



Argentina expects 15% uptick in blueberry exports

The Argentinian Blueberry Committee (ABC) is expecting a 15% year-on-year rise in exports this season to 18,500 metric tons (MT).

The season started late due to a colder winter than normal, but growers expect stable volumes from week 38, according to Pier Giua, vice president of Hortifrut Expofresh and ABC representative.

He said this season is going to be heavily focused on maritime exports via Chile to the U.S., following successful trials on the new trade route over the last couple of years.

In total he expects one-third of exports – around 6,500MT – will be sent via sea freight. Traditionally the country has shipped the vast majority of its blueberries via air freight.

“In addition to the route from Argentina, the Chilean route will also be used, which we also consider very good,” Giua told Fresh Fruit Portal.

Shipments to the U.S. are expected to reach 11,000MT, which would be similar to last season, but exports to the EU and the U.K. are set to increase.

Shipments of organic blueberries – which account for around 16% of total production – are expected to increase by 70% to the U.S.

Exports to China

Argentina expects to carry out its first blueberry shipment to China in mid-September. Chinese phytosanitary inspectors will soon visit the country and remain there until after the first delivery is completed.

“We calculate that between week 37 and week 42 the export will be carried out, which will be trial volumes by plane and sea,” said Giua.

He said that Argentina will not be focusing on big volumes for China, but shipments would likely increase next season once they have the results from this year.

The export protocol was signed in 2017 during a trade mission to China.



Taxes on exports

The industry has also criticized a series of economic reforms recently announced by Argentine President Mauricio Macri. The reforms include an increase in taxes for exports.

“The producers rejected the measure announced by the government because they believe that the exchange rate is not enough to equalize competitiveness with this tax,” Giua said.

Giua said that the move would lower Argentine exporters’ competitiveness.

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