

US and Canadian retailers visit the Chilean fruit industry

The Association of Exporters Fruit of Chile AG, Asoex, and ProChile, invited a group of representatives of major supermarket chains in the US and Canada to visit Chile to get to know the productive and export process of Chilean fruit.

The event was coordinated by the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association (CFFA) in North America, as part of its efforts to promote the national fruit in the US and Canadian markets. The representatives of the retail sector coming to Chile are: Tom Williams, director of Produce & Floral Merchandising at Coborn's Inc, from Minnesota; John Jaker, VP of Marketing and Merchandising at Charlie's Produce, from Seattle; Ian Leaf, Produce Category Manager at Montreal; Mimmo Frazzone, director of Produce & Flora at Longo's, from Ontario, and Mathew Tate, director of Produce Procurement at Aramark, from Philadelphia.

The welcome meeting was held at the offices of ASOEX and was led by Ronald Bown, the president of Asoex, who was accompanied by the deputy director of marketing of that entity, Ignacio Caballero; as well as the Secretary General of ASOEX, Edmundo Araya, Enrique Lira, and the marketing analyst ASOEX, Santiago Caballero, the executive director of ASOEX Blueberry Committee, Andrew Armstrong; the chairman of the Kiwi Committee, Carlos Curzat; the general manager of Chile's Hass Avocado Committee, Juan Enrique Lazo; the executive director of CFFA for North America, Karen Brux; the person in charge of central United States and Canada at the CFFA, Susanne Bertolas; and Amanda Sheperd, who is in charge of Social Media for CFFA Ellipses.

Ronald Bown, president of ASOEX said: "These visits are very relevant for our industry because they allow us to show, on the ground, the entire production and export process of Chilean fruit, as well as the work developed by our association. This helps strengthen our ties with the North American retail sector. The United States continues to be the main destination for Chilean fruit. During the 2015-2016 season Chile exported more than 790,000 tons of fresh fruit to that market. The main exports were of table grape, which accounted for 39% of total exports, followed by apples with 13%, and oranges and blueberries with 8%, respectively."

"The retailers that accompany us today represent large supermarket chains, both at the regional or national level in the US and Canadian markets. They also have different target audiences and markets, offering a varied opportunity for Chilean fruit," said Karen Brux, Executive Director of the CFFA.

Ignacio Caballero was commissioned to conduct a presentation on the domestic industry and the work conducted by ASOEX.

Retail

The retail representatives said consumers from their markets were greatly interested in knowing the origin of the fruit they eat, as well as its production process, and that they favored environmentally friendly processes that were respectful of field workers and, therefore, they celebrated the possibility of knowing the reality of the Chilean fruit sector.

"We have operations in Latin America, based here in Santiago, and in 20 countries around the world. The Chilean fruit is a great complement during the winter and when there is a lack of local production. It is a high quality product and I really want to learn how producers work and how important the safety standards and delivery conditions are during this visit," stated Mathew Tate, director of Produce Procurement at Aramark, Philadelphia.

"At Logo's, we promote Chilean fruit in the winter months, especially blueberries, Chilean table grapes, and stone fruit, which account for more than 20% of our sales in this period. The fruit quality is essential, that's why it is very positive to work with our suppliers to get the freshest product in the best possible conditions. Blueberries are an important part of our fresh produce business. They are our second most important berry, only preceded by strawberries, so it is very important to promote them," Mimmo Frazzone, director of Produce & Flora at Longo's, Ontario, stated.

Frazzone said that, to increase consumption, it was essential to "work together to do promotions, to inform consumers about the different varieties and the new varieties available, such as the seedless grapes, coming from Chile. Tastings are a good alternative because they allow the public to know what products are available, try them out, and buy them. The fruit's quality and taste is of paramount importance at Longo's. Our consumers are willing to pay for this quality and this flavor," he said.

The visit

The group arrived in Chile on Sunday, January 15, and they will stay in Chile until Saturday 21. They have a full agenda, which started on Monday, January 17th, with a meeting at ASOEX in the morning and a tour of stone fruit orchards and fruit centrals in the central zone of Chile during the afternoon.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the delegation went to Temuco to get to know the work being conducted in organic orchards, and with traditional berries .

On Thursday, the group will travel to Buin, where they will visit table grape orchards, packings facilities, and the SAG / USDA-APHIS / ASOEX Plant Site Inspection at Lo Herrera.

Finally, on Friday morning, the visitors will go to Curacavi, where they will get to know the work of the Fruit Technology Consortium regarding the genetic improvement of the national fruit. Currently the Consortium is working on five breeding programs for table grapes, cherries, stone fruits, raspberries, and apples.

In the afternoon the group will travel to the region of Valparaiso, where they will visit and learn about the facilities of the Port of Valparaiso and the process to export Chilean fruit.

Source : <http://www.freshplaza.com/article/169667/US-and-Canadian-retailers-visit-the-Chilean-fruit-industry>