

Chile's cherry season has drawn to a close with total exports rising 13.3% year-on-year to 94,869 metric tons (MT), with the vast majority of shipments sent to the Asian market.



The country's Fresh Fruit Exporters' Association (ASOEX) highlighted that while the increase was positive, the figure was significantly below the industry's export potential of 120,000MT as a result of adverse weather conditions in October and November last year.

"Asia remains the main market with 86.7% of the export total, with China representing 82%. South Korea, a market which opened in January 2016, had a significant first volume this season, reaching 1,341MT," ASOEX president Ronald Bown said.

The North American market (U.S. and Canada) received 6.7% of total cherry exports, similar to the previous campaign. Europe's market share remained similar at just under 3%, while exports to Brazil increased by a quarter to 2,248MT.

The association said significant marketing campaigns were carried out in the U.S., Brazil and China.

Cherry Committee president Cristian Tagle said US\$5 million had been invested in promotional activities in Asia, explaining the funds had come from both trade promotion agency ProChile and the private sector.

He also highlighted the Committee had managed to open a new high-speed shipping line to China, allowing the fruit to arrive seven days earlier than normal.

Tagle now expects Chile's cherry production to reach 150,000MT in the coming years, which he said meant logistics would need to improve in the country, especially in terms of cold storage in the supply chain.

"Nevertheless, perhaps the most important thing will be to increase demand for cherries in China, targeting mainly the middle segment consumer who does not yet consume cherries regularly," he said.

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