

In the country's second strategic dialogue to approach the situation for exports to China amid the coronavirus outbreak, Chile's exporter's association [ASOEX](#) released a report detailing potential losses.

Chile's cherry industry has been most impacted by the tumultuous trading environment. And, "if the current trends continue," cherry exporters could lose "between US\$70 million and US\$80 million". Including the export of other fruits, this number could reach US\$100 million total.

While the association made sure to clarify that these numbers could very depending on conditions in upcoming weeks, prices on Chilean exports are also currently down relative to what the industry was expecting for the widely anticipated Chinese New Year.

The association also confirmed that ports in Shanghai and Tianjin are congested from the backup of large amounts of frozen meat.

For now, the industry says it is focusing on marketing efforts to get its fruit onto China's market and sell as quickly as possible. One such effort involves "advertising the consumption of fruit via online shopping", said ASOEX. However, the industry says e-commerce sales have been slow due to a lack of laborers and logistical barriers ([similar to what other online grocers reported yesterday](#)).

The Latin American country is also donating fruit to hospitals and centers across China. Its very first shipment allocated for donations - that contained 1,000 boxes of 1.5 kilograms of blueberries - was "set to arrive the week of Feb. 10 at the lung hospital located in Shanghai".

Chilean cherries face difficulties, industry seeks to ensure phytosanitary conditions are maintained

On Feb. 5, [Chile's agriculture](#) authority reported that at least 1,500 containers of cherries were unable to be sold to the Chinese market because of complicated market access from the deadly epidemic. In this report, Ricardo Ariztia of Emol said that the situation was "highly concerning" as large amounts of cherries were beginning to go bad.

Regarding the export of cherries, ASOEX said that there are various varieties of Chilean cherries, like the Regina variety, that do not have a long enough post-harvest period to last the port back-ups. Such varieties could be more impacted than others upon entrance into the market.

During that time, he also detailed that there was "practically no commercial traffic" in Beijing - usually a commercial hub for Chilean exports.

As the situation changes, president of ASOEX Ronald Bown said, the industry is "maintaining constant evaluation of the market and is in ongoing conversations" with its representatives in China.

"The industry is worried about fruit that is in transit to China, which is currently at 1,600 containers," the report stated. Of these containers, 59 are blueberries, 173 are cherries, 872 are plums, 387 nectarines, 30 avocados and 134 table grapes.

The association added that "there are still very few cases where containers are being sent back to Chile".

Efforts to alleviate losses

Chile is currently trying to mitigate losses by rerouting shipments to other countries in Asia, according to ProChile chief Jorge O'Ryan at last week's Fruit Logistica. ASOEX said that the fruit industry is working with other markets in Asia as well as different ports of entrance in China itself to send its shipments to as alternatives.

Additionally, according to the exporter's association, the industry has been in contact with those working directly with shipments "in order to ensure that cold temperatures are being maintained for the fruit".

Last week, Bloomberg reported that various Chilean exports were piling up in China as [Chinese purchases of Chilean food items slumped 50%](#). At the time of the report, authorities in China were accepting 30 to 50 containers per day from Chile whereas they usually take in 200 to 350 containers daily.