



OVERVIEW GLOBAL STONEFRUIT MARKET

The Northern Hemisphere is slowly moving towards autumn. This spells the end of the stone fruit seasons. The hot, sunny weather experienced in the summer months have had consequences for the market. Yet, traders in most countries are satisfied with the results. Canadian cherry farmers have benefited from the trade war between the USA and China. Australian exporters have shifted their focus to the Asian markets.

Italy reports higher summer prices

The last peaches and nectarines from Sicily and a few other northern regions are coming onto the market in this country. The limited supply is, however, enough to meet demand. Prices are stable, with the exception of fruit from Ravenna and Forlì. Here, prices are rising due to an increase in demand.

Peaches and nectarines can be grown in Italy until September. With a little investment, it is possible to produce commercially viable volumes. For now, a good variety for late cultivation is lacking. The white-fleshed Romagna Mia nectarine has been in production for a number of years now. This variety is harvested between 15 and 20 September.

The harvesting of the late Angeleno plums has begun in Emilia Romagna. There is a high demand for these plums. They are exported to the United Kingdom, Canada, South America, Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Northern Europe. With a modest demand, these last volumes of President plums are being marketed. These are being sold at a high prices at the Ravenna market due to higher demand.

In July and August, wholesale market prices have climbed by 12 to 19%. This is according to figures for in Cesena, as compared to 2017. Peach, nectarines, and plum production have increased considerably. There was, however, no overlap. For growers who could supply quality products, it was a good season.

The price for yellow peaches rose by 19,3% in July with regard to 2017. This brought the average price to EUR1,36/kg. In August, this fruit noted an average price of EUR1,23/kg. In 2017, this was EUR1,06/kg in the same month.

A slight increase in plums resulted in a price of EUR1,54/kg in July. This was 15% higher than in the previous year. In August, the average price of plums was 1,39 euro/kg. This was 14% higher than in 2017.



Nectarines also showed a growth spurt. The average price for Class A and AAA in Juli 2018 came to EUR1,39/kg. This is compared to EUR1,24/kg in 2017. In August, the price rose by 15,18% to EUR1,29/kg. This was EUR1,12/kg the previous year.

A wholesaler in the city of Catanzaro in Calabria looks back on the season and says, “In the beginning, there was a shortage of peaches and nectarines and demand was high. But, as the season advanced, things progressed at a normal pace. We noted prices that were between 15 and 20% higher than last year. Apricots reflected the same situation as last year. Then, it was a total disaster for all varieties. There is very little demand for plums. We sold hardly any.”

Spain end the season with smaller yields

The Spanish season will soon end with considerably lower volumes than last year. The reason for this is the dismal flowering season as well as regular rain and hail. However, the decrease can mainly be seen in the fields. Not so much in the trade sector, declares one trader. These lower volumes mean that fewer stone fruits will be exported.

A few products, such as nectarines, are doing well when it comes to prices. Thanks to a short supply of this fruit, prices have increased when compared to the previous season. In contrast, over the past three months, peach prices have remained exceptionally low. The market was especially bad for yellow-skinned peaches. Industry prices for apricots were halved in comparison to 2017. Peaches saw a decrease in price of three to five percent compared to last year. This market is under pressure from competition from countries such as Greece and China.

The price for paraguayos remained stable in comparison to last year. These prices were, however, described as “not good at all”. On the plus side, less of this fruit was destroyed than last year. The 2017 harvest was also far larger than that of this year.

The market for apricots is better than last year, says one of the traders. Last year was “disastrous from the start”. Apricots are harvested in Spain between May and June. This year, there were smaller harvests in France and Italy. The seasons were also delayed. According to a trader, this affected the figures for the European region.

Plums closed the season in this country with a big shortage, especially in the small and medium sizes. Extremadura is the most significant cultivation area. Here, a sharp dip in volumes was experienced. This meant prices were better than in 2017. The shortage will increase until December. This shortage is due to the influence of the weather.



The French are satisfied

In France, the season is also coming to an end. A trader from Rungis looks back on it and says, “It was quite a year. Hail storms destroyed a large part of the crops. This was followed by hot weather conditions. This meant the fruit did not ripen nicely. The harvest was disappointing.” Yet, the trader is not calling it a bad year. “The limited amounts pushed prices up. The volumes were also not so small that we did not have anything to sell. We served our clients well. All in all, it was a really nice season.” French consumers like trying a variety of different stone fruits. “We even have a substantial number of culinary clients who are always looking for something really different. For example, our blood peaches and nectarines are very popular”, says the trader.

Germany: Lower quality toward the end of the season

The Southern European peach and nectarine season is currently slowly winding down. However, Spain is still dominating the market. The supply to the German market is rounded off by Italy, France, Greece, and Turkey. Demand is decreasing in tandem with the supply. The quality of the last batches of the season leaves a lot to be desired, report traders. This lack of quality has, however, not yet had any significant effect on prices. There are also still French, Spanish and even Turkish apricots available.

Local produce is dominating the plum market in this country. Demand, as well as quality, is reasonable. This means prices have consistently stayed fairly stable. Particularly the Hauszwetschge, Presenta and Top varieties are still very popular. There is a decrease in demand for Hanitas. This means the market share for the Presenta is even bigger, according to the trader. Local products are overwhelmingly dominant. Despite this, products from France, Italy, Spain, and Poland are popping up here and there. The Stanley, which is cultivated in Eastern Europe, has all but vanished. Last week, at the Frankfurt wholesale market, Queen Victoria plums from Romania reached a price of EUR10 per 7,5kg. Prices remained relatively constant over the entire line. However, at some wholesale markets, the plums were of sub-par quality. Prices, therefore, had to be lowered considerably there.

The Netherlands: A limited supply means high prices for Spanish stone fruit

In the Netherlands, the demand for Spanish stone fruit is decreasing. This means the season traditionally moves to other products. Importers are calling it a good season. In other years, the price of 4kg packed peaches and nectarines often dropped to the EUR1,50-2,50 level. This year, it never went under EUR3,50. The price for paraguayos was also very good. It reached a level of EUR5,50-7 for



5kg. The supply of apricots was also limited this year. The Spanish cherry season was not very good in terms of quality, especially at the start of the season. The quality did improve later, and some money could be made again.

The reason for the good prices lies in the hail damaged from earlier in the year. The production areas around Zaragoza en Lleida were plagued by this. This meant the supply of Class I products was considerably lower. This year emphasized the need to spread one's risk. You would not have made it through the season with only one supplier. Importers also noted that peaches gained some ground with regard to the paraguay. These Saturn peaches have been chipping away at the market share for years now. However, paraguayas in so-called 'donut' packaging have proved to be very popular.

Australia sets its sights on the Chinese market

The season in the Southern Hemisphere runs from November to March. This last season saw new protocols being implemented and an improved growth season. These factors contributed to the export of Australian stone fruit to China. The volume for this market sky-rocketed by 167% compared to the previous year. According to Summerfruit Australia, the figures up to March show the addition of peaches and plums. Australia gained access to the Chinese market for all their stone fruit varieties in November 2017. The 2018/2019 season is the first where all this country's kinds of stone fruit had access to China, and expectations are high.

In the year to June 2017, yields stood at 126.177 tons of stone fruit, valued at \$386,1 million. This volume consisted of apricots (7.163 tons), peaches and nectarines (92.017 tons), and plums (26.997 tons). Nectarines keep dominating the market.

In New Zealand, the market did not perform as well as the previous year. This, despite the recovery of the export of nectarines, peaches, and plums.

USA: Californian season almost over

The season in the state of California is on its last legs. Growers have picked and packed the last of their fruit. It is expected that the season will end in the coming weeks. Imports will then gradually take over the market. This American season was fairly stable, with no high or low outliers. Farmers are pleased with the quality of their fruit. After a slow start, the volumes grew in the summer months. This resulted in a good supply of just about every kind of stone fruit. "There were times when prices were somewhat



lower. However, in general, it was a good season”, one of the traders sums it up. With the grape season kicking off, storage space for stone fruit is dwindling.

Excellent demand for Canadian cherries from China

The Canadian province of British Columbia can look back contently on the cherry season. It ended on 23 August. The heat ripened these fruits quickly and they had a relatively short season. Canadian cherry farmers benefited from the trade war between the United States and China. Chinese importers opted for Canadian cherries. Besides China, Canadian exporters supply cherries to markets all over the world. These markets are in countries such as Thailand, the US, Vietnam, Malaysia, Europe, Singapore, the UAE, and Japan.

China: large harvest cause pressure

The peach and nectarine harvest was larger than usual. This was due to the favorable weather conditions and new orchards that came into production in the east of the country. Thanks to the hot, sunny weather, the peaches had higher Brix levels this year. The yields were also higher. As a result of the large volumes, prices for peaches were not very good. A large number of peaches came onto the market at the same time. This caused prices to tank. Earlier this year, imported peaches and Chinese honey peaches were selling at better prices. Then, there was more demand than supply.

Cherries are popular in China. Imports of this fruit increase annually. China is the largest importer of Chilean cherries in the world. However, Australian companies have now also gained access to the Chinese stone fruit market.

South Africa: persistent cold could cause problems

Farmers in the Western Cape are expecting a good stone fruit season, This, after a cold, wet winter. The cold weather hit late and is still continuing. The region experienced snowfall earlier last week. There has also been sporadic rain. Growers are hoping for sunny weather so that the trees that are already flowering can continue to have a good flowering season.

Peaches and nectarines blossomed 10 to 14 days earlier than usual this year. So, farmers in some areas are concerned about the persistent cold, wet weather. If the sun does not come out soon, there could be consequences for the harvest. The first nectarines are expected within three or four weeks. Then,



the early regions such as Wolseley will come onto the market. Prospects are good. In some areas where later varieties are cultivated, such as the Koue Bokkeveld, late frost is still a possibility. Altogether, the most important water reservoirs in the Western Cape, are filled to 72,2% capacity. The farmers' own water supplies also filled up nicely this winter.

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