

Mexican table grape exports are this year set to continue on their growth trend experienced up until 2017, having fallen by 25% in the 2018 season, according to an industry body.

Marco Molina, president of the Table Grape Growers Association of Mexico (AALPUM), told FreshFruitPortal.com that this season would likely see 22 million boxes exported and 4 million boxes sold on the domestic market.

“We have never given the figure so early ... [but] now that we know how is the fruit set ... on that basis we can present the number,” he said.

“However, it all still depends on weather conditions. For example, if it’s really hot that can make the fruit ripen faster and not grow as big.”

The industry exported 21 million boxes in 2017 but only 16 million in 2018 but to poor growing conditions. Molina said that this season would therefore be a continuation of the growth curve.

Molina is also the president of Molina Group, which produces table grapes in the state of Jalisco. He commented that the harvests there should start in the first week of April and reach around 550,000 to 600,000 boxes for the season.

Meanwhile, in the northern state of Sonora, the harvest will start in May and see heavier volumes in June.

He added that Mexican table grapes were complementary to supplies from the U.S. The state of California begins in the Coachella Valley - which normally sees overlap with Mexico - and then moves onto larger volumes in the San Joaquin Valley further north.

Varietal development and new markets

Mexico is heavily focused on seedless varieties, with Red Globe the only seeded variety remaining, Molina said.

“We estimate that this year we’ll produce 600,000 boxes of Red Globe, which would represent 2.5% of our production,” he said.

As for destinations, Molin said that new markets are presenting opportunities for Mexican grapes, especially in Asia. Mexico is hoping to soon achieve access to South Korea, with a visit by inspectors due in May.

“We also have a commercial mission planned for Australia and New Zealand, where I see more of a future for market development,” he said.

Europe, meanwhile is becoming a more challenging market for Mexican grapes, he said.

“We are at a disadvantage in terms of transport costs to countries that are closer like Egypt, India, Israel and Spain. We are selling to Europe, but it’s becoming increasingly difficult,” he said.