

Chilean blueberry industry commits to improving quality and consistency

The Chilean blueberry industry is focusing on improving the quality and consistency of its members' fresh blueberry exports. This season, they launched the "Quality System of the Chilean Blueberry Committee".

This encompasses the following 5 fundamental pillars:

- Variety Selection and Renewal: This includes the immediate removal from the export market of 37 varieties lacking strong enough post-harvest conditions to meet the requirements of Chile's export markets.
- Working at field level to grow firmer fruit.
- Giving the right care to the various varieties during the harvesting process.
- Using the latest post-harvest technologies.
- Updating quality standards to meet new market requirements for the 2019/20 season.

Today, there are more than 1,000 producers and industry technical staff throughout the country who have been trained on the details and procedures outlined as part of the quality system led by the Committee.

According to Andres Armstrong, Executive Director of the Chilean Blueberry Committee - ASOEX: "We are working with the support of our member companies (who represent 80% of Chile's fresh blueberry exports) to transfer knowledge in relation to the quality system and ensure that it is being carried out properly at all stages of production. We have organized workshops throughout the country, which include an in-depth review of current international market requirements and a detailed account of the 5 pillars of the quality system."



One of the most important components of the quality system was the initial pillar of variety selection, with the purpose of selecting the varieties optimal for export, dis-incentivising those who are not, and encouraging varietal replacement. Says Armstrong, “The first step was to check and typify all Chilean blueberry varieties that were being exported by Chile. This work was carried out through reports from the industry itself, academic research in post-harvest matters, and quality checks made by the Committee at source every year.”

According to Julia Pinto, Technical Manager of the Chilean Blueberry Committee – ASOEX, “Growers are very positive about this, because they feel that there is a lot of relevant information that would be difficult to obtain without this type of training. In addition, these informative sessions allow them to make key decisions regarding production.

The Committee has undertaken a roadshow to visit all the processing and packing centers throughout the country, with the objective of verifying compliance with previously established and agreed upon procedures and also identifying areas for ongoing improvement.

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