

Peru looks set to continue its explosive growth trend in blueberry volumes this coming season, with a forecast that, if realized, could make it the world's largest exporter.

"We expect blueberry exports to be around 110,000 and 125,000 metric tons (MT)," said Miguel Bentín, vice president of ProArandanos.

The figure would represent a leap over last season's figure of 78,000MT. It would also be more than double the 48,000MT exported in 2017-18.

And if realized, Peru would likely overtake Chile as the world's leading exporter of the fruit. For the last two seasons Chile has shipped slightly over 110,000MT.

Bentín attributed Peru's expected increase to the higher maturity of plantations and a high rate of plantings.

"Blueberry farms that are managed reasonably well tend to produce fruit very quickly," he said.

He added that although growth will continue, it will likely not continue to be as exponential as in previous years.

One limiting factor to continued strong growth is the scarcity of labor, Bentín said. He described the demand for farmworkers as "extremely high". Many other fruits, such as avocados, table grapes and citrus have also seen a sharp uptick in exports recently, thus competing more heavily for labor.

But he said that for now there is enough labor for the industry, with many companies factoring this into their plans.

"Today the development plans of large blueberry operations are considering the construction of adjoining towns to house farmworkers," he said.

## **Blueberry export market mix**

Looking at markets, he expected the spread in blueberry exports this year to be similar to previous years. The U.S. has typically received the lion's share, with around 40-50%. As illustrated in [this article](#), Peru's heavy volumes are helping to reshape the U.S. blueberry market.

The next biggest markets are Continental Europe, China and the U.K.

However, Bentín noted that growth to the Asian market has not been as high as previously hoped. China, for example, has good demand for high-quality blueberries, but still cannot absorb high volumes relative to other developed markets.

Peru is also working to gain access to South Korea and Taiwan, although the industry's hopes for future growth are still very much on China, he said.

The Peruvian blueberry season started in weeks 28 and 29 and will likely run until weeks 10 to 12.