

Weather to result in fewer Argentine lemons and later startdate

The head of the Argentine Citrus Federation (Fedecitrus) has said weather-related factors will result in two notable effects on the South American country's upcoming lemon season.

"On the one hand, there will be a drop in production. Argentina is going to have at least 10% fewer lemons compared to last year and a lot less than we can produce on a normal year," the group's president José Carbonell said.

"In addition, the sizing of the fruit has been delayed and that means that campaign is going to start in April."

Carbonell explained there had been a very dry summer in Argentina, along with a water shortage in the north of the country, which had affected production. More than 90% of the country's lemons are produced in the northwestern Tucumán province.

"We have a very hot fortnight in January and with the water shortage this made any kind of irrigation insufficient, causing a drop in production and lengthening the time necessary before the fruit can be harvested," he said.

"We are not anticipating an early start to the campaign."

Argentina's lemon exports in 2016 jumped 46% year-on-year to around 270,000 metric tons (MT), but were still far lower than the record of 450,000MT that was achieved in 2008. In 2013 severe frosts struck the industry and had a significant impact on volumes.

Carbonell also expects to see "stable prices" and, despite the lower production, exports levels similar to or higher than last year, with less fruit to be sold on the domestic market.

"Today we have less fruit but better quality," he said.

“It seems to me that we are a couple of weeks late. We won’t be arriving to the markets until the end of April or the start of May.”

Confident of U.S. market access

On the subject of the United State Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) recent decision to extend the public comment period for market access for lemons grown in Northwest Argentina, Carbonell said he was not concerned.

The stay was announced by the USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) just days after Donald Trump’s inauguration as president in January, having previously announced the market access proposal one month before.

“The U.S. has done what all administrations do when they take over. When [Barak] Obama arrived, he suspended the resolutions that had been signed in the last 60 days, just the same as [George W.] Bush and now Trump,” he said.

“It’s another market, in which we don’t want any kind of conflict, but the U.S. is importing more and more lemons every year and we have demonstrated that there are no conditions that could put the phytosanitary health of the North American citrus industry at risk.”

He expects to receive “good news” once the 60-day comment period extension ends.

The representative also expects the Brazilian market to open “imminently” and says the industry is working hard to gain Mexican market access.

Lien article : <http://www.freshfruitportal.com/news/2017/02/21/weather-result-fewer-argentine-lemons-later-start-date/>