

*Brazil's 2011 apple season was characterized by a high exchange rate and hail-damaged fruit, but the situation is looking better for 2012. Brazilian Apple Producers Association (ABPM) executive director Moisés Lopes de Albuquerque, tells [www.freshfruitportal.com](http://www.freshfruitportal.com) about current growing conditions and the season indicators so far.*

Brazil's apple season officially starts in February, but growers are already starting to notice signs of a higher quality harvest following a run of favorable weather

"In the winter as a whole, [not just in the month of July](#), we had low temperatures that were beneficial for the apple trees. This led to good quality and size of the fruit, which are still in formation," says Lopes de Albuquerque.

"The weather has been very favorable for the health of the fruit, and that is reflected in the quality of the apples, which are smooth and without the presence of russetting or scabs. Hailstorms were fairly isolated and covered much less area than what was reported last year.

"In the same period in 2010 we had a large number of orchards affected. Furthermore, despite the cold, this spring has been a little bit rainy which favors the health and therefore the quality of fruit.

He says these factors all come together to put the industry "on the path to one of the best apple crops in Brazil's history in terms of quality".

But when it comes to volumes, the crop is unlikely to change much apart from differences in the variety makeup.



Photo: Agricola Fraiburgosa



Moisés Lopes de Albuquerque

"In Brazil the crops are basically in two varieties: Galas and Fujis. We expect a fall in production of the first and an increase in the second, so that the 2011-12 harvest should be very similar in volume to the previous figure."

He says Fuji volumes will pick up due to the alternate bearing year, while Galas were affected as the cold spring hampered the work of bees during the period of leaf and flower growth in the orchards.

### **Looking domestically to offset exchange rate effects**

De Albuquerque says 2011 was a challenging year both with weather and exchange rates, pushing a need to boost demand at home.

"The eternal challenge is trying to increase per capita apple consumption in Brazil, and meet the export market with an overvalued exchange rate.

"The exchange rate is a serious problem, however last year hail was an even bigger problem. Considering this it was difficult to compete and exports declined by more than 45%.

He adds that a slight fall in the exchange rate should be considered in making export forecasts in 2012, but volumes are unlikely to be affected.

The Netherlands is Brazil's largest apple export market with 31%, followed by Bangladesh (13%), Spain (9%), Portugal (9%), Ireland (8%), Germany (6%), the U.K. (5%), Finland (4%), Denmark (3%) and Italy (2%).

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