

## Argentina: "Producers decided to stop harvesting blueberries"

Argentina's blueberry sector faced serious problems this year because of the fall in international blueberry prices, the rising production costs in Argentina, and Peru's steady increase in production and competitiveness. After years of continuous growth, the sector had the biggest stagnation this season.

Apama, the Association of Producers of Blueberries from Argentina's Mesopotamia, said producers in the area were facing a worrying situation due to the unexpected drop in this year's harvest. There was an overproduction in the 2016 season that led to a drop in the prices of blueberries in international markets, mainly in the United States, which continues to be the main consumer of this fruit and that imports more than 70% of the blueberries that Argentina exports.

The association estimates there were about 2 million kilos of blueberries that were left unharvested. "The producers decided to stop harvesting because they were going to lose money if they continued. 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. The main factor was the sharp decline in international prices, which led to the consequent early termination of this year's harvest," said Omar Chiarello, president of Apama.

"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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