

Price of strawberries more important than flavour in US

The North American strawberry market is growing, both in production and consumption. The US is the largest producer, with a local production of 1,166,000 tonnes in 2015. Local production in Mexico amounted to 393,000 tonnes that year, and in Canada it amounted to 23,000 tonnes. The difference in consumption per capita is remarkable. An inhabitant of the US eats 4.4 kilograms of strawberries on average per year, a Canadian 3.4 and a Mexican 2.5 kilograms, according to Dan Legard of the California Strawberry Commission during the International Strawberry Congress in Antwerp, Belgium.



California: 85% of US production

In the US, the production of strawberries mostly occurs in California. This state is good for 85 per cent of total US production. Strawberries are grown along the coast in particular. The share for the fresh market was a volume of 804,000 tonnes in 2016. The share meant for the frozen sector amounted to 216,000 tonnes in that year. The area in California is 14,600 hectares. Florida and Mexico are responsible for the remainder of production. The export of strawberries from the US has been fairly stable in recent years. The majority is sent to Canada, then Mexico, Hong Kong, Japan and smaller volumes to various other destinations. The consumption in the US is fairly high, 4.4 kilograms are eaten per capita per year. From 2005 to 2015, consumption of strawberries increased by 33.4 per cent in the US.

Consumer trends in the US: Appearance and price more important than flavour and origin

It's remarkable that berries are the most important part of the fresh produce departments in supermarkets. The annual turnover of the berry category in the US amounts to 6.4 billion dollar. Strawberries are in seventh place in the complete fresh produce department, with an annual turnover of three billion dollars. Regarding just fruit, strawberries are in fourth place. In the berry segment, strawberries have the largest turnover. This product is good for nearly 50 per cent of total turnover, followed by blueberries, raspberries and blackberries. Remarkable also, is that appearance and price are the two most important factors when consumers buy strawberries. This is then followed by flavour, colour, size and origin. It's also remarkable that strawberry purchases are mostly made by heavy users. The market therefore still has much potential.

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