

A Chilean fruit industry representative says that while mid-season grapes in central regions were hit hard by the heavy rains last weekend, it seems that late-season red varieties are unaffected.

Blueberries still to be harvested have also been significantly affected, while there is damage reported to peaches and plums, according to the chief of Chile's Federation of Fruit Producers (Fedefruta), Jorge Valenzuela.

The cherry and avocado harvests had largely already wrapped up so these crops are unimpacted.

Valenzuela said he was most worried about table grapes between the central Valparaiso and O'Higgins regions in terms of damage.

"All the mid-season white varieties, for example, the Thompson or Sultanina variety, which is one of the most planted in Chile, are having problems ranging from 50 to 100 percent, because they have split," Valenzuela said.

However, "all the late red varieties, which are important volumes, are not currently showing problems".

He also added, "We have received reports of damage to plums, which are being harvested, peaches, due to the same effect of the splitting, reports of blueberries in Ñuble, and there are reports of areas that experienced hail in Maule where there are problems in apple and pear orchards".

Valenzuela estimated that 40 percent of blueberries yet to be harvested in Ñuble - the leading blueberry production region - have been damaged.

"This event has never happened to us before, we are standing on top of a matter that is unknown in terms of intensity, volume of water and weather conditions, and we are just harvesting, that is, it is a very atypical issue," he said.