

After years of negotiations to gain access, the association has set a goal of 200 containers for the season.

Poland was one of the hardest hit countries when Russia announced its embargo on EU fruit in 2014, as the world's leading apple exporter at the time losing one of its top markets.

The adjustment has not been easy but the Central European country has responded by developing markets in places like North Africa and the Middle East, however hopes have always been high that Asia too can absorb some of the extra volume.


Appolonia vice president Przemysław Bładek

And the big prize is China, which granted Poland apple market access last year.

Passing by the Polish stands during Fruit Logistica in Berlin last week, many growers said while they had registered to export they had not yet found commercial opportunities. The story was different though with Appolonia, a consortium of 19 grower groups from four regions.

"We just started sending our first apples into the Chinese market, and I just came back from China to Berlin three days ago," Appolonia vice president Przemysław Bładek told *Fresh Fruit Portal* on Friday.

"We sent our first eight containers and we have 20 on the way. The market is difficult because they need only premium quality, but prices are good and the market is huge.

He said all the apples would be shipped by sea and go to the wholesale markets of Guangzhou in southern China.

"We could send by train but at the moment Russia won't accept fruits moving through their territory," he said.

He said the varieties currently being sent to China included Mutsu, Golden Delicious, Ligol, Gala and Idared.

"I know the customers will decide because they need only very sweet apples - we have a different climate, and our varieties for them are sweet and sour.

"We have a plan for this season to send 200 containers [to China] but if we do half that it'll

be good."

Appolonia has gained some learnings from the Asian market by exporting to Vietnam over the last two years, while it has also managed to crack some protocol-related difficulties with the Indian market.

"Vietnam opened the market very fast two seasons ago and we started sending apples once they opened. And every week we send two to four containers - we have one client who is exclusive. The market is good, we use different packaging to bushels.

"Today we are doing the documents and will send five containers to India too. Asian countries are good markets, especially if the Russian market is closed at the moment," he said, adding the industry had been able to overcome requirements for methyl bromide treatment; a practice that is actually banned in the European Union.

"We don't do that, we cannot, but we have an agreement with the clients - they do that in the port in India."

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