

Morocco can look forward to a strong future in the global fruit and vegetable industry, according to Spain and Morocco-based produce shipper Agri-Naturelle, as the sector continues to develop and open up new export markets.

The company's commercial director for Europe, Russia and Asia Tomás Amer told [www.freshfruitportal.com](http://www.freshfruitportal.com) the recent signing of phytosanitary protocols with Portugal was just one example indicating Morocco's bright prospects as a major industry player.

  
A strawberry farm in Morocco.

"Every year Morocco is reaching new export protocol deals for fruit and vegetables with more countries," Amer said.

"This is in line with the clear evolution in the industry's phytosanitary standards, packing practices and new logistical routes both by land and sea to be able to sell produce at competitive prices in numerous world markets."

Amer said export volume estimates to Portugal had not yet been formed, but given the short transit time between the two countries he imagined Moroccan fruit would fare very well in the coming years.

Another advantage of the Moroccan produce industry is that potato and onion farmers are able to grow crops year-round, with producers in many regions across the country achieving three potato and two onion harvests annually.

With the season for citrus and several vegetable crops like tomatoes, green beans and bell peppers just getting underway, Amer is expecting a positive campaign largely due to high demand from Russia as a result of its import ban on EU produce.

"We're anticipating good prices this season from Russia," he said.

"Russia was already one of Morocco's main destinations for its citrus exports, and shipments will likely be up around 60% this season."

Morocco's most productive citrus growing areas are the coastal regions of Agadir and Berkane, on the far West and East of the country respectively.

"Morocco is definitely on its way to becoming the fruit and vegetable garden of Europe, as well as one of the main suppliers of horticultural products to Russia," Amer said.

## **Strawberry production**

Morocco is currently the fifth largest strawberry producer in the world, with an average annual output in excess of 70,000 metric tons (MT).

The most common varieties are the Camarosa, Sabrina and Festival, with production concentrated mainly in the two northern regions of Larache and Moulay Bouselham - both with around 4,000 hectares of growing land.

Amer said Morocco imported around 80% of its strawberry plants from Spain - making business far easier for Agri-Naturelle that operates across the two countries - and the industry's long history of cultivating the fruit meant it had excellent production and packing techniques.

Photo: Agri-Naturelle

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