

Turkey's top cherry grower-exporter expects a volume rise for 2013 despite rough weather conditions that impacted pollination.

Beginning in late May, peaking around June 12 and running through to the end of July, Turkey has traditionally been one of Europe's major sources of cherries, delivering high quality volumes of Napoleon, Early Burlat and other varieties across the continent. 

However, like the fruit itself, the sector's success each year is finely balanced and largely dependent on whether orchards receive the required hours of sunshine and rainfall, especially during the delicate pollination period when dry, sunny weather is vital.

Alara Agri managing director Kerim Taner told *www.freshfruitportal.com* that "negative climate effects" during pollination are expected to result in a lighter crop in early regions, although mid and late regions are "looking normal".

Against this backdrop, Alara is taking no chances.

"The climate effects are the major risk to manage, but we have made investments in our own orchards including wind machines for frost protection, hail cannons, covers for rain, wind breakers and over-head irrigation systems," Taner explained.

The company also benefits from late orchards, which prolong its cherry supply through until mid-August, offering the firm a point of difference from its competitors, according to Taner.

Through investment in early and late varieties, he says Alara is confident of achieving a 30% year-on-year volume increase, with the total crop expected to top 5,000 metric tons (MT).

Taner says Alara has also invested for this season in "one of the largest and the most advanced" cherry processing machines this summer, adding that the company plans to further improve its product quality through "state-of-the-art technology" for quality, color and size selection of fruit in its new cherry line.

In terms of export markets, the Bursa-based company - which is part of the Univeg - ships cherries to principally Germany, Belgium, the U.K. and the Netherlands, while Taner reveals that it is also in the process of developing exports to Russia and China.

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