

Organic crop cultivation continues expanding worldwide

In a report published recently by the Office of Agricultural Studies and Policies (ODEPA), prepared by sectoralist, Pilar Eguillor, it has been noted that organic production is carried out in 179 countries, with a total area of 90.6 million hectares, and with Europe as the leading region for this type of crops.

The country with the largest certified organic acreage worldwide is Australia, with 22.7 million hectares, followed by Argentina, with 3.1 million, and the United States and Spain, with 2 million hectares each.

In its report, the ODEPA professional points out that, according to estimates, the area certified for organic agriculture worldwide represents only 1.1% of the total cultivated area; however, if the same comparison is made at country level, the certified organic area can reach over 10% of the total cultivated area. The Principality of Liechtenstein leads the ranking in this sense, with more than 30% of its agricultural acreage under organic management.

Organic crops in Chile: Blueberries stand out

Chile is a country with an export tradition, especially in the fruit sector, and now seeks to make a move towards the development of organic crop production and exports. The goal is to take advantage of the high and growing demand for these types of products at a global level, with the advantages entailed in being able to supply them during the off-season.

According to the report by Pilar Eguillor, in 2016 Chile exported organic products worth more than 266 million dollars to the world, which is 23% more than the USD 217 million of 2015.

The greatest increase was recorded by fresh Chilean organic product exports, with a value exceeding USD 108 million; 41% of the total value of all organic product exports and 41% more than in 2015. The most noteworthy increases were those of organic blueberries and apples.

In the case of frozen organic product shipments, the total value amounted to USD 90.7 million; a 30% increase over the previous year, when the total value amounted to USD 69.6 million. The main increase in value was recorded by frozen blueberries and raspberries.

As regards the number of hectares planted with organic products in Chile, the ODEPA report states that, according to the latest statistics provided by the Agricultural and Livestock Service (SAG), obtained through the National Registry System for Organic Certification, the agricultural acreage certified as organic in Chile in 2016 reached 131,973 hectares, representing an increase of 30% compared to the 100,986 hectares reported in 2015.

The three regions with the most certified organic acreage are the Biobío Region, with 51,830 hectares (39%); the Region of Maule, with 37,951 hectares (29%) and the Region of Los Ríos, with 20,235 hectares (15%).

Looking at the number of hectares planted with organic fruit trees in the country, including wine grapes, most of the acreage in September 2016 corresponded to large fruit trees, with a total of 5,979 hectares.

As for the certified organic acreage devoted to smaller fruit trees, despite a decrease compared to 2015, the most noteworthy crops were blueberries, raspberries and blackberries. The growth of the organic strawberry acreage stands out the most, with a 62% increase; from 71 to 116 hectares.

According to Pilar Eguillor's report, the reasons for the decline of organic plantations in Chile are mainly the greater competition in destination markets and the presence of pests such as *Lobesia botrana*.

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