

A new initiative in Chile headed by the Foundation for Agrarian Innovation (FIA) and the Institute for Agricultural Research (INIA) seeks to create more blueberry and raspberry varieties.

The project is being carried out in the Maule region to identify potential new varieties of the two fruits. After its creation nine months ago, it has developed participatory models and research for the industry.

Providing a model for cooperation between the INIA and the Chilean production sector, the project functions as a platform for interaction between public and private spheres.

Diverse agricultural industries in the regions and other governmental entities will work alongside producers. This conjunction of bodies is called the Management Platform, a researcher told FreshFruitPortal.com.

"We are expecting to create two alternative varieties of raspberries and blueberries for Maule along with other berry alternatives. According to parameters of the Management Platform, this will involve the consideration of local fruit as well as varieties that may be at an international level," says agricultural expert Carmen Gloria Morales of INIA.

Once the varieties are selected, the project will evaluate them and use the data created as a base for companies and producers to establish alliances. This will allow for varieties to become easily commercialized.

## **What else is the project doing?**

This project looks "to the prospect of new alternatives to validate new varieties with the greatest nutritional value so that Maule's industry can reach its potential," says Morales.

She adds that within the project there are diverse actors that will benefit from its work.

The diffusion of the new varieties will be made accessible to many actors in the industry so the market can remain competitive. Advances and results of the work will be "key to recuperating competition in the industry", says Morales.

Recently, the industry has seen a decline in productivity, quality, and diversity of varieties, she explained. This project responds to exactly that.

"In raspberries, we only are able to reach about 40% of our potential in productivity. Similarly, blueberries require varieties that are firmer, more productive and with better

post-harvest quality," she explains. The goal is to improve economic margins so that producers receive the benefits.

Additionally, said Roberto Giovanetti of FIA, the project hopes to respond to the needs of consumers in the market today.

"We are very proud to support projects like this that are one of the biggest contributions to innovation in berries. This project allows those in the agricultural industry to rely on new, accurate information about new varieties," he details.

## **Market research**

This project has also carried out a comprehensive study of the blueberry and raspberry markets and has generated workshops and meetings with actors in the industry. These have allowed the project to identify demand in the production sector and the requirements of the industry.

It also has created a system to maintain and grow new varieties within the official phytosanitary regulations of Chile. Along with providing data, it will also catalog the history of varieties in the region. This will help keep better track of developments.