

Chilean blueberry export volumes are running on par with the 2018 season, but with significant changes in terms of the varietal mix.

With the industry in its peak export season, accumulated shipments by week 52 - which was interrupted by the Christmas celebrations and low-intensity rains that affected some harvest areas - were 47,821 metric tons (MT).

That figure is 1% higher year-on-year and marks export progress of 42% against the season estimate of 115,000MT, which would mark a new record if realized.

Although the total volumes exported are similar to the previous year, there is a change in the configuration of varieties exported this season.

The varieties that have been recommended not to be exported have decreased by 53% year-on-year and represent only 1% of the total exports. Meanwhile, varieties with restrictions on handling and harvest periods have been reduced by 15%, reaching 29% of the total exports.

However, the export of the group of new varieties or those that have shown good post-harvest quality has increased by 17% and now represents 70% of the total. This is in line with the recommendations delivered by the Chilean Blueberry Committee to ensure quality in the destination markets

In addition, shipments of organic blueberries continue to increase and 5,206MT had been exported through week 52. That figure represents 11% of the total exports to date and a 45% year-on-year rise.

In terms of production areas, the current harvests are still concentrated in the south-central area. There, the volumes remain at the peak, although the focus has moved towards the mid-season varieties, dominating Legacy and Brigitta, while the earliest varieties are already presenting a downward trend in their volumes.

The southern area is increasing its participation, mainly the Araucanía region. Although it has not reached the peak of volumes yet, it shows an increase over the previous season.