


The Chilean blueberry harvest has started to show a better production rhythm with the incorporation of volumes from the central and southern part of the country, said the Chilean Blueberry Committee in its weekly report.

The northern region is the only area that has not recovered from its delay and in which a big extension of the season would cause some problems. December continues to be seen as a complicated month in terms of labor and concentration of the harvest. 

Although the harvest in the northern region is expected to end in the first day so of December, the current pace is not what was expected, because temperatures have been variable and the highs of the last week have been lower than last season. What's more, the accumulation of degree days in this region remains less than that in 2009.

Labor in Ovalle will be diverted to the grape harvest in Copiapó, which is normal in this time, but will be aggravated because of the slowness of the blueberry harvest. Another implication of a big extension of the harvest period is that postharvest of this fruit could be less than normal, which is why marketing should be faster.

Farther south, there is a full harvest of Jewel, Star and O'Neal varieties, with the first two about 30% to 40% complete, and O'Neal 50% complete.

Near Santiago, the capital, the harvest is maintaining a regular pace with mainly O'Neal and other early varieties. Duke continues without showing major volume in this zone. The harvest progress is estimated at 45% in early areas and near the coast, while in locations in the interior, the progress in general is between 15% and 25%.

South of Santiago, the harvest of O'Neal is about 10% completed, which corresponds mainly with the fruit in the area near the coast. In the majority of locations in the foothills, the harvest has not started. Halfway through this week and on, the program will start with the harvest of Dukes, then increase in volume of the O'Neals. Other later varieties, such as the Briggita should begins their harvests in the second half of December.

High volume is expected, which is will likely complicate labor management in this region that produces the biggest volume of blueberries in Chile. The quality of the fruit has been good, although in some orchards the fruit quality and weight has been less. Considering that the central-south region just started the harvest, it has not been determined if there will be diminished volume for export.

The far south is expected to start the harvest of the Duke variety in weeks 50 and 51 in

Temuco and a week later in Osorno and Río Bueno.

Source:Chile Blueberry Committee / Edited by www.freshfruitportal.com