


An array of opinions have surfaced following the announcement by Peru's National Agricultural Health Service (SENASA) that Peruvian Hass avocados would be allowed across the Chilean border without quarantine treatment starting in April. 

Chilean Avocado Committee president Adolfo Ochagavía spoke with www.freshfruitportal.com about Peru's long-running petition to gain easier access to Chile.

"This topic has been under negotiation for some time. Peru's petition comes from a study done with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to show that Peruvian Hass avocados were not a host to fruit flies," Ochagavía said.

Today we have protocol in force that requires quarantine treatment to prevent fly entrance. They are asking for this requirement to be eliminated."

The committee president added that industry concern does not only relate to fruit flies. There is also hesitation over a viroid called Sunblotch, which exists in Peru but not in Chile.

"The industry and growers are worried that this viroid could eventually enter through fruit. We have expressed apprehension to Chilean authorities who have looked into it and are reviewing the topic with Peru," he said.

"The potential risk that this infection could enter Chile would mean a significant source of damage to our industry. You have to take that into account and that's why we've made the request with the Agriculture and Farming Service (SAG) who works with SENASA for a protocol that would ensure our industry we're not going to get avocados that could eventually be infected with Sunblotch."

Ochagavía commented that Chile is a country concerned with maintaining high phytosanitary standards, which allows easy access for Chilean produce to export markets.

"Foreign authorities understand that the fruit has high quality, is safe and that there are no problems or risks for the local industry. So if we acquire a new pest or infection, there could be immediate doubts from foreign buyers," he said.

"We are starting talks to enter Brazil, to advance more in South Africa and Australia. So anything additional regarding pests and infections would impact us immediately for how phytosanitary authorities and foreign buyers perceive us."

As for the Peruvian avocado situation, the industry representative said that if authorities can assure them that fruit will not carry pests or diseases, there will be no problem in allowing

entrance without quarantine treatment.

"The only thing we want is to protect the industry and to keep our phytosanitary tradition intact," he said.

Chile: an attractive market

According to Ochagavía, Chile's avocado consumption continues to grow, which makes it an appealing market.

"I think that for this season we should have consumption of between 90,000 and 100,000 tons (MT) a year. We are big avocado eaters and to add to that, income is growing, employment is growing and consumption is growing. We're an interesting market for any foreign supplier," the committee president said.

"In the past, we've received Argentine avocados, and also from Peru and the U.S."

Ochagavía said the Chilean export market ends in March or April, after which the industry turns focus in on the domestic market where prices are more favorable.

On Peru's end, exports begin in April or the beginning of May. Strong competition begins in June, July and August.

Ochagavía added that while phytosanitary negotiations are in process, nothing is certain.

"The process is still not over. We are going to speak with the Chilean authorities to see more or less how the conversation is going but I think there is still work to be done."

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