

Chilean exports of blueberries and table grapes both experienced year-on-year declines in the first quarter of 2022 amid severe logistical issues and higher costs.

Blueberry exports between January and March fell by 5 percent in volume to 89,478 tons and 9 percent in value to \$429 million FOB, national association Fedefruta reports.

Meanwhile, table grapes dropped by 2 percent in volume to 253,300 tons and 16 percent in value to \$397 million FOB.

In preseason forecasts, blueberry exports for the 2021-22 season had been pegged on par with last season, while table grapes had been expecting a big increase of around a quarter.

Despite the declines for the second and third most exported fruits over the period, growth in the leading category - cherries - was enough to lift overall fruit exports by 4 percent in volume to 933,000 tons and 7 percent in value to \$2.7 billion.

"In a season in which we did not have weather problems, this harvest was impacted by the logistical bottleneck in the national ports, and in the delay of journeys and the increase in freight and input costs," comments the president of Fedefruta, Jorge Valenzuela.

"Without a doubt, we have never had this problem at this level, due to freight costs that have tripled. There is fruit that is not being harvested because it is more expensive to ship than to leave it on the tree.

He added that because of the delay in logistics, about 4,000 containers of Chilean cherries did not arrive on time to the markets in China.

"Before the New Year we had a very good campaign, but the problems were seen after that holiday. We have a perishable product that must arrive at the right times, and this season it was very difficult to comply. A lot of fruit was at sea for a long time," he said.

Regarding blueberries, "I would not like to talk about percentages, but many loads of blueberries have been damaged. We have received information that blueberries have been the fruit most complicated by this logistical crisis. The loss of condition is naturally reflected in no sales and falling prices".