

Antonio Walker has stepped down from his role as Chile's Agriculture Minister and will be replaced by María Emilia Undurraga, who is the former director of the country's The Office of Agricultural Studies and Policies (Odepa).

Walker is leaving his position in order to stand as a candidate in the elections this year to decide who will create the country's new constitution after voters overwhelmingly approved the proposal last year.

He was appointed to lead the Ministry of Agriculture by President Sebastian Piñera at the start of his term in 2018 and has worked hard to strengthen the role of small-holder farmers in Chile.

Undurraga, who headed up Odepa since August 2018, is an agronomic engineer, having studied Agrarian Economy at the Catholic University of Chile.

She also has a Master's degree in sociology and a Master's in International Development Politics from Duke University in North Carolina.

Jorge Valenzuela, president of peak industry body Fedefruta, commended Walker for his tenure and for helping to highlight the importance of agriculture in the country. He also said that Undurraga is an excellent choice for Agriculture Minister.

"María Emilia represents the new generation of agriculture that takes the reins of a strategic sector for employment and the economic development of the regions," he said.

"She has previously headed [Odepa], and has facilitated an objective diagnosis of the main gaps in all agricultural items - including of course export fruit growing, which is currently in full harvest of its main species - and facing the challenges of the water crisis and the pandemic."