

The import season is off and running with South American shipments beginning to enter the market. It is anticipated that supplies will increase throughout January, bringing an even more diverse selection of grape varieties.

Rob Anderholt of Seald Sweet told FreshFruitPortal.com about supplies, prices and expectations for the market.

While imports from Peru were abnormally delayed relative to typical harvesting times - arriving about 10 days to 2 weeks late - the country's product is high quality, said Anderholt. Peru is also sending more boxes than in the past.

Seald Sweet expects that supplies from the first week of January to remain at good levels.

Product out of Peru offers a range of nice varieties, both traditional and new. A wide selection of varieties out of Peru along with supplies from Mexico and the upcoming import of Chilean grapes means the market will be full of options very soon.

Table grape pricing in U.S. market

Relative to pricing, stability is also the name of the game.

"Prices are good right now, demand could probably be a little bit better at the moment," detailed Anderholt.

As supplies from Chile ramp up, volumes will be even higher and prices will level out.

"Prices will adjust a few dollars here and there," explained Anderholt. While prices adjust in the next three weeks, it's likely that they won't drop a whole lot lower than they are currently.

Chilean product in the table grape market

This adjustment in prices will come in direct response to Chilean grapes entering the market. As for Chile's supply this year, Anderholt wasn't sure exactly what to expect. However, with the country's lack of water and unfavorable weather conditions this year, reports say volumes could be down a bit.

Weather and water were the two things that Anderholt cited as being out of the ordinary for this season's imported grapes. Both Peru and Chile faced challenges this season. Despite that, the import season looks like it'll be strong and expects normal pricing.

"Chile's talking about a lighter crop but we've haven't seen anything out of there yet," he said. Anderholt added that it's necessary to wait for later in the harvest season to really get a feel of what Chilean grapes will look like.

The grapes entering the market, though, will undoubtedly increase competition and provide more variety for U.S. consumers. Looking forward, this is what Anderholt said is in store.

"Over the next few months, we're going to see a lot of great new varieties coming into the market," he went on. This new diversity in cultivars means that the market anticipates "repeat business".

The industry looks toward "a lot of great-tasting fruit for consumers". The importer's current deal with Mexican grapes promises to keep supplies at a strong level all the way through July.