

Chilean table grape volumes are expected to grow by around 10 to 15 percent this coming season which is set to get underway in December in the north of the country.

Carolina Cruz, an agronomic engineer and president of industry body Uvanova, said the industry is expected this year buck the previous years' trend of declining production levels.

"There's very good vegetative development in the plants," she told FreshFruitPortal.com.

Cruz explained that "from a technical-productive standpoint, we are very conscious about not repeating the errors that we have previously made due to the effects of the drought."

"We must be especially cautious in how we administer and manage the water, making savings where possible, as well as putting into practice all that we have learned from when the drought reached its most critical point last year - and also bearing in mind that it has not finished."

She added that the industry has been following the Ministry of Health's regulations in terms of sanitary measures on the farms and in packing houses.

"All this obviously has an associated cost, so growers are seeing in what way they can incorporate the highest amount of health measures to keep workers safe and prevent infections," she said.

And the industry is not short on challenges this year. As well as the higher costs, Cruz said that international markets remain as demanding as usual, despite the blow to many countries' economies by the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We must therefore reach the market with a product that will be appreciated and differentiated," she said.

"Consumption could be a bit slower, so it's important to produce fruit that will last a long time, that is in good condition, and that will stay fresh for longer in order to create more opportunities, which will be reflected in better prices."

Last season, Chilean grape exports dropped by a massive 21 percent year-on-year. The season had recently gotten underway when Covid-19 broke out in Asia, and Cruz said that lots of fruit that had been destined for China had to be diverted elsewhere.

"In that sense, markets that are closer to us helped create an exit for the industry. But the slowdown clearly affected the prices, and we hope that this year we don't have any more

problems with that," she said.

She explained that the [drop in exports last year](#) was due to both lower production and also the disruption to normal operations amid the pandemic.

"For the first time, we fell close to 76 million boxes, which is the lowest figure in a long time for the Chilean table grape industry," she said.

However, Cruz is optimistic that 10 to 15 percent year-on-year growth can be achieved this year, thanks in part to good rains over recent months and also the development of grape bunches.

"Also, we expect that the market will be more receptive to purchasing fruit, giving them a more optimistic outlook," she said.