

United Exports has claimed that its OZblu blueberries have set a world record by spending more than seven weeks at sea and arriving in good condition in the destination market.

A container of the fruit transited the Pacific ocean - from the port of Manzanillo in Mexico to the port of Hong Kong - spending 51 days at sea and arriving fresh and ready for sale in Hong Kong, on 20 May 2021.

Australia-headquartered United Exports said this was one of several containers sent to Asia from OZblu-Sun Farms' first harvest in Mexico, and has "set a new record for blueberries".

Upon arrival in Hong Kong, the berries had retained their size, sugars were "excellent" and they were firm and ready for sale as fresh blueberries, the company said.

DATE	MOVES	LOCATION	VESSEL	VOYAGE
Tue 30 Mar 2021 18:22	✓ Empty to shipper	MANZANILLO, MX		
Sat 03 Apr 2021 16:22	✓ Ready to be loaded	MANZANILLO, MX	CMA CGM PUGET	0MH7OW1MA
Mon 12 Apr 2021 15:49	✓ Loaded on board	MANZANILLO, MX	CMA CGM PUGET	0MH7OW1MA
Mon 17 May 2021 22:27	✓ Discharged in transhipment	SHEKOU	CMA CGM PUGET	0BD9MW1MA
Wed 19 May 2021 12:15	✗ Loaded on board	SHEKOU	DERBY D	0KRJ5S1MA
Thu 20 May 2021 22:30	Arrival final port of discharge	HONG KONG	DERBY D	0KRJ5S1MA

Co-founder of OZblu, Roger Horak, said: "These were OZ Julieta™ and OZ Magica™, freshly picked, packed and shipped in normal refrigerated containers with a controlled atmosphere, but with no post-harvest fumigation nor any modified atmosphere bags which are widely used in the blueberry industry.

"This is the pioneering life work - spanning almost 30 years and millions of dollars of investment - of the breeders, Dave and Leasa Mazzardis, and United Exports. This work has been enhanced with countless research trials and innovation in post-harvest processes that ensure these evergreen blueberries can deliver."

The fruit left Mexico with a green QC score and arrived Hong Kong in the same condition, receiving a green QC on arrival too, the company said.

This particular fruit was produced by OZblu-Sun Farms, a joint venture with United Exports in Mexico, and was sold by United Exports' OZblu Marketing LLC.

United Exports is expanding its planting in Mexico and its existing footprint in Peru and the

United States, as well with its grower in Chile.

Peru has built an incredible blueberry industry in a little over 10 years. This year it is forecast to export in excess of 200,000 metric tons.

With market access to all key consumption markets - North America, United Kingdom, European Union and China - it is estimated that Peru will be responsible for almost 60 percent of all blueberries exported from the southern hemisphere this coming season.

“This dwarfs South Africa’s expected exports of approximately 25,000 metrics tons expected this coming season, and will be a driving inspiration going forward,” says Horak.

United Exports, together with its funding partners, investors and joint venture partners, has invested just over R1,5 billion (US\$110 million) into OZblu production in South Africa, most of which is direct foreign investment.

“In addition we are partnered with very committed and quality focused contract growers, who have also invested close to half-a-billion rand (US\$40 million), and have created 300 permanent jobs and approximately 3,100 seasonal jobs,” says Horak.

United Exports says it is therefore hopeful that it’s only a matter of time before South African-produced OZblus are shipped around the world.

“I love South Africa, and would like to continue investing in new production units in South Africa for so long as we are able to effectively do so,” Horak said.