

Significant increases in volumes numerous fruit commodities in 2018 helped Chile to notch a year-on-year export growth of 11% to 2.9 million metric tons (MT).



Cherries and mandarins were responsible for much of the growth, along with other fruits including plums, nectarines, peaches and table grapes.

Apples were the most heavily exported fruit by volume in 2018 which rose by 8% to 776,000MT, closely followed by table grapes which rose 3% to 724,000MT, and then cherries, which saw exports soar by 126% to 185,000MT.

“The value of fruit exports in 2018 exceeded US\$5.5 billion FOB, the largest our industry has ever seen in a calendar year,” said Jorge Valenzuela, president of the Chilean Federation of Fruit Exporters.

“We are living through a rise in high-value fruit exports in the market, like cherries and blueberries, a phenomenon which has increased the value of shipments.”

He added that the massive rise in cherry exports “has made cherries the third-most exported fruit in terms of volume, after apples and table grapes, pushing out kiwifruit and avocados”.

The increase was largely attributed to “exceptional weather conditions” in the spring of 2017, allowing orchards to reach their maximum potential.

Cherry volumes in 2019 are expected to be lower, he said, as the spring season was more unstable and saw a severe hail storm.

### **Higher volumes of stonefruit and citrus**

Aside from cherries, other notable increases seen in 2018 include plums, which rose by 29%

year-on-year to 120,000MT.

Nectarines rose by 11% to 65,000MT, driven in part by access to the Chinese market gained at the end of 2016. Peach exports increased by 30% to 31,000MT

Mandarins and clementines saw a huge rise in 2018, growing by 46% to 170,000MT.

Meanwhile, avocado exports fell by 25% to 132,000MT due to the strengthening of the Chilean market and challenging weather conditions.

### **Challenging year for table grapes**

Fedefruta said that 2018 had been a challenging year in terms of prices for table grapes.

For this current season, Fedefruta said the industry had been concerned about price levels in its key market, the U.S., amid stocks at the end of October that were 33% higher year-on-year. But stocks have since reduced significantly.

“It remains to be seen how we are going to manage our shipments, amid the recovery in table grape volumes from Peru,” Valenzuela said.

“The challenge ... is to have storage programs for our late or mid-season fruit to export as late as possible and hopefully find ourselves in a more empty market.”