



OVERVIEW GLOBAL POMEGRANATE MARKET

The pomegranate market is at a tipping point. The last Peruvian pomegranates are on the market in Europe, while the first early varieties are already being harvested in the Mediterranean countries and the US. European traders look back on a difficult summer with large volumes and a low price. Now the sector is preparing for a European season with small sizes. The first pomegranates have also been harvested in California and India. This is an overview of the world market.

Peru: More diverse export portfolio

According to a large exporter, the market situation for pomegranates is comparable with that of avocados. The season runs from February to June/July. Many growers bet on an early start of the season and therefore choose early varieties. These varieties can be harvested earlier than the Wonderful. When the season started, the prices were very good, according to a trader, but then there was so much volume on the market that prices plummeted. Production is growing annually, and although consumption is also rising, it is doing so at a slower pace. Consumption growth is lagging behind the growth in production.

Europe is the most important export market for Peru. Many pomegranates are distributed across the rest of the continent via the Netherlands. Exporters are looking for new markets for next year. Small volumes were already shipped to the US this year, but exporters would also like to see the government helping in the opening of the Chinese or Brazilian markets. As a result, a smaller volume will go to Europe, which is better for the prices.

India expects good season

The season has just started and the outlook is good, with large volumes expected. At present, exports are only going to markets in the Middle East. Exports to Europe will start later. Indian traders say that there is a lot of competition from Egypt.



Good Chinese season thanks to favorable weather conditions

The Chinese season has been good this year. Thanks to the favorable weather conditions, the harvest volume was 30% greater. This good weather also had a positive impact on the quality of the fruit. The prices fluctuate per season, but have a fixed pattern. At the start of the season, high prices are recorded, but when the volume available on the market grows, the price sets an opposite trend. After the Moon Festival, prices are usually on the rise again.

In addition to its own production, which is mainly found in the provinces of Zhenzhou and Henan, the fruit is imported from Egypt and other countries. Chinese importers have shown interest in the large volumes harvested in Peru, but since there is no import protocol for Peruvian pomegranates, these are currently out of reach for them.

US: Good start, but lower yield of late varieties

The harvest in California started slowly last month with the early varieties, like the Foothill and Granada. "We have warm days and cold nights, which is good for the coloring and the sugar content." Also, the region was not hit by heat waves in July and August, allowing the harvest to start at a normal time. The prospects are good for the early varieties, but for the later varieties, including the Wonderful, a lower yield is expected. "It seems that the Wonderful production will be 15% smaller than usual," said a trader. This lower yield is the result of a frosty period late in the flowering season. The season usually runs from August to January, although the harvest stops in November. Outside the domestic season, Chile and Argentina take over the market.

Traders see a positive development in the market, both at a domestic and international level. This, in combination with the expected smaller harvest, will yield good results. The fruit benefits not only from the promotions that are launched at the start of the season, but also from current health trends. California exports its pomegranates to Japan, South Korea and Australia, but the largest consumer is Canada. On average, exports amount to 1 to 2 million boxes.

The pomegranate market is growing, especially on the east and west coasts of the continent. The domestic market absorbs between 25 and 40% of the harvest, depending on the time of the season. In addition, pomegranate arils are available all year round. As a result, the market is growing, says a trader. "When consumers realize that the arils are available all year round, the number of repeat purchases increases."



Over the past two seasons, the weather has had a negative impact. Because of the rain, the harvest came to a halt early. "Rain results in the fruit tearing and 25% of the harvest was lost because of the weather," recalls a trader.

Egypt expects greater harvest

The Egyptian season is about to begin and the prospects are good. A large exporter says that they have significantly increased their production. He expects to put 25% more Wonderful pomegranates on the market this year. That should lead to the company's exports totaling about 1,000 tons. The fruit's main buyers are Canada, Russia and the local market. "Our biggest competitors are Turkey and Greece, which have good export markets for this fruit.

Spain expects small sizes

The season kicked off last week with the harvest of the first early varieties, such as the Smith and Acco, in the east of the country. The harvest of the later varieties in Valencia starts in about ten days. There, a smaller yield and smaller sizes are expected. The harvest of the Valenciana pomegranates started this week. This is a descendant of the Mollar, the variety that dominated the production in Valencia almost ten years ago. Recently, growers have been switching to varieties with a more attractive appearance.

There were some heat waves during the growing season. This, in combination with the dry weather, resulted in smaller sizes. There are a lot of calibers 14 and 16 available, while the market usually demands the 10 and sometimes the 12. "Retailers have to adjust their size requirements for this season; otherwise, there will be very few pomegranates on the shelves," says a grower. Consumers prefer the large sizes, because they are easier to process into juice.

The Spanish season is starting at a time when the market is in a dip price-wise, due to the large volumes supplied by Peru. "We are having some overlap with the end of the Peruvian season. The import season was catastrophic due to the huge volumes, which caused prices to drop to a level that I thought was impossible," says a trader. Currently, there are still size 8 and 10 Wonderfals from Peru available. "We are having a tough start. If our season had not been delayed, the problems would be even bigger."

The last overseas pomegranates will disappear from the market in the next two weeks. Then it will be time for the European production. "We still have to wait and see how Turkey, Israel, Egypt and Tunisia will influence the market," continues the trader. What is certain is that there is, as with citrus, a lot of



competition from Egyptian pomegranates. This competition is especially strong after the devaluation of the Egyptian pound.

Belgium: Pomegranates close difficult summer

Pomegranate marketers have had a very difficult summer. Due to high volumes from Peru, prices fell to a dramatically low level. The volumes that are now on the market are just meeting the demand. Soon, the pomegranate season will start again in Spain, Egypt, Portugal and Greece, and larger volumes will come on the market again. The varieties that are now on the shelves come, for the most part, from Israel. The quality of the pomegranates is good at the moment, but none of the earlier varieties are as popular among customers as the Wonderful (mainly due to the short shelf life and frequent peel damage). Prices are currently falling slightly, but are still higher than those recorded this summer. The demand for pomegranates in Belgium remains stable, but the popularity of the fruit is increasing. The way in which it is eaten is still a stumbling block for many consumers.

Germany: Turkish pomegranates dominate

Turkish pomegranates are currently very popular on the German market. These have been on the market for about 2 months and, as it looks now, they will continue to be sold until mid-January and February. The price per kilo for buyers amounts to between 0.50 and 0.80 Euro. In the retail, the price level currently fluctuates between 1.30 and 1.50 Euro per kilo. This, as confirmed by traders, is approximately the same as around this time last year. Egyptian pomegranates are also available here and there; these play a subordinate role on the larger wholesale markets.

Australia: Market is growing slowly

The market for pomegranates is small, but has grown considerably over the last two to three years. The first annual meeting of pomegranate growers was held in April of this year. Furthermore, investments are being made in research. For example, there is a study into new varieties in which 300 potentially new varieties are tested at different test locations across the country.

The harvest takes place in the Australian summer and autumn months. The producers not only supply the pomegranates to the fresh market, but also process them into convenience products. The market is growing under the influence of current health trends.



Earlier this year (April 7, 2018) there was a report of a Hepatitis A infection, but the source was outside of Australia. The authorities in New South Wales emphasized that Australian pomegranates are clean.

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