

By QIMA

On January 21, 2021, a major media outlet reported false information that disrupted the cherry market in China. Allegedly, the presence of the Covid-19 virus was detected on a box of Chilean cherries exported to the city of Wuxi, in the province of Jiangsu.

The news was spread on the social network Weibo and became a trending topic. More than 2.5 billion users reacted to the information. Unfortunately, the controversy was not limited to social networks. The impact on prices was immediate: The fruit went from costing 60 yuan to 16 yuan.

As a result, prices fell by up to 59%. More than 90% of cherry production in Chile is destined for China.

We cannot lose the Chinese market

The catastrophe occurred just days before the celebration of the Chinese New Year, key period in which cherries are traditionally consumed. For the Chinese, the red fruit represents a symbol of prosperity, perfection, fortune and eternity and is usually the favorite gift for the beginning of the new year.

This is the reason why China became the main importer of cherries in the world. Chile is the country that has benefited the most from this tradition: In less than ten years, it went from exporting 50,000 tons to 232,000. Losing this market is a luxury that the country simply cannot afford.

No wonder that the representatives of the exporters' trade associations worked hard to deny the news and reassure consumers.

In the first place, they explained that the Chinese customs never reported the incident to the Chilean embassy, therefore, if the event really happened, it is not related to cherries coming from Chile. On the other hand, it has been argued that the virus does not survive on surfaces for more than 14 days and cherry shipments take at least 25 days to reach China.

In spite of everything, the uncertainty of the producers increases every day with respect to the commercialization price in the Chinese market, as it suggests taking an important risk when producing and exporting to that destination.

With the 2021 cherry season approaching, it is important to step up efforts to secure the market and recover last year's losses.

Actions to regain confidence

The reality is that the risk of Covid-19 infection when consuming imported food from the cold chain is very low. That is why it is vital to maintain conditions conducive to their preservation.

Ensuring compliance with the export and import protocols required by the Chinese government, as well as those established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) is the best way to regain consumer confidence.

Qima Produce Protocol

Since the outbreak of the global pandemic, QIMA Produce has defined preventive guidelines during the cherry inspection process both at origin and destination. The company continuously reinforces these measures and makes sure to strictly follow the regulations of the Chinese authorities.

Cherry exporters have a clear challenge this season: regaining the confidence of the Chinese market and QIMA Produce's involvement during the distribution chain will contribute to consumers enjoying a delicious, healthy and toxic-free cherry.

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