

International sanctions against Iran are forcing Pakistani mango growers to seek alternative markets, with Australia and Japan now high up the list of potential destinations. 

Ahmed Jawal CEO of major exporter Harvest Tradings who described Australia as an "interesting market for the future" told www.freshfruitportal.com that exports to the country could begin as early as next year, with both sides apparently eager to reach a deal.

"I have personally talked with the Indian high commissioner in Islamabad and the economic secretary and they are very confident," he said.

"From the information I have gathered, Pakistani mangoes will hopefully start to be shipped to Australia in 2014. Australia is a very good market and they are very welcoming of our product.

"Australian inspectors will also be coming here soon to look at quality and other specifications."

Jawal said some small volumes would also be shipped to Japan this year, although he stressed this would not include Harvest Tradings.

Some markets are proving to be more complicated for Pakistan's mango exporters.

Asif Iqbal, from Faisalabad-based Naqshbandi Enterprise, said the loss of Iran as a market had definitely affected the Pakistani mango sector, adding it had also badly impacted rice and mandarin orange exporters.

Jawal pointed to concerns in the sector about the effect U.S. sanctions on Iran were having on Pakistani mango growers, adding that attempts to appeal to the Pakistani government to improve the situation through diplomacy had proved unsuccessful.

The complex export situation for the U.S. is also proving to be frustrating for producers. Despite an ongoing process to gain entry for Pakistani mangoes since 2011, Jawal believes the sector is again likely to export zero mangoes to the country; a state of affairs he blames squarely on the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

"The USDA has not laid down a level playing field for Pakistani exporters in the case of mangoes as they did for Indian exporters.

"The USDA allows Indian mangoes in their country and last year they exported 210 (metric) tons (MT) of mangoes and this year 500MT and Pakistan did not export a single mango to

the U.S.

"We request that the USDA comes out and lays down the same requirements as they have given to Indian mangoes in the past. We want a positive message from the USDA and we want them to remove the barriers they have created in the past."

Despite this, Jawad says he positive for the coming season, with harvesting beginning in late May before exports start in the first week of June.

Some 1.55 million MT of mangoes are expected to be produced by the country as a whole this season, with the sector setting a US\$16m target for exports this year.

Major export destinations are expected to include Vietnam, Mauritius, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Japan, the U.A.E., the U.K., and some parts of Indian Punjab, as well as Jammu and Kashmir.

Iqbal said the sector has also not been discouraged by a slightly later start to the season, which he claimed did not take growers by surprise.

"Yes, there a little delay in mango harvesting due to the weather conditions because it's not as hot as it was at the same time last season, but it's a normal situation with the mango season - it's normally one or two weeks up or down due to the weather, but there has been no affect on production."

For Iqbal, the decision to set a sector-wide export starting date for the new mango season is also a "positive step" for growers because he claimed that premature mangoes could be exported if the restriction was not in place. This, he argues, would create "so many quality issues" that it would ultimately damage confidence in the Pakistani mango sector, resulting in severe losses.

"To avoid these dangers, all Pakistani mango exporters with this help of the government of Pakistan have taken this step," Iqbal added.

Photo: Pakistan Tribune

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