

The Chilean blueberry season is wrapping up with lower exports than originally forecast, following a period of numerous challenges for the country's fruit industry.

The season had initially been expected to see a 4% year-on-year rise in exports to 115,000 metric tons (MT), but will end up fractionally below the 110,769MT exported last year, the Chilean Blueberry Committee (CBC) said in a weekly crop report.

The drop in volumes was largely attributed to the industry limiting the output of varieties with short post-harvest life, as growers continue to reconvert their varieties to newer cultivars.

The season developed in a very similar way to the previous year. October saw widespread protests in Chile, which the CBC said did not have a great impact on the campaign since port operations were maintained with minimal disruptions.

There was more volume at the beginning of the season from the north of the country due to varietal renewal in that area.

Due to the coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak in China, market activity was severely limited for at least three weeks after the Chinese New Year in late January, affecting a portion of containers arrived on those days.

In addition, the final few weeks of the season saw a year-on-year drop in exports due to high temperatures that impacted harvests and make them more concentrated.

Blueberry exports up to week 12 were registered at 109,291MT, which is 1.5% less than last season. The final volumes of the season are now being sent, with only 290MT shipped in week 11.

North America received 52% of the volume, Europe 32% and the Far East 15%. In terms of variation, North America faced the biggest adjustment this season, with shipments 11% lower year-on-year. Conversely, Europe increased by 8% and the Far East by 20%.

Exports of organic blueberries continued to rise, growing by 16% to 15,470MT. Three-quarters of these volumes were sent to North America, up by 11%, while Europe received 23%.