexico. In addition, we are working on a protocol to send Mexican raspberries to the supermarkets in Guatemala."

Berries all year long

The demand for berries is growing in many countries and, according to Martinez, one of Mexico's advantages is that they can grow them throughout most of the year. "The season begins in September, and we have been making shipments to Guatemala each month. We started with blueberries in June or July and we'll continue until December," Martinez added.

Since we have a supply all year round, Mexico has to compete with several countries throughout the year. However, Martinez said, many customers prefer to rely on the same supplier all year so they can have a stable price and strengthen their relationships.

BQ Fruits' market diversification has allowed the company to increase its volumes of berries. "We are producing a higher volume and we are trying to increase exports." Last season blueberries suffered a little, but Martinez is sure they will have very good opportunities this year, as their programs with Japan and Guatemala are going very well. Sales of blackberries and raspberries in Europe are also doing well, while sales of blueberries in Europe are not doing very well.

Prices are too high prices for Europe

Mexican blueberries face a lot of competition in Europe, so BQ Fruits is looking for other markets that can afford them. "We have excellent varieties and sizes. We will continue with the customers we have all year, but we will also try to find new markets," he said. The Asian market can afford to buy blueberries from Mexico, despite the high transport costs. "We send very small volumes to Asia, two or three batches per week, but we'll increase exports over the next year. For now, they are enjoying the product and everything is being sold. However, they consume very small amounts, which is a problem, as the flights rates are based on weight," said Martinez.

Even though Mexico can ship its products to Guatemala by boat or by truck, customers prefer to receive them by plane because customs processes are very slow and complicated in Guatemala. "It takes two or three days to pass the products through customs, and our customers prefer to have them as soon as possible."

BQ Fruits uses dollars in all its markets, except in Europe, where it works in euros; thus, the exchange rates do not usually pose a problem for the company. "In addition, we also buy most of the materials we use with dollars." Finally, Martinez says that they currently pack their blueberry in 125 gram containers for all their markets, so they haven't had to change their packaging for new markets; only the label.

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