

Turkey: Cherry production down 20% in Kemalpasa

The Kemalpasa town of Izmir, one of the biggest production areas for cherries in Turkey, has seen production numbers fall well below expectations this season. Production is estimated to be 20% lower than in the previous year at 48,000 tons. Following this estimate, the price of cherries started to rise to 3.75 USD per kg at the growers and 8.75 USD per kg at retail.

The research shows that heavy winds during the flowering and anthesis period caused the decline in productivity this season. The data announced by the Kemalpasa Chamber of Agriculture indicates that there are 7,000 growers in a production area of 850 million square feet. There are around 3 million cherry trees, out of which approximately 2.2 million produces cherries. The remaining 800,000 are classified as young plants which are not currently in production. The aforementioned wind factor was shown to be the main reason for the 20% decline in production from 60,000 tons to 48,000 tons.

The growers are selling the first harvested product not only to local markets but also for export to Russia and other countries. The growers indicate that exports strengthen their position in price negotiations with local market merchants and note that the prices are around 2-4 USD per kg range when there are no exports and around 4.5 – 5.5 USD per kg range where there is an export market. The main expectation for revenue for the growers is from the Napoleon variety of cherry, the harvest of which has not started yet. This particular variety will be exported mostly. However the production numbers for this variety will be almost 50% lower this season.

Kemalpasa Chamber of Agriculture Chairman Bulent Oray:” The town is started to be known as the capital of the cherry in Turkey. This year our production numbers are a bit disheartening for us. We expect a 20% decline in production numbers which will increase the prices of the products. If the export markets continue with the same demand as previous years, the prices in local market will go even higher. The fact that we are exporting 60 % of our entire exports to Russia during the upcoming World Cup in Russia is getting our hopes high.

Our biggest concern is high costs. We cannot harvest the cherry with automated systems so we need a lot of manual labor. We hire seasonal workers to pick the cherries. However there are intermediaries who organize these seasonal workers and they earn most of the money and very little is left for the workers themselves. Our labor costs per kg alone is 0.5 USD. With other costs added, the price per kg at the grower should be at least 1.25 USD level so our growers can earn some money for their extensive efforts. We have started up a cooperative to cut out the middlemen in the trade and improve the

margins for our growers. This in the end will also help the end consumers who will be able to purchase these products at a cheaper price.”

The workers on the field are paid around 20 USD per day but they had to give up 5 USD per day to intermediaries who find them the jobs and they were suffering because of it.

Liens articles : <http://www.freshplaza.com/article/193864/Turkey-Cherry-production-down-20-percent-in-Kemalpassa>