



## Inaugural Argentine blueberry exports to China expected in September

The Argentine blueberry industry is expecting to receive a visit from Chinese inspectors later this year to give the final go-ahead for exports to begin, after trade protocols were signed last year.

Argentinian Blueberry Committee (ABC) manager Carla Ginobili told Fresh Fruit Portal that market access was gained in December 2017, but facilities needed to be approved for exports to begin.

She expected a Chinese delegation would visit production areas in a few months' time.

“The inspectors will come to Argentina in September and will probably travel to [major growing regions] Tucuman, Concordia and Buenos Aires, but we are still waiting for the formal invitation from the National Service of Agri-Food Health and Quality (Senasa), which will be sent shortly,” she said.

Following the revision by the inspectors, they will then observe the initial export, which is expected to be carried out in late September when the season gets underway.

“There are two motives for the visit – to review the implementation of the phytosanitary protocol and to see the first departures, so we had to choose a data in which Argentina has fruit in conditions to export to China,” Ginobili said.

She added: “We are very confident that they are going to like Argentine fruit in China. We think that it is a market with good potential that will help us to spread out our supply.”

Argentina will have a 30% tariff rate for its first exports to China, but Ginobili was hopeful that in the short-term this could be reduced to be more in line with its competitors.

“Argentina has a 30% tariff rate because it comes under the Mercosur-China negotiations, but we are working – through the Ministry of Agroindustry and in accordance with the country's international laws – to achieve a lower tariff,” she said.

“The exporters are taking the tariff this year as part of the cost, but the idea is that as Argentina has good trade relations with China there is the possibility of lowering it to be more competitive or having the same conditions as Chile and Peru, which currently have a 0% rate.”

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