

The Chilean Kiwifruit Committee and the Agrarian Innovation Foundation (FIA) are collaborating on a risk determination model to help kiwifruit growers rapidly assess the potential of a Psa infection. 

The model will take various evaluation factors into account, including geography, climate, plant age and proximity to a positive orchard, explained Kiwifruit Committee general manager Carlos Cruzat.

"Having a risk evaluation system allows us to know what we should do in terms of preventative action, with these being proportional to the risk faced. The idea is that producers don't have overly exaggerated or passive actions, which means higher costs, among other things," Cruzat said.

Currently, information is being gathered from Chilean and global sources to better understand the disease. An epidemiological study has begun at the Fitonova laboratory to analyze the main characteristics of Psa in Chile. The lab is investigating Psa-positive orchards to determine if the bacteria act the same in Chile as in other countries.

The model developed through the project will be available online so that each farmer can enter his or her data to determine risk levels.

Cruzat explained that one of the biggest risk factors of Psa is that the pathogen can enter undetected and appear much later when control measures are no longer effective.

"Chile has had the opportunity to take measures with anticipation and not arrive to the same extreme as other countries. We hope that this helps us better manage disease spread and the intensity with which it appears," he said.

Of 11,300 hectares of kiwifruit production in Chile, 700 hectares are under control due to Psa. The hectares include 57 orchards with one or more plants with the bacteria.

In 2012, Chile exported around 207,000 MT of Hayward kiwifruit, representing around US\$215 million. Due to climatic and cyclical conditions, Hayward exports are expected to drop 7% this year. FIA says a negative effect has not been made on output by Psa.

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