

Russia retains top spot as largest market for Turkish tomatoes

Turkey exported tomatoes worth some \$163 million in the first five months of this year. During that period, Russia was the biggest market, importing approximately \$62 million worth of Turkish tomatoes, produced mainly in greenhouses in the Mediterranean and Aegean regions.

As of May 27, Turkey sold tomatoes worth \$163 million to 57 countries, said Hakkı Bahar, board member of the Turkish Exporters' Assembly (TİM) and chairman of the Western Mediterranean Exporters Union (BAİB).

However, the export figure pointed to a 3% decrease compared to the same period last year, Bahar told Anadolu Agency (AA). "The decline stemmed from unfavorable weather conditions," he said.

Bahar recalled that in the same period last year, tomatoes worth \$44 million were sent to Romania. Russia ranked second and imported some \$31 million worth of Turkish tomatoes last year.

"Compared to the same period of last year, Russia ranked first with a 201% increase. Russia was followed by Romania with \$22.5 million, Ukraine with \$18.6 million and Bulgaria with \$11.8 million. Exports to Israel amounted to \$8.4 million," said Bahar.

He added that BAİB carried out a total of \$67.7 million of tomato exports to 47 countries as of May 27. He also denounced rumors that tomatoes from Turkey were being sent back. Bahar said those who made these claims were speaking without the proper knowledge and were spreading wrong information. "How many times have we received feedback due to a chemical drug residue problem? Almost none, maybe once or twice," he added.



Russia, which has long been standing out as the primary market for Turkish fresh fruits and vegetables, saw its share fall due to the problems experienced in the last three years.

In November 2015, Turkey downed a Russian fighter jet for violating its airspace. After the incident, Russia banned imports of Turkish fruits and vegetables including tomatoes, oranges, apples, apricots, cabbage, broccoli, mandarins, pears, peaches, cucumbers, plums, strawberries, onions, cloves and poultry. However, Russia relaxed the trade sanctions on Turkey in the summer of 2017.

The country has now retained its top position and exports of fresh fruit and vegetable exports to the country have consistently increased.

Antalya Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Agriculture Products Trade Committee Chairman Kazim Akbulut said the Mediterranean city of Antalya and the surrounding region were very good for tomato production.

Akbulut said new greenhouses were being built and the cultivation of subterranean agriculture was improving. "We have 308,000 decares of greenhouses in the Antalya region, growing around 3.67 million tons of various products," he added.

A slight decrease in production and quality may occur depending on weather conditions during the winter period, according to Akbulut, while the production increased along with the increase in the air temperature.

Akbulut said production and quality can decrease slightly in the winter, but it recovers with the increase in air temperature.

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