

The South America Blueberry Convention successfully brought together growers, exporters, service providers and marketers from the region's growing countries, with a common call for the industry to focus on high quality fruit, new varieties and logistical issues as blueberry consumption reaches an inflection point in its primary markets of consumption.

The in person event was organized by [Yentzen Group](#) and sponsored by the International Blueberry Organization (IBO), in collaboration with the national blueberry associations of the primary growing nations in South America: The Asoex Blueberry Committee (Chile), the Blueberry Growers' Association of Peru (ProArandanos), the Argentine Blueberry Committee (ABC) and the Union of Fruit Growers and Exporters of Uruguay (UPEFRUY).

Opening the event, Gustavo Yentzen, President of the Yentzen Group, stressed the importance of unity in confronting the challenges facing the industry: "Each country is affected by the same external factors, each country depends more than before on how this collective reacts to the challenges," he said in his opening address.

The lead off panel of the event focused on the ever growing supply of blueberries on a global scale, and the importance of South American production, where 60% of the world's exported fruit is harvested.



Colin Fain, CEO of Agronometrics, stressed the importance of the Americas in his presentation, which forecasted that Latin America will increase its blueberry production by 61% between 2020 and 2025, and also offered his view on what will help the region grow.

"There are three pillars that must be addressed to remain competitive going forward: seeing the importance of a 52 week offer, a focus on quality and improving consumer knowledge of blueberries through education and marketing".

Cort Brazelton, Co-CEO of Fall Creek Farm & Nursery, provided an analysis of the

competitive offer of counter season fruit, and urged growers to switch to new varieties that offer greater firmness, longer post harvest life cycles and a crunch consumers love.

Luis Miguel Vegas, manager of Peru's ProArandanos association, spoke of Peru's impressive growth and its projections going forward, which estimate a 25% increase in exports for the upcoming 2022-23 season.

Vegas also highlighted the expansion of Peru's growing region both north and south of the traditional La Libertad region which went from supplying 93 percent of Peru's blueberries in 2016 to around 50 percent today.

Raúl Dastres (CH) president of Exportador Valle Maule in Chile, expressed the concerns faced by many Chilean growers, who have seen a drastic increase in the competition they face. Moreover, growers are struggling to find the resources and time to invest in the variety renewal being demanded by today's blueberry consumers to stay competitive.

Logistics are a top concern for Ezequiel Giménez, President for Latin America for NorthBay, and also stressed that growers still need to focus on the factors within their control that the consumer is looking for.

"What are we looking for from the end customer? Find the quality they want and repeat that purchase", he said, calling for a greater attention to the variety change. "Those that don't have the varieties the customer wants will be left behind."

The event also featured an exhibitor's hall with 40 companies showing the latest in machinery, genetic material, consulting services and more. The event took place in the Sun Monticello Hotel & Convention Center, just south of the Chilean capital of Santiago.