

Dutch top fruit might go to Colombia by end of 2018

Dutch apples and pears might be exported to Colombia by the end of the year. Market access negotiations are at an advanced stage. A final audit is to take place in Dutch growers orchards at harvest time this year.

Inge Ribbens of GroentenFruit Huis is optimistic about the latest talks between the Dutch and Colombian authorities about the export protocol. "The agreements are practical and feasible. They also offer sufficient phytosanitary guarantees. If this summer's audit is concluded positively, the first Dutch apples and pears could be sent to Colombia by the end of 2018."

GroentenFruit Huis is the Dutch interest group for exporters and grower associations engaged in the sale of fruit and vegetables. This organisation is always closely involved with discussions regarding market access. GroentenFruit Huis looks at the feasibility of phytosanitary guidelines in particular.

New markets

The Dutch fruit sector is eagerly in search of new markets. The loss of Russian exports has put pressure on prices. There have been several successes over the past few years. For example, market access has been gained for exporting Dutch fruit to China, India, Vietnam, and Mexico.

According to Ribbens, India, in particular, is a success story. "When it comes to exporting apples, India is now in fourth place behind Germany, The United Kingdom and France. Exports to countries outside of Europe are leading to better price formations in the European Union. Realising access to new markets like Colombia is, therefore, of the utmost importance."

Four years of negotiations

Discussions with Colombia started in 2014. These will be completed this year. A four-year procedure is not unusual. Negotiations with China took six years. Ribbens does not think large quantities of Dutch fruit will go to the Netherlands in the short term. "Opening the border is an important first step. After this, it is up to exporters to sign contracts with supermarkets and other importers."

Fast delivery

A lot of fruit is grown in Colombia's neighbours in South America. Ribbens, therefore, does not expect Dutch apples and pears to be in Colombian shops year-round after the border is opened. "There is room for Dutch fruit in people's baskets. This is when there is a low supply of these fruits from countries

like Chile and Argentina, or if there are disappointing yields in those regions. Our exporters are able to deliver quickly if the demand arises."

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