

Peru is expecting to increase its pomegranate exports by 40% year-on-year this season, which would bring total volumes to around 50,000 metric tons (MT), up from 34,259MT.

Sandro Farfán, general manager of ProGranada Peru, told FreshFruitPortal.com that by week 10 the country had exported around 11,000MT, which is 43% higher than the same week last year.

"There has been strong growth and Peru consumes very little quantities of pomegranates at the local level. Basically everything that is produced by growers affiliated with ProGranada is for export."

Around 60% of the fruit goes to Europe, followed by Russia and Canada. "Those are basically the three main markets," he said.

Farfán attributed the rising production to a growing number of planted hectares as well as the increasing maturity of the trees in various production regions, which he said led to the peak volume weeks arriving earlier this season.

He said that market prices are lower this year as a result of the higher volume - a similar situation to what was seen in 2018, which also saw greater supplies than the previous season.

The season is expected to run until June, with peak volumes in February and March. But increasing overlap with Turkey, India and Israel have impacted Peruvian growers' returns, he said.

Peruvian exporters are therefore looking to diversify their market portfolio and have their sights set on Asia.

"At ProGranada we have been working alongside [phytosanitary watchdog] Senasa to be able to enter new markets. In 2017 the U.S. opened, and last year Brazil," he said

In March a Chinese delegation will arrive to carry out inspections with view to opening up the market to Peruvian exporters. The industry is also working to open Japan, South Korea and Mexico.

"In total we are working to open up more than 15 markets," he said.