

Mexican blueberries are on the road to Philadelphia. Peruvian blueberries are already landing in the Philadelphia seaport.

So begins the 2022-23 Latin American blueberry season, notes Mike Maxwell, the president of Procacci Bros. Sales Corp., based in Philadelphia.

In a Sept. 14 interview, Maxwell generalized that Latin American blueberry export season had begun in a small way.

Young Peruvian blueberry fields seemingly double production every year. Now those “small plants are kicking in.”

Thus, in the last four years, Peru’s blueberry export volumes have exploded. Peru produces large berries that quickly fill clamshells for retail displays.

As a result, by late September and early October, North American retailers will have “very promotable volumes,” Maxwell continued.

Tom Beaver, director of sales and marketing for Sunny Valley International Inc., in Glassboro, NJ, confirmed that his firm, as well as other importers, has been diligent in setting up retail programs to keep product moving and provide prices that keep growers happy.

Beaver on Sept. 15 said Peru’s blueberry deal was ramping up and will be in full volume in the next several weeks. This is expected to run throughout the fall and winter. Fruit size is good and quality looks strong.

John Pandol, director of special projects for Pandol Bros., Inc., Delano, CA, confirmed that Peruvian blueberry imports into the U.S. started in early September. He attributes that to three factors.

First, there was a production “wave” of early Peruvian blueberries.

Second, September supplies from North American growers weren’t that high. “Now, the channels are empty,” he told Fresh Fruit Portal on Sept. 20.

And, third, given international exchange rates, it’s more attractive for Peruvian growers to ship to the U.S., versus less attractive currency returns from Europe. “What was going to Europe is coming here.”

Pandol spoke to us from Philadelphia International Airport, after meeting with logistics people on the Delaware River waterfront. He saw that various retailers in that area displayed very little fruit grown in North America, with Peruvian blueberries being abundant.

By mid- to late-October, supply from Peru will rise to meet demand and there will be plenty of blueberries for retail promotion.

Generally speaking, with international production of berries - and other fruits - increasing, global gaps in supply are quickly shrinking.

In addition to Mexico and Peru, Procacci imports Argentine and Chilean blueberries.

Also available are small volumes from Colombia.

Beaver said typical timing is expected on the Chilean deal, which will begin in late November or early December, running through March or April. "This should be an excellent crop."

For Sunny Valley, the Argentine blueberry crop was gaining steam in mid-September and is to run through November or into December.

From this side of the southern border, Procacci also domestic product from the Northwest, which is winding down, and Florida. Sunshine State blueberries are just coming into the market.