

# Argentina: Blueberry in crisis after years of growth

Blueberry producers from the region of Mesopotamian are facing a worrisome situation due to the unexpected drop in this year's harvest. In 2016, there was an overproduction and, consequently, a drop in prices in the international markets, especially in the United States, which buys 70% of the fruit Argentina exports.

According to estimates based on the production forecast made at the beginning of the harvest, a total of 2 million kilos of blueberries were left unharvested.

"The producers decided to stop harvesting because they were going to lose money if they continued," said Omar Chiarello, president of the Association of Producers of Blueberries from Argentina's Mesopotamia (Apama), which brings together more than fifty producers, mostly from Concordia, and some from Corrientes.

The blueberry's critical situation began a few weeks ago due to the oversupply in the market and the stagnant consumption of blueberries, which led to a significant devaluation in prices.

Local producers were expecting a good harvest and the estimated regional production of blueberries for export in the more than 1,000 hectares devoted to this product in the area stood at 9 million kilos.

In addition, about 70,000 potential wages, including field work, packing, and logistics were lost. "The crucial factor was the sharp decline in international prices, which led to an early termination of the harvest this year," said Chiarello, who added that the season in Concordia had ended two weeks earlier than last year.

"The fruit that wasn't harvested was discarded or producers pruned the plants with all the fruit, which hurt us as producers. However, it's something we had to do to. Now we have to be optimistic about next year's harvest," concluded the leader.

After evaluating the harvest, producers stated that the increased costs of harvesting, logistics, and the delay in the payment of refunds of the VAT were some of the factors that made the domestic production less competitive.

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