

Spain: Blueberries recording notable growth in berry sector

Statistics reveal that blueberries are recording a notable growth in Spain, where Huelva is the main producer. Significant increases in the acreage are also observed in other producing countries, as explained by the Spanish Federation of Associations of Producers and Exporters of Fruits, Vegetables, Flowers and Live Plants (Fepex).

In Huelva, the acreage has increased from 1,150 hectares in the 2013/2014 season to 2,858 hectares in 2017/2018. On the Cantabrian coast, the acreage stands at 400 hectares and Fepex assures that the autonomous governments want to encourage the expansion of these crops.

It explains that the governments of Asturias and Cantabria have published orders to promote blueberry plantations with subsidies to producers, with a focus on production for the period from June to October.

In the international arena, Chile exported 103,000 tonnes last year, and Peru expects to export 120,000 tonnes in four years. In Argentina, the domestic blueberry market is growing, with the acreage oscillating between 1,900 and 2,100 hectares.

Most of the production is exported and the United States is its main destination, with 65% of the total, although the United Kingdom is also an important market.

Meanwhile, on the African continent, South Africa and Morocco are expanding their plantations, and in Europe, Portugal, which had so far mostly focused on raspberries, is growing increasingly more blueberries.

In Spain, the sector is mostly betting on European markets, such as the United Kingdom, in order to maintain its growth, and the Scandinavian countries are of special interest, as their consumers tend to associate berries with their healthy properties.

Efforts are also being made to diversify exports, according to Rafael Domínguez, manager of Freshuelva, and in this line, China is one of the destinations considered of interest. In fact, the Ministry of Agriculture and Economy has already been asked to start negotiations for a protocol to allow exports to this country, similar to the one that Chile has already signed with China.

The berry sector also seeks to increase its presence in the Arab countries, where blackberries are already being exported.

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