

After gaining recognition from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), California's AGQ Labs is working to release fruit that is detained upon arrival to the country. 

According to a report by AGQ Labs, these detentions can be caused by the presence of a contaminant or the simple suspicion that one may exist.

"The benefit that this has for our clients in Chile, for example, is that, when they have a problem, they will have the option of going to a local laboratory that gives more confidence because they know us," general manager Miguel Valero told *www.freshfruitportal.com*.

Valero explained that detentions normally come from pesticide residue, although there are other types of contaminants.

"Specifically, in our case, we specialize in detentions from pesticide residue for fresh fruits and vegetables and processed foods," he said.

AGQ Labs said that the increase in sanitary health regulations, like the Food Modernization Act, increase the number of border checks and make daily detentions more frequent. In these cases, the exporter must go to a private laboratory to do a study showing the goods are acceptable.

The study requires thorough, multidisciplinary work that specializes in efficient practices for sampling, inspection, analysis, methodological validation, data handling, etc.

"The FDA has a very rigorous control plan which isn't as exhaustive or demanding as on the legislative level in Europe but the system is different. For example, in Europe, the topic of detention does not exist," he said.

Valero emphasized that these tests are very important to show that products from exporters are free of residue or have residue below the maximum limit.

According to a company report, the last few detentions undertaken by AGQ Labs have been freed in three to four days, a reasonable timeframe given the extensive labor put into studies and government paperwork. This process can sometimes take up to a month.

"We provide services to any exporter from any country, whether we are present there or not. If an exporter calls us from South Africa, we can offer our service," he said.

"Our position at the moment, now that the FDA recognized us, allows us to give a special service to all South American countries where we are positioned, especially Peru and Chile."



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