

## Turkey steps up efforts to expand fruits exports in Asia

Turkey has stepped up its efforts to expand its agricultural export markets in Asia, as the country's trade ministry enters final stages to receive approval to export fresh fruits to Japan, Thailand, Philippines, and others.

Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan said on Monday that her ministry has accelerated its strategic plan to diversify the country's fresh vegetable and fruit exports, adding that it could take a long time for countries to lift export restrictions for agricultural products due to strict food safety measures.

Turkey has been granted permits to export grapefruits and lemons to Japan, cherries to China and South Korea, and grapes, pomegranates, cucumbers, fresh peppers, eggplants, and lettuce to Seychelles since forming a trade committee to expand agricultural markets in Asia in 2003.

The minister noted that receiving clearance for exports of Turkish milk and dairy products to China has been one of the biggest achievements of these efforts. She said they are expecting citrus fruit, apple, grape and pomegranate products to follow dairy exports to China.

Turkey's fruit producers have recently entered Thailand's \$210 million apple market and will soon add the Philippines to the list, Pekcan said.

Currently, most of Turkey's apples are exported to India, while the fruit has also found buyers in the Middle Eastern, European and Russian markets.

Turkey ranks third in the world for apple production with 3 million tons annually.

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