

## Chile: Cherry export season begins

According to the Minister of Agriculture, Carlos Furche, the 2017 - 2018 cherry export season is expected to be very auspicious because of the exponential increase of productive orchards and the increase in demand for cherry shipments during the previous years. To celebrate the official start of the cherry export season, last Thursday, Minister Furche visited the plant of Ranco Cherries and the orchard of the Los Nobles company in the O'Higgins Region.

The Minister was accompanied by the Regional Secretariat of Agriculture, Jose Guajardo, the Regional Director of the Agricultural and Livestock Service (SAG), Rodrigo Sotomayor, the General Manager of ASOEX, Miguel Canala-Echeverría, and the President of Fedefruta, Luis Schmidt.

Currently, China is the main destination market for Chilean cherries, and Chile is the main exporter of this fruit in the world. Chile accounts for 85% of the production of cherries from the southern hemisphere, and it is the absolute protagonist in the production in the counter season. This season, Chile is expected to produce some 34 million boxes of cherries.

"We are in full harvest season and everything indicates that this will be a very good year for producers, we might even have a record harvest. Our cherries have become the flagship product of the Chilean fruit sector in some markets, like the Chinese market, so it's possible that we export around US \$ 1 billion, which was completely unimaginable 10 years ago. This is the result of the investment made by the public and private sectors and also of a work that has allowed us to guarantee plant health and safety conditions, as well as opening markets," added Minister Furche.

During the 2016-2017 season, the Agricultural and Livestock Service (SAG) certified around 9 million boxes and they expect that there will be a substantial increase in certifications this season, which could add up to more than 12 million boxes in the O'Higgins regions, i.e. a 43% increase in sanitary inspections.

In turn, Miguel Canala-Echeverria, the general manager of ASOEX, highlighted the public-private efforts that have led the cherries sector to position itself as a leading exporter of high quality fruit, safety, and flavor. He also spoke about the 5 million-dollar promotion campaign planned for the 2017-2018 season, saying that it was unique in its type and for a single species, and that its goal was to boost consumption of Chilean cherries, mainly in China. Canala-Echeverria also said that this would be a record season, regarding the Chilean cherry's quality.

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