

Peru exported 50% more last year

In 2018 Peru's blueberry exports amounted to more than US \$ 554 million, i.e. 50% more than in 2017, thanks to the investment of the private sector and an increasingly growing participation of small producers in the interior of the country, stated the former president of the Association of Exporters (ADEX) and candidate for the presidency of that union, Alfonso Velasquez Tuesta.

Peru's blueberry boom, which was possible thanks to the country's productive development and commercial policy of opening to new markets, has already been acknowledged by the media of Chile, the main exporter of that berry.

Velasquez said that in 2010 Peruvian blueberry exports had only amounted to US \$ 32,416, a number that had increase to just over US \$ 18 million by 2013. "The participation and leadership of the private sector and the support of the Peru Berries National Program of Sierra and Selva Exportadora, promoted this crop among small producers in the interior of the country," he said.

Small producers

On November 17, 2011, Sierra Exportadora, a public body that at that time was attached to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, launched the Peru Berries National Program from the stadium of the Pichupampa peasant community in the province of Huaura, in Lima. Sierra and Selva Exportadora trained small producers and had demonstration plots, which resulted in the sowing of blueberries in different latitudes, including Lima, with great profitability.

Markets with potential

Unlike Chile, where blueberry crops are grown by large companies, in Peru small producers who have less than 10 hectares account for nearly 20% of the production and have contributed to an increase in blueberry exports, Velasquez Tuesta said. This crop has improved their quality of life, he added.

According to Velasquez, last year, just over 84% of the total exports were sent to the United States, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. However, he added, there is potential to achieve a greater



participation in Asian countries. "China acquired US \$ 33 million in blueberries in 2018, but it has a much higher ceiling. Others markets include Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and South Korea so we must get ready to meet that demand," he said.

He also considered that the negotiation of the FTA with India is a great opportunity for exporters of this fruit. Finally, he highlighted the added value given to blueberries, as the country also exports blueberry juice, canned, frozen, and dehydrated blueberries.

"The amounts of these byproducts are not significant, but there is no doubt that the sector continues to take firm steps in the development of this fruit. Its production and commercialization generates more employment, development of other production chains and, above all, it helps to reduce poverty within the country," he concluded.

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