

With the 2018-19 Chilean cherry campaign now over, exporters say that they received higher average prices in the Chinese market despite another high-volume crop.

The season closed with total exports of 180,342 metric tons (MT), just 4% lower than the record previous season of 187,066MT, which was almost double the 2016-17 campaign. Of the total, 91% of exports went to China.

While many of the larger exporters are still working on their final numbers from the season, smaller companies like Cherry Export Group have already determined that their returns were better than in 2017-18.

René Wünkhaus, a representative of the company, told FreshFruitPortal.com: "The the exported volumes are similar to the past season, but the sales prices were much better thanks to the quality of the fruit."

In addition, he said that the fruit had been processed faster and had arrived in the market more quickly than the last season.

According to Wünkhaus, average returns to the producer were US\$4.30 per kilo in 2017-18, but this past season they were closer to US\$6 per kilo.

Figures from market intelligence firm Decofrut show that between weeks 44 and 10, the average FOT price of Chilean cherries was US\$15.56, compared to US\$13.80 last season.

Another interesting aspect Wünkhaus noted this past season was that prices were favorable both before and after Chinese New Year, which took place in early February.

"After Chinese New Year, the prices picked up a lot, and that had to do with the good quality of the fruit, which was not the case last year when prices dropped," he said.

Market reports show that the Regina variety (Jumbo, Dark, 5kg) fetched between RMB350 and 450 (US\$52 - 67) before the holiday, but between RMB 480 and 530 (US\$71.50 - 79) afterward.