

Argentina expects 5% uptick in fresh blueberry exports

The Argentinean Blueberry Committee (ABC) has announced the official start to the 2017 season, marked by a crop oriented toward earlier production, higher yields and expectations for better fruit quality and longer shelf life.

The committee has forecast a 5% year-on-year rise in exports to 18,000 metric tons (MT), of which 63% is set to go to the U.S. and Canada, 21% to England, and the remainder to continental Europe and other markets.

“Thanks to our country’s production experience, we have a differential which is being able to adapt to the needs of a volatile market, investing more in technology and betting on varietal conversion,” ABC president Federico Bayá said in a release.

“While we’ve managed to keep the production trend of recent years, the current focus is on improving quality and diversifying markets to guarantee the acidulated flavor that distinguishes our fruit,” said Bayá.

“We had an even and smooth winter that didn’t lead to any losses from frost,” the executive added.

On the matter of an earlier season, Bayá highlighted how varietal changes meant the production curve had shifted, bringing peak production to weeks 42-43 from what used to be between weeks 45-46.

However, through improved post-harvest practices he expected the fruit would achieve a quality characterized by a “different flavor”, which has prompted a promotional campaign around the slogan “Taste the difference”.

“We’re looking for a greater percentage of sea-freight shipments, which will allow us to reduce costs and have more planning,” Bayá said.

“We will continue to send a percentage by air freight which means the fruit can arrive at the destination in a couple of days, supplying markets with early fruit and converging freshness and flavor.”

Additionally, growers are also hoping to boost blueberry consumption within Argentina itself.

“We have given ourselves the medium-term challenge of developing the domestic market, offering export product adapted to the demands of local consumers who require high quality and accessible prices,” said Bayá.

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